



Policy  
Paper

# Poverty, place and inequality

Why place-based approaches are key to  
tackling poverty and inequality

*Victoria Pinoncelly*



**RTPI**

mediation of space · making of place

# Poverty, place and inequality

## Why place-based approaches are key to tackling poverty and inequality

This report argues that ‘people-based’ approaches on their own are not enough to reduce poverty and inequality. Alongside conventional approaches to reducing poverty, which focus on welfare reform, we need to harness the potential of places to increase opportunity and realise people’s potential.

Problems such as worklessness, low incomes, lack of aspiration and ill-health are not just individual – they are also social. The environment can shape people’s behaviour and limit or enhance their wellbeing and life chances, but this has largely been neglected in welfare policy.

This means understanding how better built environments and stronger place-based initiatives can support and promote employment, educational achievement, better health and improved social mobility. In an era of localism and devolution, increasing equality and opportunity should be a core part of local, city and sub-regional plans and strategies. Rather than relying solely on national welfare reform, governments across the UK should also promote and incentivise a new era of place-based initiatives to combat poverty and inequality.

### Executive summary

In recent announcements regarding the regeneration of so-called ‘sink estates’ in England, the UK Government has recognised the link between the built environment, poverty and a range of social problems such as anti-social behaviour. However welcome, this recognition needs to go much further.

The built environment can have a profound effect on people’s behaviours and opportunities. Alongside conventional ‘people-based’ welfare policies, a much stronger focus on place, in particular on place-based schemes, could do much to reduce poverty, inequality and the social problems that stem from them. The localism and devolution agenda has often neglected a significant aspect of place: its role in poverty and inequality. Recognising the potential of local approaches to poverty reduction could contribute greatly to improving social mobility and achieving social justice.

To a large extent, current approaches to poverty reduction have been informed by an individualised rather than broader environmental perspective. Despite a widespread recognition that deprivation goes well beyond differences in income, for example to include educational opportunity and housing options, and that these wider factors can in turn impact on people's ability to find work or stay healthy, recent policy has largely neglected the importance of the local environment in determining, shaping, and sometimes reinforcing deprivation.

Policy-makers recognise that there a range of factors that can contribute to poverty and social decline, for instance family breakdown, worklessness, addiction, serious debt and educational failure. However, the underlying focus remains an essentially individual one, by emphasising what some people may lack in terms of personal capabilities, skills, aspiration or family circumstance. This neglects how these factors can themselves be the symptoms of wider contexts, such as poor physical environments or local concentrations of poverty.

The poorest are often pushed to live in degraded environments with fewer services and amenities, poor access to public transport, educational opportunities and jobs, a lack of green spaces, lower air quality and higher rates of crime and anti-social behaviour. This in turn reinforces poverty and inequality. We also know that children's and young people's life chances remain heavily influenced by the places in which they grow up.

These are effectively forms of 'place poverty'. While it is increasingly recognised that physical and social environments can have an important role in health inequalities, for example, it is now time to recognise that local environments also have a significant influence on social and economic inequalities. This represents the 'missing link' in tackling the root causes, rather than merely the symptoms, of poverty.

Despite recent UK Government announcements, over the past few years there has been a decline of place-based initiatives in England in particular, through the demise of area-based policies and funding to tackle deprivation, and the focus instead on so-called 'people-based' factors. On their own, people-based approaches are unlikely to be enough to reduce poverty and inequality, in part because they ignore the importance of place and the local environment. Yet four local authorities in 10 across the UK don't make any significant reference to issues of poverty, social exclusion and inequality within their local plans. Similarly, many city devolution deals fail to reference these issues.

Some critics have suggested that area-based approaches are inherently ineffective. However, previous area-based initiatives have been limited in four main ways: short timescales; issues with scale and methodological approaches; a lack of resourcing; and a lack of focus on people within these initiatives. In contrast, this report includes positive case studies of practical improvement in communities across the UK and beyond through place-based initiatives and 'whole-place' approaches which could be applied more widely.

Making a real impact on poverty and inequality will require a new focus on promoting fairness, opportunity and social mobility through more concerted and coordinated

efforts to improve the places and communities in which people live. This means understanding how better built environments and stronger place-based initiatives can support and promote employment, educational achievement, better health and improved social mobility. It also means considering how place-based approaches to poverty reduction can be incorporated into the various levels of localism and devolution across the UK.

## Implications and recommendations

Given the importance of place to poverty and inequality, in an era of localism and devolution increasing equality and opportunity should be a core part of local, city and sub-regional plans and strategies. Rather than relying solely on national welfare reform, governments across the UK should also promote and incentivise a new era of place-based initiatives to combat poverty and inequality. In particular, within the local and devolution policy framework in England there is much greater potential to create a better strategic framework to tackle poverty and inequality at various levels of governance.

- **Governments across the UK should consider how devolution can promote social justice alongside economic growth**, in particular through City Deals in the UK and Devolution Deals and Growth Deals in England.
- **Sub-regional plans in the UK should have a greater focus on promoting economic opportunity and social justice.** So far, Local Economic Partnerships (LEPs) in England have tended to neglect deprivation and the wider social and environmental aspects of their growth plans, but their developing role in helping to integrate local plans and strategies means that they should play an important role in promoting and coordinating place-based social justice at a sub-regional level.
- **Integrated poverty reduction strategies tailored to their particular places and communities need to be developed.** At the local government level, many authorities have developed integrated poverty reduction strategies tailored to their particular places and communities. This can create savings and tackle issues more effectively. This is all the more important in the context of limited resources. National government also has a role in promoting more integrated working at local level, for example as the Scottish Government does through Community Planning Partnerships and Single Outcome Agreements. As some towns and cities have also demonstrated, Fairness Commissions can help to identify local problems and issues in order to inform poverty reduction strategies.
- **Local authorities should also recognise the importance of planning in poverty reduction within their local plans.** Programmes for poverty reduction should not be narrowly conceived through housing provision or estate regeneration, but instead encompass better transport links, access to local services and amenities, and safer communities, all of which are important to creating better environments. In turn, these can promote greater economic participation and more cohesive communities, as well as generating more

investment in struggling areas. Regeneration needs to be aligned closely with poverty reduction strategies, and issues of poverty and inequality need to be articulated more strongly in local plans.

- **Neighbourhood planning should be an important tool for helping to improve communities and reduce poverty locally.** In England, neighbourhood planning gives communities more power to identify issues, develop a shared vision for their neighbourhoods and shape the development and growth of their areas. In practice however, more deprived areas have been less involved in neighbourhood planning, possibly because of a lack of skills and capacity, but probably also because the design of neighbourhood planning may not be inviting for poorer communities to engage with. Governments across the UK should consider how to engage poorer communities in particular in the future development of neighbourhood and community-level planning. The new Neighbourhood Planning Grants may have potential in supporting deprived areas to draw up neighbourhood plans. The role of Planning Aid England should be developed to encourage the take-up of neighbourhood plans in areas of deprivation and engage in capacity-building.
- **Universities should play a role in local poverty reduction.** Universities are often important local employers, but are also increasingly recognising their broader social role in their communities, for example through the notion of the 'civic university'. Universities can engage with local people and organisations to harness resources, producing research on patterns of deprivation and inequalities and working with school in less advantaged areas, as for instance in the University of Manchester's involvement in the Just Greater Manchester programme. Another example of the broader role that university planning schools can play is through the RTPI-award winning Westfield Action Research Project (WARP), a partnership between the University of Sheffield and the local community, to help the community determine a vision for change for their area and develop and implement a long-term plan that will help to transform their community.
- **Policy-makers, decision-makers and researchers need better data relating to poverty and inequality that reflects the importance of place and the environment.** Data that incorporates non-material forms of poverty and uses neighbourhoods as units of analysis could provide a better picture of deprivation and inequality, and form the basis of a longitudinal data set that would help to track and evaluate the success of place-based approaches properly. This could even inform the development of 'minimum place standards', covering such factors as access to services and facilities, how neighbourhoods look and how safe they are, and community and neighbourliness within places.

## 1. Why place is critical to poverty and inequality

This section considers the debate over ‘people versus place’ and describes the multiple dimensions of place that impact on people’s opportunities and life chances.

There are a number of ways in which poverty and inequality<sup>1</sup> can be understood too narrowly, and which consequently constrict the initiatives we develop to reduce them. For example, poverty and inequality are about more than just income or a lack of material resources, hence the use by many researchers and commentators of the wider term ‘deprivation’. Poverty and inequality can be understood as having both a material dimension (a lack of income or goods) and a non-material dimension (such as poor physical and mental health).<sup>2</sup>

This is true at an individual level, for example in the ways that poverty and inequality are often related to low educational achievement, poor health, and exclusion from social or political participation. It is also true at an area or place level, for example in terms of poor housing, inadequate community facilities, crime and anti-social behaviour, environmental neglect, and lack of good quality green spaces.<sup>3</sup>

This environmental dimension of poverty and inequality makes it all the more surprising that some commentators have argued for a focus on people to the exclusion of place. This will need to be corrected if we are to develop a more comprehensive and effective approach to reducing poverty and inequality.

### The ‘people versus place’ debate

Income inequality in the UK is among the highest in the developed world, but poverty is often concentrated in particular areas. For example, just 19 per cent of local authority districts in England and Wales contain half of all poor children.<sup>4</sup> In Scotland, nearly one third of the most deprived areas are in one city, namely Glasgow (despite deprivation having become less concentrated over time).<sup>5</sup> The question is why these concentrations exist (and indeed persist), and what we can do about it.

For some commentators however, *who you are* matters more than *where you live*.<sup>6</sup> These commentators recognise that there are significant inequalities between areas,

<sup>1</sup> This report will focus on socio-economic inequalities as defined in the Equality Act 2010, rather than the protected characteristics defined in the Act of age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. However, these issues are of concern to the RTPi and have been the focus of previous publications. It should be noted that the Equality Act contained a provision that demanded that public bodies consider social and economic disadvantage when allocating resources, but this was not implemented.

<sup>2</sup> Sheffield Hallam University Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research, (2014), *Regeneration and poverty: policy and practice review* (Sheffield: Sheffield Hallam University).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Smith, George, Noble, Michael and Wright, Gemma (2001) “Do we care about area effects?”, *Environment and Planning A* Vol. 33 pp.1341-1344.

<sup>5</sup> The Scottish Government, High Level Summary of Statistics Trend Last Update <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Social-Welfare/TrendSIMD>

<sup>6</sup> See for example, Glaeser, Edward L. (2011) *Triumph of the City* (London: Penguin); Cheshire, Paul C. Nathan, Max and Overman, Henry G. (2014) *Urban Economics and Urban Policy* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar).

but tend to downplay the impact that place has on people. From this perspective, most of the disparities in employment or income can be explained by individual differences (for example, in level of education) rather than by so-called 'area effects'.<sup>7</sup> In other words, people with similar incomes tend to concentrate in (typically worse) neighbourhoods primarily because living in these areas costs less (referred to as a 'sorting effect').

