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Staffordshire

STILL DIGGING DEEPER: THE IMPACT OF AUSTERITY ON INEQUALITIES AND DEPRIVATION IN THE COALFIELD AREAS

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Executive Summary

The loss of the coal industry in former coal-producing areas of the UK, along with Austerity policies leave a **40-year legacy of extensive inequality and deprivation in the coalfield areas**. This report, by focusing on case study areas; Fife and South Lanarkshire (Scotland) Barnsley and Stoke on Trent (England) and Neath/Port Talbot and Merthyr Tydfil (Wales) shows how the ‘economic vandalism’ of neoliberal Austerity policies, by deregulating labour markets, downgrading employment rights, and the erosion of the welfare state, have **undermined the economic recovery of the Coalfield areas**. A major plank in the Conservative Government strategy was the attack on trade unions and organised labour. The 1980s/1990s was characterised by a reduction in union membership and collective bargaining which had major impacts on wages and work insecurity.

The Thatcher led Conservative Government pit closure programme in the early 1980s was not accompanied by any significant investment in new sustainable employment opportunities in the Coalfield areas. Successive Governments have pursued similar policies with the stepping up of Austerity since 2010. Overall, welfare reforms and **benefit cuts** in the Coalfield areas amount to **£32.6 billion over the period 2010-2021**. Coalfield Local authorities have experienced significant cuts since 2010, amounting to a **combined funding gap in 2025/26 of £447 million**.

In **Scotland** the Coalfield local authorities **have a funding gap of £98million for 25/26**. Welfare reforms and benefit cuts amount **to £5.1 Billion over 2010-2021**.

In the **English Coalfield areas**, local authorities have received £480 million less in 2024 compared with 2010. In 2025/26 the funding gap amounts to £206m. In addition, **cuts to benefits** in these areas over the period of 2010-2021 amounts to **£22.5 billion**. Furthermore, the Coalfield areas are also **losing £650 million** a year due to the removal of the Universal Credit (UC) uplift payment.

The Welsh Coalfields have **funding gaps of £143m for 25/26**. Welfare reforms and benefit cuts to these areas amounts to **£4.99 billion** over the period 2010-2021. It is estimated that the removal of the Universal Credit uplift has involved a loss in benefits amounting to **£134 million per year**.

The loss of European Funding as a result of Brexit which was so essential for the Coalfield economies has not been replaced. EU regional funding would have been worth £1.404 billion between 2021-2015 allowing for inflation. Under the previous UK Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) *Wales* will receive £632m in replacement funds –involving **a shortfall of £772m**. In Scotland, the Government was allocated **just £212m** over a three year period when EU funding would have been worth around £549m

The Coalfield areas are some of the **most deprived parts of Britain**, characterised by low paid, low skilled jobs with few opportunities for progression. Health inequalities are prevalent with a high proportion of working age adults ‘economically inactive’ due to long term health conditions, and high numbers of people dependent on health-related benefits.

Spending cuts are not felt uniformly. **Women** make up a higher proportion of those employed by local authorities, schools and in other public sector roles and so are hit harder when jobs are cut. They also tend to have a greater reliance on local services which have been severely affected. Austerity and the more recent cost of living crisis also mean that high childcare costs and shortfalls in provision act as a cause of poverty and a barrier to employment.

Over the past 40 years successive Governments' have failed to provide any **long-term commitment to address deprivation and inequality in the Coalfield areas**. The 1997-2010 Labour Governments in their various policies on devolution and regional/urban development failed to address the underlying causes of regional inequality. Growth led initiatives tended to be based on short-term funding with little integration of physical regeneration with social outcomes.

The Case for a Just Transition

Austerity is a political choice as the current Government has the power to raise public spending and investment, increase taxes on the wealthy and big businesses, and properly regulate businesses and financial institutions. We argue for a new type of sustained and long-term industrial policy. This means participatory decision making with the costs and benefits fairly distributed and sustainable transitions that promote inclusive growth leading to decent work, poverty eradication, and social inclusion. The current UK Government must make emergency repairs to social security to halt harrowing declines in health and life expectancy. This should ensure a minimum acceptable standard of living, including restoring the value of benefits such as Universal Credit to cover the costs of living.

Workers and trade unions should be at the heart of a delivery plan. Those sectors and firms involved with an inclusive green economic strategy need to recognise trade unions and promote collective bargaining in the formulation of transition agreements. All aspects of working conditions and the work place need to be addressed such as pay, health and safety, equal opportunities, and vocational training.

Local authorities are essential to this *Just Transition* to take forward an economic and social agenda, so restoring funding to pre-2010 levels is essential. German unification as an example of 'levelling up.' In other words the scale of investment in the former Eastern Germany had to be commensurate to addressing the structural economic problems and inequalities. The expenditure between 1990 and 2014 totalled €2 trillion (about £71 billion) a year. On the basis of Institute of Fiscal Studies estimates the funding required to even meet pre-2010 levels would lead to an increase in core funding of at least 17% per resident. We argue for a move away from privatisation, an end to Austerity policies, and for a form of devolution policies which maintains redistribution at the centre.

Preface – The legacy of pit closures in Shirebrook

Far from being forgotten or left behind, England's former mining and manufacturing towns have been testing grounds for successive waves of neoliberal policymaking. Although these policies have failed at their stated aim of generating well-paying jobs, they were successful at remaking former industrial heartlands into hubs of logistics and care work..... policymakers and commentators continue to refer to ex-industrial towns as defined by the past, the actual economic structures of these areas are marked by cutting-edge innovations in exploitation and financialisation.¹

The loss of the coal industry in former coal-producing areas of the UK, along with Austerity policies leaves a strong legacy that is still important four decades on -- in precarious work, unstable incomes, poor working opportunities, high rates of benefits, few community resources, and poor health outcomes. In 1984 the National Coal Board announced the closures of pits involving a loss of 20,000 jobs. This was challenged at the time by the National Union of Mine Workers (NUM) stating that more pits would be closed with a loss of 70,000 jobs. The NUM were proved right and as the Institute of Fiscal Studies calculate between 1980 and 1994, more than 200,000 miners lost their jobs. This amount represented a reduction of approximately 90% of the industry's workforce.²

One way to highlight these painful legacies is to examine the lived experiences of one community, Shirebrook, in North Derbyshire. Shirebrook is not extraordinary, nor is it the worst affected of the former Coalfields, but the town stands out because its fate is that of mundane economic and social change – from well-paid unionised jobs in coal to low paid, non-union, distribution sector jobs.

Shirebrook recently featured in a TV documentary, *Miners' Strike 1984*, as an example of a community which still bears the social and political scars from the 1984-85 strike, but only in the last shot did the town's *economic* future come into the frame. The area had been producing coal since 1896 but the colliery closed in 1993. Twenty years later, in 2013, the town became the headquarters and distribution centre of Sports Direct, renamed the Fraser Group in 2019, a retail firm infamous for poor working practices.

Although the arrival of Sports Direct produced new opportunities for jobs in Shirebrook, the jobs available were emblematic of the "new" economy – with insecure work, low pay, and poor working conditions. Sports Direct has long been in the spotlight for poor working conditions and in 2016 a Parliamentary select committee condemned the company for treating their employees "without respect or dignity."³ Journalists and unions also documented the firms'

¹ Hillhorst S (2024) *A Tale of Two Towns: Economic Disadvantage and Political Disempowerment in Ex-Industrial England*, Commonwealth, LSE Knowledge Exchange.

https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/62306a0b42f386df612fe5b9/6740b50ff6a6ef4ba638485c_A%20Tale%20of%20Two%20Towns.pdf

² Benyon H (1984) *Digging Deeper Issues in the Miners' Strike*, London: Verso

Rud J P Simmons M Toews G and Aragon F (2022) *Job displacement costs of phasing out coal*, London IFS, WP 22/37, p4

³ See Godley, S. 2016. Mike Ashley running Sports Direct like 'Victorian workhouse' *The Guardian*. [Mike Ashley running Sports Direct like 'Victorian workhouse' | Frasers Group | The Guardian](https://www.theguardian.com/business/2016/jun/16/mike-ashley-sports-direct-victorian-workhouse)

House of Commons (2016) *Employment Practices at Sports Direct*, Business Innovation and Skills Committee HC 219 <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmbis/219/219.pdf>

reliance on agency workers, heavy surveillance of employees, instant dismissal for seemingly innocuous offences, and anti-union practices.⁴

Like many places in the country, Austerity has also hit Shirebrook hard. The contraction of the *local* government safety net pushed many extra costs onto local people, such as council taxes, while simultaneously reducing collective resources, such as youth services and community centres. At the same time, increased conditionality around unemployment and incapacity benefits which push people into low paid work, act to amplify the insecure conditions of local work. Like many in the former Coalfields, people in the area suffer from poor health. Almost 7.6% of the population of Bolsover are in poor health and over 23.4% are economically inactive.⁵ Of course, the jobs in coal are long gone, but we argue the importance of Sports Direct to Shirebrook is both of symbolic and of material importance in understanding why the loss of the coal economy is still felt in former Coalfield areas.

We make our case.

⁴ Ibid.; Godley, S. 2017 Sports Direct workers' representative faces 'uphill struggle' *The Guardian*. [Sports Direct workers' representative faces 'uphill struggle' – union | Frasers Group | The Guardian](#)

⁵ IPPR. 2024. Revealed: Sickness epidemic creating new wave of economically inactive in 'bad health blackspots'. [Revealed: Sickness epidemic creating new wave of economically inactive in 'bad health blackspots' | IPPR](#)

Introduction

Report Structure and Objectives

The principal aim of the report is to assess the impact of Austerity policies with respect to their role in creating and maintaining inequalities and deprivation within the Coalfield areas.

This study was undertaken on the 40th Anniversary of the miners' strike, where considerable attention focused on the nature and lessons of the strike, but less on the economic and social consequences of Thatcher's and subsequent Governments' policies on the Coalfields. The essence of these policies has been to give primacy to the role of the market, cutting back on social welfare and weakening the 'power' of the trade unions and organised labour. This raft of measures makes up what we define as Austerity policies.

We examine distinct phases of economic and social change in Coalfields areas - particularly the impacts of the pit closures between 1984 and 2010, and successive Conservative Government's programmes of intensified Austerity after the 2008 financial crisis. We demonstrate in this report the remarkable continuities in the nature and objectives of social and economic policies towards the Coalfield areas over the last 40 years.

After introducing our case studies and methods, we define and explain the meaning of Austerity, how the violence inflicted against the miners is mirrored by a more comprehensive violence of Austerity. This is followed with an assessment of the economic and financial impacts between 1984 to 2010 through the Thatcher, Major and 1997-2010 New Labour administrations. In the section covering 2010-2024 on the Coalition and Conservative Governments, Austerity economics was ratcheted up which only served to accentuate, in a more intense manner, economic and social deprivation in the Coalfields and deindustrialised areas.

Finally, we present recommendations around 'An Agenda for a Just Transition' and alternative industrial strategies which argues for a series of policies that address the deep-rooted structural problems of the Coalfield areas. We consider that there is a danger that the current Labour Government approaches could replicate the mistakes that were made by the 1997-2010 Blair led administration in terms of its growth led approaches and also with the apparent continued commitment to Austerity. The Report argues that an economic and industrial policy which reverses the trend of widening social and geographical inequalities is urgently required.

Case Study Areas

We present a nuanced analysis of the current 'state of the Coalfields' in relation to the impacts of Austerity by analysing a number of particular case study areas of former coal-producing areas. Our case studies are South Lanarkshire and Fife in Scotland, Merthyr Tydfil and Neath/Port Talbot in Wales and Stoke on Trent and Barnsley in England. The case studies were selected with respect to the following criteria. First, we choose areas which gave us the opportunity to build on previous work by the authors on the Coalfields (South Lanarkshire in

Scotland, Merthyr Tydfil in Wales⁶ Stoke-on-Trent⁷ and Barnsley in England⁸). Second, the areas were also chosen to represent the diversity of socio-economic circumstances and economic geographies.

Methods and Data Collection

The research involved two stages. In the first stage, a literature review that covers UK, Scottish, and Welsh Government and local authority reports, papers and academic research on the former Coalfield economies. The second stage relates to the collation and analysis of data that captures both Austerity policies and deprivation (see Appendix 2). In this respect we draw on a variety of statistical sources primarily from the Office for National Statistics, the Department of Work and Pensions, and Welsh and Scottish Governments. The data shaded indicates the policy/service areas which are numerically 'worse' than the national average (see below).

Because of the different ways in which data is collected by the devolved nations it was not possible to make direct comparisons. This is the case for data on local authority spending was obtained from the Institute of Fiscal Studies. Data on council spending gaps for 2025/26 were obtained from a report by Unison⁹ *Councils on the Brink*. Data. Similarly, the devolved nations collate Indicators of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) on a different basis. Finally, census data for England Wales was collected in 2021, whilst the census in Scotland was undertaken in 2022.

Data for benefit changes were obtained from Christina Beatty and Steve Fothergill at Sheffield Hallam University. This was based on estimates drawing from earlier work on the geographical distribution of benefit cuts.¹⁰

The Austerity, deprivation and health indicators for the Coalfield area local authorities are compared to their national averages for Scotland, England and Wales. The LA indicators that are worse than the national average is highlighted and the most deprived area underlined (Appendix 2).

⁶ North D Syrett S and Etherington D (2007) *Devolution and regional governance Tackling the economic needs of deprived areas*, York, JRF

⁷ Etherington D, Jones M and Telford L (2022) Challenges to Levelling Up: Post-COVID precarity in "left behind" Stoke-on-Trent. *Front. Polit. Sci.* 4:1033525. doi: 10.3389/fpos.2022.1033525

⁸ Etherington D and Jones M (2016) *Devolution and Disadvantage in the Sheffield City Region: An Assessment of Employment, Skills, and Welfare policies*, University of Sheffield: Sheffield.

Etherington D and Jones M (2016) *Agreeing to austerity: does signing up to devolution challenge the Northern Powerhouse?*, Policy @Manchester Blog <https://blog.policy.manchester.ac.uk/posts/2016/11/agreeing-to-austerity-does-signing-up-to-devolution-challenge-the-northern-powerhouse/>

⁹ Unison (2024) *Councils on the Brink: The Local Government Funding Gap 2025/26*

<https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2024/09/Councils-on-the-brink-with-regional-appendix.pdf>

¹⁰ Beatty C and Fothergill S (2016) *The uneven impact of welfare reform: the financial losses to places and people* CRESR Sheffield Hallam University

http://www4.shu.ac.uk/research/cresr/sites/shu.ac.uk/files/welfarereform-2016_1.pdf

Austerity, Economic Vandalism and Institutional violence

We use a broad understanding of Austerity as outlined in Table 1. As a starting point Austerity is an economic policy regime whose objective is to secure a redistribution of wealth and income in favour of the rich.¹¹ The poorest and least well-off groups and areas, including the Coalfields, are bearing the brunt of the impact of Austerity.

Table 1: The Austerity model

Austerity comprises three key elements:

- Downgrading employment rights and attacking trade unions. Deregulation of 'labour markets', wage stagnation and insecure work.
- A welfare reform agenda involving a stricter conditionality and work-first regime as a way of moving people into jobs which are low-paid and insecure. The use of, or threat of, sanctions as a disciplinary measure has driven the transition from welfare to work
- Shrinkage of the welfare state in relation to all its four main roles: as a source of income support; as a provider of free or subsidised public services; as a direct employer; and as a defence against marketisation of society.

We argue that the lack of any credible policies to counter the impacts of the pit closures demonstrates that the economics of Thatcher's pit closure programme constitutes economic vandalism creating untold damage to communities and areas as well as on the miners who lost their jobs.¹²

Institutional violence as defined by Vicki Cooper and David Whyte¹³ describes the ordinary and mundane violence which comes in a variety of forms.

It is precisely because this violence pervades people's lives over long periods of time that the violence of austerity carries an ever present *threat* of physical/and or psychological harm. The various forms of violence.....(destitution, eviction, the seizure of possessions, homelessness, deportations, going without a meal, or having electricity or gas cut off) have now become a real possibility for a fast growing section of the population¹⁴.....

¹¹ Callinicos A (2012) Contradictions of austerity. *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 36(1): 65–77.,p12

¹² Benyon H and Hudson R (2021) *The Shadow of the Mine: Coal and the End of Industrial Britain*, London Verso

¹³ Cooper V and Whyte D (2017) *The Violence of Austerity* in V Cooper and D Whyte eds *The Violence of Austerity*, London, Pluto

¹⁴ Cooper and Whyte, *Ibid*, p24

An example of this is the sort of language used by the Conservative Government when Margaret Thatcher described the miners as “the Enemy Within.”¹⁵ Conservative policies also embodied stereotyping and demonising striking miners and those who suffered from her Governments economic and social policies – in particular those reliant upon social security, and working class people in general.

The Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign provided evidence that the police’s physical attack and arrest of pickets at the Coking Plant at Orgreave, South Yorkshire was preplanned and “opened the door for the police to go beyond a traditional method of policing with impunity during the miners strike and after.”¹⁶ The 1984-85 miners’ strike involved over 11,000 arrests.

¹⁵ Schwarz B (1984) Let them Eat Coal; The Conservative Party and the Strike, in H Benyon ed Digging Deeper Issues in the Miners’ Strike, London: Verso

¹⁶ Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign (2024) Orgreave Truth and Justice 40 years on A Case for an Inquiry, Sheffield: OTJC Campaign, <https://otjc.org.uk/orgreave-truth-and-justice-40-years-on-the-case-for-an-inquiry/>, p14

Charting the Austerity impacts on the Mining Communities 1984 -2010

The immediate impacts 1984-1997 – Increasing poverty and deprivation

It was in the early 1980s that the economic shocks to regional economies were traumatic in terms of job losses and unemployment.

