

Building resilient communities and tackling regional inequalities



BACKGROUND

The UK has some of the highest regional inequalities in Europe, and this is leaving many people behind. The impact on people's lives is significant, with some regions seeing stark and growing rates of poverty. This leaves millions of people below the poverty line and without the support and opportunities they need to thrive. The recent All Party Parliamentary Group on Left Behind Neighborhoods report¹ highlighted that those areas with the highest deprivation lack places to meet, community assets and infrastructure. Children living in these areas are also more likely to attend underperforming schools.

Since being initially set out in the 2019 Conservative Party's election manifesto, the term "levelling up" has been at the centre of the government's policy agenda. Broadly, the agenda to tackle regional inequalities acknowledges that "... not everyone shares equally in the UK's success. While talent is spread equally across our country, opportunity is not²". However, regional inequalities remain as stark as ever, exacerbated by the current cost of living crisis, with many communities being left behind and people being held back from achieving their potential. This is demonstrated by the increasing demand for SVP services – over the past year the SVP has seen a 49% increase in requests for help to our national office.

Tackling this issue requires giving more power and autonomy to local areas to enable them to tailor investment to their local communities. It also requires recognising the vital role charities play in delivering local services and ensuring they can continue this role in the face of rising demand. This all needs to be underpinned by changes to social security to ensure everyone can afford essentials and be in a position to meet their aspirations.

WHAT CAN WE DO?

Government needs to commit to tackling regional inequalities and help improve social and economic outcomes for left behind areas. We are calling on policymakers to work more closely with local and regional stakeholders including charities like the SVP, who are experts in the communities they work in, and can help identify local solutions to local problems. It is also vital that the important role that charities play in supporting local communities is acknowledged and that they are given more support to be able to continue this role.

Measures to achieve economic growth and improve living standards need to be targeted to narrow regional differences. Such measures should include strengthening the social security system so people can afford the essentials and meet their aspirations. We are also calling for a rethink of the government model to deliver local services.

CASE STUDY

Chorley Buddies is an SVP community group run by SVP staff, members, and local volunteers. It provides a food poverty support service by running five weekly Good Food Clubs in different areas of the town, helping over 1000 people and families each week. The clubs sell food that would have otherwise gone to landfill and are a crucial service helping people during the cost of living crisis.

The Good Food Clubs in Chorley represent much more than a food poverty support service. They provide a space in which people can come together on a weekly basis and are provided with a sense of dignity and independence. Located in areas of the town with different levels of deprivation, the clubs serve diverse purposes for their varied members and spread both economic and social opportunities.

QUESTIONS FOR YOUR CANDIDATES

1. If elected, what will your party do to address regional inequalities and help communities thrive?
2. Will you commit to working more closely with local groups and organisations such as the SVP to identify the best policies to support left behind areas and address regional inequalities?

MORE INFORMATION

- Read the SVP's latest report on regional inequalities 'From the Frontline – Tackling regional inequalities from the ground up. [Read it here.](#)
- Healthy life expectancy in Blackpool and Middlesbrough is ten years shorter than affluent local authorities in the South East³.
- Nearly 50% of the population in London have graduate-level qualifications, compared to 28% of the population in the North East of England⁴.
- Local government in the UK has significantly less power than comparable countries.
- Social and private renters have poverty rates of 46% and 34% respectively, compared with 12% for owner-occupiers. They are also far more likely to be materially deprived or to live in food insecurity⁵.

1 <https://www.appg-leftbehindneighbourhoods.org.uk/report/executive-summary/>

2 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/62e7a429d3bf7f75af0923f3/Executive_Summary.pdf

3 <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm5802/cmselect/cmbeis/566/56606.htm#:~:text=Healthy%20life%20expectancy%20in%20Glasgow,those%20in%20the%20richest%20fifth>

4 <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2023/jan/10/census-shows-stark-differences-in-peoples-qualifications-across-england-and-wales#:~:text=The%20new%20figures%20from%20the,those%20in%20the%20north%20Deast>

5 <https://ifs.org.uk/sites/default/files/2023-09/R265-Living%20standards%2C%20poverty%20and%20inequality%20in%20the%20UK-2023-1.pdf>