Indeed, to some of these commentators this sorting may be no bad thing: "[T]hose without jobs or job prospects cannot afford to pay the housing market costs of better transport links. Moreover given their low skills or poor health and so their poor prospects of getting better jobs, they are likely not so badly off in living in less accessible but cheaper areas."<sup>8</sup>

Of course, this perspective might not be shared by the residents of poorer areas. Whether a person dislikes their neighbourhood is significantly related to its neighbourhood deprivation score, for example.<sup>9</sup> The Marmot Review of health inequalities in England also found a number of key areas where socio-economic status correlates with environmental disadvantage: transport, green space, pollution, food, housing and community participation and social isolation (as discussed further below).<sup>10</sup> In other words, and somewhat unsurprisingly, poorer areas tend to be worse areas in a range of ways.

Despite this, these commentators argue that in order to tackle poverty we should focus on improving individual outcomes (for example, through employment and education policies) rather than on improving places.<sup>11</sup> In this view, it is too difficult for policy- and decision-makers to eradicate the disparities between areas and turn around the performance of 'struggling places';<sup>12</sup> any such investments would likely be largely wasted.

This 'people not place' perspective has been very influential in policy as well as some academic circles, perhaps reflecting the general 'place blindness' in much policy-making (and indeed some academic research).<sup>13</sup> This may be because of the sometimes inconclusive and contradictory results from research studies of area

<sup>7</sup> Gibbons, Steve, Overman, Henry F. and Pelkonen, Panu (2010) 'Wage Disparities in Britain: People or Place?' SERC Discussion Paper 0060 (London: SERC).

<sup>8</sup> Cheshire, Paul C. Nathan, Max and Overman, Henry G. (2014) *Urban Economics and Urban Policy* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar) p.60.

<sup>9</sup> Joshi, Heather (2001) "Is there a place for area-based initiatives?" *Environment and Planning A* Vol. 33 pp. 1349-1352.

<sup>10</sup> Marmot, Michael et al. (2010) *Fair Society, Healthy Lives: The Marmot Review* (London: The Marmot Review).

<sup>11</sup> This focus is reflected in UK Government policy. For example, the Department for Work and Pensions' social justice outcomes framework indicators' which comprise: family stability; realising potential in the education system; proven re-offending rates by offenders under the age of 18; entrenched worklessness; improved outcomes for those receiving treatment for drug or alcohol dependency; proportion of adult offenders who did not re-offend; proportion of adult offenders in P45 employment 1 year on (this is available at [www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-justice-outcomes-framework-indicators](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-justice-outcomes-framework-indicators)). However this does not include environmental factors.

<sup>12</sup> Cheshire, Nathan, and Overman (op. cit.) p.35.

<sup>13</sup> Harris, Michael and Pinoncelly, Victoria (2014) *Thinking Spatially: Why places need to be at the heart of policy-making in the twenty first century* (London: RTPi).

effects (due in part to issues with data and methodologies). However, a significant number of academic and policy studies do suggest that spatial (geographical) concentrations of deprivation can have a compounding effect on the residents of poor areas.<sup>14</sup>

People's health outcomes, education, employment prospects and opportunities to build wealth and improve well-being are significantly influenced both by people's socio-economic status *and* where they live.<sup>15</sup> This seems obvious that many of the things that add to people's quality of life and enhance their earning potential – such as jobs, better schools and public services, safe streets, green spaces, leisure and entertainment – are most accessible only in particular locations.

Certainly, the ability to benefit from access to jobs, public services and amenities can be determined by where people can afford to live (and so by household income), but this only serves to reinforce the point that we could do much to reduce poverty and inequality by improving the areas in which less advantaged people live, since they may often lack the private means to move to better areas. For instance, improving labour market opportunities comes from labour market policy but also needs to consider place-based barriers to work, such as the availability of jobs nearby and the provision of affordable and reliable public transport.

In contrast then to the argument that living in a poor neighbourhood is not a cause of social disadvantage,<sup>16</sup> we can acknowledge that people's options in life can be, as the social geographer Danny Dorling puts it, "largely controlled and constrained by life places in which they grow up, the local expectations, resources, schools, job opportunities, child-care expectations, and housing opportunities".<sup>17</sup>

Moreover, even if the academic evidence for area effects is (inevitably) mixed – though stronger than the 'people not place' camp suggests – there still remains the *moral* case for seeking to improve the places in which fellow citizens live, to create better and safer living environments for the most vulnerable in society, who may have little choice to live elsewhere (or indeed may have a strong sense of attachment to where they live or may want it to receive more investment).

Further, although 'people-based' approaches may sound progressive in their focus on supporting individuals, they risk overemphasising the role of individual behaviours and decisions in poverty outcomes, which in turn risks blaming individuals for their circumstances. In contrast, a stronger understanding of the importance of place better reflects contemporary understandings of poverty and inequality, for example what the economist and philosopher Amartya Sen has termed the 'deprivation of capabilities'.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> Rae, Alasdair (2011) *Deprivation in Sheffield* (Sheffield: Department of Town Planning, University of Sheffield).

<sup>15</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2014) *All on Board: Making Inclusive Growth Happen* (Paris: OECD).

<sup>16</sup> Cheshire, Nathan, and Overman (op. cit.) p.73.

<sup>17</sup> Dorling, Danny (2001) 'Anecdote is the singular of data', *Environment and Planning A* Vol. 33 pp.1335-1369.

<sup>18</sup> Sen, Amartya (2009) *The Idea of Justice* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press).

– that people are poor when they are restricted in their freedom to make choices about what they want to be and do and about how they use the resources they have.

Place, as much if not more than individual characteristics, can undermine people's ability to live the best lives they possibly can. Further, a focus on people to the exclusion of place seems to neglect that the effects of living in a poor neighbourhood can persist over time (in other words, people can carry 'place' with them). The psychological effects of persistent deprivation play a cyclical role in perpetuating individual and household poverty, and can have wider effects on neighbourhoods, for instance through crime.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, the persistence of poverty in time may be as much a problem as its spatial concentration.<sup>20</sup>

Despite its influence then, the 'people versus place' debate seems both unnecessary and unhelpful. Rather than accepting that 'segregation' is inevitable (or even desirable) and adopting a fatalistic view of places, we would do better to recognise that people are affected by the context in which they live and affect it in return, that their environment can be a major component of their poverty, and that it is possible to improve places in ways which reduce inequality as well as support people in more individual ways.

In short, *where* you live matters as well as *who* you are. To this end, the rest of this section describes the multiple dimensions of place that impact on people's opportunities and life chances.

## Local environments: A missing link in tackling poverty

### Access to services

Lack of access to essential services such as a post office, primary school, supermarket or General Practitioner (GP) surgery can reinforce poverty and inequality. Often, areas of multiple deprivation face the loss of basic services and amenities such as banks and post offices, and large retailers may be reluctant to locate in poorer areas.<sup>21</sup>

For example, there is significantly unequal access to GPs between areas of high and low deprivation.<sup>22</sup> Each year 1.4 million people miss, turn down or choose not to seek medical help because of transport problems.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, alongside other factors, 'food

<sup>19</sup> Grant, Ursula (2010) *Spatial Inequality and Urban Poverty Traps* (London: Overseas Development Institute).

<sup>20</sup> Rae (2011) *Deprivation in Sheffield* (op. cit.).

<sup>21</sup> Dowler, Elizabeth, (2008) 'Health and inequalities the challenge for sustaining just consumption', *Local Environment* Vol 13 No 8 pp 759-772.

<sup>22</sup> NHS England, (2013) *High quality care for all, now and for future generations: Transforming urgent and emergency care services in England - The Evidence Base from the Urgent and Emergency Care Review* (London: NHS England).

<sup>23</sup> NHS Health Development Agency, (2005) *Making the Case: Improving Health through Transport*.

poverty' (defined as the inability to obtain healthy affordable food) is significantly affected by whether people lack shops in their area or have trouble reaching them.<sup>24</sup>

## Housing

Housing obviously represents a major part of material living conditions, and also affects people's ability to cover essential spending such as fuel or food costs. Poverty prevents access to many potential housing options or makes them hard to sustain, but housing circumstances also affect poverty, for example poor housing conditions affect aspects of child development as well as adult health.<sup>25</sup>

Variations in housing costs between places have a substantial impact on total numbers of people defined as living in poverty, and the extent to which people in poverty experience material deprivation, and have been overlooked in research on poverty and material deprivation.<sup>26</sup> Once housing costs are taken into account, the number of Londoners living in poverty almost doubles from just over one million to just over two million, and those in the South East of England are also affected.<sup>27</sup>

Poorly insulated housing can also put households in fuel poverty,<sup>28</sup> 9 per cent of households (2.3 million) in the UK cannot afford to heat the living areas of their home and 10 per cent of households live in a damp home.<sup>29</sup> The number of people in 'housing-cost-induced poverty' (not experiencing poverty until housing costs are taken into account) has also increased over the past two decades.<sup>30</sup>

Unsurprisingly then, low-cost decent-quality housing in an attractive job market could make a considerable contribution to increasing disposable income, maintaining work incentives and preventing material deprivation.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>24</sup> This is Sustain's definition, available at [www.sustainweb.org/foodaccess/what\\_is\\_food\\_poverty/](http://www.sustainweb.org/foodaccess/what_is_food_poverty/)

<sup>25</sup> Pinoncelly, Victoria and Hartkoorn, Inge (2014) *Promoting Healthy Cities: Why planning is critical to a healthy urban future* (London: RTPI).

<sup>26</sup> Tunstall, Rebecca et. al., (2013) *The Links between Housing and Poverty: An Evidence Review* (York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Fuel poverty designates individuals/households that have to spend more than 10 per cent of their income on fuel to heat their home properly. It was considered for inclusion in the new Indices for Multiple Deprivation 2015 but not included eventually.

<sup>29</sup> Poverty and Social Exclusion (PSE) UK (2013) *The Impoverishment of the UK*.

<sup>30</sup> Tunstall, (2013) *The links between housing and poverty: an evidence review* (op cit.).

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

## Transport

Place matters to those who are disadvantaged in the labour market, as they tend to have a more 'localised' orientation than the population as a whole. Evidence from travel-to-work patterns shows that disadvantaged people are less mobile and more reliant on public transport. In both urban and rural areas, lower qualified and unemployed people tend to have least locational flexibility in seeking jobs.<sup>32</sup>

It may be especially difficult for those from poorer neighbourhoods to commute to where job opportunities are (or look for work), due to expensive and/or fragmented public transport networks.<sup>33</sup> Deindustrialisation, combined with inadequate public transport, rather than say a lack of skills or training, have particularly afflicted some communities.<sup>34</sup> Inaccessibility is not only a rural issue; poorer inner city areas with little purchasing power may lack adequate bus services.

The Campaign for Better Transport has also shown that since 2010, £78 million has been withdrawn from local authority bus funding in England and Wales resulting in over 2,400 bus services being reduced, altered or withdrawn from service.<sup>35</sup>

Those in suburban and rural areas are less likely to use public transport, in large part due to its lower availability. While bus fares have risen on average by 30 per cent between 2001 and 2013, petrol prices have risen by 70 per cent; this obviously has a disproportionate effect on low-income households in suburbs and rural areas who are reliant on the car.<sup>36</sup> Although fuel costs have been falling recently, car insurance and relying on car for transport for each household is costly. If people live in isolated places, fuel costs can weigh heavily on a household's budget (see further below for more on rural areas). In the UK 1.5 million are deemed at high risk of suffering from 'transport poverty',<sup>37</sup> where a significant part of disposable wages are spent on fuel.