From mid-1979 to mid-1984, Britain's manufacturing employment base contracted by 1.7 million jobs or 24%, a reduction equivalent to more than half of the total decline that has occurred since 1966. While there would undoubtedly have been a major recession without the Thatcher Government, it has been estimated that almost half the jobs lost can be attributed to the 'Thatcher effect.' Although the problem of deindustrialisation has spread to all regions of Britain, the gap between the relatively more buoyant South and East and the industrial heartland widened considerably.¹⁷

The assumption that miners would find alternative employment can be challenged by examining the impacts over the past 40 years. As we shall explain below, initiatives which were put in place were woefully inadequate in relation to the scale of need, and only a small minority of miners found alternative sustainable employment. Former miners interviewed stated that health problems presented barriers to work.¹⁸ These findings tally with other surveys¹⁹ which showed a significant movement of ex-miners on to sickness benefits who could be classified as the hidden unemployed and could possibly access employment if the right quantity and quality of jobs were created.²⁰

The Institute of Fiscal Studies estimated the earnings impact of redundancies and job loss from the mines involved overall earnings falling by 80% to 90% in the year after displacement and remained depressed by 20% to 30% fifteen years later. Over the fifteen-year period, present discounted earnings losses amount to between 4 and 6 times the miners' pre-displacement earnings.²¹

The other dimension to the impact on both areas and communities is the policies of welfare state retrenchment which had major impacts on poverty. In addition to the abandonment of regional policy aid, the Thatcher Government imposed financial restrictions on local government through rate capping along with opening up services to competitive tendering, and abolishing the Metropolitan County Councils which were responsible for coordinating planning, transport policy and economic development for the city regions.²²

¹⁷ Martin R (1986) Thatcherism and Britain's Industrial Landscape in R Martin and B Rowthorne eds *The Geography of De-Industrialisation*, London: Methuen

¹⁸ Turner R (1995) *After Coal*, in R Turner ed *The British Economy in Transition: From the Old to the New*, London

¹⁹ Benyon H and Hudson R (2021) *The Shadow of the Mine: Coal and the End of Industrial Britain*, London Verso, pp173-173

²⁰ Beatty C and Fothergill S (2020) The Long Shadow of Job Loss: Britain's Older Industrial Towns in the 21st Century. *Frontiers in Sociology*. 5:54. doi: 10.3389/fsoc.2020.00054

²¹ Rud J P Simmons M Toews G and Aragon F (2022) *Job displacement costs of phasing out coal*, London IFS, WP 22/37

²² Horton S (1990) Local Government 1979-89 A Decade of Change, in S Savage and L Roberts eds *Public Policy under Thatcher*, London Methuen

The Thatcher Government also made major changes to social security, restricting access to striking miners and their families,²³ These included major cuts in social security and housing benefit and rules relating to eligibility to claims for income support. Benefit entitlement was tied into workfare programmes such as the Youth Training Scheme (1988) and the Employment Training Programme (1989). The end result was the emergence of large scale homelessness, and council tenants in rent arrears.²⁴ Whilst regeneration initiatives were set in place in the Coalfield areas (we assess these in more detail below) the disinvestment in these areas and neighbouring deindustrialised regions led to a deepening employment crisis in the 1990s.

Attacking the Trade Unions: Industrial Relations and Union decline

The approach of the Thatcher Government fundamentally shifted the ‘moral economy’ of the industry. Prior to the Conservative strategy the coal industry embodied consultation and dialogue between the mining unions and the National Coal Board (NCB). It was clear from the earlier Ridley Plan for the nationalised industries that the prerogative of managers’ right to manage and that Government proposals relating to the coal industry were not up for negotiation. The Government installed Ian Macgregor as the lead NCB negotiator and during the strike when talks were put in place between the NUM leadership and the NCB there was a direct ruling from the Cabinet that there would be no concessions to the NUM.²⁵

Ned Smith, the Industrial Relations Director said in a memo that once the strike had started, there was no chance that a settlement would be agreed.²⁶ This framework, albeit with some modifications under New Labour, has embodied Government approaches to trade unions in Britain ever since. As highlighted above the Conservative Governments clear attack on trade unions combined with the loss of jobs in sectors where unions were organised has had a major impact on the UK economy and society and in particular the Coalfield and deindustrialised areas.

The combination of changes to economic and industrial relations policies had a dramatic impact on union density – the proportion of workers in a workplace who are members of a trade union (Table 2).

²³ Jones P and Novack T (1984) Welfare Against the Workers: Benefits as a Political Weapon, in H Benyon ed *Digging Deeper: Issues in the Miners Strike*, London Verso

²⁴ McGlone F (1990) Away from the Dependency Culture? Social Security Policy. in S Savage and L Roberts eds *Public Policy under Thatcher*, London Methuen

²⁵ Jim Phillips (2023) Injustice, deindustrialisation and the 1984–1985 Miners’ Strike in Scotland, *Social History*, 48:3, 363-388, DOI: 10.1080/03071022.2023.2213980

²⁶ Phillips J (2014) Containing, isolating, and defeating the miners: The UK Cabinet Ministerial Group on Coal and the three phases of the 1984-85 Miners Strike, *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations*, 35 pp117-141

Table 2 Union Density (union member as a percentage of employees) by Region (1984-1994)

	1984	1990	1994
London	51	36	28
Outer South East	48	37	25
East Anglia	47	45	27
South West	58	47	28
East Midlands	64	59	32
West Midlands	70	51	36
Yorkshire and Humberside	69	56	36
North West	77	60	40
North	76	64	43
Wales	75	63	46
Scotland	67	59	39
Great Britain	62	50	33

Source: Martin R Sunley P and Wills J (1996), p58

If we look at the Table 1 there are two factors to emphasise – first is the rate of reduction in union densities overall throughout the UK. The second point is “the historical division between the more unionised north and the less unionised south and east of the country has persisted as a central feature of the landscape of organised labour. In fact, in some respects the relative gap between the two geographical halves of British unionism has widened.”²⁷

Trade union membership levels reached its peak in 1979 (13.2 million) and declined sharply through the 1980s and early 1990s. The decline in union membership was more pronounced among manual workers in manufacturing where the percentage of workplaces with recognised trade unions fell from 71% in 1980 to 48% in 1990.²⁸ From 1996 onwards the rate of decline slowed significantly, and in 2020-21 unions reported membership at 6.73 million.²⁹

One aspect of industrial relations to follow these trends is the explicit non recognition of unions which has increased since 1980 as the proportion of manual employees in workplaces recognising trade unions fell. Martin, Sunley and Wills (1996) observe that the decline in union representation (bargaining, membership, density) has been accompanied by the new turn to flexibility where employers are taking advantage of representation gaps in order to change working practices leading to poorer wages and working conditions in particular sectors. We will explore this in more detail below.

²⁷ Martin R Sunley P and Wills J (1996) Union Retreat and the Regions, London, Regional Studies Association, p59

²⁸ Martin R Sunley P and Wills J (1996) Union Retreat and the Regions: The Shrinking Landscape of Organised Labour, London RSA

²⁹ Department of Business and Trade (2023) Trade Union Membership, UK 1995-2022: Statistical Bulletin, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/646dcc477dd6e7000ca9b289/Trade_Union_Membership_UK_1995-2022_Statistical_Bulletin.pdf

The Coalfields Under New Labour 1997–2010 Austerity with a ‘lighter touch’

In 1999 The Coalfields Regeneration Trust (CRT) was established by the UK Government to provide support to Coalfield communities impacted by the pit closure programme of the 1980s/90s. The CRT more or less took over the role previously played by the Coalfields Community Campaign which was established in 1985. During this period, the CRT was provided with grants from UK, Scottish and Welsh Governments to fund grassroots community organisations to support their work in the Coalfield areas. In addition to being a grant making body for various initiatives, the CRT has commissioned and funded invaluable research on monitoring economic and inequality changes to the Coalfield areas. Although these initiatives have been important for providing a voice and source of investment in regeneration projects in the former Coalfields, they have been essentially small scale in their nature.

There are questions regarding the actual effectiveness and efficacy of New Labour’s policies for deprived areas. A two-year Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) study carried out between 2005-2007³⁰ focused on the nature of devolved governance and institutional change in relation to deprived areas. This drew on deep dive case studies of deprived areas including a number which were predominantly Coalfield areas (Easington in Co Durham, Merthyr Tydfil in South Wales, South Lanarkshire in Scotland, and parts of the East Midlands). A key finding of the study that the use of predominantly supply-side policies and reliance on the market failed to address the underlying causes of regional inequality.

The extent and intensity of economic restructuring and deindustrialisation has impacted on major conurbations and other industrial regions, combined with strong flows of resources to more globally competitive regions such as London and the Southeast, sets the broad context of uneven regional development of which deprived areas form a part.³¹

This implies that a more ambitious national industrial strategy was required. At the end of Labour’s term there were still deep rooted economic and social problems in the Coalfield areas. In 2009 A National Audit Office (NAO) report on the effectiveness of policies in the Coalfields found:

The former English Coalfields are one of the largest regeneration challenges to face the country over the last 30 years. Over 190,000 people lost their jobs in coal mining between 1981 and 2004 – representing more than one quarter of total male employment in affected communities. Coal communities developed in largely rural areas, with less extensive transport links and few options for employment in other industries. The extent and speed of pit closures resulted in severe economic, social, and environmental deprivation in many communities.³²

The House of Commons (HoC) Public Accounts Report (2010)³³ was scathing of New Labour’s policies with many criticisms similar to those in the JRF study. Labour’s approach to regeneration smacked of ‘trickledown economics’ with little systematic link and integration of physical regeneration to social outcomes.

³⁰ North D Syrett S and Etherington D (2007) *Devolution and regional governance Tackling the economic needs of deprived areas*, York, JRF

³¹ North et al ibid p92

³² National Audit Office (2009) *Regenerating the English Coalfields*, HC 84 Session 2009–2010

³³ House of Commons Public Accounts Committee (2010) *Regenerating the English Coalfields* Sixteenth Report of Session 2009–10 HC 247

The Department has not monitored which groups have benefited from its initiatives or assessed the number of jobs that have been filled by people from former Coalfield communities³⁴

The HoC Report highlighted the lack of a coordinated strategy at different geographical levels of Government. Overall, there was a lack of recognition that the regeneration of the Coalfield and deindustrialised areas needed to be implemented within the framework of a national industrial strategy and the resources and investment needed to be commensurate to the scale of the problems.

Government inertia or a lack of priority or urgency in addressing the needs of Coalfield areas seemed to prevail. In 1998 the Coalfield Task Force report recommended the establishment a Coalfield Enterprise Fund of an initial £50 million but this took five years to be set up and its initial budget was only £10 million.³⁵

The widespread pit closures began in 1981 but the Government did not establish the Coalfields Task Force until 1997. During this time, many people of working age in the Coalfield communities withdrew from the labour market and moved onto incapacity benefits. Although there had been various European initiatives aimed at physical development and inward investment in these areas, by the late 1990s the Coalfields as a whole still had a substantial job deficit.³⁶

Beatty, Fothergill and Powell's assessment of the Coalfields 20 years after the pit closures emphasise the lack of jobs in the former Coalfields. They calculate overall, that in the English and Welsh Coalfield areas a total of 222,000 coal jobs were lost between 1981-2004 (data for Scotland was not available). Although there was some employment recovery during the period of economic growth of the 1990s, taking all the Coalfields together, there was still a job shortfall of 90,000 or 40% of the total jobs lost between 1981-2004.³⁷

The main point here is that recovery of the Coalfield areas was *primarily* left to the market even though it was apparent that major public investment, strategic economic planning, and industrial democracy were required. Instead, with the election of a Conservative Government in 2010 committed to Austerity policies as their 'solution' to the financial crisis, the prospects for the Coalfield areas became very bleak.

³⁴ Ibid, p 11

³⁵ Ibid p11

³⁶ Ibid p11

³⁷ Beatty C and Fothergill S and Powell R(2005) Twenty years on has the economy of the UK coalfields recovered *Environment Planning A* 39 1654-1675, p1667

Austerity Intensified 2010-2024: Bleak Prospects for the Coalfield Areas

In this section we focus on the trends in budget cuts to social security and the key public services which are vital to sustaining economic growth and addressing poverty and inequality in the deindustrialised communities. The main trends are summarised in Appendix 1. Below we will focus on the key welfare services: social security, local authorities, health services and childcare.

Social security and welfare

Beatty and Fothergill's analysis of the impact of welfare reforms demonstrate highly uneven geographical impacts with the largest cuts occurring in the older industrial areas because a higher proportion are claiming in work, out of work and sickness benefits. Out of the top 50 local authorities that had been impacted, a large proportion included former mining communities. The bottom 20 local authorities are in the more prosperous South of England.³⁸ In a follow up study of the impact on local economies, Beatty and Fothergill contend that the relatively high 'welfare bill' in the deindustrialised economies is related to the historic destruction of jobs. As they state "the point here is that contemporary public finance are understood not only by the direct costs of welfare benefits in former industrial Britain, but also the inability of a weakened manufacturing sector to deliver the sustained growth that the economy so dearly needs."³⁹

Local authorities

Although often not recognised as such, funding for local government provides UK communities with a local safety net (emergency welfare funding, council tax relief, or social care for the elderly and the young) and collective resources (such as funding for youth clubs, community centres, libraries, and sure start). All these have been hit by Austerity cuts to local authorities. More recently the Institute for Fiscal Studies provide alarming evidence of the current scale of the cuts, its unequal nature and how the more deprived areas are affected:

Taking the period 2010–11 to 2024–25 as a whole, councils' overall core funding is set to be 9% lower in real terms and 18% lower in real terms per person this year than at the start of the 2010s. The reduction is set to be larger for councils serving deprived areas (e.g. 26% per person for the most deprived tenth) than for the less deprived areas (e.g. 11% for the least deprived tenth)⁴⁰

Gray and Barford in an earlier study highlighted the deepening cuts in UK local authority services and also show that the more deprived local authorities have been hit hardest by

³⁸ Beatty C and Fothergill S (2016a) *The Uneven Impact of Welfare Reform: The financial losses for places and people*, Sheffield Hallam University

³⁹ Beatty c and Fothergill (2016b) *Jobs Welfare and Austerity How the Destruction of Industrial Britain casts a shadow over present-day public finances*, Sheffield: Sheffield Hallam University

⁴⁰ Ogden K and Phillips D (2024) *How have English councils' funding and spending changed? 2010 to 2024*, London: IFS <https://ifs.org.uk/publications/how-have-english-councils-funding-and-spending-changed-2010-2024>

Austerity cuts. As local demand for services have risen and budgets have been squeezed, councils are pushed to fund only mandatory services and are increasingly unable to support other community assets and collective resources. Gray and Barford show that this shrinks the capacity of the local state, increases inequality between local governments, and exacerbates territorial injustice.⁴¹

Health Services

The Health Foundation's REAL Centre projects a potential £38bn shortfall in the funding needed to improve the NHS by the end of the next parliament.⁴² Studies by the Health Foundation show that higher levels of deprivation are associated with a higher average score for poor health. The funding gaps fall more heavily on those living in the most deprived areas of England, who also tend to have poorer health.⁴³ Incapacity Benefit claimants (i.e. health related benefits) in the Coalfields are double the rate in the South East of England. A significant proportion (38%) of Coalfield residents age 16 years and over report health problems lasting 12 months or more.

Childcare

Underfunding makes the UK's childcare sector one of the most expensive in the world.⁴⁴ According to the Women's Budget Group (WBG), early years education and childcare is already unaffordable for many households, especially for lone mothers. Over 4.6 million women were prevented from securing a job or increasing their working hours due to unsuitable childcare options in 2021⁴⁵. WBG estimates that an extra £5.2 billion of investment is required to make the sector sustainable.

The Impact of the Loss of European Funding

A key question for the current Government will be whether it will replace and even add to the funding that emanated from the EU. The abolition of the structural funds following Brexit has meant a major reduction for areas and devolved nations which have relied on funding support for infrastructure and social inclusion projects. EU regional funding would have been worth £1.404 billion between 2021-2015 allowing for inflation. Under the previous UK Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Wales will receive £632m in replacement funds – a shortfall of £772m (this does not include loss of funding for rural areas).⁴⁶ In Scotland, the Government allocated just

⁴¹ Gray M and Barford A (2018) The Depth of the Cuts: The uneven geography of local government austerity, *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society* 2018, 11, 541–563 doi:10.1093/cjres/rsy019

⁴² <https://www.health.org.uk/news-and-comment/news/38bn-extra-per-year-needed-to-revive-the-nhs>

⁴³ <https://www.health.org.uk/news-and-comment/news/public-health-underspend-starves-england-s-most-deprived-areas-of-vital-services>

⁴⁴ Topping, A (2021) *How do UK childcare costs stack up against the best?* The Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/money/2021/sep/12/how-do-uk-childcare-costs-stack-up-against-the-best>

⁴⁵ Womens Budget Group (2022) *Response to Autumn Statement 2022*. Available at: <https://wbg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/WBG-budget-response-Nov-2022-FINAL.pdf>

⁴⁶ <https://www.gov.wales/written-statement-loss-funding-wales-result-uk-governments-arrangements-replacement-eu-funding>

£212m over a three year period when EU funding would have been worth around £549m – a shortfall of £337m.⁴⁷

The previous Government were apparently lying when they pledged to replace EU funds. If we take South Yorkshire, a major Coalfield area, as an example, in 2021 regional development spending through the SPF was just £820m compared to the £3 billion average from the EU funds.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ <https://www.gov.scot/news/eu-replacement-funding-60-percent-shortfall/>

⁴⁸ <https://www.southyorkshire-ca.gov.uk/news/article/06f27164-94bf-422f-8ee1-d69d29ab7bb4>

Labour Government in 2024: Continuing Inequalities and Deprivation in the Coalfield Areas?

All Party Parliamentary Group 2024 Report

The All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) Report on the Coalfield areas reveals continued problems of economic and social deprivation in the former Coalfields.⁴⁹ An updated report on the labour market reveals that some of the key weaknesses still persist:

in total one-in-six of all 16-64 year olds in the former Coalfields claim out-of-work benefits of one kind or another. That's just short of 600,000 people. A particularly high incapacity benefit claimant rate contributes to these numbers.... In England, 43% of Coalfield neighbourhoods are in the most deprived 30% in the country. In Wales, the former South Wales Coalfield stands out as particularly deprived, as do the Fife and Ayrshire/Lanarkshire Coalfields in Scotland.⁵⁰

The APPG investigation called for evidence from policy stakeholders in relation to a broad range of policy issues. Their response can be summarised as follows:

- Relating to the response from Local authority managers “there is unanimity that the ability of local authorities to support communities has been significantly impacted by a decade of funding cuts.”⁵¹
- Average earnings in the former Coalfields are below the national average 8%% for men and 10%% for women. Furthermore, lower employment rates and an excessive dependence on low-productivity industries and low-skill occupations prevails The Centre for Cities observed that “In recovering from the heavy blows of the second half of the 20th century, Coalfields have tended to swap coal mines for call centres and distribution sheds.”⁵²
- Poor public transport services is a key issue in terms of accessing available employment.

