

# UNLOCKING POTENTIAL IN A CRISIS: A REVIEW OF LOCAL AUTHORITY RECOVERY PLANS IN RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Thomas Moniz, Sigrun Clark, Shivangi Talwar, Prof Cecilia Vindrola-Padros


## Rapid Research Evaluation and Appraisal Lab (RREAL)

Department of Targeted Intervention  
University College London (UCL)  
Charles Bell House  
43-45 Foley Street  
London  
W1W 7TY

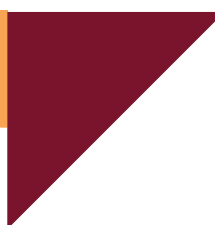
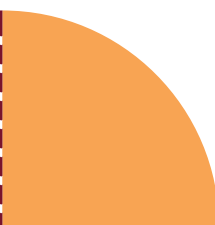
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**Contact:** Prof. Cecilia Vindrola

 [c.vindrola@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:c.vindrola@ucl.ac.uk)

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## 1. SUMMARY

Under the challenging circumstances brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, local authorities have shown their agility and adaptability to develop plans that addressed recovery and renewal, with a focus on **people, place and economy**. This rapid review draws together the available evidence on the plans developed by a sample of local authorities in England. It considers the key themes found across the responses as well as the ways in which local authorities adapted their ways of working to drive innovation and provides a number of case studies to explore this in greater depth. It also illuminates some of the constraints that local authorities faced, which have implications for their future ability to respond to crises.

### KEY INSIGHTS:

- The plans sought to both **capitalise on positive trends** brought about by the pandemic - such as active travel, remote working, and digital connectivity – and to **advance previous agendas**, for example on environmental or net zero objectives.
- A key theme was **addressing existing inequalities** that were exacerbated by the pandemic, such as improving employment, skills, and welfare offers.
- The plans also illustrated a shift among local authorities towards **more collaborative forms of working** with Local Enterprise Partnerships, Chambers of Commerce, public services such as health and social services, the voluntary sector, and with other local authorities to pool resources and draw on the expertise of different actors.
- Many local authorities lacked the resources to fully fund their recovery plans, which meant that funding requests to central government was a core element of their response. In many cases, recovery plans were not fully funded, and the scope of implementation was limited. This has highlighted that, despite devolution initiatives, **England's system of local governance remains a multi-level patchwork**, with local authorities' dependant on central government for funding.

### PRINCIPLES:

Drawing on the findings of this review, we recommend three broad principles for the UK Government and local authorities to enable greater policy innovation, especially when a crisis demands swift changes in ways of working:

- 1. The UK Government should devolve greater powers to local authorities**, including giving them increased ability to determine how to make use of existing funding and raise additional funds in order to pursue their strategic local priorities.
- 2. The UK Government should ensure local authorities have access to more flexible funding opportunities** that are not timebound, ring-fenced or competitive, as has been the case for Levelling Up Funding.
- 3. Local authorities should prioritise increasing collaborative working**, including seeking input from local businesses, services, and community groups to develop their strategic plans. In particular, where a crisis situation requires swift policy change and adaptation, it is essential to include all interlocking levels of governance and neighbouring local authorities in developing a collective strategic response.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

Local government in England can be primarily perceived as having two roles: firstly, the localised delivery of centrally prescribed services (among them are functions such as social care, schools, housing and planning, leisure, waste collection and business support); and, secondly as a democratic body, responding to local resident needs and expectations.

COVID-19 created a very challenging situation for local authorities with a road to recovery operating against a bleak financial outlook compounded by a substantial loss in locally generated revenue due to restrictions on social, business and leisure activities. The pandemic has had severe effects on local communities and implications for how councils manage their usual ways of working. This review seeks to understand to what extent the unprecedented circumstances caused local authorities to think differently about their approach to policy and the opportunities and challenges that arose.

## 3. AIMS

This rapid policy review draws together the available evidence on the plans that local authorities in England developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, focusing on economic as well as societal recovery and renewal. The purpose of this review is to use these recovery plans as a lens for local and combined government activity and innovation. This exercise includes an analysis of the embedding of three key thematic areas of strategic priority for local authorities identified by the International Public Policy Observatory within these plans: Net Zero, Place and Spatial Inequality, and Socio-Economic Inequalities. The review additionally scans for other prominent themes identified across the plans.