## Health

Given all this, it is perhaps unsurprising that place-related factors are strongly related to inequalities in health – indeed, factors such as employment, housing, access to services, and travel-to-work areas may be more significant than income deprivation on its own.<sup>38</sup>

The *Fair Society, Healthy Lives* report for England (the Marmot Review) in 2010 showed that there is a 'social gradient' in health: those living in the most deprived

<sup>32</sup> Green, Anne E. (2001) 'Unemployment, nonemployment and labour-market disadvantage' *Environment and Planning A* 2001 pp.1361-1364.

<sup>33</sup> OECD (2014) *Making Inclusive Growth Happen* (op. cit.).

<sup>34</sup> Green, (2001) 'Unemployment, nonemployment and labour-market disadvantage' (op. cit.).

<sup>35</sup> Campaign for Better Transport (2015) *Buses in Crisis: A report on bus funding across England and Wales 2010-2016* (London: Campaign for Better Transport).

<sup>36</sup> Hunter, Paul (2014) *Poverty in Suburbia: a Smith Institute study into the growth of poverty in the suburbs of England and Wales* (London: Smith Institute).

<sup>37</sup> Sustrans (2012), *Locked Out: Transport Poverty in England* (London: Sustrans).

<sup>38</sup> Buck, David and Maguire, David, (2015) *Inequalities in life expectancy: changes over time and implications for policy* (London: King's Fund).

neighbourhoods die earlier and spend more time in ill health than those living in the least deprived neighbourhoods.<sup>39</sup> As the report suggested, in part this is because people living in the most deprived neighbourhoods are more exposed to environmental conditions which negatively affect health.

Transport patterns, access to green space, pollution effects, housing quality, community participation, and social isolation are all structured by social inequality. These social and economic inequalities underpin the determinants of health – the range of material, social, environmental, psychosocial, behavioural and biological factors that shape health and wellbeing.<sup>40</sup> Recently, the NHS recognised the impact of the built environment on health through its Healthy Towns programme in England. In Scotland, the 2008 *Good Places, Better Health* implementation plan has encouraged a ‘system-based’ rationale for action to reduce health inequities and the links with other governmental strategies related to this domain.<sup>41</sup>

### Rural areas

While poverty is often considered primarily as an inner-city phenomenon, there can be significant deprivation in rural and more isolated areas.

Research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation has found that people living in rural areas typically need to spend 10-20 per cent more than people in urban areas to reach a minimum acceptable standard of living.<sup>42</sup> As noted, bus services outside city centres can be infrequent and unreliable, making it more difficult for those who don’t own a car to find and retain work.<sup>43</sup> Services and facilities in rural areas can be sporadic, exacerbated by cuts to local services over the past few years.<sup>44</sup>

In addition, people in rural areas can face higher energy bills, for example as a result of a lack of mains gas supply and reliance on using more expensive fuels. Older homes in rural areas can also be less energy efficient.<sup>45</sup> As a result, the proportion of households in fuel poverty is much higher in the most rural areas – an average of 29 per cent of households (in 2007-2009) compared to 24 per cent in villages centres and 15 per cent in urban areas.<sup>46</sup>

Poverty and deprivation can also be more ‘hidden’ in rural areas. Pockets of rural deprivation can be masked by areas of relative affluence, making a reliance on broad area data problematic. Similar issues of poor transport links and access to services can also affect suburban areas – where again the assumption might be that poverty

<sup>39</sup> Marmot et al., (2010) *The Marmot Review* (op. cit.).

<sup>40</sup> Pinoncelly, Victoria and Hartkoorn, Inge (2014) *Promoting Healthy Cities: Why planning is critical to a healthy urban future* (London: RTPi).

<sup>41</sup> The Scottish Government (2008) *Good Places, Better Health: A New Approach to Environment and Health in Scotland* (Edinburgh: The Scottish Government).

<sup>42</sup> Smith, Noel, Davis, Abigail and Hirsch, Donald, (2010) *A Minimum Housing Standard for Rural Households* (York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation).

<sup>43</sup> Hunter (2014), *Poverty in Suburbia* (op. cit.).

<sup>44</sup> Smith, David and Hirsch (2010), *A minimum housing standard for rural households* (op. cit.).

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Fuel poverty data, available at: <http://www.poverty.org.uk/r80/index.shtml?2>

doesn't exist – and indeed poverty has been growing faster in suburbia than in cities in recent years.<sup>47</sup>

### Environmental inequalities

Social and economic inequalities find expression in the built environment (for example, spatially concentrated poverty and/or racial segregation), and these social inequalities overlap with – and many argue, lead to – environmental inequalities.<sup>48</sup> The Marmot Review defined 'environmental inequalities' as the unequal impact of environmental factors on health and wellbeing. These can include factors discussed above such as access to education and care, housing, travel and transport.

In addition, other factors such as public spaces, access to nature and environmental problems such as poor air quality and pollution are also linked with deprivation;<sup>49</sup> more recently, the TCPA's *Planning Out Poverty* contains case studies that illustrate environmental factors of poverty and exclusion.<sup>50</sup>

These environmental factors are highly unequally distributed. In the most deprived areas, 45 per cent of the population experience two or more of these unfavourable environmental conditions, compared to less than 5 per cent in the least deprived areas.<sup>51</sup> In England, Scotland and Northern Ireland, inequalities are greater in areas with poorest air quality. In such areas, the population is characterised by higher levels of deprivation.<sup>52</sup>

Further, in the context of climate change, the quality of neighbourhoods and levels of income inequality are all important for climate adaptation. Heatwaves and floods often reveal inequalities in people's 'social vulnerability', something that needs to be addressed by climate adaptation strategies and approaches.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Hunter (2014), *Poverty in Suburbia* (op. cit.).

<sup>48</sup> Jermé, Erica S. and Wakefield, Sarah (2013), 'Growing a just garden: environmental justice and the development of a community garden policy in Hamilton, Ontario' *Planning Theory and Practice* Vol 14 Issue 3 pp.295-314.

<sup>49</sup> Land-use and derelict land, density, noise pollution, proximity to green space and waste landfill sites, vacant dwellings and low demand were not included in the English Indices of Deprivation 2015 update (see Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) Updating the English Indices of Deprivation Report for Consultation, November 2014); the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) includes proximity to landfill and waste sites data.

<sup>50</sup> Ellis, Hugh and Henderson, Kate (2013), *Planning Out Poverty: The Reinvention of Social Town Planning* (London: Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA)).

<sup>51</sup> Geddes, Ilaria, Allen, Jessica, Allen, Matilda and Morrissey, Lucy (2011) *The Marmot review: implications for spatial planning* (London: UCL).

<sup>52</sup> Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) (2006) *Air Quality and Social Deprivation in the UK: an environmental inequalities analysis* (London: DEFRA).

<sup>53</sup> Lindley, Sarah et al (2011), *Climate change, justice and vulnerability* (York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation).

## Social networks

Where more disadvantaged people are concentrated in one place, problems of relative exclusion can be reinforced by an absence of positive social networks and low aspiration. Work by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has shown that social support networks – an important dimension of inclusiveness and which can be crucial to employment prospects – tend to be weaker among the most disadvantaged social groups, including the poor and the less educated.<sup>54</sup> However, there can also be a strong sense of community and social networks in poorer areas.

---

<sup>54</sup> OECD (2014) *Making Inclusive Growth Happen* (op. cit.).

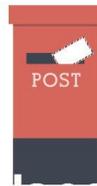
**'Place poverty'**

Taken together, this evidence points towards forms of 'place poverty' – local environments have a significant influence on social and economic inequalities and income poverty.

## Place Poverty Factors



**Affordable, quality housing**



**Access to services**



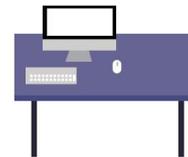
**Availability and quality of green spaces**



**Access to educational opportunities**



**Availability of public transport**



**Access to jobs**



**Local air quality and pollution**



**Access to shops and healthy food**



**Rates of crime and anti-social behaviour**

Ultimately, the under-recognition of place in thinking about poverty and inequality may stem from a lack of spatial awareness and thinking generally in policy.<sup>55</sup> This can have a significant impact. For example, the under-occupancy charge policy (also known as ‘bedroom tax’), whereby social housing tenants with ‘spare’ bedrooms face a reduction in Housing Benefit, in effect adopts a “one size fits all” approach. However, in the north of England families with a ‘spare’ room outnumber overcrowded families by three to one, so thousands of people have been hit by the policy despite there being no local need for them to move. Evidence also suggests there are not enough smaller social homes available for all the households affected to move to.<sup>56</sup>

More broadly, welfare policies do not reflect the different cost of living in different places, such as housing and childcare costs, as well as the different job opportunities and salary levels places offer, which risks excluding poor families from certain places.<sup>57</sup> It is perhaps unsurprising then that the spatial impact of welfare reforms over recent years has been highly unequal.<sup>58</sup> The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has also shown that poorer areas have been more affected by budget cuts, and that the most deprived areas have seen the largest cuts in funding since 2010. (In contrast, cuts in Scotland have taken place at a slower pace which may have given local authorities more room to invest in preventative measures, which could drive down costs in the medium term by reducing the need for services in future years.<sup>59</sup>)

Most broadly of all, there is a clear spatial economic imbalance in the UK, with a need for a regional rebalancing of investment between places.<sup>60</sup> As the planning academic Alasdair Rae has argued, we should consider issues of poverty “as part of larger trends in socio-spatial inequality like the increasing concentration of poverty, intra-city economic divergence, or spatial inefficiencies between employment opportunities and the location of the unemployed”, rather than agency-centric policies which often view problems in terms of micro spatial neighbourhood issues or individual inadequacies.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>55</sup> RTPI, *Thinking Spatially* (op. cit.).

<sup>56</sup> According to Shelter figures, accessed at: [http://england.shelter.org.uk/campaigns/\\_why\\_we\\_campaign/Improving\\_social\\_housing/Why\\_we\\_need\\_more\\_social\\_housing](http://england.shelter.org.uk/campaigns/_why_we_campaign/Improving_social_housing/Why_we_need_more_social_housing)

<sup>57</sup> Williams, Maire, ‘Britain’s benefit burden is not a level playing field’ (blog post, 25 March 2015). Accessed at [www.centreforcities.org/blog/britains-benefits-burden-is-not-a-level-playing-field/](http://www.centreforcities.org/blog/britains-benefits-burden-is-not-a-level-playing-field/)

<sup>58</sup> Beatty, Christina, and Fothergill, Steve (2013), *Hitting the Poorest Places Hardest: The Local and Regional Impact of Welfare Reform* (Sheffield: Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research, Sheffield Hallam University).

<sup>59</sup> Case, Rachel, and Scott Paul, Abigail ‘The most deprived areas have borne the brunt of government cuts’ (blog post, 11th March 2015). Accessed at <http://www.jrf.org.uk/media-centre/most-deprived-areas-borne-brunt-local-government-cuts-66096>

<sup>60</sup> Gardiner, Ben, Martin, Ron, and Tyler, Peter, (2012) ‘Spatially Unbalanced Growth in the British Economy’, Working Paper CGER No.1 (Cambridge: Centre for Geographical University Research, University of Cambridge).

<sup>61</sup> Rae, Alasdair (2011) ‘Learning from the past? A review of approaches to spatial targeting in urban policy’, *Planning Theory and Practice* 12 (3) pp. 331-348.