Lack of funding and accountabilities in regeneration

Despite the plethora of Government led regeneration initiatives, there are still a considerable number of sites and buildings in which have been left derelict and vacant. There are many assets which have been funded by the Mining communities, but a lack of resources has prevented refurbishment and improvements.

In addition to the Coalfields Regeneration Trust, investment in sites, buildings and community and sports facilities has been handed over to the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation (CISWO). The aim of (CISWO) is to “improve the lives of former miners and their families in England, Scotland and Wales.” A BBC Investigation in February 2025, found most of the £12.2m raised by selling 27 sites over the past 14 years had gone to the CISWO.⁵³ According

⁴⁹ APPG (2024) *Next Steps in Levelling Up the Former Coalfields*, Barnsley: APPG

⁵⁰ Fothergill S Gore T Leather D (2024) *State of the Coalfields 2024*, Sheffield: Sheffield Hallam University, p4

⁵¹ APPG (2024) *Next Steps in Levelling Up the Former Coalfields*, Barnsley: APPG, p17

⁵² Centre for Cities (2024) Just what levelling up mean for the Coalfields, Blog, <https://www.centreforcities.org/blog/just-what-should-levelling-up-mean-in-the-coalfields/>

⁵³ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/clynxz2ypv8o>

to the BBC, “Miners welfare date back more than 100 years to when social welfare pots - funded by payments out of miners' earnings - paved the way for the creation of facilities including pit head showers, recreational grounds and clubs.” The BBC reported that the CISWOs activities in terms of selling off assets were undertaken without due consultation or inclusion of the views of the mining communities. This has led to criticisms by ex miners, local communities and some MPs who have complained that that proceeds from the sale of assets were not invested in the local areas.

The role of CISWO was raised in Parliament in 2018 in relation to a debate about funding sports facilities in Coalfields. The then Conservative MP Ben Bradley (MP for Mansfield) commented “In my experience, CISWO is not always the best at facilitating effective management of the facilities and ensuring that they are looked after.it is allowing facilities to become run down and in some cases turning a blind eye to poor management, which is detrimental to communities.” In the same debate John Mann, the Labour MP for Bassetlaw was also critical when he stated that CISWO “has never had a plan. I have had many battles with it, even over basics such as getting investment in.”⁵⁴

In many respects the actions of CISWO and the conflicts with the local community arise from a wider problem of ‘benign’ neglect of these areas due to the failure to invest the commensurate resources that is required as well as a lack of accountability in terms of how investments are made. John Mann raised this in the Parliament debate expressing a view that underfunding was a major issue in terms of the neglect of improvements to local facilities. As we have noted from the various audits of the Coalfield areas, initiatives have tended to be top down and much of the funding streams were short term – often creating uncertainty. A Report for the former Department of Communities and Local Government in 2010 on the Regeneration of the Coalfields stated that the way forward lies with local authorities who “are best placed to understand their own areas and therefore have a central role to play in the next phase of coalfield regeneration.”⁵⁵ However, as noted above the restriction in funding for local authorities is severely hampering the regeneration of the Coalfield and deindustrialised areas.

⁵⁴ <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2018-10-24/debates/B717B74A-4B0A-493F-AE58-0913C5ACDFC2/CoalfieldAreasSportsFacilities>

⁵⁵ Coalfields Regeneration Review Board (2010) A Review of Coalfields Regeneration, London DCLG. <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a74c35740f0b619c865a3de/1728082.pdf> p52

Case Studies of Coalfield Areas

By analysing case study areas (South Lanarkshire and Fife in Scotland, Merthyr Tydfil and Neath/Port Talbot in Wales and Stoke on Trent and Barnsley in England) we present a deepened and nuanced analysis of the current 'state of the Coalfields' in relation to the impacts of Austerity. Data presented below is taken from Appendix 2 unless otherwise indicated. The common themes and issues relating to the case study areas can be summarised as follows:

- low life expectancy,
- widespread poor health,
- a low employment rate,
- fewer highly qualified residents
- high out-of-work benefit claimants
- low level and insufficient benefits to 'make ends meet',
- lack of sustainable jobs
- high proportion of families living below 'the breadline.'

Scotland

A Scottish Government report assessing the impact of the cost-of-living crisis in Scotland⁵⁶ provides some insights into how Austerity has affected vulnerable groups in Scotland. The issues identified by the report are:

- The effect of inflation means that the Scottish Government 2022-23 budget was worth £1.7 billion less in real terms. Local authorities are facing significant budgetary issues requiring £500 million to balance the budget.⁵⁷
- 30% of households in Scotland not having enough savings to keep them above the poverty line for one month should they lose their income.
- Households in receipt of income related benefits are likely to be disproportionately negatively affected due to financial hardship as a result of "a sustained period of austerity." UK benefit rates have not increased in line with inflation. Furthermore, significant numbers of people who are on low incomes narrowly miss out on qualifying for low income benefits (approximately 10,000 households).

In the autumn of 2023 a total of 58,000 men and women of working age were out of-work on benefits of one kind or another in the Scottish Coalfield areas.⁵⁸

The Ayrshire/Lanarkshire and Fife Coalfields continue to display signs of substantial social and economic distress – for example low life expectancy, widespread poor health, a low employment rate, fewer highly qualified residents and high out-of-work benefit claimant rates. These disadvantages are reflected in the Scottish Indices of Deprivation, which place around half of their local neighbourhoods amongst the worst 30% in Scotland.

⁵⁶ Scottish Government (2022) The Cost of Living Crisis in Scotland: An Analytical Report, Scottish Government Edinburgh,

⁵⁷ Audit Scotland 2023/24 (May 2024). https://audit.scot/uploads/2024-06/briefing_240514_councils_budgets.pdf

⁵⁸ Fothergill S and Gore T (2024) The State of the Scottish Coalfields, Sheffield, Sheffield Hallam University

Austerity and the cuts to employment support is preventing disadvantaged groups accessing sustainable employment.

South Lanarkshire

Since the 1970s, deindustrialisation and employment loss in manufacturing industry has been particularly prominent in the West of Scotland. In the early 1990s, the closure of the Ravenscraig steel works in Motherwell along with the effects of pit closures had an adverse impact on the Lanarkshire economy.⁵⁹ South Lanarkshire is part of the Glasgow City Region, an area which has experienced significant deindustrialisation of its core industries, although there seems to be some evidence of recovery in terms of job creation.

Table 3 South Lanarkshire Austerity and Deprivation Indicators

Local Government	Health	Benefits Financial loss per working age adult 2010-2021	Childcare Childcare places per 100 children aged 7 and under ⁶⁰ December 2023	Long term sickness as % of economic inactivity	Avoidable mortality	Index of deprivation Ranking 1-22
Budget gap of £22.4m, 2025/26	£7 million health budget gap 2023/24 ⁶¹ for South Lanarkshire services	£600 Scotland average loss £500	47.2 Scotland Average 48	29.0% Scotland average 25.6%	339.2 per 100,000 population Scotland average 346.6	10 out of 32

Source: (Tables A1,A2,A3 and websites)

Whilst South Lanarkshire is not the most deprived Coalfield area, Table 3 shows that recovery from the economic and cost of living crisis will be hampered by above average cuts to local government, health services and benefits.

Fife

Fife is located in Southeast Scotland just north of Edinburgh and is one of the largest former Coalfield areas. Fife comprises a diverse series of small towns with varying socio-economic conditions – Dunfermline, Levenmouth and Glenrothes were the most disadvantaged, and also have the lowest employment rates.⁶² The threatened closure of the oil refinery at Grangemouth illustrates that the deindustrialisation of the economy continues to be a prominent feature of economic change in the area.

⁵⁹ Gibbs E (2016) Deindustrialisation and industrial communities: the Lanarkshire Coalfields, University of Glasgow PhD Thesis

⁶⁰ Authors own Local Authority analysis based on <https://www.careinspectorate.com/index.php/statistics-and-analysis> and 2022 Census data (GRO(S))

⁶¹ <https://www.nhslanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk/pulse-plans-supported-to-protect-most-vulnerable-in-face-of-brutal-funding-gap/>

⁶² Fife Council (2023) Local Economic Profiles 2022-2023

https://know.fife.scot/__data/assets/pdf_file/0031/562198/2024-01-Fife-Local-Area-Economic-Profiles-2022-23.pdf

The Coalfield Regeneration Trust (CRT) assessment of the former Coalfields area reveal a “worsening picture, with 31% of Coalfield neighbourhoods now in the most deprived 20%.”⁶³ Despite record low levels of unemployment, Fife’s employment rates remain below the Scottish rate, with an increase in the number of people who are economically inactive.

Around 10% of school leavers are failing to achieve and sustain a positive destination. A significant number of people face multiple barriers to meaningful employment as a result of long-term physical and mental health conditions, and there are persistently high rates of people claiming out-of-work benefits in Cowdenbeath, Kirkcaldy and Levenmouth. The earnings of people who work and live in Fife are lower than the national average.

Table 4 Fife Austerity and deprivation indicators

Local Government	Health	Benefits	Childcare	Long term sickness % of economic inactivity	Avoidable Mortality	Index of multiple deprivation 1-22 Ranking
Budget Gap £16.2 million, 2025/26	The Fife Health and Social Care Partnership try and plug a £39 million hole in their finances. ⁶⁴	Estimated loss of £620 Scotland average loss £500	46.8 Scotland average 48.0	24.6% Scotland average 25.6%	314.7 per 100,000 Scotland average 346.6	11 out of 32

Source: (Tables A1,A2,A3) and websites

England

Taking the three most important services that have an impact on deprived and disadvantaged communities -- local government, health and welfare -- the scale of the cuts in England have been considerable. The Local Government Association (LGA) analysis shows that due to inflation and wage pressures alongside cost and demand pressures, English councils face a £2.3 billion funding gap in 2025/26, rising to £3.9 billion in 2026/27. This is a £6.2 billion shortfall across the two years.⁶⁵ According to the Nuffield Foundation there is set to be a £4.8 billion unfunded shortfall in the NHS England revenue budget for 2024/25, raising the prospect that without further funding, service cuts may be inevitable.⁶⁶ In England, 44% of all Coalfield neighbourhoods are among the most deprived 30% in the country. This is a proportion almost three times higher than in South East England. In four Coalfield areas – West Cumbria,

⁶³ <https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/news/fife/1397078/fife-still-haunted-by-devastating-pit-closures-and-covid-19-will-only-make-it-worse-report-says/>

⁶⁴ <https://www.dunfermlinepress.com/news/24214722.fife-health-social-care-partnership-set-budget/>

⁶⁵ <https://www.local.gov.uk/about/news/further-funding-cuts-councils-would-be-disastrous-urgent-funding-and-reform-needed>

⁶⁶ <https://www.nuffieldtrust.org.uk/news-item/how-much-more-money-does-the-nhs-need>

Durham, North Staffordshire and Lancashire – the proportion of neighbourhoods in this deprived category is at least 50%.⁶⁷

Barnsley

Barnsley is situated in the Yorkshire Coalfield and comprises a number of former pit villages. The local authority forms part of the Sheffield City Region which also comprises Sheffield, Rotherham, and Doncaster. Around 20,000 jobs were lost in Barnsley when coal mines shut in the 1980s and 1990s.⁶⁸ The legacy of the pit closures and loss of jobs in manufacturing has led to the high numbers classified as long term sick, (40.1% compared with GB average of 27.2%).⁶⁹

A newspaper special report on Barnsley highlighted the high level of economic inactivity: “Experts debate the causes of rising inactivity, but crumbling public services are agreed by many to be one of the driving forces. NHS waiting lists have surged to record levels, with more than 6 million people awaiting treatment, while employment support has been slashed.”⁷⁰ As Table 5 shows the combination of health inequalities, benefit and health services cuts is a major barrier to addressing economic inactivity.

Table 5 Barnsley Austerity and Deprivation indicators

Local Government	Health	Benefits	Childcare	Long term Sickness % economic inactivity	Avoidable Mortality	IMD - deciles
Budget Gap £16.5 million, 2025/26 BARNSELEY Council's budget has been cut by around £130m every year. ⁷¹ IFS 2010-2024 -28.6% cut in funding	Barnsley has lost £3.5 million public health cuts 2015-2021 NHS Trust has a planned deficit position for 2023-24 of £11.2m NHS Trust reported deficit of £11m for 23/24 ⁷²	Estimated benefit loss £760 GB Average £640	19.2 England average 25	29.3% England Average 18.8%	337.3 per 100,000 England average 253.0	2 (10)

Source: (Tables B1,B2,B3) and websites

⁶⁷ Fothergill S Gore T and Leather D (2024) State of the Coalfields 2024, Sheffield: Sheffield Hallam University.

⁶⁸ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-south-yorkshire-68437184>

⁶⁹ <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157120/report.aspx#tabeinact>

⁷⁰ Partington R (2024) The sickness trap: how Barnsley has tried to fight back against worklessness
<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2024/oct/26/the-sickness-trap-how-barnsley-has-tried-to-fight-back-against-worklessness>

⁷¹ <https://www.barnsleychronicle.com/article/27528/years-of-tory-cuts-leave-barnsley-1bn-worse-off>

⁷² https://www.barnsleyhospital.nhs.uk/sites/default/files/2023-09/barnsley_hospital_nhs_ft_annual_report_and_financial_statement_2022-23.pdf

Stoke on Trent

Stoke on Trent, situated in the North Staffordshire Coalfield, possesses the characteristics of a deindustrialised 'low pay low skills' economy with high rates of working age adults reliant on benefits, concentrations of 'worklessness' among disabled people, whilst youth unemployment is a challenge in some areas of deprivation. The closure of coal mines combined with the loss of jobs in other traditional industries – in particular the world famous ceramic industry has had a major negative impact on North Staffordshire's economy. Jobs growth within the local economy comprises relatively high proportions of insecure employment (including zero-hour contracts, underemployment and temporary contract working).⁷³

Table 6 Stoke on Trent Austerity and Deprivation indicators

Local Government	NHS health spending waiting list	Benefits	Childcare	Long term Sickness % economic inactivity	Mortality	IMD - deciles
Budget Gap £24.6 million, 2025/26 Receiving special Government aid to "avoid bankruptcy"	£90.9 million deficit ⁷⁴	Estimated benefit loss £880 England average £640	20.2 England average 25.0	25.9% England Average 18.8%	369.0 per 100,000 England average 253.0	1 out of 22

Source: (Tables B1,B2,B3) and websites

We take a closer look at the impact of energy costs on social deprivation in Stoke on Trent below, but the indicators in Table 6 provides a bleak picture of the nature of public spending cuts and their impacts on deprivation.

Wales

The geography of the Coalfield areas comprises the southern mouths of the valleys, and the key ports of Port Talbot, Swansea, Cardiff and Newport. The most isolated and inaccessible northern reaches of the Valleys, known as the "Heads of the Valleys," have always fared far worse from depopulation and the economic consequences of colliery closure. Wales as a whole has suffered the most of all the nations in terms of the impact of 2008 economic and current cost of living crises. Welsh Government statistics showed that one in five people in Wales were waiting for NHS treatment. Alongside this, the Health Foundation have issued a stark warning that rising inequalities could see more people of working age living with major illnesses by 2040.⁷⁵ Former Prime Minister Rishi Sunak announced a crack-down on the so-called 'sick note culture', a policy that seems to remain a priority for the current Labour Government.

Researchers at the University of Cardiff comment on the long-term impact of the pit closures "The real legacy of the pit closure programme in Wales is not so much the greener valleys (an

⁷³ Etherington D, Jones M and Telford L (2022) Challenges to Levelling Up: Post-COVID precarity in "left behind" Stoke-on-Trent. *Front. Polit. Sci.* 4:1033525. doi: 10.3389/fpos.2022.1033525

⁷⁴ <https://staffsstoke.icb.nhs.uk/your-nhs-integrated-care-board/our-publications/plans-and-strategies/final-2024-25-ssot-ics-operational-plan-final-10/?layout=file>

⁷⁵ <https://www.bevanfoundation.org/news/2024/04/why-people-in-wales-are-on-the-sick/>

accidental by-product) but the decades long combination of unemployment, under-employment, ill health, increased crime and drug use and lack of hope. Many parts of the valleys have still to recover from this.”⁷⁶ A report by the Bevan Foundation stated “In total, in January 2024, 13% of people in Wales, about one in eight sometimes often or always didn’t have enough for all the basics but not much else. This is largely unchanged on the position in July 2023.”⁷⁷

Neath/Port Talbot

During the past three decades the economy of Neath Port Talbot has undergone major structural changes including the complete cessation of underground coal mining (although a number of opencast sites are still being worked), and major closures and rationalisation in the steel and petrochemical industries.⁷⁸ The low pay low skills economy which is typical of the Coalfields is reflected in a skills profile over the three years from 2018-20, where only around 28% of people of working age in Neath Port Talbot were qualified to NVQ4+, compared with 43% in the UK.⁷⁹

The social and health impacts of rationalisations are evidenced in the following data (see Table 7):

- 10,000 residents were classified as ‘workless’ (22.7%) compared with 13.95% in GB.
- 9,200 were on long term sickness, (45.5%) compared with 27.2% in GB.
- Data produced by Citizens Advice Bureau reveal that in Neath Port Talbot, 15% of local areas fall into the most deprived local areas in Wales, topped (Swansea/Neath/Port Talbot) only by Cardiff, Rhondda Cynnon Taff, Merthyr and Newport. Additionally, 63 of the 91 local areas in Neath Port Talbot are in the 50% most deprived local areas in Wales.
- Again like in Scotland (in Fife) Neath Port Talbot steel works restructuring with the closure of the blast furnaces accounts for the loss of 2,000 jobs.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ <https://wiserd.ac.uk/blog/the-pit-closures-of-the-1980s-part-of-mrs-thatchers-green-eco-strategy/>

⁷⁷ Bevan Foundation (2024) Snapshot of poverty in winter 2024, Bevan Foundation March 2024
<https://www.bevanfoundation.org/resources/a-snapshot-of-poverty-winter-2024/>

⁷⁸ Neath Port Talbot Structure Plan (2008) <https://www.bridgend.gov.uk/media/1409/bd22.pdf>

⁷⁹ SQW (2022) Neath Port Talbot Economic Recovery Plan, <https://www.npt.gov.uk/media/18436/economic-recovery-plan-final.pdf>

⁸⁰ Unite (2023) *A Workers Plan for Port Talbot*, London Unite

Adu A (2024) Workers affected by Port Talbot closures to get up to £10,000 to start businesses
Guardian, 15 November 2024. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2024/nov/15/workers-affected-by-port-talbot-closures-to-get-up-to-10000-to-start-businesses>

Table 7 Austerity and Deprivation in Neath Port Talbot

Local Government	NHS Health spending	Benefits	Childcare	Long Term Sickness % of Economically inactive	Avoidable Mortality	IMD
Budget Gap is £17.8 million. 2025/26 Reductions in the revenue budget in excess of £100m in real terms since 2008 ⁸¹	Swansea Bay Health Board reported a deficit of £86.6m for 2023. ⁸²	Estimated Benefit loss	High costs preventing parents accessing childcare ⁸³	30.8% Wales Average 21.1%	336.6 per 100,000 Wales Average 224.6	5 out of 22

Source: (Tables C1,C2,C3) and websites

Merthyr Tydfil

The local authority is situated in the Valleys north of Cardiff and forms part of the Cardiff City Region. In 2007, Merthyr was the most deprived local authority in Wales a consequence of the pit closures and the large-scale job losses in manufacturing industry that occurred in the 1970s and 1980s. In South East Wales, there is a legacy of relatively large numbers of long-term unemployed people, many of whom are claiming health-related benefits.⁸⁴

In 2021, the Council's Economic Development Plan stated that "Merthyr Tydfil has faced historical socio-economic challenges that resulted from the decline of the area's industrial legacy. Our communities and businesses have demonstrated considerable resilience to respond to these challenges and thrive." However, at the same time acknowledging the degree to which the pandemic exposed the area's economic vulnerabilities.⁸⁵ Merthyr Tydfil features some of the most deprived areas in Wales with 8 LSOAs, out of the 36 total, classed as among the 10% most deprived in Wales and half of LSOAs in the local authority classed as among the 30% most deprived in Wales.⁸⁶

⁸¹

<https://democracy.npt.gov.uk/documents/s96653/2024%2025%20Revenue%20budget%20proposals.pdf%20&LLL=0>

⁸² The revised plan at 31st May 2023 reported a deficit of £86.6m.