This overall aim was addressed by:

- a. Mapping local policy responses to COVID-19 through identifying and analysing local authority COVID-19 recovery plans.
- b. Summarising the common themes of recovery plans and policy responses.
- c. Conducting 'deep dive' case study analysis on selected recovery plans which focus strongly on one or more of the key strategic themes identified for review.

The review was guided by the following questions:

- a. What differences exist between local areas in terms of the geographic location, demography, and political leadership?
- b. Are there common themes across recovery plans?
- c. What policy innovations have been introduced through recovery plans?
- d. Which plans have progressed to policy action and implementation?
- e. What do they tell us about key local policy challenges?
- f. What assessment of impact of recovery plans has been possible?

## 4. IDENTIFICATION OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

The review sought to include a sample of local authorities from all levels of local governance in England. The identification and categorisation of the local authorities was based on the UK Government list of councils in England in 2023 [1]. The six different types of local authorities included in this review are listed below:

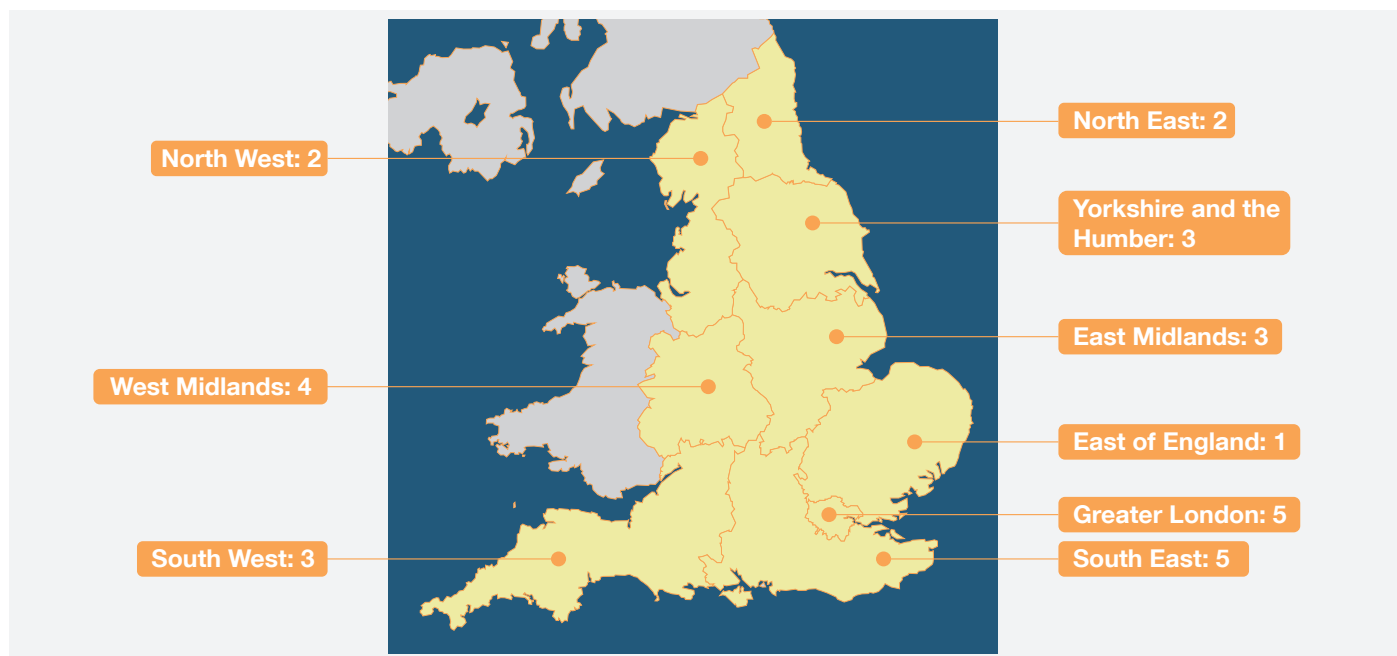
- a. London boroughs, Greater London Authority (GLA) and City of London Corporation
- b. Combined authorities
- c. Metropolitan districts
- d. Unitary authorities
- e. County councils (including one County LEP)
- f. District councils

These local authorities were selected to represent a diverse sample, in terms of the type of authority (based on the list above), their regional location in England, their political leadership (as of June 2023) and their demography in terms of population size and percentage of household deprivation. The Office for National Statistics (ONS) area profile tool [2] was used to identify the 35 local authorities that varied in these domains. The percentage of household deprivation was based on the percentage of households within the local authority that were not deprived in any dimension including education, employment, health and housing [3]. A higher percentage per authority would indicate a lower level of deprivation.