As a result, it is clear that local efforts to improve housing, transport and amenities need to be part of wider national and regional approaches to tackle poverty and inequality. Thinking more spatially could help policymakers to make better judgements about how individual policy proposals interact with and affect the development of places as a whole. At the same time, the importance of place to poverty and inequality should lead us to (re)consider the role that local place-based initiatives could play in increasing opportunity and helping to realise people's potential.

## 2. Place-based initiatives: Moving beyond the previous model

As the first section of this report has outlined, the environments in which people live affect many dimensions of poverty. As a result, there has been a recurring interest in place or area-based initiatives as a way of reducing poverty and inequality.

There have been a number of area-based initiatives over the years. For example, the UK Government's Urban White Paper<sup>62</sup> published in 2000 promised an 'urban renaissance' and marked the beginning of an era of area-based initiatives alongside capacity-building in deprived areas<sup>63</sup> and regeneration initiatives such as the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) and the New Deal for Communities (NDC) programmes in England.

Here, 'regeneration' can be defined as policy interventions which seek to achieve some combination of economic, physical, social and environmental improvements in defined geographical areas that have experienced decline. These interventions have often taken the form of 'area-based interventions' (ABIs), which are time limited programmes designed to address either a particular issue or combination of problems in urban localities.<sup>64</sup>

More recently however, place-based approaches have been somewhat marginalised in policy and funding, in part because of concerns about their impact and value for money (though the UK Government's recently-announced plans for 'sink estate' regeneration may suggest the beginnings of a renewed interest in this area, see further below). In 2015 the London School of Economics conducted an independent analysis of the social policy record of the Coalition Government, which showed the lack of government funding for area-based initiatives and regeneration in England. The report concluded that the Government set out no aims in relation to neighbourhood inequalities and conditions, and stopped monitoring spatial inequalities or setting targets. The mechanisms by which mainstream programmes were aligned with each other to meet the needs of poor neighbourhoods have been discontinued. Funds which were being used to target either deprived areas specifically or individual living in such areas have been withdrawn. Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) data showed that spending on "core" regeneration programmes fell from £11.189 billion in 2009/10 to £3.872 billion in 2011/12.<sup>65</sup> This contrasts with the situation in other UK nations (see box outs).

This section considers the evidence for the impact of area-based initiatives, both their successes but also their limitations, in order to consider the potential for a more place-based approach to poverty. The debate over the effectiveness of area-based

<sup>62</sup> Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) (2000) *Our Towns and Cities – the Future* (London: ODPM).

<sup>63</sup> Swain, Corinne (2015) 'Towards objectives for a new urban policy', *Town and Country Planning* Vol. 84 No. 8.

<sup>64</sup> Crisp, Richard et al (2014) *Regeneration and poverty: evidence and policy review* (Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research (CRESR), Sheffield Hallam University, University of Reading, Queens University Belfast, University of Stirling and University of Cambridge).

<sup>65</sup> Lupton, Ruth, and Fitzgerald, Amanda (2015) 'The Coalition's Record on Area Regeneration and Neighbourhood Renewal: Policy, Spending and Outcomes 2010-2015' Working paper 19 (London: LSE, Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion (CASE)).

initiatives is not new and dates back to the 1960s and 1970s. However, in the light of persistent and indeed widening poverty and inequality, this remains a critical debate. Based on this review, this section suggests that previous area-based initiatives have been limited in four main ways: short timescales; issues with scale and methodological approaches; a lack of resourcing; and a lack of focus on people within these initiatives.

### Scotland<sup>66</sup>

Scottish regeneration initiatives have been more focused on the physical side of regeneration. Different bodies were from the 1990s encouraged by government to work in partnership to promote regeneration. In the last decade, policy outcomes have been conceived nationally, but delivered via mainstream local government funding and not dedicated resources earmarked by central government (with the abolition of Communities Scotland in 2008 there is no longer a dedicated central housing agency focused on this work).

Core policy thinking towards regeneration has become to local authority strategic planning, as illustrated by Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) and Single Outcome Agreements (SOAs) between local authorities and the Scottish Government. However, there is some evidence that SOAs are a weak strategic planning tool given the lack of dedicated budgets to address their ambitions; and, that CPPs have a limited scope in influencing the decisions about mainstream agencies budgets.

Some programmes in Scotland have been successful in delivering good place-based outcomes – physical and environmental improvements, housing renewal and social, wellbeing and community outcomes – such as regeneration led by the Glasgow Housing Association.

---

<sup>66</sup> Robertson, Douglas (2015) *Regeneration and Poverty in Scotland: Evidence and Policy Review* (Stirling: University of Stirling).

**Wales**<sup>67</sup>

The Communities First programme, first initiated in 2001, was a geographically targeted people-based approach with specific anti-poverty objectives. The programme currently involves 52 clusters that cover the ten per cent most disadvantaged areas of Wales as defined in the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation.

Another strand of regeneration activity has been the area-based economic development work of first the Welsh Development Agency and later the Welsh Government. This has taken a number of forms including specific area regeneration schemes such as those in Cardiff Bay, Barry Waterfront and Newport as well as programmes in the Heads of the Valleys and areas in North Wales.

The current Regeneration framework 'Vibrant and Viable Places'<sup>68</sup> was launched in March 2013 and its first programmes are still part way through implementation. Its aims are to produce prosperous, healthy and learning communities through a holistic and more targeted approach with the priority on coastal communities, town centres and Communities First areas. There are a number of other area-based programmes with regeneration implications, such as Communities First, European Structural Funds, Rural Development Plans (RDPs), Flying Start, among others.

The flagship regeneration programme within Vibrant and Viable Places is the Targeted Regeneration Investment, which sees 11 local authorities in Wales sharing over £100 million of capital funding for regeneration schemes between 2014 and 2017.<sup>69</sup>

---

<sup>67</sup> Clapham, David (2015) *Regeneration and poverty in Wales: Evidence and policy review* (Reading: University of Reading).

<sup>68</sup> Welsh Government (2013) *Vibrant and Viable Places – New Regeneration Framework* (Cardiff: Welsh Government).

<sup>69</sup> Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) (2015) *Review of the Welsh Government's Vibrant and Viable Places programme*.

### Northern Ireland<sup>70</sup>

Northern Ireland's regeneration programmes have been comprehensive and based on disadvantaged areas, with the exception of social housing investment which has been undertaken separately by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. Area-based initiatives have consistently addressed income poverty through economic development measures such as job training and creation, business support and the social economy; this has also been a feature of the small number of property-based initiatives over the years.

The concepts of social exclusion and multiple deprivation have led to a clear understanding of spatial disadvantage as part of anti-poverty initiatives, dating back to the Targeting Social Need (TSN) programme's commitment to focus public expenditure more closely on areas of need and identification of priority areas through deprivation indicators, delivering successful regeneration programmes such as Making Belfast Work and the Londonderry Initiative where the mainstream government approach had failed.

Following reform of local government in 2015, the new councils have scope to incorporate antipoverty objectives more overtly into their regeneration strategies and to include specific income poverty outcomes in their evaluation approach, along with increasing community involvement in the policy area through the community planning process, although effective joined up action will be a challenge.

### Limitations of past Area-Based Interventions

The perceived 'failure' of ABIs (at least to some critics) may not represent a problem with a more localised place-based approach to poverty reduction *per se*, but rather the issues with many previous schemes – including the fact that they were not always designed with poverty reduction foremost in mind. What may be critical for regeneration programmes is to incorporate people factors as well, for example through maximising the employment opportunities for residents arising from regeneration activities or considering how local public services can also be incorporated into such schemes.

#### Short timescales

ABIs are often short-term interventions, while planning is longer-term in outlook. ABIs are often resource-constrained and time-limited in nature, which might not be sufficient to address entrenched poverty, given its persistence in time. Regeneration is a long-term process and it often takes a long time to see improvements.

---

<sup>70</sup> Muir, Jenny (2015) *Regeneration and poverty in Northern Ireland: Evidence and policy review* (Belfast: Queen's University Belfast)

## Issues with scale and definition of area-based initiatives

Some commentators have also argued that the relative lack of evidence on the efficacy of area-based approaches to alleviate poverty may be the result of certain methodological approaches to measuring their impact.

In the UK, national level survey data looks at individuals and households as units of analysis rather than neighbourhoods, and uses cross-sectional studies rather than longitudinal studies to study how neighbourhoods evolved over time.<sup>71</sup> This makes it hard to measure the success of ABIs given the churn in population. In addition, there is statistically significant unexplained area-level variation, which is suggestive of a neighbourhood effect of people responding to their local situation. However, contextual effects that may be location specific are unlikely to be easily identified by the use of aggregate census indicators.<sup>72</sup> So-called Townsend variables of deprivation, which are characteristics of individuals and households in an area, do not tell us much about the area *per se* and the aggregated characteristics of the population that lives within it. This is problematic, as the influence of place on individual outcomes is a subtle function of the physical and built environment, the location of services and facilities (as outlined in the previous section) and so on, as well as the people who live within an area.<sup>73</sup>

Scale issues are also related to coordination between different scales of government (e.g. city, regional, national) and understanding the wider spatial ramifications rather than drawing strict boundaries around areas.<sup>74</sup>

## Lack of resourcing

It is clear that meaningful levels of funding are an essential component of successful regeneration. ABIs have often been resource-constrained. For instance, the New Deal for Communities (NDC) Programme, which was launched in 1998 and was one of the most well-resourced ABIs in England, represented an investment of £2 billion, boosted further by partner contributions at the local level, but this equated to just £200 million a year – equivalent to what is spent by the National Health Service (NHS) every 17 hours.<sup>75</sup> This is despite the fact that cost benefit analysis showed that, in combination, regeneration activities produce somewhere between £2.30 and £3.50 of value for every £1 invested.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Burrows, Roger and Bradshaw, Jonathan (2001) 'Evidence-based policy and practice', *Environment and Planning A* Vol. 33 pp.1345-1348.

<sup>72</sup> McCulloch, Andrew (2001) 'Reply: Ward-level deprivation and individual social and economic outcomes in the British Household Panel Study' *Environment and Planning A* Vol. 33 pp.1365-1369

<sup>73</sup> Burrows and Bradshaw (2001) 'Evidence-based policy and practice' (op. cit.).

<sup>74</sup> Rae (2011) 'Learning from the past? A review of approaches to spatial targeting in urban policy' op. cit.

<sup>75</sup> Commission for Underperforming Towns and Cities (2015) *A brighter future for our towns and cities* (London: Institute for Economic Development (IED), RTPI, Association of Town and City Management (ATCM), Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS)).

<sup>76</sup> Crisp et al. (2014) *Regeneration and poverty: policy and practice review* (op. cit.).

### Lack of focus on people

Reviews of ABIs have sometimes used a narrow definition, describing them as involving support for businesses (such as Enterprise Zones) or limited physical interventions.<sup>77</sup> This reflects the typical focus of ABIs, but also means that it may be unfair to dismiss them for a lack of impact in terms of poverty reduction.

In terms of spending on regeneration activities, interventions have focused heavily on the physical environment (for example, housing, public or green spaces, and anti-crime measures) rather than on more people-focused aspects (such as community development, health or education). According to a review by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF), only one per cent of total spending (at least measured in 2009-11) is dedicated to the latter activities compared with 68.6 per cent on the former.<sup>78</sup> In reality, regeneration programmes have rarely been conceived directly as a means to tackle poverty and have largely not been evaluated in terms of their impact on poverty, particularly in relation to income or material deprivation.