⁸³ <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/statistics-and-research/2021-01/qualitative-study-of-beliefs-behaviours-and-barriers-affecting-parental-decisions-regarding-childcare-and-early-education.pdf>

⁸⁴ North et al (2007) Interventions to tackle the economic needs of deprived areas Analysis of six policy case studies, York JRF p121

⁸⁵ Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Economic Vision 2020-2035

<https://democracy.merthyr.gov.uk/documents/s55754/Appendix%201.pdf>

⁸⁶ Merthyr Tydfil HSP Strategy Needs Assessment <https://www.merthyr.gov.uk/media/8151/merthyr-tydfil-hsp-strategy-needs-assessment.pdf>

Table 8 Merthyr Tydfil Austerity and Deprivation

Local Government	NHS Health spending	Benefits	Childcare	Long term Sickness % of Economic active	Avoidable Mortality	IMD
Budget Gap £8.8 million, 2025/2026	Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board has deficit plan of £79m 2023 ⁸⁷	Average annual benefit loss £840 Wales average £710	Childcare costs are higher than average and low demand because many families cannot afford to pay for it. Fewer places per head of population ⁸⁸	34.0% Wales Average 21.1%	388.0 per 100,000 Wales Average 224.6	2 out of 22

Source: (Tables C1,C2,C3) and web sites

⁸⁷ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-66795466>

⁸⁸ Family and Childcare Trust Merthyr and Rhymney Childcare a Constituency Profile

Priority challenges in the Coalfield Areas

Employment relations and increasing labour market inequalities

Successive Conservative Governments since 2010 have attempted to restrict trade union organisation, representation, collective bargaining and the right to strike⁸⁹. International comparative research undertaken by the University of Manchester has found

- “the protection of workers through institutions such as trade unions, collective bargaining structures, and joint consultative committees has declined significantly over the last 40 years in the UK.
- A high share of workers in the private sector (around six in seven) have no formal representation through independent channels of social dialogue such as collective bargaining with trade unions.” Furthermore:
- The increase in precarious work is also closely related to changes in industrial relations,
- Employers, the major architects of job quality and labour enjoy increasing discretion to utilize precarious employment to reduce costs, increase flexibility and shift risks onto the shoulders of workers⁹⁰

A Report by Sheffield Hallam University on the Coalfields provides some insights into the possible effects of the weakening of industrial relations in relation to employment rights and collective bargaining. The first area explored is the nature of labour market restructuring and the growth in jobs in the warehouse sector in the former Coalfields. Jobs in warehousing account for nearly 30%% of the overall increase in employment in the Coalfields between 2012 – 2022. This amounts to around 62,000 between 2012 and 2022.⁹¹

In some Coalfields warehouse work has become the main source of employment. The report notes that the type of jobs created tend to be low paid and non-unionised. A report on the warehouse sector in 2019⁹² highlights the dilution of employment rights and the prevalence of poor working conditions, lack of representation.

Research in Sheffield as part of the *Sheffield Needs A Pay Rise Campaign* provides evidence of the extent to which the loss of quality jobs in the steel, engineering and coal industries has given rise to a labour market characterised by low pay and insecurity.⁹³

⁸⁹ Tuckman A (2016) *Kettling the Unions?* London Spokesman Books

⁹⁰ Keune M and Pedaci M (2019) Trade union strategies against precarious work: Common trends and sectoral divergence in the EU, *European Journal of Industrial Relations*, 26, 2, pp 135-155

⁹¹ Fothergill S Gore T and Leather D (2024) *The State of the Coalfields 2024*, Sheffield Sheffield Hallam University. Coalfields Regeneration Trust, p18.

⁹²

Kik, G, Ni Luanaigh, A, Greevy, H, Morrice, N, Robertson, K, Green, A & Owen, D 2019, How has the UK Warehousing sector been affected by the fissuring of the worker-employer relationship in the last 10 years? [City-RED! Work Inclusivity Research Centre \(WIRC\) Strategy and International Business](#), Director of Labour Market Enforcement.

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⁹³ Thomas P et al *Tackling Labour Market Injustice and Organising Workers: The View from a Northern Heartland* <https://eprints.staffs.ac.uk/6902/>

Women in the Coalfields

The commemoration of the miners' strike in 2024 has drawn attention to the role of women as both activists and carers in supporting the strike.⁹⁴ It is our contention that the pit closure programme and related policies were an assault on women's economic and social rights. In this section we explain some of the key issues relating to this (see Tables A4,B4,C4).

Women, sickness, economic inactivity and labour market inequalities

One trend over the last 20 years is the diversion of women on to sickness benefits in the deindustrialised areas:

one of the long-term consequences of male job loss has been to increase the competition for jobs for women in the same places. This has had the effect of marginalizing women with poor health and poor qualifications as well as men in the same position. Like their male counterparts, these women with health problems or disabilities then claim incapacity benefits.⁹⁵

We argue that Austerity is also a factor in preventing women with long term health conditions in accessing employment. A Newspaper special report on Barnsley (see case study) highlighted the high level of economic inactivity including among women: "Experts debate the causes of rising inactivity, but crumbling public services are agreed by many to be one of the driving forces. NHS waiting lists have surged to record levels, with more than 6 million people awaiting treatment, while employment support has been slashed."⁹⁶

Previous research on Wakefield, undertaken as part of a wider project exploring gender and employment,⁹⁷ found that between 1991 and 2001 although there was a decrease in women's economic inactivity, from 34% to 31% (compared to 32% to 29% in England as a whole), the percentage of women who were permanently sick and disabled increased by 3 percentage points (compared to 1 percentage point in England).⁹⁸ By 2021, the percentage of women aged 16-64 who were long-term sick had decreased but it was now at a higher level than for men in Wakefield (6.5% compared to 6.2% respectively in 2021 compared to 7.1% and 10.0% for women and men of working age in 2001). This is reflected in many of the Coalfield areas (see Table A4), where levels of sickness and disability were higher than the national averages in 2021 and also higher for women than men. In particular, in South Lanarkshire, Neath Port Talbot and Blaenau Gwent 1 in 4 working age women were disabled demonstrating the need for additional health and social support in these areas.

See also Etherington, D. Jeffery, B. Thomas, B. Jones, M. and Ledger-Jessop, B. (2023) Trade union strategies to tackle labour market insecurity: Geography and the role of Sheffield TUC, *Industrial Relations*, <https://doi.org/10.1111/irj.12400>

⁹⁴ Massey D and Wainwright H (1984) Beyond the Coalfields The work of the miners support group, in

⁹⁵ Beatty C Fothergill S and Powell R (2008) Women on Incapacity Benefits: New Survey Evidence, Sheffield: Sheffield Hallam University

⁹⁶ Partington R (2024) The sickness trap: how Barnsley has tried to fight back against worklessness <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2024/oct/26/the-sickness-trap-how-barnsley-has-tried-to-fight-back-against-worklessness>

⁹⁷ Escott K and Buckner S (2006) *Addressing Women's Poverty: Local Labour Market Initiatives* Executive Summary <https://essl.leeds.ac.uk/sociology-research-expertise/dir-record/research-projects/875/gender-and-employment-in-local-labour-markets-gellm>

⁹⁸ <https://essl.leeds.ac.uk/sociology-research-expertise/dir-record/research-projects/875/gender-and-employment-in-local-labour-markets-gellm>

The research also highlighted the high levels of young women with no qualifications which resulted in a high proportion NEET (not in education, employment or training). In 2001, 21.8% of 16-24 year old women and 27.0% of men had no qualifications in Wakefield (compared to 19.0% and 21.8% respectively in England). Data from 2021 show that although the numbers had improved (12.9% and 16.2% of young men and women with no qualifications), in Wakefield and many of the other Coalfield areas lack of qualifications continues to be a major issue compared to the national data. In addition, in many of these areas a much lower proportion of both women and men are qualified to Level 4 or above compare to the national averages. In Bolsover, just 27.0% of women of working age and 21.8% of men have level 4 qualifications such as a degree compared to 39.4% and 34.7% in England. This skills gap results in a lack of opportunities, particularly for young women and men in Coalfield areas, with an impact of further and higher education, employment opportunities, wages, housing affordability and consequently health and wellbeing.

Decline in public sector employment opportunities

Women make up a higher proportion of those employed by local authorities, schools and other public sector roles and so are hit harder when jobs are cut.

Certain regions of the country are also more reliant on public sector jobs as a proportion of total jobs, including Northern Ireland (25%), Wales (21%), Scotland (21%), the North East (20%), and Yorkshire and Humber (18%).⁹⁹ Foley shows the loss in public sector jobs by region. Even when excluding the loss of public sector jobs due to reclassification issues, we can see the regional effects of these losses with regions like Wales, the North East of England, and Yorkshire and Humber showing steep declines. Women, in these regions, are likely to bear the brunt of changes in the public sector labour market

The Impact of cuts to local government services

The post-2010 Austerity policies not only targeted benefits, but also enacted heavy cuts to local government, and thus all the community services they fund. These cuts are unevenly spread across the country but, of course, the effects of local government cuts are also uneven *in place* and analysis by the Women's Budget Group finds that they disproportionately affect women.¹⁰⁰ This happens in three ways. First, local government funds many of the services on which women disproportionately depend. Second, when these services are cut many women respond by providing this service themselves. Third, women are disproportionately employed by local authorities and schools (and in other public sector roles) and so hit harder when jobs are cut.

The Women's Budget Group highlights how the cuts directly reduce the basic services that women rely upon – this involves a whole range such as housing, education, social care for adults and childcare, youth centres, women's refuges and emergency housing, free legal advice, free cultural events, parks, libraries and transportation. These services are often used directly by women, in their role as mothers, or as carers of the disabled and elderly.

Other institutions, such as charities, which might “fill the gap” in services provision, are also affected by the same cuts. The financial stress that local government is experiencing directly affects the funding for charity sector – which limits the potential role the third sector can play

⁹⁹ Foley, N. (2020). *Public sector employment by parliamentary constituency*. House of Commons Library.

¹⁰⁰ Women's Budget Group (2019) Triple whammy: The impact of local government cuts on women.

Accessed: [Triple-Whammy-the-impact-of-local-government-cuts-on-women-March-19.pdf \(wbg.org.uk\)](https://www.wbg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Triple-Whammy-the-impact-of-local-government-cuts-on-women-March-19.pdf)

in providing local services”.¹⁰¹ Thus, food banks, children’s centres, legal aid services, and debt advice providers’ also experience financial difficulties when funding from the local authority is reduced or cut – just when they are needed most.

For example, in their study of the former Scottish Coalfield, North Lanarkshire, Anette Hastings and colleagues highlight the gendered impacts of local council cuts. They find “women, particularly those living in deprived neighbourhoods, have historically borne a greater burden of the everyday work of maintaining their immediate neighbourhood, adding to already significant first and second shifts of paid employment and unpaid domestic labour.”¹⁰²

Increased pressures on caring and accessing affordable childcare

We argue that affordable and accessible childcare is a matter of social justice. High childcare costs and shortfalls in provision as well as a sector which is characterised by low pay and high turnover contribute to problems for both mothers and fathers accessing and maintaining employment (lone parents, the majority who are women, are particularly disadvantaged). Data in Appendix 2 shows that in England there were just 25.0 childcare places per 100 children of 7 years age and under. Only three of the Coalfield area local authorities are around this average with the remaining below. The data for Scotland was better with 48 places per 100 children aged 7 years and under but just two of the six Scottish Coalfield areas exceeded this. In Wales there are 26.8 places with again just two of the eight Coalfield areas having higher numbers of childcare places.

Women bear the brunt of childcare and other caring responsibilities. Savilla and Smith show that families during the pandemic did almost an entire extra working week of childcare– and this increase was mostly shouldered by mothers.¹⁰³ Women in the survey still did 65% of the childcare (as they did pre-pandemic) and “the amount of additional childcare provided by women is less sensitive to their own employment than it is for men, leaving many women to juggle work with (a lot of) childcare.”¹⁰⁴ Other scholars show similar findings, with “relevant differences among breadwinners whose paid hours reduced: while men did not significantly change the share of time they spent in unpaid labour, women increased it disproportionately.”¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ Barford, A., & Gray, M. (2022). The tattered state: Falling through the social safety net. *Geoforum*, 137, 115-125.

¹⁰² Hastings, A., Matthews, P., & Wang, Y. (2023). Unequal and gendered: assessing the impacts of austerity cuts on public service users. *Social Policy and Society*, 22(4), 594-614.

¹⁰³ Sevilla, A. and Smith, S. (2020) Baby steps: the gender division of childcare during the COVID-19 pandemic, *Oxford Review of Economic Policy*, Volume 36, Issue Supplement_1, 2020, Pages S169–S186.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. pg 170S.

¹⁰⁵ Zamberlan, A., Gioachin, F., & Gritti, D. (2021). Work less, help out more? The persistence of gender inequality in housework and childcare during UK COVID-19. *Research in social stratification and mobility*, 73.

Current Welfare Reform as a driver of poverty

In 2023 Sir Keir Starmer told the BBC his Labour government would not change the two-child cap and would not commit extra money to benefits without first growing the economy.¹⁰⁶ This comment implies that social security or potentially welfare and public services do not contribute to growth. We contend that the Labour Government welfare reform agenda of targeting welfare cuts contains considerable hazards and threats to the possibility of regeneration and prosperity in the Coalfield and deindustrialised areas. At the time of writing (February 2025) there is evidence that the Government is broadly continuing the policies pursued by the former Conservative administrations. The key problem is that a higher proportion of the working age population are reliant on social security in the Coalfield areas and also on benefit incomes which do not cover the costs of essentials (food, rent, energy).

In an earlier study on the impact of welfare cuts in local authority areas, Beatty and Fothergill¹⁰⁷ estimates on the financial impact of the post 2015-2021 reforms was to cut the amount of benefits received by claimants by **almost £13billion by 2020-21**. The greatest loss in the income of working age adults due to benefit cuts, occurred in the more deprived local authorities, the majority located in the deindustrialised (and former Coalfield) areas. **This analysis for the report has compiled data for the coalfield areas showing the cuts 2010-2021 amounting to £22.5 billion** (see Tables A1,B1,C1.)

In their review of Poverty in the UK in 2025, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) state:

The basic rate of income-related benefits has fallen dramatically in real terms since 2015, and the resumption of uprating in line with inflation in 2020 has not done enough to bring them back to their pre-freeze value. In fact, in April 2022, during the height of the cost-of-living crisis, we saw the greatest fall in the real-terms value of the basic rate of unemployment benefits since 1972.¹⁰⁸

The derisory level of benefits is illustrated below:

- If you are single and under 25 you get £311.68 per month and single aged 25 or over it amounts to £393.35, if you live with a partner and both under 25 you will receive £489.23 (for both).
- If you live with a partner and either are aged 25 or over this amounts to £617.60. These are monthly payments.
- For ESA up to £90.50 a week if you're in the work-related activity group up to £138.20 a week if you're in the support group.

Disability organisations and trade unions wrote to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions Liz Kendall and Chancellor Rachel Reeves, calling for a rethink over government plans to cut out of work benefits for severely disabled benefit claimants by more than 50% as part of the £3 billion welfare budget savings Reeves is looking to make.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/czi7nj9j8l0o>

¹⁰⁷ Beatty C and Fothergill S (2016) The uneven impact of welfare reform: the financial losses to places and people CRESR Sheffield Hallam University
http://www4.shu.ac.uk/research/cresr/sites/shu.ac.uk/files/welfarereform-2016_1.pdf

¹⁰⁸ Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2025) UK Poverty 2025, York: JRF p90

¹⁰⁹ <https://dpac.uk.net/2024/10/call-for-rethink-over-horrendous-disability-benefit-cut-plans/>

Joseph Rowntree Foundation research on Universal Credit found:¹¹⁰

- around 5 in 6 low-income households on Universal Credit are currently going without essentials
- support has eroded over decades and the basic rate ('standard allowance') of Universal Credit is now at around its lowest ever level as a proportion of average earnings
- 66% of the public think the basic rate of Universal Credit is too low
- almost half of households see their payments reduced by deductions and caps. For example, a household can lose 25% of their standard allowance to repay debts to DWP

Universal Credit conditionality and Benefit sanctions

The Conservative Government raised the Administrative Earnings Threshold (AET). The AET determines the degree of work search required by Universal Credit claimants who are in work but on a low income. There is evidence that the DWP are still applying a stringent conditionality regime in terms of work search requirements. According to David Webster¹¹¹ from the University of Glasgow the number of people subject to benefit sanctions has increased in the last 12 months because of the more stringent conditionality.