## 4.1 THE GEOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES

A total of 28 plans were included in the review based on their diversity in characteristics to ensure maximum variation. These 28 plans were published by areas within the nine different regions of England. A summary of the number of published plans per region can be seen in the map below. An overview of the different types of local authority in this sample can be found in Appendix 1. A summary of the diverse characteristics of the local authorities included can be found in Appendix 2 and a table of local authority characteristics in Appendix 3.

**Figure 1. The regional spread of plans included within this review**



## 5. DEVELOPMENT OF CASE STUDIES

Following the identification of the local authorities and the review of policies implemented across their recovery plans, the research team developed in-depth case studies with representatives from a sample of five local authorities.

The aim of the case studies was to confirm the following with the local representatives:

- Have any additional innovative policies been formed due to the COVID-19 pandemic?
- Which plans have progressed to policy action and implementation?
- What are some of the key local policy challenges?
- What assessment of impact of recovery plans has taken place?

The local authorities were chosen to produce a diverse sample in terms of the type of authority, the region they are located in, their political leadership and their level of household deprivation.

The case studies were developed as a result of conducting in-depth interviews based on topic guides developed to meet the study aims. Interviews were conducted with local authority staff who were involved in developing or implementing the plans shared in this review.

## 6. FINDINGS

The next section sets out key findings from the plans. Across the 28 plans, local authorities sought to harness the pandemic recovery to accelerate pre-pandemic policy agendas such as net zero, and address policy areas such as socio-economic inequality that were exacerbated by the pandemic. A noticeable trend is that many local authorities' plans were developed in collaboration with other authorities, local services, business groups and the voluntary sector in a shift towards an increasingly whole system approach to local governance.

The section firstly provides an overview of the plans' characteristics and scope, it then goes onto to discuss key policy innovations that were either part of an acceleration of pre-COVID policy agendas or that emerged as part of a policy reset in light of the pandemic. Policy actions relating to the key strategic themes identified for review of focus (net zero, place and spatial inequality, and socio-economic inequality) and the other core themes (business and economy, young people, health, changes to the council) that emerged are also presented. Finally, the findings from the case studies are presented paying attention to the discussions around the acceleration of pre-COVID agendas, the importance of collaborative working and recommendations to overcome key policy challenges.

### 6.1 OVERVIEW OF PLANS

A summary of the recovery plans included within this review can be found in Appendix 4.

The plans vary in their length and their scope in relation to their recovery strategies. For example, the North Northamptonshire plan is approximately a page long and is composed of brief bullet points relating to 'economic, community and organisational recovery' (2021). In comparison to the majority of plans the Oxfordshire Emergency Response Plan, which is integrated with other plans, is highly detailed at 54 pages long and including over 70 actions (2021). Three of the recovery plans were published in a webpage format instead of PDF format (Isle of Wight, 2020; South Tyneside, 2020; North Northamptonshire 2021). The remaining 25 plans were all published online as PDF documents.

#### 6.1.1 COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS AND ENGAGEMENT

Some local councils under the umbrella of a larger local authority worked together to create shared plans and pool resources. This was particularly notable of three pairs of district councils' belonging to the same counties, working in partnership (Adur & Worthing, 2020; Broadland & South Norfolk, 2020; East Lindsey & Boston, 2020). These councils which all neighbour each other regularly cooperate and share responsibilities. There is also the South London Partnership (SLP) which is a sub-regional cross-party collaboration of five London boroughs: Croydon, Kingston-upon-Thames, Merton, Richmond-upon-Thames, and Sutton (2020). One facet of this review is the extent of potential duplication, with some lower tier councils producing their own documents even though the wider County Council or Combined Authority wherein they are situated conducted parallel work.