Given this, it is then perhaps unsurprising that regeneration has tended to have been more effective in tackling 'non-material' forms of poverty (such as poor health or the negative experiences of living in poor areas) than in reducing 'material' forms of poverty (lack of income or material deprivation). Again, such limitations may be explained by short timescales and the relatively small scale of interventions, as well as the challenges in influencing the spending and activities of mainstream providers of public services.

In these ways, regeneration has been more ameliorative in improving conditions in deprived areas rather than radical in confronting the deeper causes of poverty; for example, as the JRF noted in its review, regeneration has created jobs but these are not always 'additional' and they are often taken up by individuals living outside target areas, which means the capacity of regeneration to generate jobs that benefit those living in poverty could be enhanced.

### The need for a new approach to place-based initiatives

There is mixed evidence for ABIs in addressing poverty and inequality; many commentators argue that although the main policy prescriptions for eradicating poverty should be through universal macroeconomic and social policies, area-based policies could still be a 'useful addition' to 'mainstream' programmes.<sup>79</sup> To the OECD for example, neighbourhood-level policy interventions have a mixed track record and can lead to different treatment of individuals and households whose conditions are quite similar. However, place-based approaches reflecting the conditions of cities and regions are required, focusing on "overcoming spatial segregation via instruments

<sup>77</sup> For example, Cheshire, Nathan, and Overman (2014) *Urban Economics and Urban Policy* (op. cit.).

<sup>78</sup> Crisp et al. (2014) *Regeneration and poverty: policy and practice review* (op. cit.).

<sup>79</sup> Smith, George, Noble, Michael and Wright, Gemma (2001) 'Do we care about area effects?' *Environment and Planning A* Vol. 33 pp.1341-1344.

that improve access to opportunity and integrate distressed neighbourhoods into the wider social and economic environment.”<sup>80</sup>

However, if the evidence for place-based initiatives is mixed, the evidence for people-based initiatives on their own is not especially convincing. Taking the limitations of many previous ABIs into account, a pragmatic view would suggest that a broader, more comprehensive and effective strategy to reducing poverty will need to be a combination of both ‘mainstream’ policy approaches (including conventional welfare policies) and people-based initiatives *within* places. Within this, recognising the multiplicity of problems in one location requires a coordinated policy response across government departments, which has not always happened in urban policy.<sup>81</sup> ABIs should not be abandoned as part of a comprehensive spatial reassessment<sup>82</sup> of approaches to poverty, which the recommendations section outlines in more detail.

### Limitations of local plans

Local plans are an essential part of the spatial consideration of poverty and inequality, especially in the absence of recent area-based programmes. In order to indicate the extent to which poverty and inequality are considered in local plans, we reviewed a representative sample of 100 local plans/core strategies from across the UK (representing 115 and about 25 per cent of the total number of local authorities in the UK). This excludes Northern Ireland due to the recent decentralisation of planning powers. This sample is representative of population distribution both within the UK nations and English regions. The sample also takes into account the balance between urban and rural areas, political control of local authorities, and local government structure. The sample incorporates all of the Core Cities and Key Cities.<sup>83</sup>

We looked at whether the issues of **poverty, inequality, deprivation** and/or **social exclusion** were considered in local plans’ policies, and not only within the evidence base. Passing reference to the issues as part of the overall strategic objectives or within some specific policies only has been recognised. However, mention to “regeneration” alone in local plans was not regarded as sufficient in the absence of the keywords defined above outlined as intended outcomes of regeneration.

The review revealed that 39 per cent of local plans did not consider these issues at all within their policies. Perhaps unsurprisingly, local plans in urban areas did tend to consider these issues more, with 64 per cent of local plans, while only 44 per cent of local plans in rural areas did. However, some rural local plans such as in **Cheshire** or **Wiltshire** stood out by their consideration of rural poverty and deprivation.

<sup>80</sup> OECD (2014) *Making Inclusive Growth Happen* (op. cit.)

<sup>81</sup> Rae (2011) ‘Learning from the past? A review of approaches to spatial targeting in urban policy’ op. cit.

<sup>82</sup> Rae (2011) ‘Learning from the past? A review of approaches to spatial targeting in urban policy’ op. cit.

<sup>83</sup> The Core Cities group represents eight large regional cities, and the Key Cities group represents 26 mid-sized regional cities.

Conversely, 61 per cent of local plans did consider these issues. Based on the consideration of only passing reference to the issues in local plans and the largely urban nature of the sample, this can be considered to be a generous estimate.

The terms, when they were mentioned, were often part of a strategic objective in local plans and therefore were an overarching theme in the local plans. Even in those which did, however, they were not always spelt out in spatial policies. Some local plans articulated more clearly how they would aim to tackle poverty, social inequalities and deprivation, through policies on transport, housing, education, employment, public services, access to community facilities, land-use and development, although for some this exclusively focused on providing low-income residents with access to jobs.

Local plans in **Trafford**, **Sheffield** and **Cardiff** were good examples of integrated spatial strategies to tackle poverty and deprivation. Notably, the local plan for **Tending District Council** mentioned the importance of the location of development and how dispersed development can lead to social exclusion; **Great Yarmouth** mentions the importance of encouraging community initiatives and instilling civic pride; and **Liverpool** and **Reading** mention the importance of taking into account these issues in major developments.

The local plans which considered these issues often outlined how their spatial objectives would integrate with the aims of local Sustainable Communities Strategies. Local plans' monitoring frameworks included policy targets such as reducing inequalities, enhancing community safety and securing environmental improvements, but also reviewing 'people' factors such as unemployment, educational attainment and the number of Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) within the higher scale of the indices of multiple deprivation. **St Albans** outlined the number of new community facilities and infrastructure in more deprived areas as a measurable action in its monitoring framework. Indeed, implementation of strategic objectives linked to poverty and deprivation would also need to be monitored.

In terms of national planning policy context, in England the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) does not include reference to poverty, deprivation and social exclusion but only to "inclusive" planning. The National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) does not have sections on poverty and inequality, and within the 'Plan-making – Local Plans' section, a short mention of how local authorities should use evidence base to assess "locations of deprivation which may benefit from planned remedial action" (as part of 'business' considerations). By contrast, the (now superseded by NPPF) Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1) had a section on social exclusion and cohesion, which among other things outlined planning should reduce to reduce social inequalities, although it acknowledged that regeneration of the built environment alone cannot deal with poverty, inequality and social exclusion. In terms of regional planning policy context, in London, 38 per cent of the local plans reviewed did not consider these issues in policies despite their inclusion in the London Plan iterations from 2004 onwards.

In the context of the Cities and Devolution Local Act 2016 (which relates to England and Wales, but which has practical effect in England only), devolution deals

agreements within England have been signed between HM Treasury and (so far) seven areas. However, many of these deals do not include reference to poverty, deprivation and inequality, although several mention the issue of 'dependency'. When the existence of fragmented services or weak transport links are identified, solutions focus on training and unemployment programmes rather than addressing wider environmental factors such as lack of transport options.

Sub-regional structures and plans can play an important role in tackling poverty. Last year, the RTPI commissioned a report on Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) in England, providing a detailed analysis of the planning roles of LEPs through detailed analysis of their Strategic Economic Plans (SEPs). The report found that LEPs are perceived as playing an important role in shaping places; however, many SEPs only make a passing reference to the issue of deprivation, and fail to consider the social and environmental ramifications of growth plans.

This also includes Strategic Development Plans in Scotland, which will also be introduced in Wales following the Planning (Wales) Bill in July 2015. In Scotland, Strategic Development Plans have identified social disparities as priorities their vision, as for instance in the TAYPlan delivered by the Strategic Development Planning Authority for Dundee, Angus, Perth and Fife. However, little attention has been given to how these disparities will be addressed.<sup>84</sup>

At neighbourhood level, as part of the Localism Act 2011, communities can create a neighbourhood plan which can influence development and improve sustainability in a local area. To begin the process, community groups have to apply to their local planning authority for approval to draw up a neighbourhood plan. They also have to get council approval of the area the document would cover, as do parish councils. However, in practice deprived neighbourhoods have been less involved in the neighbourhood planning process. Research found that town halls in England's most deprived areas are the least likely to have received applications from local groups to take on neighbourhood planning powers.<sup>85</sup>

### **'Sink estates': Estate regeneration funding and planning**

Despite having focused its welfare policy on 'people' rather than 'place', the UK Government has more recently announced its intention to take a "comprehensive approach to regeneration" to so-called 'sink estates' in England.<sup>86</sup> The Government has announced a £140 million of loan funding to private sector organisations to level additional funding for the regeneration of 100 estates, as well as the establishment of an Estate Regeneration Advisory Panel. In doing so, this appears to recognise the link between the built environment, poverty and a range of social problems such as anti-social behaviour. This could be a great way to invest in some parts of cities,

<sup>84</sup> Vigar, Geoff, Cowie, Paul, and Healey, Patsy (2014) *Success and Innovation in Planning – Creating Public Value*, RTPI Research Report No. 8 (RTPI: London).

<sup>85</sup> Geoghegan, John 'Poorer areas see fewer neighbourhood plan applications' *Planning Resource* article, 25 March 2013, available at: [www.planningresource.co.uk/article/1175787/poorer-areas-few-neighbourhood-plan-applications](http://www.planningresource.co.uk/article/1175787/poorer-areas-few-neighbourhood-plan-applications)

<sup>86</sup> Department for Communities and Local Government website, accessed at [www.gov.uk/government/news/prime-minister-pledges-to-transform-sink-estates](http://www.gov.uk/government/news/prime-minister-pledges-to-transform-sink-estates) .

improve local lives and provide housing, but the risks of displacement for existing residents, especially social housing tenants, would need to be considered seriously in order to maintain mixed communities. An equivalent percentage of genuinely affordable housing units would need to be maintained, in light of the role housing costs play in poverty and inequality.<sup>87</sup>

As part of the Government's announcement, the Packington Estate in Islington, London has (rightly) been outlined as an exemplar of estate regeneration. However, while we can learn from the Packington Estate, as outlined by the Prince's Foundation and Hyde Group,<sup>88</sup> "there simply isn't the same degree of public subsidy available any more to support estate regeneration" and it is questionable whether it can be replicated;<sup>89</sup> the level of public subsidy was £33 million on the Packington Estate alone. In light of this, regeneration schemes are likely to only be financially viable if the social properties are let at higher market rates; and the cross-subsidy of affordable homes via the sale of private homes models would only be viable in places with high land prices, creating potential unbalance between different regions.

It has been suggested by the UK Government that 'planning obstacles' and 'pointless planning rules' have hindered the process of estate regeneration. However, schemes such as the Packington Estate have been planning-led.<sup>90</sup> Masterplanning is required to deliver sustainable, mixed communities with wider amenities to offer a sense of place. Well-designed housing and public realm is the key to persuading residents and other stakeholders that estate regeneration is worthwhile. As a result investing in up-front masterplanning and subsequent detailed planning applications is crucial to any estate regeneration scheme. Working with local residents and surveys of existing conditions and infrastructure are also essential as they enable realistic plans to emerge and prevent delays, amendments and repetition later in the design process.<sup>91</sup>

While the planning process and planning permission can be complex, it is necessary in order to respect the views of residents as well as to ensure the provision of enough facilities for new and existing residents, in order to provide sustainable communities. Typically this should include a right to return for existing residents who have been temporarily rehoused; community centres, shops and leisure facilities; open and shared spaces in which residents can meet and take part in community life; and education and employment provision in the local area. For schemes to be delivered with greater speed however local planning authorities need to be appropriately

<sup>87</sup> For example Travers, Tony, Bosetti, Nicolas and Sims, Sam (2016) *Housing and inequality in London* (London: Centre for London).