Unite Trade Union has highlighted that such is the extent of low wages in the UK, 40% of the 7 million people currently on Universal Credit are in work. Many are forced to claim due to low wages, caring responsibilities or long-term sickness or disability. The majority are women.¹¹²

The DWP's own research on the effectiveness of benefit sanctions reveals mixed results although there is some evidence that they improve employment outcomes. Dr Serena Pattaro from the University of Glasgow has undertaken research on the impact of sanctions and found "that there are long-lasting consequences of benefit sanctions, in terms of higher risks of moving into lower quality jobs and decreased chances of finding regular or stable employment. In addition to labour market outcomes, there is also a wide range of adverse impacts for claimants and their children. For example, sanctions were associated with an increase in material hardship, including the experience of food deprivation and financial hardships, but also increasing health problems for claimants and their children. There was also some evidence of an increase in child maltreatment and behavioural problems, as well as lower school attendance rates."¹¹³

The dominant trend in the Coalfield areas is a distinct squeeze in wages and living standards for a significant proportion of the population. There is some evidence from earlier research

¹¹⁰ (<https://www.jrf.org.uk/social-security/guarantee-our-essentials-reforming-universal-credit-to-ensure-we-can-all-afford-the>

¹¹¹ <https://cpag.org.uk/policy-and-research/latest-policy-briefings-and-reports/david-webster-briefings>

¹¹² <https://www.unitetheunion.org/campaigns/unite-against-sanctions>

¹¹³ https://www.gla.ac.uk/explore/glasgowsocialscienceshub/resources/all/headline_969673_en.html

that work-first, or supply-side policies, reinforce these trends. The welfare to work model is essentially 'work first' and supply-side orientated where conditionality rules help to increase the supply of labour and there is less concern with regards to the type of jobs, rates of pay and opportunities for advancement. In fact recent research from the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) provides evidence that benefit reforms pushed more people into work, but the work is often part-time, low-paid with little progression.¹¹⁴ More importantly, welfare-to-work or active labour market policies are only poorly linked, if at all, into demand side interventions in the labour market. The emphasis is upon speed of exit from the benefit into any form of 'suitable' employment.¹¹⁵

Although it can be argued that most benefit claimants will access entry level employment as a 'stepping stone' for further career advancement and progression, the reality is different. Furthermore, employment services are not linked into any form of industrial policy or are designed to resolve problems of underemployment and precarious work. In this way it is suggested that the current welfare to work model contributes to a trend towards transitions between low pay insecure work and benefits, which is increasingly a common characteristic of the UK urban labour market.

People who are reliant on claiming benefits are more likely to be in poverty than those who rely on other incomes. The inadequacy of benefits means that people are struggling to make ends meet and even survive without recourse to charities and foodbanks. To illustrate this we explore the impact of benefit cuts on fuel poverty in Stoke on Trent (see case study below).

Benefit Cap

Along with other benefit policies the benefit cap is a major cause of poverty. The CPAG has made an assessment of the Cap stating that "the government's own evaluation of the policy found that the vast majority of capped households do not move into work. This is unsurprising as just over a third (34%) of people on universal credit who are subject to the benefit cap are assessed by the DWP as not required to look for a job because they are caring for very young children."¹¹⁶

Two child tax credit

The Guardian recently reported that curbing child poverty by scrapping the two-child benefit cap would save hundreds of lives a year and avoid thousands of admissions to hospital.¹¹⁷ The Women's Budget Group has assessed the impact of the implementation of this policy and found:

- Households with 3 or more children (which are hit hardest by social security cuts, and particularly the two-child limit) are also those that are most affected by cuts to public services. Households with 3 or more children lose on average (cash-equivalent)

¹¹⁴ Hoynes, H., Joyce, R. and Waters, T. (2023), 'Benefits and tax credits', IFS Deaton Review of Inequalities <https://ifs.org.uk/sites/default/files/2024-06/Final-Benefits%20and-taxcredits-IFS-Deaton-Review-of-Inequality-1.pdf>

¹¹⁵ Etherington D (2020) *Austerity Welfare and Work: Exploring Politics Geographies and Inequalities*, Bristol Policy Press

¹¹⁶ <https://cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/2023-08/The%20benefit%20cap-%20an%20unhappy%20anniversary.pdf>

¹¹⁷ <https://www.wbg.org.uk/article/children-in-families-hit-by-2-child-limit-also-lose-most-from-cuts-to-public-services-finds-the-wbg/>

£3,681 per year from public services compared to £2,335 for households with 2 children and £821 for households with no children.

- Households with 3 or more children see an astonishing fall in living standards by 16.6% due to combined impact of tax, benefit and public services between 2010 and 2027/8. Households with 2 children also see a significantly large drop: 9.9% fall in living standards (i.e. net income plus cash-equivalent value of public services). Households with no children see a 5.6% fall in living standards.
- The two-child limit/benefit cap is contributing to poverty (46% of households with 3 or more children are now in poverty) among households with 3 or more children. The impact is disproportionate on the poorest 10% of households and on Black and Minority Ethnic groups (particularly women).

Managed benefit migration

Between now and the end of 2025, thousands of people will have their existing benefit payments switched off and replaced with Universal Credit. The process involves several hurdles; in the worst-case scenario, a family could be left without any income at all. CPAG along with other welfare rights organisations have raised issues about the process which is leaving some people without any money.¹¹⁸

Stoke on Trent – cuts to benefit and winter fuel payments

On the 8 December 2024, the Observer newspaper reported that one million pensioners are going without meals because of the cuts to winter fuel payments.¹¹⁹ We focus below on how the energy crisis and its high costs are impacting people in Stoke-on-Trent, one of the former Coalfield communities.

In 2023, University of Staffordshire in collaboration with Citizens Advice Staffordshire North and Stoke on Trent produced a report on the impact of Austerity on poverty in Stoke-on-Trent. This found that the cost-of-living for many people in Stoke-on-Trent was already high before 2022, with a structural combination of poorly paid work and cuts to the welfare state meaning many people struggled to meet their basic needs and pay their bills. Stoke-on-Trent was also previously branded as the 'capital of debt'.¹²⁰

Citizens Advice followed this with an assessment of the impact of the fuel crisis on Stoke on Trent.¹²¹ Stoke still has rates of benefit claimants above the national average, a figure that will inevitably rise as the migration from legacy benefits progresses, it still places Stoke-on-Trent 29th out of 309 districts. The financial impacts of greater reliance on claiming benefits in the context of benefit cuts means that a significant number of families and individuals are experiencing financial stress and debt.

¹¹⁸ <https://cpag.org.uk/news/what-you-need-know-about-managed-migration-universal-credit-briefing-mps>

¹¹⁹ <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2024/dec/07/winter-fuel-crisis-one-million-elderly-already-skipping-meals-and-applications-system-overwhelmed>

¹²⁰ Etherington, D, Jones M. Telford L Harris, S and Hubbard, S (2023) *Families on the Brink in Stoke-on-Trent: How austerity and the cost-of-living is driving poverty and destitution*. Project Report. Staffordshire University.

¹²¹ Staffordshire North Stoke on Trent Citizens Advice (2024) Turning Down the Heat, <https://www.snsCab.org.uk/who-are-we/articles/turning-down-the-heat-5-january-2024-update/>

- Rates of personal insolvency are among the highest in the country while local estimates suggest between £80 and £100 million a year of benefit goes unclaimed, money that could make a huge difference to families affected by this.
- Average earnings remain at 85% of the national average, as they have done for most of the last 20 years.
- The April 2023 fuel poverty figures show that with 22.9% of households classed as fuel poor, Stoke-on-Trent had the second highest rate in the country after Birmingham. This showed an increase even from 2021 (21.8%).

In terms of enquiries, the number of clients with queries about domestic energy, from January 2019 through to July 2022 has significantly increased. As the Citizens Advice observe “In fact the longer this crisis persists the greater this problem will become. It is likely that as prices rise then the number of clients unable to meet these costs by cutting back elsewhere or cutting back on usage and then getting into debt will increase significantly.”

Recommendations: A Just Transition for the Coalfield Areas

What we mean by ‘just transition’

In his assessment of the impact of the Miners’ strike and the pit closures in Scotland, Jim Phillips describes the process as “unjust transition” as it removed union voice and economic security “in highly coercive circumstances.”¹²² A Just Transition means participatory decision making with the costs and benefits fairly distributed and sustainable transitions should promote inclusive growth – decent work, poverty eradication, and social inclusion. Transitional policies should also involve macroeconomic instruments which involve long term sustainable funding and guaranteed workers and community rights and voices in the development of policies.¹²³

Breaking away from Austerity economics

After the Great Recession, and after the decision to leave the EU the British economy went into a downward spiral with real GDP growth still more than 20% below its pre-2008 trend. Austerity is a political choice as the government has the power to raise public spending and investment, increase taxes on the wealthy and big businesses, and properly regulate big businesses and financial institutions.¹²⁴

A study by Unite Trade Union reported that thousands of companies of all sizes have boosted their profits during the cost-of-living crisis. Middle-ranking companies (median) saw profits rise by 26%. And in 2022 almost a third of companies had profit margins over 10%. While real wages have stagnated, high corporate profits have driven the cost-of-living crisis. The research also shows how increased profits haven’t translated into investment, while shareholder payouts rise. FTSE 350 companies are paying out 20% more to their shareholders than they were pre-pandemic.¹²⁵

At the same time the refusal to upgrade benefits and persist with the means testing of benefits (two child tax credit, benefit cap, Winter Fuel Payments), plus the threat to ‘clamp down’ on sickness benefit claimants as we have highlighted earlier, raises questions regarding the Labour Government commitment to tackling poverty and the ‘excesses’ of private sector corporate greed.

¹²² Phillips J (2023) Injustice, deindustrialisation and the 1984-85 Miners’ Strike in Scotland, *Social History* 48,3, 363-388

¹²³ Rising, J Dumas, M Dicker, S Propp, D Robertson, M and Look W (2021) *Regional Just Transitions in the UK: Insights from 40 Years of Policy Experience*, Resources for the Future/Environmental Defence Fund, Washington.

TUC (2019) *A Just Transition to a Greener and Fairer Economy*, London TUC

https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/A_Just_Transition_To_A_Greener_Fairer_Economy.pdf

¹²⁴ Blakeley G (2024) Labour’s Austerity is a Choice <https://tribunemag.co.uk/2024/08/labours-austerity-is-a-choice-starmer-pain>

¹²⁵ Unite (2024) Profiteering is breaking the economy, <https://www.unitetheunion.org/news-events/news/2024/may/corporate-profiteering-unite-study-of-17-000-companies-shows-margins-jumped-30-since-the-pandemic>

A Different Devolution approach to Coalfields and Deprived Areas

The Government launched its devolution strategy in December 2024 which has major implications for deprived areas in the UK.¹²⁶ Devolution is supposed to mean transferring powers and funding to local and regional bodies. The White Paper acknowledges that the UK has the most centralised system of government with substantial regional inequalities. How different in substance are the current policies to the previous Conservative Governments? How can an inclusive Devolution work whilst the Government is pursuing Austerity policies.?

In 2016 a study of devolution policies in the Sheffield City Region (SCR)¹²⁷, covering part of the Yorkshire and North Derbyshire Coalfields, found that much of the devolution debate has been focused on economic 'growth', but pressing questions remained as to what kind of local and regional development is optimal, and for whom. In this context the Report offers lessons for the current Labour Government's 'growth agenda.' The Report found that:

- Devolution growth objectives face significant challenges: the combined impact of Austerity cuts and welfare reforms resulted in over £1.1 billion in lost income to the SCR, far exceeding committed monies from Devolution Deals. Budget settlements for local authorities involved further cuts of around £131m for just 2016-2017, with disadvantaged groups and areas particularly affected.
- Economic and social disadvantage, combined with difficult labour market conditions including the low paid and poor-quality sustainable employment, presented major challenges for employment and skills policies.
- There was at all levels of Government a lack of perspective in terms of how disadvantaged groups can be included in, and importantly benefit from, policies to stimulate growth.

The lessons from this study suggest realistic funding commitments to address economic and social problems in the deindustrialised cities. This can include extending the powers and financial sustainability of local governments to enact localised procurement. Using our collective purchasing power embodied in each local authorities' budget to support local has many potential benefits. Supporting local industries can ensure that firms hire, train, and support local workers. Public funds can also support unionised firms and cooperatives which pay a decent wage and offer good working conditions.

This could also be used to reclaim and expand public ownership in a re-municipalised model with a reversal of privatisation and increased levels of local public ownership. Public Futures¹²⁸ a crowd-sourced databank on re-municipalisation, estimates there have been 812 cases of industry taken back into public hands in Europe, and over 130 in the United Kingdom. These experiments with place-based strategies to reverse public service privatisation suggest that industries such as energy, transport, social care, and education are all sectors where this is possible.

Central government also has a large role to play. We argue that a reinforcing and stabilising strategy might include the creation of a Coalfields' wealth fund. This would be more targeted

¹²⁶ HM Government (2024) *English Devolution White Paper*
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-devolution-white-paper-power-and-partnership-foundations-for-growth/english-devolution-white-paper>

¹²⁷ Etherington D and Jones M (2015) *Devolution and Disadvantage in the Sheffield City Region: An Assessment of Employment Skills and Welfare Policies*, Sheffield : Sheffield University

¹²⁸ <https://publicfutures.org/en/cases/> 2024.

than a national wealth fund and would require a large scale investment into the Coalfields, acknowledging that the loss of the coal industry leaves an economic, social, and political legacy which is still felt today. It would also acknowledge that this economic and social “scarring” exacerbated the Coalfields experience of almost 15 years of Austerity. The proceeds of this fund could offer communities a long-term and stable source of local investment and could be used to counter economic downturns.

Additionally, we have shown that widening inequalities in public service provision can be understood as part of the bigger picture of widening regional inequalities more generally. Clearly, the Coalfields are disadvantaged by a shrinking public sector. The collective provision of public services functions as part of the social safety net – providing both universal services and targeted services for people on low-incomes. Investing in public services is key to regenerating local economies and should be seen as central to devolution policies. The required funding should be on the scale and level as committed under German unification (see below).

The top-down and centralised nature of national-local government in the UK, makes many of these strategies difficult to pursue without reducing the current level of centralisation. We encourage the current Labour Government to rethink and change the relationship. Devolution policies are gaining in momentum, and the UK now has experience with different forms and types of devolution. We think devolution for cities and regions which are struggling economically should differ from the policies offered to economically prosperous areas. Conservative policies encouraged local authorities to rely more on their local tax base and fee generation. However, this approach functioned to reinforce regional inequalities, as prosperous cities will find this change easier to implement. We argue for devolution which involves significant resources that are commensurate for addressing the problems and challenges highlighted in this report.

Levelling Up – The German Example

The Centre for Cities has provided the example of German unification as an example of ‘levelling up.’ In other words the scale of investment in the former Eastern Germany had to be commensurate to addressing the structural economic problems and inequalities. The expenditure between 1990 and 2014 totalled €2 trillion (about £71 billion) a year. For comparison UK “levelling up” funding has been around £4.8 billion per annum. Germany’s equalisation scheme comprised transfer payments through benefits and pensions (45%) and the remaining involved infrastructure investments and ‘growth enhancing’ policies.

An important aspect of the German strategy was the reorganisation and reform of local government which was seen as a key institution for implementing regeneration of the city economies. “UK policymakers should learn lessons from the German experience: the Federal Government’s long-term commitment to the project, the size of funding committed and its support for cities as the necessary creators of economic prosperity for all of former East Germany.”¹²⁹ This point is taken up by Gwen Bevan and Patrick Diamond in their Blog when they argue that in Germany, the federal government works with its 16 regions (Laender) and the Laender by and large work cooperatively and learn from each other in their federal laboratory. these regional systems of governance and finance have been vital to levelling

¹²⁹ Enenkel K (2021) *What can German Reunification teach the UK about Levelling up?* Centre for Cities Blog post 14 October 2021 <https://www.centreforcities.org/blog/what-can-german-reunification-teach-the-uk-about-levelling-up/How>

up East Germany. By contrast, the centralised systems of the UK are a serious obstacle to reducing our regional inequalities.