Oxfordshire's Economic Recovery Plan is the only plan included here which was not published by the local authority for the area and instead by Oxfordshire's Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP). Nevertheless, the plan involves "close strategic liaison and progress review" in collaboration with the Council, and many of the deliverables are to be implemented by the County and District Council's (Oxfordshire, 2021, p.36). Sheffield's plan is specifically framed as a 'business recovery plan' and was produced by Sheffield City Council's Business Response Group – a co-operation between the Cabinet Member for Business and Investment and the private sector (2020, p.1).

Recovery responses have also involved substantial joint working with different public service providers alongside well-established charity sector bodies, as well as drawing on the support of a myriad of neighbourhood and mutual aid groups, local businesses and members of the public. Four of the plans were directly informed by public consultation (GLA, 2020; West of England, 2020; City of London, 2021; Wigan, 2021). The City of London notes specifically that it consulted 4,670 members of the public (2021,

p.3). The three Combined Authority plans were all developed in collaboration with local councils, LEPs and business leaders (South Yorkshire, 2020; West Midlands, 2020; West of England, 2020).

The majority of the plans included only limited information about how they were developed or simply stated that they were developed by the local authority themselves.

## 6.1.2 SCOPE

Only three of the 28 plans were not explicitly published as recovery plans (Harrow, 2020; Bath & North East Somerset, 2020; Middlesbrough, 2021). Nevertheless, the three councils all considered the impact of the pandemic and integrated measures aimed at recovering from it into their various policy strategies. The Harrow 10-year Economic strategy, Middlesbrough Strategic Plan and Bath and North East Somerset Corporate Strategy were all developed in 2020 prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, but were subsequently adapted to reflect the challenges brought on by it (Bath & North East Somerset, 2021; Harrow, 2021; Middlesbrough, 2021). Some plans include policies explicitly adapted from other strategies. The West Midlands plan, for example, states that areas of industry support are directly adapted from its 2019 Local Industrial Strategy, with a focus on the green economy, health care and high-speed rail services (2020, p.2). Plans had different timeframes for the implementation of recovery interventions, as exemplified by Harrow's 2020-2030 Economic Strategy (2021), in contrast to Sheffield City Region's 18-month timeline and Cornwall's one year timeline (South Yorkshire, 2020). Twenty-one of the plans included a time frame for implementation ranging from two to five years. While the remaining four plans had no clear timeline at all (Solihull, 2020; Lewisham 2021; North Northamptonshire, 2021; Rother, 2021).

All the documents reviewed are contextualised as being grounded in the economic and societal recovery to the fallout caused by COVID-19 and resuming interrupted policy agendas. Nevertheless, 12 of the plans raise the need to address the primarily economic, employment and supply chain challenges brought on by the UK's exit from the EU (Cornwall, 2020; Isle of Wight, 2020; Lancashire, 2020; West Midlands, 2020; West Sussex, 2020; Worcestershire, 2020; Bradford, 2021; Harrow, 2021; Oxfordshire, 2021; Rother, 2021; SLP, 2021; South Tyneside, 2021). The plans do not go into depth in their coverage of Brexit but acknowledge the need to prepare for and respond to the challenges it will bring and take advantage of any opportunities.

A survey undertaken by Lichfields highlights that most local authorities and LEPs have used their initial recovery as an opportunity to reset policy agendas; to build future resilience within the local economy and respond to wider structural shifts brought about and accelerated by the pandemic [4]. While our findings indicate there has been some reset to the policy agenda, overall, the recovery was used to accelerate existing policies and respond to wider structural challenges exacerbated by the pandemic. The survey also found that 71% of local authorities at the time aimed to revisit economic strategies to reflect the challenges and opportunities and ensure objectives are suitable in a rapidly changing environment [4]. This finding has been supported by a number of plans included in this review such as the Harrow 10-year Economic Strategy, Middlesbrough Strategic Plan and Bath and North East Somerset Corporate Strategy.

## 6.2 POLICY ACCELERATION AND INNOVATION ACROSS THE RECOVERY PLANS

Across the plans, there were some notable policy innovations, some which seek to capitalise on changes brought about by the pandemic such as increased local connectivity including 15-minute communities, remote and hybrid working and, digital access and inclusivity. Other policy areas pre-date the pandemic but gained importance in light of its effects and appear to be undergoing an acceleration in the plans, such as regarding net zero (particularly retrofitting housing), targeting inequalities and investing in health and social care, and engaging with local communities. The case studies also identified accelerations to policy change such as changing to flexible and remote working, enhancing digital connectivity and increasing collaboration between and within authorities. They also proclaimed that these changes were positive legacies resulting from the pandemic and that have been maintained in the long term. More detail on the case study findings will be discussed in the later sections of this report.