<sup>88</sup> Prince's Foundation, Hyde Group (2016) *Estate regeneration: six steps to success* (London: Prince's Foundation).

<sup>89</sup> Butler Patrick, 'New London homes bridge the divide between rich and poor communities' *The Guardian*, 4 December 2012.; Sell, Susie 'The planning lessons arising from one of the Prime Minister's favourite estate regeneration projects', *Planning Resource* 26 February 2016.

<sup>90</sup> See London Borough of Islington Packington Estate page: [www.islington.gov.uk/services/planning/plan\\_brief\\_major/Pages/packington.aspx](http://www.islington.gov.uk/services/planning/plan_brief_major/Pages/packington.aspx)

<sup>91</sup> Urban Design London (2015) *Estate Regeneration Sourcebook* (London: Place Alliance).

resourced - since 2010 there has been a decrease on average of 37 per cent in planning policy staff and 27 per cent in development management staff.<sup>92</sup>

However welcome, the Government's estate regeneration needs to go much further in investment and outlook if it is to be comprehensive, in recognising that estate demolition is not a silver bullet and that places more broadly and deeper structural problems can have a negative impact on people and prevent them from achieving their full potential, resulting in further poverty and inequality.

---

<sup>92</sup> RTPI, ARUP (2015) *Investing in Delivery: How we can respond to the pressures on local authority planning*, RTPI Research Report No. 10 (Manchester: ARUP).

## Towards a new approach

The case studies below present examples of changes in physical and social environments which have had a positive impact on people and show an understanding of the environmental dimensions of poverty. These also suggest the basis of a new approach to tackling poverty and inequality locally.

Making a real impact on poverty and inequality will require a new focus on promoting fairness, opportunity and social mobility through more concerted and coordinated efforts to improve the places and communities in which people live. This means understanding how better built environments and stronger place-based initiatives can support and promote employment, educational achievement, better health and improved social mobility. It also means considering how place-based approaches to poverty reduction can be incorporated into the various levels of localism and devolution and strategic plans across the UK.

### Understanding place poverty



*Byker bypass, Newcastle. Photo credit: Kay Williams (Flickr)*

### **Building a better picture of local poverty: The Newcastle Fairness Commission**

The Newcastle Fairness Commission final report was published in 2012, including a supporting document on environmental inequalities.<sup>93</sup> The city as a whole is relatively deprived (the 2010 Index of Multiple Deprivation ranks Newcastle as the 40th most deprived local authority), and some parts of the city continue to suffer from multiple forms of deprivation that severely restrict the local residents' life chances. What is important to note is that environmental quality varies across the city, with poorer neighbourhoods tending to experience lower standards than wealthier neighbourhoods. The report provides detailed analyses of the socio-spatial distributions of the city's environmental burdens including increased air pollution, landfills and hazardous sites, rundown neighbourhoods, housing quality, road traffic accidents, comparing the least deprived neighbourhoods to the most deprived neighbourhoods.

The study shows that whichever aspect of inequality or lack of social justice is being considered, it is at its worst in the areas of Benwell and Scotswood; Elswick; Byker; and Walker, together with parts of Kenton in Newcastle upon Tyne. It shows that people in deprived communities have an unfair share of the environmental burden as well as being more vulnerable to the impacts of environmental burden. For instance, Byker and Walker have the highest levels of respiratory admissions and long-term illness, and the lowest levels of car ownership in city. Waste processing stations present in Benwell and Scotswood, Byker and Walker. Walker also has a significant site of contamination. In terms of rundown neighbourhoods, Benwell and Scotswood scored lower for environmental standards, and also had the highest level of problematic vacant properties.

### **Understanding deprivation in place: Centre for Regeneration Excellence Wales (CREW) 'The Deep Place study' Regeneration Wales, Tredegar**

The Deep Place Study (published 2014) aimed to develop a complete understanding of a single disadvantaged location in Wales, in this case Tredegar, and attempted to identify the current weaknesses which constrain that location, as well as opportunities which could be exploited to establish a sustainable future for the community.

The study is not limited by current practice, policy or resource constraints, but instead aims to explore cutting-edge opportunities that could help lift the community out of poverty to become a fully sustainable location by 2030. It explores the development of local economic, social and cultural solutions to challenge poverty. Areas examined include economic activity, transport connectivity, demographics, health, education, housing, environment and culture.

---

<sup>93</sup> Davoudi, Simin and Brooks, Elizabeth (2012) *Environmental Justice and the City: Full Report* (Newcastle: Newcastle University).

## Incorporating place-based poverty reduction in plans at different spatial scales and promoting 'whole-place' approaches



*Great Northern Square, Manchester. Photo credit: Alan Stanton/Flickr.*

### **Universities engaging with poverty and local communities: Just Greater Manchester**

The University of Manchester sits within Greater Manchester, a combined authority of 2.7 million people and a large city economy within the UK. Yet Manchester is also a conurbation with deep inequalities in opportunities and outcomes across key areas such as education, health, work and place.

Universities worldwide are increasingly seen as key anchor institutions in their local communities, contributing to the fairer health, social, economic, educational, environmental and cultural development of their regions. By engaging and partnering with a range of people and organisations in Greater Manchester to harness resources, the University can act as a positive force for good in the region.

Just Greater Manchester brings together the different themes of work to make a difference in the region. It will highlight and develop research on Greater Manchester, teaching activities benefiting the community, work with schools and colleges in less advantaged areas, widening access to culture, student and staff volunteering, local employment programmes and opportunities, social enterprise work and organising key public events and activities. In all of these areas, the University is placing particular emphasis on addressing inequalities.

### **Integrating poverty and inequality into local plan-making: The Plymouth plan**

The Plymouth Plan received an RTPI Award for Excellence in 2015 for Plan-Making Practice. Plymouth City Council has demonstrated an innovative approach to cross-professional working and service delivery, for instance integration between the planning, health and social care sectors.

The Plymouth Plan is a ground-breaking plan which looks ahead to 2031. It sets a shared direction of travel for the long-term future of the city bringing together, for the first time in Plymouth, a number of strategic planning processes in one place. Among many other themes, poverty and inequality is a strong focus across the plan, prioritising the importance of physical and financial access to facilities, services and opportunities and promoting community cohesion and “where inequality and fairness are addressed for those living and working in the city” and to “allow all residents to take advantage of economic growth delivered in the city”. The Plymouth Plan seeks to respond to the big questions the city is facing in health inequalities (including through tackling food poverty) the lack of enough affordable housing, the need to provide good quality jobs, climate change, increased demand on services, and reduced public sector resources.

Part of the plan (‘Delivering strong and safe communities and good quality neighbourhoods’) articulates how, in neighbourhoods where people are disadvantaged and do not have equal chances, providing specific support to local communities and consider targeted regeneration and other interventions as appropriate. The local planning authority will support this by identifying sites for development and considering proposals for development in terms of whether they deliver sustainable linked neighbourhoods, strengthen communities and address inequality, including where appropriate using planning powers to control the number of betting shops, fixed odds betting terminals and pay day lenders in the city (a recommendation that emerged from the City’s Fairness Commission). This also entails strengthening communities to build on social value and social movements so that people have control of the communities where they live.

Many of the solutions will depend on organisations working closer together than ever before, and also on individuals and communities being empowered to take control of their own lives and neighbourhoods. It will also require government and its agencies to look beyond traditional ways of looking at plan-making so that complex issues are addressed in an integrated and holistic way rather than in old fashioned silos.

### **Partnership approaches to tackle health inequalities: Glasgow**

While health in Glasgow has improved over the past century, it still has one of the poorest health profiles of any Scottish or UK city. Glasgow has adopted the approach of health equity in all policies at both strategic and operational levels. For instance, the main social housing provider has a strong focus on tackling health inequalities in all of its work, and the main strategy for employability in the city – Glasgow Works – similarly includes a focus on tackling health inequalities. In addition, community empowerment is a priority. This is supported by the Scottish Government, including

several initiatives recognising the need to create positive physical environments, to approach health in an integrated manner, and to 'co-produce' urban health.

The Equally Well Govanhill test site was a localised partnership approach (involving the public and third sectors as well as community members) which aims to improve all aspects of life and conditions in this area of Glasgow. Established service structures have limitations when approaching complex and intractable issues such as health inequalities; the project has shown the importance of participation and empowerment, including participatory budgeting and 'community anchors' (existing community organisations which can help to promote health interventions).

### **Neighbourhood planning as a tool for regeneration: Holbeck, Leeds**

Holbeck in Leeds was one of the first inner-city areas in the country to create its own localised plan to encourage development and regeneration. It was put forward as a frontrunner Neighbourhood Plan area by Leeds City Council<sup>94</sup> based on the needs of Holbeck as an area with one of the highest levels of multiple deprivation in the city, but also the opportunities which the area has for physical improvement and community engagement.

A case study of neighbourhood planning in Holbeck produced by Planning Aid England<sup>95</sup> showed that residents felt that Holbeck had huge potential, with an engaged, multicultural community, many active community groups and an identifiable centre; however Holbeck faces challenges, as large parts of Holbeck were vacated in preparation for various regeneration initiatives.

It has been hard at times to convince people in Holbeck who have been affected by previous regeneration schemes and have "heard it all before" that the neighbourhood plan will be different, and will be an effective way to bring about change in the area. However, the neighbourhood planning process is seen as a proactive one and something which the community can do in addition to other regeneration initiatives (for example, those led by the council). Neighbourhood planning is seen as a tool to improve Holbeck, but also as a way for the community to have more control in the planning of the area.

Holbeck illustrates an issue for inner-city areas: there is no parish council in Holbeck and it was difficult to get started on the neighbourhood plan as it took a long time to get to the stage of submitting an application to be designated as a Neighbourhood Planning Forum and Area (including setting up a Board for the Forum and ensuring it was representative). Throughout this period the local planning authority (LPA) was very supportive and the group benefitted from ongoing support from Planning Aid England staff and volunteers. The Holbeck Neighbourhood Forum now consists of representatives of local residents, community groups, businesses and other organisations which include housing developers.

---

<sup>94</sup> Planning Aid England 'Neighbourhood Planning support: Leeds City Council area'. Available at: [www.rtpi.org.uk/media/1809767/leeds\\_case\\_study\\_jan\\_2013.pdf](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/1809767/leeds_case_study_jan_2013.pdf)

<sup>95</sup> Forum for Neighbourhood Planning 'Holbeck: a case study about neighbourhood planning as a tool for regeneration' Available at: <http://www.ourneighbourhoodplanning.org.uk/case-studies/view/440>

In January 2016 the Draft Holbeck Neighbourhood Plan was released.<sup>96</sup> Policy R1 – ‘Continuing Regeneration’ outlines that “priority will be given to developments that improve existing housing quality, affordability and choice, improve access to local employment and skills development, enhance green infrastructure and green space in the area, upgrade the local business environment and improve local facilities and services, especially health and well-being”.