As Bevan and Diamond highlight, the lessons from Germany are instructive. “in 2019, the regions of East Germany were richer than the three poorest regions in Britain. Italy’s three poorest regions are impeded by varieties of organised crime: Campania, Sicily and Calabria. The ratios of GDP per capita of the richest to poorest regions were threefold in Italy and former West and East Germany. They were *eightfold* in the UK (between inner-London West and Tees Valley and Durham).”¹³⁰

A Progressive Funding Plan for Public Services

In relation to health

In response to the 2024 Autumn Budget the Kings Fund commented “On the whole, this budget has been a starting point for the investment and reform that is needed to begin to stabilise the trajectory of NHS performance, but it is not enough for the system to deliver the wholesale shift needed for a health and care system fit for the future. To achieve that, more funding will be needed in next year’s Comprehensive Spending review.”¹³¹ Over the Parliament health spending has grown at 2.4% which is below the 4% that is required to improve services.¹³² Just to emphasise the false economy of Austerity if trends continue, the Institute for Public Policy Research thinktank warns the number of people economically inactive owing to sickness could hit 4.3 million by the end of this parliament, fixing the nation’s health could save the NHS £18 billion a year by the mid-2030s.¹³³

In relation to local authorities

A Local Government Information Unit report has stated that “Local government, funded properly, and with a positive working relationship with central government, has the potential to do much more for their residents than deliver essential services”¹³⁴ (and) the “services councils provide: care, housing, green spaces, learning, planning, economic development and so many more, are not optional extras or luxuries they are the bedrock of a civilised society.” In many ways local authorities are essential to a Just Transition in relation to taking forward an economic and social agenda. A report commissioned by the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) demonstrates how investment in public services – especially local government needs to be an integral feature of a ‘growth’ strategy.¹³⁵ On the basis of Institute

¹³⁰ Gwyn Bevan Patrick Diamond 2024 *How Labour could make devolution work*

<https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/how-labour-could-make-devolution-work/>

¹³¹ The Kings Fund Responds to the 2024 Autumn Budget <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/insight-and-analysis/press-releases/response-autumn-budget-october-2024>

¹³² WBG (2024) Health Inequalities and Gender: Briefing for a New Government, <https://www.wbg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Health-and-Gender-WBG-Briefing-2024.pdf>

¹³³ Partington R (2024) The sickness trap: how Barnsley has tried to fight back against worklessness <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2024/oct/26/the-sickness-trap-how-barnsley-has-tried-to-fight-back-against-worklessness>

¹³⁴ LGIU (2024) The state of local government finance in England 2024, <https://lgiu.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/State-of-Local-Government-Finance-in-England-2024.pdf>

¹³⁵ Gregory M Griggs S Longlands S Baines M (2025) *Kickstarting growth: Maximising the contribution of local council services*, Manchester APSE

of Fiscal Studies estimates the funding required to even meet pre-2010 levels would lead to an increase in core funding of at least 17% per resident.¹³⁶

The role of social security

Professor Sharon Wright has argued that a number of steps are required to restore social security to a credible and sustainable level of income and social support.

The next UK government must make emergency repairs to social security to halt harrowing declines in health and life expectancy. This should ensure a minimum acceptable standard of living, including restoring the value of benefits such as universal credit to cover the costs of living.

Since 71% of children living in poverty are in working families, employers should be required to pay the real living wage. In-work universal credit also needs to top up wages enough to make work pay.¹³⁷

Raising social security incomes will save money. It is estimated that the cost of child poverty is around £39 billion per annum.¹³⁸ Child poverty causes extra costs for the NHS – the estimated cost of poverty on health care (i.e., additional public spending due to greater health care need and use) is £29 billion (£34 billion in current prices).¹³⁹ We would argue that a useful benchmark in determining acceptable living standard is the Minimum Income Standard (MIS) which has been calculated by researchers at Loughborough University for the of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. A single person needs to earn £28,000 a year to reach a minimum acceptable standard of living in 2024. A couple with 2 children needs to earn £69,400 a year between them.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ IFS (2024) Immediate Reflections on the Budget Fiscal and economic Overview

<https://ifs.org.uk/sites/default/files/2024-10/Immediate-reflections-on-the%20budget-local-government.pdf>

¹³⁷ Wright S (2024) How the UK Social Security System stopped tackling poverty

<https://theconversation.com/how-the-uks-social-security-system-stopped-tackling-poverty-230904>

¹³⁸ Hirsch D (2023) The Cost of Child Poverty in 2023 https://cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/2023-10/Cost_of_child_poverty_2023.pdf

¹³⁹ Mallorie S Illustrating the Relationship Between Poverty and NHS Services.

<https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/insight-and-analysis/long-reads/relationship-poverty-nhs-services>

Blog March 2024

¹⁴⁰ JRF (2024) A Minimum Income Standard for the United Kingdom in 2024,

<https://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/default/files/pdfs/a-minimum-income-standard-for-the-united-kingdom-in-2024-ba39f8765dd2544634503849043e825e.pdf>

A Workers Transition and a New Type of Industrial Policy

The new Labour Government launched an Industrial Strategy in 2024¹⁴¹ but the details in relation to resources to back up the main growth aims are not clear. The other danger is as highlighted by the TUC is without “actively targeting policies for good work, the industrial strategy could prioritise growing businesses that fail to create jobs, or actively offshore them, or pursue growth at the expense of their workforce.”¹⁴²

We argue the only way forward is through a new type of sustained and long-term industrial policy that assures a *Just Transition* – for the former Coalfield areas and for the people who live in them. This needs to be harnessed to the national mission of economic transformation to a greener economic base. Plans for a “green” energy transition need to be localised in specific communities if they are to be just. Regional development policy is often place-blind. However, transforming our energy supplies to low-carbon alternatives must not be rolled out in an abstract way, but by thinking through the potential and constraints of real communities. We need to think about how to localise our new forms of energy supply, in ways which allow former Coalfields, the regions which traditionally produced the country’s energy, to do so again.

We also need to think downstream – we argue for the need to reintroduce well-paid manufacturing in the components necessary for thriving alternative energy sources. Manufacturing jobs are still more likely to pay more, be unionised, and to allow a high standard of living for workers in the sector. We also need to create local service sector jobs which are not precarious, but which offer stability and predictability. We highlight the need for not just for “green” jobs and “clean” energy, but the need for these necessary changes in the economy to be structured in a manner which is aware of the distributional effects of where the jobs are produced, what type of job is being produced, and who gets that job. Promoting these sectors is the role of government, the market alone will never produce this outcome, as it will require a Keynesian stimulus in specific communities to produce the distributional and spatial outcomes we propose.

We also advocate moving away from strategies which outsource our more polluting industries to other countries. In planetary terms, outsourcing our polluting industries to the Global South while still demanding the products used only serves to further our neo-colonial relationships with developing countries and does nothing to stop climate change. We argue we should keep industry, even “dirty” industry with well-paid and unionised jobs, in the UK as a more honest accounting of our role in the global economy and the changing climate. For example, steel production in the UK may contribute to global CO2 emissions, but this can be minimised with state-of-the-art production techniques and fewer transportation miles.

Strengthening employment rights

We argue that strengthening workers’ rights and trade union representation is essential for a just transition. Countries where there are high trade union densities, coordinated collective

¹⁴¹ HM Government (2024) *Invest 2035: the UK’s modern industrial strategy*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/invest-2035-the-uks-modern-industrial-strategy/invest-2035-the-uks-modern-industrial-strategy>

¹⁴² TUC (2024) *TUC submission to the Industrial Strategy Green Paper*

<https://www.tuc.org.uk/research-analysis/reports/tuc-submission-industrial-strategy-green-paper>

bargaining combined with strong welfare and social protection systems, have a lower incidence of precarious work and labour market inequalities.¹⁴³

The approach by the English and Scottish TUCs

In its report *A Just Transition to a greener, fairer economy* the English TUC set down some broad guidelines for a transition that is inclusive of trade unions. The key message of the report is that “we need a different approach to the failed neoliberal approach of the 1980s which left workers behind and communities devastated.”¹⁴⁴

The key messages of the report include:

- *A Clearer Funding Path* The funding required for a balanced energy policy can be obtained through progressive taxation. Investment in infrastructure and public services has to be commensurate to the needs and requirements of a Green Low Carbon strategy.
- *Workers to be at the heart of a delivery plan.* Those sectors and firms at the heart of such a plan need to recognise trade unions who should be involved with transition agreements. All aspects of working conditions and the workplace need to be addressed such as pay, health and safety, equal opportunities, training.
- *Skills and vocational training* A Just Transition will require a different approach to training. Trade unions should be at the centre of developing training and skills plans at the workplace. , As well as establishing lifelong learning accounts for all adults so that everyone has a personalised budget for training, there should be a right to career reviews and face-to-face guidance on training to help them access it.
- *The creation of good jobs* The Government should use its procurement powers to ensure that jobs generated benefit workers in the local community and throughout the supply chain. It must also insist that jobs created provide workers with trade union recognition, and that employers have fair recruitment, industrial relations and pay policies for all workers.

Similarly, the Scottish TUC produced a report by analysing the state of Scotland’s Low Carbon and Renewable Energy Economy, and highlighting the gap between the rapidly growing income made by companies across offshore and onshore wind with a decreasing number of jobs.¹⁴⁵ Furthermore the STUC has been campaigning for a workers plan for renewal based on climate change criteria in Mosmorrone (see below).

¹⁴³ Damian Grimshaw, Mat Johnson, Arjan Keizer and Jill Rubery (2015) *Reducing Precarious Work through Social Dialogue: An analysis of ‘protective gaps’ facing people at work in the UK*, University of Manchester
Damian Grimshaw, Mat Johnson, Arjan Keizer and Jill Rubery (2016) *Reducing Precarious Work Protective Gaps and the Role of Social Dialogue in Europe*, University of Manchester

Etherington D (2022) *Lessons from the Danish Employment and Skills Model - Job Retention and Rotation Scheme*, <https://committees.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/111581/pdf/>

¹⁴⁴ TUC (2019) *A Just Transition to a greener, fairer economy* London TUC, p4

¹⁴⁵ Scottish TUC (2024) *Mind the Gap*, <https://www.stuc.org.uk/resources/stuc-mind-the-gap-march24.pdf>

Case Study: A Just Transition in South Wales -The Unite Neath-Port Talbot Model

The Unite Trade Union has conducted a national campaign around the regeneration of the manufacturing industry¹⁴⁶, including the steel industry which is an integral part of a wider set of policies relating to a Just Transition towards a green economy. In Neath and Port Talbot Unite's demand relating to the campaign to maintain steel production in the area is summarised below in Figure 1.¹⁴⁷

Figure 1 Securing existing production at Port Talbot

- We will not budge on this principle: workers must not be made to pay for the transition. We will not let employers use new technologies as a smokescreen for job cuts. Workers must be fully involved in negotiating all aspects of the process of transition through a credible collective bargaining framework that defends jobs, pay and conditions. At Port Talbot, this includes the following commitments:
- Maintain blast furnace operation and associated raw materials management for as long as necessary while a DRI facility is constructed. Employment guarantees for all workers in this part of the site, including in the sinter plant and coking ovens.
- No move by Tata to replace on-site raw materials production with imported alternatives. No closure of the Basic Oxygen Furnace until construction of multiple new Electric Arc Furnaces is complete, with all jobs protected.

The Union failed to prevent the closure of the blast furnace. Unite Regional Secretary for Wales, Peter Hughes, said: *"The closure of Port Talbot's last remaining blast furnace and its virgin steel making facilities will strike a blow into the very heart of the town and the surrounding region. It marks the end of a proud history of traditional steelmaking that stretches back through generations of families."*¹⁴⁸

Unite had campaigned to secure a £2.5 billion steel fund. However, at Port Talbot, 2,500 employees will lose their jobs by March 2025 and Labour's negotiation of an enhanced redundancy and retraining package will hardly cushion the blow. A further 300 jobs will be cut in three years' time, with these expected to include roles at its Llanwern steelworks near Newport. In return for £500m of taxpayers' money, Port Talbot will invest £750m of its own money in building an electric arc furnace, due to start work in 2027.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ Unite (2024) *Manufacturing matters Matters now more than ever*, London Unite

¹⁴⁷ Unite (2023) *A Workers Plan for Port Talbot*, London Unite

¹⁴⁸ <https://www.unitetheunion.org/news-events/news/2024/september/port-talbot-blast-furnace-closure-unite-will-keep-tata-s-feet-to-fire-on-future-jobs>

¹⁴⁹ Davies R (2024) *Port Talbot losses What's next for British Steel Production*, Guardian, 11 September 2024

Case Study: Scotland STUC Just Transition in Mossmorran, Fife, Scotland

The Scottish TUC has been active in promoting an industrial strategy in Scotland. This strategy also has a geographical focus with the formulation of a set of policies within a framework for a workers plan for Mossmorran located in Fife. The petrochemical plants at Mossmorran - Shell's Natural Gas Liquids plant and ExxonMobil's Ethylene plant - are located near the former mining village of Cowdenbeath. The plants have operated since the 1980s and have formed a valuable source of jobs in an area ravaged by the closure of coal mines. Following the TUC the STUC argues that a Just Transition should be worker-led and that the Government should engage workers in the planning process. Trade unions are also calling for a special fund to be set up to support project development.

A Just Transition Partnership was established by the Scottish TUC and Friends of the Earth which involves Unite Scotland, UNISON Scotland, UCU Scotland, CWU Scotland, PCS Scotland, New Economics Foundation, Common Weal and WWF Scotland. A special report by Transitional Economics was commissioned by Mark Ruskell MSP which states that "the Mossmorran natural gas liquids processing plants face an uncertain future, with significant vulnerabilities due to the climate and environmental emergency. External factors contributing to these vulnerabilities include (i) a decrease in the availability of raw material inputs as a result of ambitions to limit oil and gas extraction in line with the Paris Agreement, and (ii) a decrease in demand for ethylene (Mossmorran's main output) due to international efforts to curb plastic waste."¹⁵⁰

The key Just Transition outcomes should guide planning and monitoring of the benefits. Both the forward planning and the monitoring of the local Just Transition Plan should be based on a clear and measurable set of targets. In our view the key indicators are: 1. Job creation - numbers in new industries or processes 2. Emissions reductions achieved 3. Numbers of people making job transitions 4. Skills necessary for transition – delivery and utilisation 5. Pay, conditions and collective bargaining in the sectors affected 6. Distribution of costs and benefits to communities – reductions of inequalities These indicators give a clear view of what we believe should be the benefits of the Just Transition for the Mossmorran and broader Fife community.

In the Transition Economics report there are pointers to the lessons that are offered by the Lucas Plan put forward by workers at Lucas Aerospace in 1976.

¹⁵⁰ Transition Economics (2022) A meaningful just transition for Mossmorran, Edinburgh
<https://www.stuc.org.uk/resources/just-transition-for-mossmorran-briefing.pdf>

Conclusions

The fallacy of Austerity economics

The Thatcher administration's determination to close the mines, the manner in which it was done, and the sustained lack of attention to the economies and communities affected has left the Coalfield areas with high rates of unemployment and reliance upon sickness benefits, and a narrow economic base to work from. The severe and rapid economic restructuring and deindustrialisation has left scars on individual lives and communities. Although the New Labour government offered a bit of respite in the form of some job growth and increasing funding of public services, they failed to address the underlying causes of regional inequality and the widening gap between the rich and the poor.

Austerity consisted of an ideological attack against the public sector with budget cuts for social programmes, outsourced service provision, weakened regulations, cancelled infrastructure projects, and a sell-off of public assets. It was also an assault on people who relied on the social safety net with tightened eligibility requirements and increased conditionality of the benefit system pushing many into low waged precarious jobs or into destitution.

The case studies presented here provide lessons for the current Labour Government as they show the targeted and cumulative nature of Austerity in the Coalfield communities has served to reinforce persistent trends in inequalities and deprivation. Together, they highlight the high number of people affected by, and the consequences of, public expenditure cuts in already weak local economies. Poor pay, unemployment, long-term sickness, poverty, illness and poor life expectancy are all outcomes of this toxic mixture. As one report assessing transitional policies for the coalfield areas states "significant economic disparities remain, and no comprehensive policy has been implemented to address them."¹⁵¹

A road map towards a just transition

In conclusion, we wish to restate what we see as the way forward for an alternative (just transition) strategy to Austerity which will benefit Coalfield and deprived areas and regions in the UK. This can be based on the following criteria. First, the benefits and costs of a sustainable transition of a country's economy are fairly distributed. That means public services, including local government, health and the social security receives sustainable funding in a way that ensures an equitable distribution of incomes. A key challenge is to address the current wealth and income inequalities which act as a break on economic growth. Second, and related, an environmentally sustainable transition should promote inclusive growth by decent work for all, social inclusion and the eradication of poverty. Finally, that communities and workers – in particularly trade unions are at the heart of shaping and implementing policies.

¹⁵¹ Rising, J Dumas, M Dicker, S Propp, D Robertson, M and Look W (2021) *Regional Just Transitions in the UK: Insights from 40 Years of Policy Experience*, Resources for the Future/Environmental Defence Fund, Washington.p45

Appendix 1 Budget changes to key services 2010-2024

Policies and services	Key trends since 2010
Local authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Between 2010–11 to 2024–25, councils’ overall core funding is set to be 9% lower in real terms and 18% lower in real terms per person this year than at the start of the 2010s. The reduction will be larger for councils serving deprived areas (e.g. 26% per person for the most deprived tenth) than for the less deprived areas (e.g. 11% for the least deprived tenth).¹⁵²
Social Security	<p>The former Coalfields have taken the brunt of cuts to social security¹⁵³.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A substantial gap exists between social security support and the cost of essentials, with households increasingly running ‘negative budgets’. Many low-income households saw a fall in financial support, as planned benefit uprating did not compensate for the end of emergency cost of living payments from February 2024. This equates to a drop in income of £665 a year for an unemployed person aged under 25, when compared to 2023/24 (factoring in inflation). This represents a real-terms terms cut of 18%.¹⁵⁴ Overall, social security payments are woefully inadequate for households to meet basic needs.
NHS spending and health inequalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is set to be a £4.8 billion unfunded shortfall in the NHS England revenue budget for 2024/25, raising the prospect that without further funding, service cuts are inevitable.¹⁵⁵ Health inequalities are prevalent in the former Coalfield areas with a high proportion of working wage adults ‘economically inactive’ due to long term health conditions NHS waiting lists have surged to record levels, with more than 6 million people awaiting treatment, while employment support has been slashed.