## 6.2.1 LIVING LOCALLY – CONNECTIVITY AND 15-MIN COMMUNITIES

The pandemic underscored health inequalities due to the lack of access to green spaces and poorly designed communities with insufficient access to amenities.

An important aspect of recovery across several of the plans was to enable ‘15-minute cities / neighbourhoods’ or simply making it more accessible to live locally (GLA, 2020; West of England, 2020; Bradford, 2021; Harrow, 2021; Oxfordshire, 2021; SLP, 2021). The focus of this urban planning policy was on addressing place and spatial inequality, to ensure that most daily necessities and services, such as work, shopping, education, healthcare, leisure facilities, as well as green (e.g. gardens, parks, woods) or blue (e.g. rivers, ponds, canals) infrastructure can be easily reached within 15-minutes’ walk or cycle from any point within a city or neighbourhood and deliver environmental benefits for the community. The policy has gained importance as a way of making places more liveable, capitalising on the renewed importance of local neighbourhoods and living locally. This is especially relevant in light of habits that changed during the pandemic such as the rise of active travel and remote working. Under such a policy, local authorities can invest in infrastructure and repurpose unused buildings to enable local employment, remote and near home working and modernise urban centres.

*“As a result of restrictions and changing consumer behaviour, the “15-minute community” concept has resonated deeply across Oxfordshire. The County’s dispersed and polycentric geography lends itself more easily to adaptive ways of working and the localisation of economies caused by restrictions on movement.”* (Oxfordshire, 2021, p.5).

In general, enabling remote and near home working, building active travel infrastructure and improving digital and transport connectivity and local services featured prominently across the plans. Rother emphasises the importance of home working for rural communities, who previously spent more time commuting, to enable “life back into local village communities”, whilst also reducing carbon emissions (Rother, 2020, p.8). Lewisham meanwhile planned to beneficially build on the increase in walking and cycling that occurred as behaviour changes during the pandemic (2021, p.4).

## 6.2.2 DIGITAL ACCESS AND INCLUSIVITY

As the pandemic exposed digital inequalities it also provided an opportunity for local authorities to improve digital access and digital inclusivity.

While the pandemic has accelerated digital trends, it has also accentuated digital divides in terms of skills, connectivity, uptake and access. It is therefore vital that communities invest in addressing these divides to help ‘level-up’ and drive economic and social recovery. Improving digital access was an important aspect of many plans in relation to making places more inclusive and retaining shifts to hybrid and remote forms of working (Adur & Worthing, 2020; Cornwall, 2020; GLA, 2020; Isle of Wight, 2020; Lancashire, 2020; Nottinghamshire 2020; Solihull, 2020; South Tyneside, 2020; South Yorkshire; West of England, 2020; West Sussex, 2020; Worcestershire 2020; Bradford 2021; Harrow; 2021; Oxfordshire, 2021; Rother, 2021; SLP, 2021; Wigan, 2021). Policies include digital training and upskilling, improving digital infrastructure such as broadband and 5G networks and providing financing to access internet services. Improving digital access was widespread across all areas of the country but was attributed particular importance regarding spatial inequalities such as in social housing and rural areas. The GLA’s plan has a particular emphasis on digital inclusivity with one of its nine missions being ‘Digital Access for All’ (GLA, 2020, p.7).

## 6.2.3 NET ZERO AND RETROFITTING HOUSING

Net zero was an area with visible acceleration under the plans with focus on active travel, low traffic neighbourhoods, local supply chains and growing the green economy.

Retrofitting existing infrastructure, especially housing and building zero carbon new builds is central to many of the plans. Many of the local authorities have taken a co-benefit approach as they seek to boost



energy efficiency and cut emissions, reduce fuel poverty and create training and employment opportunities (Adur & Worthing, 2020; East Lindsey & Boston, 2020 GLA, 2020; Nottinghamshire, 2020; South Tyneside, 2020; South Yorkshire, 2020; West Midlands, 2020; West of England, 2020; West Sussex, 2020; Bath & North East Somerset, 2021; Bradford, 2021; City of London, 2021; Harrow, 2021; Rother, 2021; Wigan, 2021). Training and redeploying people who were made redundant during COVID-19 was flagged as an important aspect to retrofit programmes due to an ageing workforce exacerbated by the pandemic and Brexit related skills shortages (Nottinghamshire, 2020).