### Delivering place-based projects tackling poverty and inequality



*Golspie Street, Govan, Glasgow. Photo credit: John Lord/Flickr.*

### Community-led regeneration: Central Govan Action Plan

The Central Govan Action Plan (CGAP) is a ten year, community led, planning partnership and investment framework guiding the physical regeneration of Central Govan. The aim is to make Central Govan attractive, vibrant and prosperous, a place where people want to live, work, visit and invest.

Since 2006, £88m has been invested through the CGAP framework, which has resulted in the physical transformation of Govan but also in raising the quality of life and instilling a sense of positive and lasting change in a community and place.

---

<sup>96</sup> It can be accessed at: [www.holbeckneighbourhoodplan.org.uk/](http://www.holbeckneighbourhoodplan.org.uk/)

## Placemaking in the Ocean Estate, East London: Working with residents and improving place



*Ocean Estate, London Borough of Tower Hamlets. Photo credit: Tim Crocker/Levitt Bernstein*

The Ocean Estate is located in Stepney, Tower Hamlets, which is amongst the 10 per cent most deprived areas in England. Residents were disillusioned with past attempts at regeneration in the Estate, but were keen for the site to be improved, as it was blighted by street crime and the majority of housing was no longer fit for purpose.

Developers were invited to bid for the site, and working with Bellway Homes and East Thames Housing Group (ETHG), architecture and urban design firm Levitt Bernstein worked up proposals to refurbish 1,200 existing homes, deliver over 1,000 new homes and significantly enhance the landscape, with a construction value of £200m.

Levitt Bernstein's approach focused on involving local residents and organising monthly forums and other local events to enable people to ask questions and give direct feedback to the client and design team. A programme for Community Champions was also developed, which offered resident volunteers the opportunity to learn new skills in return for conducting, analysing and presenting research work on the estate. These findings were then used to shape the proposals.

The project was completed in 2014 and has achieved change in the local area through placemaking on a large scale – by improving 1,200 existing council homes, demolishing poorly designed and run down properties with more than 1,000 new, mixed tenure homes (including 395 affordable housing units and tenure-blind design). It provided improved landscaping and better design, retail and new community

facilities, including a community centre offering an extensive GP service, housing services, space for community groups, and play areas and ball courts.

The Ocean Estate project was shortlisted for the RTPi Planning Awards “Leading the Way for Planning in the Community” category in 2014.

### **Promoting urban social integration: Colombian cities**



*Metrocable in Medellín. Photo credit: Santiago Velasquez/Flickr.*

The Colombian city of Medellín has built a transport system that brings together the formal and informal cities and contributes to social cohesion. The Medellín Metrocable serves the difficult to reach neighbourhoods on the city’s hillsides, and residents of the traditionally marginalized settlements. Alongside the construction of the Metrocable, the city took the opportunity to invest in improving the hillside barrios, with the construction of parks, schools, sporting fields, and libraries have been constructed nearby.<sup>97</sup>

In another Colombian city, Bogotá, many parts of the city are suffering from economic and geographic isolation. Over the last 20 years, city leadership has looked to use public space and transport systems to bridge the social divide and create opportunity for all of Bogotá’s citizens. This has entailed the development of the TransMilenio bus rapid transit system, which provides fast, efficient, and reasonably

<sup>97</sup> Project for Public Spaces (PPS) (2012) *Placemaking and the Future of Cities* (New York: PPS).

priced public transportation to large areas of the city and encouraging walking and cycling in a city where many don't own a car.<sup>98</sup>

Although the Colombian context is widely different to the UK, the focus on spending on infrastructure for the poorest (with, what is more, small city budgets by UK standards) has shown a commitment to social integration and an understanding that public transport and public facilities can support equity in a city of economic disparity.

### **Tackling environmental inequalities in access to green space: The NYC Community Parks Initiative**

The Community Parks Initiative is an investment in the smaller public parks that are located in New York City's densely populated and growing neighbourhoods where there are higher-than-average concentrations of poverty. The Community Parks Initiative is NYC Parks' first major equity initiative. It will invest \$130 million and also bring enhanced programming, maintenance, and community partnership building to community parks serving high-need communities. The initiative will engage New Yorkers in rebuilding local parks, create new reasons to get out and get fit, and reconnect communities to the green spaces right outside their doorsteps. The initiative targets 55 neighbourhoods in the five boroughs for physical improvements and the capital projects will rebuild 35 community parks.

### **Making good planning central to regeneration: The Gorbals regeneration project, Glasgow**

Planning and regeneration have been used to deliver economic benefits to the residents of the Gorbals in South Glasgow, which are part of what is needed to tackle poverty.

RTPI analysis shows how, after two decades of regeneration, unemployment in the Gorbals fell by 31 per cent between 2004 and 2012, whilst the percentage of 'income deprived' people, including those on welfare benefits, also fell by 35 per cent in the same period. This compares significantly better than the average of Glasgow as a whole, which saw only a 16 per cent drop in unemployment and a 21 per cent drop in 'income deprived' citizens between 2004 and 2012.

This analysis suggests that living in safer, cleaner and more attractive places enables individuals to become more economically active and live more fulfilling lives. Good planning and place-making can have a direct impact on individuals' lives, rather than just delivering 'gentrification' effects.

### **A people-based approach anchored in place: Workplace, Newham**

The London Borough of Newham has experienced a fall in deprivation over recent years from being 2<sup>nd</sup> most deprived local authority area in 2010 to 25<sup>th</sup> most deprived in 2015 in the English Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). Workplace, an

---

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

employment service and ‘one stop shop’ in Newham, was established in 2007, five years before the 2012 Olympics, in order to make sure local people benefit from local regeneration and to secure local jobs from the new jobs created by Olympic regeneration project in the borough.

Until 2009, LB Newham ran a conventional jobs programme, advising residents on their CVs, pointed them to job postings, and sent them on their way, with only 2 per cent of clients finding jobs through this route. By contrast, the Workplace scheme is anchored in the Borough; it hired more than a dozen managers to embed in the offices of major local employers and helped them to identify and hire Newham residents. Now, 80 per cent of clients who apply for jobs via Workplace are successful, meaning 4,500 residents matched with employers each year.

Using local intelligence, Workplace has proven to be far more successful than the Government’s own Work Programme to get the unemployed into jobs. Eighty per cent of Newham residents who find jobs through Workplace sustain employment for at least six months, compared with 52 per cent in the government’s Work Programme across London, according to a 2011 report.<sup>99</sup>

### **Distribution of economic value of land and public assets**

Land-use planning can regulate the use of land in the public interest. Public investments in infrastructure often produce an unearned increment in land value for landowners, so a more equitable distribution of this uplift between landowners and the community could be a fair way of funding the housing and infrastructure needed.

Land Value Capture (LVC) can be a way to achieve this. The success of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) in funding the Northern Line extension, and the use of a Business Rates Supplement to fund Crossrail demonstrate the efficiency and effectiveness of land value capture approaches.

Another model for the development of place is Community Land Trusts (CLTs). The basis of most CLTs is that they hold land and assets for the long term, involving developing affordable housing. The Champlain Housing Trust (CHT) which was established in Burlington, Vermont in 1984 was an early pioneer of the CLT approach of providing affordable housing in perpetuity. CHT’s homes are, on average, affordable to households earning only 57 per cent of the area’s median income and it has over 2,200 properties for low-cost home ownership and rental. It seeks to assure security of tenure to low and moderate income households through the collective control of land; protect vulnerable renters in gentrifying neighbourhoods; and preserve access to home ownership for households with modest incomes.

---

<sup>99</sup> Presser, Lizzie ‘What’s behind the huge fall in deprivation in east London? And no, it’s not gentrification’ *The Guardian* article, 12 January 2016, available at: [www.theguardian.com/society/2016/jan/12/what-behind-deprivation-east-london-newham-unemployment](http://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/jan/12/what-behind-deprivation-east-london-newham-unemployment)

### 3. Implications and recommendations

Alongside conventional ‘people-based’ welfare policies, a much stronger focus on place, in particular on place-based schemes, could do much to reduce poverty, inequality and the social problems that stem from them. The devolution and localism agenda has largely neglected a significant aspect of place: its role in poverty and inequality. Recognising the potential of local approaches to poverty reduction could contribute greatly to improving social mobility and achieving social justice opportunities.

Making a real impact on poverty and inequality will require a new focus on promoting fairness, opportunity and social mobility through more concerted and coordinated efforts to improve the places and communities in which people live. This means understanding how better built environments and stronger place-based initiatives can support and promote employment, educational achievement, better health and improved social mobility. It also means considering how place-based approaches to poverty reduction can be incorporated into the various levels of localism and devolution and strategic plans across the UK. This represents the ‘missing link’ in tackling the root causes, rather than merely the symptoms, of poverty.

As part of this, planning can be effective in delivering positive social outcomes for local people as well as creating strong local economies<sup>100</sup> that can alleviate poverty. As noted, four local authorities in 10 don’t make a reference to issues of poverty, social exclusion and inequality within their local plans. Often tackling social justice is seen as another aim in addition to economic growth which can ‘overload’ local plans’ objectives. However, both aims are closely interrelated – balanced economic growth can contribute to tackling poverty and inequality.

## Recommendations

Action against poverty must be taking place across space and time: different scales of government must be involved in taking coordinated action on poverty and inequality, and there must be a long-term, intergenerational commitment to this.

The following recommendations reference in particular many of the structures and initiatives in place in England, partly for illustration but also because, as noted, there has been a pronounced lack of place-based thinking in England compared to the other UK nations.

### 1. Embed poverty and inequality within devolution initiatives

The Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016 aims to give cities in England new powers and freedoms to generate economic growth and control local decision-making and the allocation of public funding. Many debates focus on the potential for devolution and its role in fostering economic growth. However, governments across

<sup>100</sup> Adams, David and Watkins, Craig (2014) *The Value of Planning* RTPi Research Report No. 5 (London: RTPi).

the UK should consider how devolution can be the means to other ends such as social justice and tackling poverty. Many devolution deals within England for example do not include reference to poverty, deprivation and inequality.

Some commentators have suggested that localist initiatives have been undermined by an underlying centralism, so we need more bottom-up localism. We need an approach where central government retains a key role in welfare policy and in redistributing resources between richer and poorer areas of need, but also enables local government and communities much further.<sup>101</sup>

The potential of New Development Deals, Tax Increment Financing and the retention of business rates in tackling deprivation needs to be further spelt out. City Deals with UK cities should allow areas to gain enough powers to grow their economies and address deep socio-economic inequalities, and mayors could take a leading role in tackling poverty in their localities. The City Deal in Manchester, for example, mentions the importance of immediate carbon reduction and local employment support benefits offered by the Greater Manchester's Local Sustainable Transport Fund.<sup>102</sup> The RTPI's *Strategic Planning* paper outlines how effective cooperation for planning across boundaries can be achieved.<sup>103</sup>

## 2. Examine how poverty can be tackled at sub-regional level

Sub-regional structures and plan can play an important role in tackling poverty. This includes Strategic Economic Plans (SEPs) by Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) in England, and Strategic Development Plans in Scotland, which will also be introduced in Wales following the Planning (Wales) Bill in July 2015.