¹⁵² Institute for Fiscal Studies (2024) *How have English councils’ funding and spending changed 2010 to 2024?* IFS

¹⁵³ Beatty c and Fothergill (2016) *Jobs Welfare and Austerity How the Destruction of Industrial Britain*

¹⁵⁴ IPPR (2024) *Snakes and Ladders: Tackling precarity in Social security and Employment Support* London IPPR, p11

¹⁵⁵ <https://www.nuffieldtrust.org.uk/news-item/how-much-more-money-does-the-nhs-need>

Childcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over 4.6 million women in the UK were prevented from securing a job or increasing their working hours due to unsuitable childcare options in 2021¹⁵⁶. Underfunding makes the UK's childcare sector one of the most expensive in the world.¹⁵⁷ Early years education and childcare is unaffordable for many households and especially for lone mothers. Women's Budget Group estimates that an extra £5.2 billion of investment is required to make the sector sustainable
Education and skills spending	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The previous Conservative Government's investment in skills in England fell by £1 billion since 2010, while employers are investing 26% less in training per employee than in 2005. Education and skills cuts have disproportionately affected people in the poorest areas and with the lowest qualifications. Government cuts have meant a 27% fall in publicly funded learners from the most deprived areas, while the number of learners from the most affluent areas have barely changed. Meanwhile, people qualified to degree level are three times more likely to get training at work than non-graduates.¹⁵⁸
Public Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buses, with over 3 billion trips in England annually, are vitally important for local communities.¹⁵⁹ Cuts to bus provision between 2011 and 2023 were 10 times higher in England's most deprived than its least deprived areas.¹⁶⁰ The shrinking of the bus network is detrimental for growth and decarbonisation and undermine the aims and objectives of the national bus strategy and transport decarbonisation plan (which are based on growth of public transport use)? Black Africa, Black Caribbean and Black British adults are most likely to live in households with no car or van (39% of adults, compared to 17% of adults from White ethnic groups)

¹⁵⁶ Womens Budget Group (2022) *Response to Autumn Statement 2022*. Available at: <https://wbg.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/WBG-budget-response-Nov-2022-FINAL.pdf>

¹⁵⁷ Topping, A (2021) *How do UK childcare costs stack up against the best?* The Guardian. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/money/2021/sep/12/how-do-uk-childcare-costs-stack-up-against-the-best>

¹⁵⁸ <https://learningandwork.org.uk/news-and-policy/cuts-to-skills-funding-hit-poorest-areas-hardest-and-put-20-billion-economic-growth-at-risk/>

¹⁵⁹ [Revealed: Bus cuts hit deprived areas the hardest | IPPR](#)

¹⁶⁰ IPPR North. [Revealed: Bus cuts hit deprived areas the hardest | IPPR](#)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 77% of jobseekers in British cities outside London do not have regular access to a car, van or motorbike. This proportion rises to 87% for jobseekers aged 18-24. • People employed in routine and manual occupations make more bus trips, and travel further on the bus, than those in managerial/professional or intermediate occupations. • Women make more trips by bus than men, with the difference most marked outside of London. • Disabled people are more likely to travel by bus than people without a disability¹⁶¹
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¹⁶¹ <https://www.urbantransportgroup.org/system/files/general-docs/Funding%20a%20better%20future%20for%20urban%20transport%20-%202021%20Mar%202023.pdf>

Appendix 2 Austerity, Deprivation and Health Indicators

Table A1 Austerity Indicators – Scotland

	Council Funding Gap 2025/26 ¹⁶²		Total Impact all benefit reforms 2010 to 2020/21 ¹⁶³		Universal credit £20 uplift removal – loss/yr (millions)*	Childcare places per 100 children aged 7 and under ¹⁶⁴ December 2023	NHS waiting lists ¹⁶⁵ 30 th Sept 2024	
	2025/26 (£million)	% of revenue budget represented by gap	Estimat ed loss £m per year	Financial loss per working age adult £ per year			Waiting to start treatment	% Waiting within 12 weeks
Scotland	£487.9	3.0%	£1,990	£570	N/A	48.0	568,561	39.0
Fife	£16.2	1.5%	£143	£620	N/A	46.8	31,854	39.4
Midlothian	£13.0	4.3%	£32	£580	N/A	53.9	96,989	38.0
Clackmannanshire	£13.0	7.8%	£22	£660	N/A	48.3	13,057	74.7
East Ayrshire	£17.0	4.0%	£53	£690	N/A	43.0	54,325	33.5
North Lanarkshire	£16.5	1.6%	£146	£660	N/A	39.5	62,826	34.0
South Lanarkshire	£22.4	2.3%	£122	£600	N/A	47.2	62,826	34.0

*Scotland introduced a 'top up' to Universal Credit for families with children aged under 6 in 2021. This was extended to children under 16 and increased in 2022. <https://cpag.org.uk/news/seven-years-scotland>

¹⁶² <https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2024/09/Councils-on-the-brink-with-regional-appendix.pdf>

¹⁶³ Beatty, C. and Fothergill, S. (2018) : Welfare reform in the United Kingdom 2010–16: Expectations, outcomes, and local impacts, Social Policy and Administration. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/spol.12353> Updated data supplied to authors

¹⁶⁴ Authors own Local Authority analysis based on <https://www.careinspectorate.com/index.php/statistics-and-analysis> and 2022 Census data (GRO(S))

¹⁶⁵ <https://publichealthscotland.scot/publications/nhs-waiting-times-stage-of-treatment/stage-of-treatment-waiting-times-inpatients-day-cases-and-new-outpatients-quarter-ending-30-september-2024/> Local Authority areas matched to nearest NHS hospital trust

Table A2 Deprivation Indicators – Scotland

	People claiming UC (% of people aged 18-65) Aug 2024 ¹⁶⁶			Qualifications 2022 Census ¹⁶⁷			Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (2020) ¹⁶⁸	
	Not in employment	In employment	All	% of people aged 16-64		% of people aged 16-24	Rank: Scotland (1- 32)	Proportion of LSOAs or small areas in most deprived 10% nationally
				No qualifications	Level 4+	No qualifications		
Scotland	10.6	5.8	16.5	10.3	34.8	5.8		
Fife	12.0	6.4	18.4	9.8	30.0	5.5	11	7.7
Midlothian	9.9	6.0	16.0	9.4	32.1	6.8	21	2.6
Clackmannanshire	13.4	6.6	20.0	13.4	27.1	9.4	8	9.7
East Ayrshire	14.5	6.9	21.4	13.8	25.6	8.7	7	9.8
North Lanarkshire	12.6	6.6	19.2	13.6	25.5	7.8	6	13.4
South Lanarkshire	10.9	5.7	16.7	11.2	30.9	7.2	10	10.0

¹⁶⁶ DWP UC Data for August 2024 from Stat Xplore with 2022 Census data from GRO(S) – Authors own calculation

¹⁶⁷ 2022 Census from GRO(S)

¹⁶⁸ Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2020 <https://www.gov.scot/collections/scottish-index-of-multiple-deprivation-2020/>

Table A3 Health Inequality Indicators – Scotland

	Avoidable mortality rate per 100,000 population, 2019-21 ¹⁶⁹			Long-term sickness % of people aged 16-64, 2022 ¹⁷⁰		Disability and General Health % of people aged 16-64, 2022 ¹⁷¹			
	All	Treatable	Preventable	% of those economically inactive	% of all	Disabled		General Health	
						All	Day-to-day activities limited a lot	Not good (Fair, bad, very bad)	Bad/very bad
Scotland	346.6	98.9	247.7	25.6	5.9	20.0	8.4	18.3	6.0
Fife	314.7	95.0	219.7	24.6	6.1	15.1	5.4	19.3	6.2
Midlothian	292.3	87.6	204.7	28.1	5.1	13.1	4.6	17.1	5.2
Clackmannanshire	391.1	114.8	276.4	28.2	7.2	22.7	9.8	20.8	6.9
East Ayrshire	394.8	111.9	283.0	31.9	7.7	14.9	5.9	21.1	7.2
North Lanarkshire	415.3	118.5	296.8	32.2	7.3	14.8	6.1	21.7	7.9
South Lanarkshire	339.2	99.5	239.7	29.0	6.2	13.9	5.4	19.3	6.6

Note: Avoidable mortality - are all those defined as preventable or treatable

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/causesofdeath/methodologies/avoidablemortalityinenglandandwalesqmi#quality-characteristics-of-the-avoidable-mortality-data>

- preventable mortality: causes of death that can be mainly avoided through effective public health and primary prevention interventions (that is, before the onset of diseases or injuries, to reduce incidence)
- treatable mortality (previously known as amenable mortality): causes of death that can be mainly avoided through timely and effective healthcare interventions, including secondary prevention and treatment (that is, after the onset of disease, to reduce case fatality)

¹⁶⁹ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/causesofdeath/bulletins/avoidablemortalityinenglandandwales/2021and2022> and <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/vital-events/deaths/avoidable-mortality>

¹⁷⁰ 2022 Census data (GRO(S))

¹⁷¹ 2022 Census data (GRO(S))

Table A4 Deprivation Indicators by Gender – Scotland

	Qualifications, 2022 ¹⁷²				Long-term sickness % of people aged 16-64, 2022 ¹⁷³		Disabled % of people aged 15- 64, 2022 ¹⁷⁴		People claiming UC (% of people aged 18-65) Aug 2024 ¹⁷⁵	
	16-24 no qualifications		16-64 Level 4+		Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
	Women	Men	Women	Men						
Scotland	4.8	6.9	38.7	30.8	6.1	5.8	21.8	17.9	18.4	14.4
Fife	4.7	6.4	33.8	25.9	6.4	5.8	23.6	19.3	20.7	15.9
Midlothian	5.1	8.2	35.8	28.3	5.4	4.8	20.6	17.0	18.8	12.9
Clackmannanshire	8.0	10.7	31.3	22.8	7.4	6.9	24.1	20.8	22.8	17.1
East Ayrshire	7.2	10.2	30.4	20.7	7.8	7.5	24.5	20.5	23.9	18.7
North Lanarkshire	6.2	9.3	29.5	21.3	7.8	6.8	24.9	20.0	22.1	16.2
South Lanarkshire	5.8	8.5	35.1	26.5	6.5	6.0	22.8	18.4	18.9	14.3

¹⁷² 2022 Census data (GRO(S))

¹⁷³ 2022 Census data (GRO(S))

¹⁷⁴ 2022 Census data (GRO(S))

¹⁷⁵ DWP UC Data for August 2024 from Stat Xplore with 2022 Census data from GRO(S) – Authors own calculation

Table B1 Austerity Indicators – England

	Council Funding Gap 2025/26 ¹⁷⁶		IFS local budget changes 2010-2024 ¹⁷⁷			Total Impact all benefit reforms 2010 to 2020/21 ¹⁷⁸		Universal credit £20 uplift removal – loss/yr (millions) ¹⁷⁹	Childcare places per 100 children aged 7 and under ¹⁸⁰ December 2023	NHS waiting lists ¹⁸¹ Sept 2024	
	2025/26 (£million)	% of revenue budget represente d by gap	2010 per head	Inflation adjusted change 2010- 2024 per head	Inflation Adjuste d % change 2010- 2024	Estimated loss £m per year	Financia l loss per working age adult £ per year			All '000s	% Waiting within 18 weeks
England	£3,393.1	5.5%	£947	-£165	-21.1	£22,490	£640	£6,292.6	25.0	7573.2	58.5
Northumberland	£15.0	3.4%	£1,037	-£133	-14.8	£119	£620	£32.2	19.8	34.5	80.2
South Tyneside	£8.8	5.6%	£1,261	-£340	-36.9	£76	£810	£22.0	17.6	61.1	73.2
County Durham	£16.8	2.9%	£1,015	-£167	-19.7	£230	£700	£67.3	16.6	40.3	67.6
St. Helens	£5.2	2.7%	£1,080	-£193	-21.8	£85	£770	£23.5	23.2	81.0	57.8
Wigan	£15.6	5.4%	£939	-£157	-20.1	£142	£700	£39.6	25.3	52.1	54.7
Cumberland	£21.5	6.2%	£993	-£113	-12.8			£26.6		38.1	58.6
Allerdale						£35	£610		14.6		
Copeland						£25	£590		16.3		
Barnsley	£12.4	4.4%	£1,011	-£225	-28.6	£116	£760	£33.1	19.2	21.9	74.4

¹⁷⁶ <https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2024/09/Councils-on-the-brink-with-regional-appendix.pdf>

¹⁷⁷ Ogden, K. and Phillips, D. (2024) How English Councils Funding and Spending Change 2010-2024, IFS <https://ifs.org.uk/publications/how-have-english-councils-funding-and-spending-changed-2010-2024>

¹⁷⁸ Beatty, C. and Fothergill, S. (2018) : Welfare reform in the United Kingdom 2010–16: Expectations, outcomes, and local impacts, Social Policy and Administration. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/spol.12353> Updated data supplied to authors

¹⁷⁹ Based on data from DWP UC for August 2024 from Stat Xplore – Authors own calculation

¹⁸⁰ Authors own Local Authority analysis based on ONS (2024) Childcare accessibility by neighbourhood Source: Ofsted, 2021 Census data (ONS) via NOMIS (Crown Copyright) <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/educationandchildcare/articles/childcareaccessibilitybyneighbourhood/2024-06-04>

¹⁸¹ <https://www.england.nhs.uk/statistics/statistical-work-areas/rtt-waiting-times/rtt-data-2024-25/> Local Authority areas matched to nearest NHS hospital trust

	Council Funding Gap 2025/26 ¹⁷⁶		IFS local budget changes 2010-2024 ¹⁷⁷			Total Impact all benefit reforms 2010 to 2020/21 ¹⁷⁸		Universal credit £20 uplift removal – loss/yr (millions) ¹⁷⁹	Childcare places per 100 children aged 7 and under ¹⁸⁰ December 2023	NHS waiting lists ¹⁸¹ Sept 2024	
	2025/26 (£million)	% of revenue budget represente d by gap	2010 per head	Inflation adjusted change 2010- 2024 per head	Inflation Adjuste d % change 2010- 2024	Estimated loss £m per year	Financia l loss per working age adult £ per year			All '000s	% Waiting within 18 weeks
Doncaster	£16.5	6.1%	£991	£145	-17.1	£148	£770	£44.0	17.1	56.5	59.1
Rotherham	£6.6	2.0%	£988	£162	-19.7	£120	£740	£36.7	16.5	32.9	62.0
Sheffield	£22.5	4.1%	£1,065	£234	-28.2	£232	£610	£68.2	21.3	96.8	61.8
Wakefield	£23.0	8.1%	£905	£103	-12.9	£153	£720	£43.3	17.6	55.8	58.9
Nottinghamshire			£872	£115	-15.2						
Ashfield	£1.5	7.9%				£55	£700	£15.8	21.8	35.5	62.1
Bassetlaw	£0.0	0.0%				£47	£660	£13.1	13.7	56.5	59.1
Gedling	£0.4	2.7%				£43	£600	£10.6	25.0		
Mansfield	£3.6	20.7%				£52	£760	£14.7	18.2	35.5	62.1
Newark and Sherwood	£0.0	0.0%				£42	£570	£12.1	25.2	35.5	62.1
Derbyshire			£863	£128	-17.4						
Bolsover	£0.0	0.0%				£35	£710	£9.5	15.8		
Chesterfield	£2.2	16.3%				£45	£690	£12.1	21.5	29.0	54.8
North East Derbyshire	£1.0	0.6%				£34	£560	£9.0	18.8		
South Derbyshire	£1.5	7.6%				£32	£490	£9.1	24.8		
Leicestershire			£727	£58	-8.6						
North West Leicestershire	£0.4	2.2%				£32	£520	£8.9	31.1		
Staffordshire			£764	£50	-7.0						
North Staffordshire										74.5	56.1

	Council Funding Gap 2025/26 ¹⁷⁶		IFS local budget changes 2010-2024 ¹⁷⁷			Total Impact all benefit reforms 2010 to 2020/21 ¹⁷⁸		Universal credit £20 uplift removal – loss/yr (millions) ¹⁷⁹	Childcare places per 100 children aged 7 and under ¹⁸⁰ December 2023	NHS waiting lists ¹⁸¹ Sept 2024	
	2025/26 (£million)	% of revenue budget represente d by gap	2010 per head	Inflation adjusted change 2010- 2024 per head	Inflation Adjuste d % change 2010- 2024	Estimated loss £m per year	Financia l loss per working age adult £ per year			All '000s	% Waiting within 18 weeks
Newcastle-under-Lyme	£1.6	8.4%				£44	£530	£11.6	24.4		
Stoke-on-Trent	£24.6	13.0%	£1065	£194	-22.2	£141	£880	£39.5	20.2		
South Staffordshire											
Cannock Chase	£1.3	7.9%				£40	£640	£10.8	19.7	88.8	52.8
Warwickshire			£836	£77	-10.1					81.5	56.2
North Warwickshire	£0.0	0.0%				£21	£540	£6.1	19.7		
Nuneaton and Bedworth	£2.9	13.0%				£56	£700	£16.5	22.2		
Kent			£842	£81	-10.6						
Dover	£1.0	4.9%				£47	£680	£13.6	18.2	86.7	50.9

Table B2 Deprivation Indicators – England

	People claiming UC (% of people aged 18-65) Aug 2024 ¹⁸²			Qualifications 2021 Census ¹⁸³			English Indices of Deprivation (2019) ¹⁸⁴	
	Not in employment	In employment	All	% of people aged 16-64		% of people aged 16-24 No qualifications	Rank: England decile (1 most deprived – 10 least deprived)	Proportion of LSOAs or small areas in most deprived 10% nationally
				No qualifications	Level 4+			
England	10.8	6.6	17.3	12.4	37.1	11.1		
Northumberland	10.2	6.5	16.7	11.0	33.0	13.2	4	11.7
South Tyneside	15.5	8.3	23.7	13.0	29.7	12.2	1	24.5
County Durham	13.6	6.8	20.3	13.4	29.4	11.0	2	12.0
St. Helens	13.3	7.0	20.4	14.2	30.5	13.9	1	24.4
Wigan	11.8	7.1	19.0	13.5	28.9	13.1	3	16.5
Cumberland	9.5	6.3	15.8					
Allerdale				12.7	30.8	13.0	4	11.7
Copeland				13.0	28.7	12.3	3	6.1
Barnsley	13.7	7.5	21.3	17.5	26.0	15.4	2	21.8
Doncaster	14.5	8.1	22.6	18.1	24.7	16.8	2	23.7
Rotherham	14.7	7.4	22.1	16.2	25.6	14.3	2	21.6
Sheffield	12.4	6.1	18.5	13.6	36.4	8.9	2	23.8
Wakefield	11.8	7.4	19.2	17.4	26.8	14.6	2	15.8
Nottinghamshire								
Ashfield	12.3	7.6	19.9	15.0	24.5	14.0	3	16.2
Bassetlaw	10.7	7.3	18.0	14.0	27.8	12.9	4	7.1
Gedling	8.4	6.1	14.6	10.4	35.6	11.5	7	1.3

¹⁸² DWP UC Data for August 2024 from Stat Xplore with 2021 Census data from ONS via Nomis – Authors own calculation

¹⁸³ 2021 Census data (ONS) via NOMIS (Crown Copyright)

¹⁸⁴ English Indices of Deprivation 2019 <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/english-indices-of-deprivation>

	People claiming UC (% of people aged 18-65) Aug 2024 ¹⁸²			Qualifications 2021 Census ¹⁸³			English Indices of Deprivation (2019) ¹⁸⁴	
	Not in employment	In employment	All	% of people aged 16-64		% of people aged 16-24	Rank: England decile (1 most deprived – 10 least deprived)	Proportion of LSOAs or small areas in most deprived 10% nationally
				No qualifications	Level 4+			
Mansfield	12.5	8.3	20.8	17.3	24.5	16.0	2	14.9
Newark and Sherwood	9.5	6.4	15.9	12.3	30.8	13.2	5	4.3
North Derbyshire								
Bolsover	11.1	7.3	18.4	15.8	24.4	13.8	3	4.2
Chesterfield	11.4	7.2	18.6	12.8	29.5	12.0	3	8.7
North East Derbyshire	9.2	5.5	14.7	12.0	30.4	12.6	6	4.8
South Derbyshire	7.7	5.7	13.4	9.4	34.8	10.9		0.0
Leicestershire								
North West Leicestershire	7.8	5.6	13.4	11.2	33.1	11.3	7	3.5
Staffordshire								
North Staffordshire								
Newcastle-under-Lyme	8.8	6.1	14.8	12.3	31.2	9.1	5	2.5
Stoke-on-Trent	15.6	8.4	24.0	18.9	24.7	13.6	1	32.1
South Staffordshire								
Cannock Chase	10.1	6.8	16.9	14.2	25.5	13.9	5	3.3
Warwickshire								
North Warwickshire	8.6	6.3	14.9	13.2	27.9	12.7	6	2.6
Nuneaton and Bedworth	12.1	7.3	19.5	15.0	27.7	14.1	3	6.2
Kent								
Dover	12.4	7.1	19.5	12.0	29.1	13.3	4	7.5

Table B3 Health Inequality Indicators – England

	Avoidable mortality rate per 100,000 population, 2019-21 ¹⁸⁵			Long-term sickness % of people aged 16-64, 2021 ¹⁸⁶		Disability and General Health % of people aged 16-64, 2021 ¹⁸⁷			
	All	Treatable	Preventable	% of those economically inactive	% of all	Disabled		General Health	
						All	Day-to-day activities limited a lot	Not good (Fair, bad, very bad)	Bad/very bad
England	253.0	81.6	171.4	18.8	4.6	15.3	5.9	15.1	4.3
Northumberland	242.7	79.5	163.2	23.2	5.8	18.4	7.3	17.6	5.2
South Tyneside	346.0	101.8	244.2	27.4	7.6	20.5	9.2	20.0	6.7
County Durham	318.7	94.7	224.0	24.7	7.4	20.7	9.0	19.5	6.4
St. Helens	322.7	98.9	223.7	30.2	7.6	20.1	9.2	19.0	6.4
Wigan	321.5	97.6	223.9	27.1	6.2	17.8	7.7	17.2	5.3
Cumberland	297.3	88.8	208.5						
Allerdale				25.6	5.9	17.4	7.3	16.9	5.0
Copeland				26.3	6.4	18.4	8.0	18.2	5.8
Barnsley	337.3	104.4	232.9	29.3	7.4	20.0	9.0	20.0	6.5
Doncaster	322.6	97.7	225.0	24.6	6.4	18.2	7.8	18.7	5.8
Rotherham	325.1	110.6	214.5	26.1	6.8	19.0	8.3	18.8	6.0
Sheffield	279.3	87.1	192.2	17.6	5.4	17.8	6.9	16.8	5.0
Wakefield	317.4	95.6	221.8	26.5	6.4	18.1	7.6	18.2	5.6
Nottinghamshire									
Ashfield	305.4	92.5	212.9	28.3	6.7	19.8	8.3	19.7	6.0
Bassetlaw	272.0	89.9	182.1	24.4	5.6	18.1	7.3	17.9	5.1
Gedling	235.4	82.3	153.0	22.1	4.6	16.1	6.1	15.4	4.3
Mansfield	312.0	93.2	218.8	29.8	7.2	19.8	8.6	20.1	6.3

¹⁸⁵ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/causesofdeath/bulletins/avoidablemortalityinenglandandwales/2021and2022> and <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/vital-events/deaths/avoidable-mortality>

¹⁸⁶ 2021 Census data (ONS), Crown Copyright

¹⁸⁷ 2021 Census data (ONS), Crown Copyright

	Avoidable mortality rate per 100,000 population, 2019-21 ¹⁸⁵			Long-term sickness % of people aged 16-64, 2021 ¹⁸⁶		Disability and General Health % of people aged 16-64, 2021 ¹⁸⁷			
	All	Treatable	Preventable	% of those economically inactive	% of all	Disabled		General Health	
						All	Day-to-day activities limited a lot	Not good (Fair, bad, very bad)	Bad/very bad
Newark and Sherwood	242.3	82.3	160.0	22.1	5.2	17.4	6.9	16.9	4.8
North Derbyshire									
Bolsover	322.3	97.5	224.8	30.5	7.2	20.4	8.8	20.2	6.5
Chesterfield	303.5	96.4	207.0	30.2	7.4	20.9	8.6	20.4	6.2
North East Derbyshire	238.9	77.5	161.3	26.2	6.0	18.4	7.5	17.9	5.3
South Derbyshire	227.0	74.7	152.3	19.1	3.7	14.9	5.1	14.6	3.7
Leicestershire									
North West Leicestershire	247.6	83.7	163.9	19.3	3.9	15.0	5.2	14.6	3.8
North Staffordshire									
Newcastle-under-Lyme	287.1	88.0	199.1	21.2	5.3	18.1	6.7	17.0	5.1
Stoke-on-Trent	369.0	106.5	262.5	25.9	7.3	19.9	8.4	20.4	6.6
South Staffordshire									
Cannock Chase	285.4	95.4	190.0	25.8	5.5	17.6	6.9	17.9	5.2
Warwickshire									
North Warwickshire	254.8	94.5	160.3	21.5	4.3	15.8	5.9	15.9	4.5
Nuneaton and Bedworth	295.4	99.5	195.9	23.3	5.2	17.0	6.6	17.5	4.9
Kent									
Dover	272.10	79.5	192.6	23.9	5.9	18.8	7.6	17.6	5.4

Table B4 Deprivation Indicators by Gender – England

	Qualifications, 2021 ¹⁸⁸				Long-term sickness % of people aged 16-64, 2021 ¹⁸⁹		Disabled % of people aged 15- 64, 2021 ¹⁹⁰		People claiming UC (% of people aged 18-65) Aug 2024 ¹⁹¹	
	16-24 no qualifications		16-64 Level 4+		Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
	Women	Men	Women	Men						
England	9.9	12.2	39.4	34.7	4.7	4.5	16.8	13.3	19.9	14.7
Northumberland	11.8	14.4	36.4	29.5	5.7	5.8	19.5	16.4	19.3	14.0
South Tyneside	11.3	13.2	31.4	28.0	7.5	7.7	21.9	18.4	27.0	20.3
County Durham	9.6	12.4	32.3	26.5	7.5	7.3	22.3	18.5	23.3	17.3
St. Helens	12.5	15.3	33.8	27.1	7.7	7.6	21.4	18.1	23.5	17.2
Wigan	11.3	14.7	32.3	25.5	6.4	6.1	19.3	15.8	21.9	16.0
Cumberland							19.0	15.5	18.4	13.0
Allerdale	11.3	14.6	33.6	28.1	6.1	5.7				
Copeland	11.4	13.1	29.4	28.0	6.6	6.3				
Barnsley	13.6	17.2	29.1	22.7	7.6	7.2	21.6	17.7	24.7	17.7
Doncaster	14.9	18.7	27.3	22.1	6.8	6.1	19.5	15.5	26.5	18.7
Rotherham	12.8	15.6	27.8	23.3	6.9	6.8	20.3	17.0	25.0	19.0
Sheffield	8.2	9.7	38.3	34.5	5.3	5.4	19.7	15.9	20.8	16.2
Wakefield	12.9	16.2	29.4	24.0	6.5	6.2	19.5	15.7	22.5	15.8
Nottinghamshire										
Ashfield	11.9	16.0	26.5	22.4	7.0	6.4	21.3	17.3	23.2	16.4
Bassetlaw	11.2	14.3	30.8	24.9	5.8	5.5	19.2	15.5	21.4	14.6
Gedling	10.1	12.8	38.7	32.3	4.8	4.5	17.6	14.1	17.3	11.7
Mansfield	14.8	17.1	26.9	22.1	7.2	7.3	21.0	17.9	24.0	17.5

¹⁸⁸ 2021 Census data (ONS) Crown Copyright

¹⁸⁹ 2021 Census data (ONS) Crown Copyright

¹⁹⁰ 2021 Census data (ONS) Crown Copyright

¹⁹¹ DWP UC Data for August 2024 from Stat Xplore with 2021 Census from ONS and 2022 Census from GRO(S) – Authors own calculation

	Qualifications, 2021 ¹⁸⁸				Long-term sickness % of people aged 16-64, 2021 ¹⁸⁹		Disabled % of people aged 15- 64, 2021 ¹⁹⁰		People claiming UC (% of people aged 18-65) Aug 2024 ¹⁹¹	
	16-24 no qualifications		16-64 Level 4+		Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
	Women	Men	Women	Men						
Newark and Sherwood	12.0	14.2	33.6	28.0	5.5	4.9	18.7	14.8	19.0	12.8
North Derbyshire										
Bolsover	12.8	14.7	27.0	21.8	7.4	6.9	21.8	18.1	21.9	14.9
Chesterfield	10.5	13.4	32.1	26.8	7.3	7.5	22.2	18.8	21.1	16.0
North East Derbyshire	11.2	14.0	33.4	27.3	5.9	6.1	19.7	16.8	17.6	11.7
South Derbyshire	9.9	11.9	37.1	32.5	4.1	3.4	16.4	12.6	16.9	9.7
Leicestershire										
North West Leicestershire	9.7	12.9	35.4	30.7	4.2	3.6	17.0	12.8	16.2	10.4
North Staffordshire										
Newcastle-under-Lyme	7.7	10.4	34.3	28.0	5.4	5.2	19.8	15.9	17.2	12.4
Stoke-on-Trent	12.4	14.8	27.3	22.1	7.4	7.1	21.5	17.4	27.6	20.5
South Staffordshire										
Cannock Chase	11.8	15.8	28.8	22.1	5.8	5.2	19.8	15.1	20.2	13.4
Warwickshire										
North Warwickshire	10.8	14.5	31.2	24.7	4.5	4.2	17.3	13.7	18.4	11.3
Nuneaton and Bedworth	12.2	16.1	30.1	25.2	5.4	5.1	18.6	15.0	22.7	16.2
Kent										
Dover	12.3	14.3	32.5	25.5	6.0	5.9	20.2	16.6	22.4	16.5

Table C1 Austerity Indicators – Wales

	Council Funding Gap 2025/26 ¹⁹²		Total Impact all benefit reforms 2010 to 2020/21 ¹⁹³		Universal credit £20 uplift removal – loss/yr (millions) ¹⁹⁴	Childcare places per 100 children aged 7 and under ¹⁹⁵ March 2024	NHS waiting lists ¹⁹⁶ Sept 2024	
	(£million)	% of revenue budget represented by gap	Estimated loss £m per year	Financial loss per working age adult £ per year			Waiting to start treatment	% Waiting within 14 weeks
Wales	£379.5	4.7%	£1,360	£710	£361.1	26.8	166,715	80.3
Flintshire	£28.3	6.8%	£58	£620	£15.9	37.3	39,338	82.0
Wrexham	£12.6	3.4%	£58	£690	£16.2	38.2	39,338	82.0
Neath Port Talbot	£17.8	4.4%	£69	£780	£18.8	19.3	17,470	84.9
Rhondda Cynon Taff	£22.1	3.5%	£118	£790	£29.2	19.9	16,765	87.8
Merthyr Tydfil	£8.8	5.0%	£31	£840	£8.4	13.3	16,765	87.8
Caerphilly	£33.7	7.4%	£87	£780	£22.5	23.4	25,663	92.0
Blaenau Gwent	£6.0	2.6%	£36	£830	£10.4	15.6	25,663	92.0
Torfaen	£14.1	5.6%	£42	£740	£12.9	23.3	25,663	92.0

¹⁹² <https://www.unison.org.uk/content/uploads/2024/09/Councils-on-the-brink-with-regional-appendix.pdf>

¹⁹³ Beatty, C. and Fothergill, S. (2018) : Welfare reform in the United Kingdom 2010–16: Expectations, outcomes, and local impacts, Social Policy and Administration. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/spol.12353> Updated data supplied to authors

¹⁹⁴ Based on data from DWP UC for August 2024 from Stat Xplore – Authors own calculation

¹⁹⁵ Authors own Local Authority analysis based on 2021 Census data (Crown Copyright) via Nomis and SASS returns from <https://www.careinspectorate.wales/data-tools>

¹⁹⁶ <https://stats.wales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/NHS-Hospital-Waiting-Times/Diagnostic-and-Therapy-Services/waiting-times-by-weeks-wait-hospital> Local Authority areas matched to nearest NHS hospital trust

Table C2 Deprivation Indicators – Wales

	People claiming UC (% of people aged 18-65) Aug 2024 ¹⁹⁷			Qualifications 2021/2022 Censuses ¹⁹⁸			Wels Index of Multiple Deprivation (2019) ¹⁹⁹	
	Not in employment	In employment	All	% of people aged 16-64		% of people aged 16-24	Rank: Wales (1-22) rank	Proportion of LSOAs or small areas in most deprived 10% nationally
				No qualifications	Level 4+	No qualifications		
Wales	11.8	6.8	18.6	13.7	34.3	11.3		
Flintshire	10.0	6.5	16.5	12.2	32.0	12.7	=18	3.0
Wrexham	11.6	7.6	19.1	14.8	31.4	14.3	=12	7.0
Neath Port Talbot	14.0	7.1	21.1	16.1	29.0	12.4	5	15.0
Rhondda Cynon Taff	12.8	6.7	19.5	16.8	29.8	12.6	=4	18.0
Merthyr Tydfil	14.2	8.3	22.5	19.8	27.8	15.9	2	22.0
Caerphilly	13.4	7.1	20.5	16.7	28.6	13.4	9	10.0
Blaenau Gwent	16.1	8.2	24.3	20.2	24.6	13.9	6	13.0
Torfaen	14.4	8.2	22.6	14.7	29.7	13.7	14	5.0

¹⁹⁷ DWP UC Data for August 2024 from Stat Xplore with 2021 Census from ONS and 2022 Census from GRO(S) – Authors own calculation

¹⁹⁸ 2021 Census data (ONS) via NOMIS (Crown Copyright)

¹⁹⁹ Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation - 2019. <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Community-Safety-and-Social-Inclusion/Welsh-Index-of-Multiple-Deprivation>

Table C3 Health Inequality Indicators – Wales

	Avoidable mortality rate per 100,000 population, 2019-21 ²⁰⁰			Long-term sickness % of people aged 16-64, 2021 ²⁰¹		Disability and General Health % of people aged 16-64, 2021 ²⁰²			
	All	Treatable	Preventable	% of those economically inactive	% of all	Disabled		General Health	
						All	Day-to-day activities limited a lot	Not good (Fair, bad, very bad)	Bad/very bad
Wales	224.6	87.1	137.5	21.1	6.9	19.5	8.6	18.3	6.0
Flintshire	268.1	91.4	176.7	23.8	5.1	16.7	6.9	16.1	4.8
Wrexham	307.1	104.2	202.9	23.9	5.9	18.6	7.8	17.9	5.3
Neath Port Talbot	336.6	111.5	225.1	30.8	9.6	23.2	11.5	21.2	7.7
Rhondda Cynon Taff	319.7	99.6	220.2	30.6	8.6	21.7	10.2	20.7	7.1
Merthyr Tydfil	388.0	119.4	268.6	34.0	9.6	22.2	11.4	21.6	8.2
Caerphilly	330.2	104.1	226.1	32.2	8.7	21.9	10.5	21.3	7.5
Blaenau Gwent	385.6	138.4	247.1	36.1	10.5	23.0	11.6	23.4	8.5
Torfaen	303.6	103.9	199.7	30.4	8.0	21.8	9.9	21.2	7.1

²⁰⁰ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/causesofdeath/bulletins/avoidablemortalityinenglandandwales/2021and2022> and <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/vital-events/deaths/avoidable-mortality>

²⁰¹ 2021 Census data (ONS), Crown Copyright

²⁰² 2021 Census data (ONS), Crown Copyright

Table A4: Deprivation Indicators by Gender

	Qualifications, 2021 ²⁰³				Long-term sickness % of people aged 16-64, 2021 ²⁰⁴		Disabled % of people aged 15- 64, 2021 ²⁰⁵		People claiming UC (% of people aged 18-65) Aug 2024 ²⁰⁶	
	16-24 no qualifications		16-64 Level 4+		Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
	Women	Men	Women	Men						
Wales	10.0	12.5	37.5	31.0	7.1	6.7	21.2	17.0	21.5	15.7
Flintshire	11.5	13.7	35.1	28.8	5.4	4.9	18.3	14.4	19.5	13.4
Wrexham	13.3	15.2	35.1	27.7	6.0	5.8	19.8	15.9	23.0	15.3
Neath Port Talbot	11.8	13.0	32.0	26.0	10.2	9.0	25.5	20.5	24.6	17.5
Rhondda Cynon Taff	10.6	14.6	33.0	26.5	8.8	8.4	23.6	19.2	23.1	15.7
Merthyr Tydfil	13.3	18.4	31.6	23.8	10.0	9.1	24.2	19.5	26.9	17.8
Caerphilly	11.8	14.8	31.7	25.3	9.0	8.4	23.9	19.0	23.8	16.9
Blaenau Gwent	12.0	15.6	28.5	20.6	10.9	10.0	25.2	20.3	28.1	20.4
Torfaen	11.6	15.7	33.1	26.2	8.3	7.6	24.1	19.0	26.2	18.8

²⁰³ 2021 Census data (ONS) Crown Copyright

²⁰⁴ 2021 Census data (ONS) Crown Copyright

²⁰⁵ 2021 Census data (ONS) Crown Copyright

²⁰⁶ DWP UC Data for August 2024 from Stat Xplore with 2021 Census from ONS and 2022 Census from GRO(S) – Authors own calculation

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