Research published by the RTPI has shown that many of the Strategic Economic Plans prepared by LEPs, which are part of the process to negotiate Growth Deals, fail to consider deprivation and to consider the wider social and environmental consequences of their growth plans. Although SEPs are not planning documents in the sense of being a formal part of the plan-led system, they still influence policy. The lack of statutory guidance on LEPs means that the level of influence over social justice is hard to assess; however as the role of LEPs in planning has been increasing over time and they are now perceived as having an important role to shape places and powerful planning actors, this makes them an important body to coordinate social justice measures at sub-regional level. The potential of Local Growth Deals should also be recognised.

<sup>101</sup> MacKinnon, Danny et al (2010) 'Rethinking Local-Central Relations: Progressive Localism, Decentralisation and Place' Paper for the Inaugural Conference of the Sheffield Political Economy Research Institute, University of Sheffield, 16-18 July 2010 (Glasgow: University of Glasgow).

<sup>102</sup> Wong, Cecilia et al, 'Does space matter? Housing, transport and accessibility in Greater Manchester' (Manchester: Centre for Urban Policy Studies, University of Manchester).

<sup>103</sup> Blyth, Richard (2015) *Strategic Planning: Effective Cooperation for Planning across boundaries* (London: RTPI).

In Scotland, Strategic Development Plans can identify social disparities as priorities their vision, as for instance in the TAYPlan, although little attention has been given to how these disparities will be addressed.<sup>104</sup>

### 3. Promote integrated, outcomes-led strategies at local government level

At the local government level, many authorities have developed integrated poverty reduction strategies tailored to their particular places and communities. These have the potential to create savings and tackle issues more effectively. This is all the more important in the context of limited resources. National government also has a role in promoting more integrated working at local level, for example as the Scottish Government does through Community Planning Partnerships and Single Outcome Agreements (SOAs). As some towns and cities have also demonstrated, Fairness Commissions can help to identify local problems and issues in order to inform poverty reduction tackling strategies. Multiple problems in one location requires coordination across government departments.

A RTPI study of community planning and spatial planning in Scotland<sup>105</sup> has demonstrated that there are opportunities to align processes to help deliver spatial planning and community planning outcomes more effectively and efficiently, and improve spatial planners knowledge of community planning and where they can contribute. To be successful regeneration requires both spatial planning (physical change) and community planning (social change) to work together and impact on social, economic and environmental. Spatial planning needs to articulate better in development plans how it integrates with community plans' outcomes and aspirations; equally the monitoring of SOAs and community plans should address and measure progress on place development.

A shared vision is important – for instance the aforementioned TAYplan Strategic Development Planning Authority derives its Strategic Development Plan vision and outcomes directly from the SOA and Community Plan outcomes. This visioning process also provides an opportunity for alignment. In England, the Plymouth Plan is an example of a shared vision and integrated local plan.

In Wales, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 aims to make public bodies think more about the long term, work better with people and communities and each other, look to prevent problems and take a more joined-up approach, with poverty and health inequalities identified as challenges. In Northern Ireland, local government reform has resulted in councils taking forward spatial planning and community planning. Councils will have the responsibility to work with representatives from the statutory, business, higher education, community and voluntary sectors, to develop a long-term plan to improve the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the city.

<sup>104</sup> Vigar, Cowie, and Healey (2014) *Success and Innovation in Planning – Creating Public Value* (op. cit.).

<sup>105</sup> Miller, Nikola, and Hayes, Sile (2015) *Linking People and Places: Spatial and Community Planning* (Edinburgh: RTPI Scotland).

Planning is about deliver outcomes for people. Planners need to see themselves as place leaders and articulate how local plan integrate with plans for communities, and the principles above apply to all UK nations.

#### **4. Local authorities should recognise the important role of planning in poverty reduction**

Planning and regeneration is often narrowed down to investment in physical infrastructure and single development projects, whereas it can also contribute towards co-ordinating essential services, community facilities, quality housing and environments, and investment in human capital (e.g. local employment through regeneration schemes). A joined up spatial planning approach to promoting balanced settlements can address poverty and inequality in many ways. Space for local employment opportunities, and service opportunities (especially viable transport and mobility) is important in preventing spatially institutionalised poverty and inequality.

Specifically, planning can help by delivering affordable housing, encouraging employment and capital investment to poorer areas and promoting the more equitable distribution of resources, burdens and benefits. The current operation of viability however, with other forms of regulation, is disproportionately elevating landowner windfalls and developer profit at the expense of delivering planning requirements. This is undermining the plan-led system, and the ability of local authorities to deliver sustainable development and affordable housing in the midst of a housing crisis. This makes it hard to secure affordable housing, even for authorities with local will and resources (and increasingly resources in local planning authorities are an issue).<sup>106</sup> The Housing and Planning Bill currently progressing through Parliament is likely to have implications for the provision of affordable housing in England, if S106 planning agreements are to be bypassed for the provision of Starter Homes.<sup>107</sup>

Still, we need to further align regeneration with poverty-reduction strategies and foster equity in the provision of services. The issues of poverty and inequality also need to take a much more prominent place in local plans and in national planning policy such as the NPPF. Often these issues are mentioned in the evidence base but not in strategic and spatial policies. Issues of poverty and inequality need to be articulated more strongly in local plans and their implementation.

The RTPI Code of Conduct outlines that “members must seek to eliminate discrimination by others and promote equality of opportunity throughout their professional activities”. This sets expectations for planners to consider the issues outlined in this report, as does the RTPI Ethics and Professional Standards Practice Note.<sup>108</sup>

---

<sup>106</sup> Wachter, John, ‘Viability: what does it mean for the plan-led system?’ RTPI Blog, 18 September 2015.

<sup>107</sup> RTPI, Housing and Planning Bill briefing.

<sup>108</sup> RTPI (2016) *Ethics and Professional Standards Practice Note* (London: RTPI).

## 5. Encourage the take-up of neighbourhood plans in areas of deprivation

In England, neighbourhood planning gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and shape the development and growth of their areas, making it an important tool to identify local issues and involving communities in actively shaping their environment. However, in practice deprived neighbourhoods have been less involved in the neighbourhood planning process, in part because the design of neighbourhood planning may not be inviting for some communities to engage with the process.

Government should consider this in the ongoing development of neighbourhood planning. The new Neighbourhood Planning Grants may have potential in supporting deprived areas to draw up neighbourhood plans. The role of Planning Aid England should be developed to encourage the take-up of neighbourhood plans in areas of deprivation and engage in capacity-building – local actors and resources are assets to target poverty as their perception of their environment is an important factor. Neighbourhood planning have proven to be a tool for regeneration as well as plan-making, for example in Holbeck, Leeds. In tackling poverty the role of co-production will be essential.

In Wales, the Vibrant and Viable Places Ministerial Advisory Group recommended that a future regeneration programme in Wales be community-led and focus on the goals and governance approaches of Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and its principles.<sup>109</sup>

## 6. Universities should play a role in poverty reduction

Universities and planning schools are also important in helping communities with high levels of poverty and social exclusion. Universities can engage with local people and organisations to harness resources, producing research on patterns of deprivation and inequalities and working with school in less advantaged areas, as for instance in the University of Manchester's involvement in the Just Greater Manchester programme.

Another example of this is the Westfield Action Research Project (WARP), a partnership between the University of Sheffield and a local community. Westfield, a community experiencing high levels of poverty and social exclusion, is one of 150 'Big Local' areas in England that are each receiving a £1 million grant from the Big Lottery programme. The Sheffield University Department of Urban Studies and Planning has been working with a small group of Westfield residents to help them determine a vision for change for their area, and develop and implement a long-term plan that will help to transform their community.

---

<sup>109</sup> MAG (2015) *Review of the Welsh Government's Vibrant and Viable Places programme*.

## 7. Revise methodological approaches and use of data

Crucially, the importance of place needs to be reflected in the data we use to assess poverty – as this data shapes our policy answers. If we have people-based data, we'll have people-based solutions. For instance, the move to Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) was aimed to enable more precise targeting of areas in need; now we need data which measures the non-material forms of poverty better, consider neighbourhoods as units of analysis and uses more longitudinal data in order to understand changes in the long-term. This will help build up the evidence base and evaluate place-based approaches properly. Currently, indices of multiple deprivation in the UK nations cannot be used for comparing how much more deprived an area is from another – so effectively, even though it is an area-based measure, it is about people and not the quality of places.

In addition, the 'material' forms of deprivation such as income and employment have got more importance than 'non-material' factors such as access to services, housing and poor environment. Other aspects in IMDs include measuring accessibility in terms of public transport travel times, as in the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation, rather than road distances, as in the English Indices of Deprivation, which may not depict an accurate picture of travel times for people who don't own a car. Notably, in England a place survey in 2008 contributed to providing information on people's perceptions of their local area and the local services they receive.<sup>110</sup>

Transport for London (TfL) has developed a more qualitative measure of accessibility - Access to Opportunities and Services (ATOS). The current measure, Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTALs) help to identify where Londoners have poor or good access to the public transport network, but does not take into account where this transport goes and what services can be accessed. By contrast, ATOS measures the level of access to employment (average journey time to the nearest 10,000 low qualified and high qualified jobs), education (average journey time to the nearest 3 primary schools, secondary schools and further education), health services (average journey time to the nearest three GP surgeries), quality food shopping (journey time to the nearest town centre or supermarket) and open spaces (walking time to the nearest publicly accessible open space).

---

<sup>110</sup> Communities and Local Government (CLG) (2009) 'Place Survey 2008, *England – Further Results*' Local Government Statistical Release (London: CLG).

## 8. Consider the use of minimum place standards

In addition to minimum income, we should consider the importance of minimum place standards tools. The MAPS tool, developed by the University of York and Loughborough University, captured a broad level consensus about what places need to have and be like in order to reach an acceptable minimum standard, based on focus groups. This consensus is captured in the MAPS framework that sets out both the key domains and the necessary features of place. The three key domains of MAPS are access to services and facilities, how neighbourhoods look and how safe they are, and community and neighbourliness within places. Groups identified how MAPS might be configured in rural compared with urban areas.<sup>111</sup> In Scotland, the new Place Standard tool aims to support the delivery of high quality places by providing a framework for the assessment and improvement of new and existing places.<sup>112</sup>

Our thanks to the Centre of Urban Policy Studies at the University of Manchester for hosting a roundtable to inform this paper in November 2015, and to the roundtable participants.

*Front and back cover: Ocean Estate in Stepney. Photo credit: Tim Crocker/Levitt Bernstein.*

---

<sup>111</sup> Padley, Matt, Bevan, Mark, Hirsch, Donald and Tunstall, Rebecca (2013) *Minimum Acceptable Place Standards* (Loughborough University, University of York).

<sup>112</sup> Architecture and Design Scotland, NHS Scotland, The Scottish Government, Place Standard Scotland, available at: [www.placestandard.scot/#/home](http://www.placestandard.scot/#/home)

# Poverty, place and inequality

## Why place-based approaches are key to tackling poverty and inequality

This report argues that 'people-based' approaches on their own are not enough to reduce poverty and inequality. Alongside conventional approaches to reducing poverty, which focus on welfare reform, we need to harness the potential of places to increase opportunity and realise people's potential.



**RTPI**

RTPI - Royal Town Planning Institute – May 2016  
research@rtpi.org.uk  
Tel: 020 7929 9494

Royal Town Planning Institute, 41 Botolph Lane, London EC3R 8DL.  
Registered Charity in England (262865) & Scotland (SC037841)