#### 6.2.4 LINKING EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT IN ADDITION TO THE 'NO WRONG DOOR' POLICY

Socio-economic inequalities were exacerbated by the pandemic and many local authorities emphasised the importance of providing support especially within education and employment.

During the pandemic many people lost their jobs and sources of income. Many young people were unable to access employment opportunities after finishing school or university, as such policies supporting and linking education and employment were pushed to the fore (Cornwall, 2020; GLA, 2020; Isle of Wight, 2020; Lancashire, 2020; Nottinghamshire 2020; Solihull, 2020; South Yorkshire, 2020; West Midlands, 2020; West of England, 2020; West Sussex, 2020; Worcestershire 2020; Bradford, 2021; Oxfordshire). Local authorities in London and Bradford discussed the 'No Wrong Door' approach to address socio-economic inequalities (GLA, 2020; Bradford, 2021; Harrow, 2021; SLP, 2021). This measure supports collaboration and integration between support services and employment providers, in an attempt to ensure that employment and enterprise provide a secure route out of poverty. The policy seeks to coordinate skills, career and employment support for those who have been long-term unemployed, are at risk of redundancy, or face other barriers such as having a disability, health condition or being a young person in care. It also aims to ensure that all young people have a better understanding of careers services and their options on leaving school.

#### 6.2.5 THE HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE WORKFORCE

The pandemic laid bare many of the weaknesses in the health and social care sector, as such many of the plans underline the need to enable access to health and social care professions and invest in the sector.

Health and social care in England were in a fragile state prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, and under the pressure of the pandemic weaknesses in the care system were acutely exposed [5]. Investing in infrastructure, education and training to build a sufficient and sustainable workforce in the health and social care sector was an important aspect of the recovery for many local authorities as they sought to upgrade local health service offers and 'build back better' in line with the Governments approach (GLA, 2020; Isle of Wight, 2020; Lancashire, 2020; Nottinghamshire, 2020; Solihull, 2020; South Yorkshire, 2020; West Midlands, 2020; West of England, 2020; West Sussex, 2020; Bradford, 2021; Harrow, 2021; Oxfordshire, 2021). An important aspect of the investment is enabling greater access to vocational pathways, increasing training opportunities, re-skilling and upskilling staff, establishing more widespread local clinics and upscaling digital health services to relieve pressure from hospitals. The West Midlands plan specifically identifies the need to retrain workers for in demand sectors such as health and social care, this is echoed across other plans.

#### 6.2.6 ORGANISATIONAL REFORMS BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES

The pandemic changed the way that local authorities work and led many of them to make active changes in the work culture.

Five of the plans also discussed plans to 'innovate' the way the council and its employees work (Adur & Worthing, 2020; Broadland & South Norfolk, 2020; North Northamptonshire, 2021; Bath & North East Somerset, 2021; Wychavon, 2021). One aspect of this innovation was retaining shifts to home working by council employees that occurred during the pandemic, contributing to reduced travel pollution, and

leading to future savings regarding office space. The same plans equally call for digital upskilling of staff and investment in technology to facilitate new and efficient ways of working by continuing the shift to hybrid and virtual meetings and ensuring employees all have access to communication platforms such as Microsoft Teams.

During the pandemic local authorities saw their income streams severely decreased due to restrictions on social, economic and leisure activity, while their expenditures rose enormously. Several plans discuss ways to increase their income generation through commercial activities and reduce expenditure by cutting base costs (Adur & Worthing, 2020; Broadland & South Norfolk, 2020; Bath & North East Somerset, 2021).

## 6.2.7 LOCAL AUTHORITY CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Some of the plans were partially based on community engagement and several plans made commitments to improving their civic engagement.

Throughout the pandemic, councils have made significant efforts to continue to lead and represent their communities and seek to maintain democratic processes and engage residents in designing and delivering the recovery (Adur & Worthing, 2020; GLA, 2020; West of England, 2020; Bath & North East Somerset, 2021; City of London, 2021; North Northamptonshire, 2021; Wigan, 2021). Some councils aim to uphold more transparent democratic processes, even in a virtual context, as evidenced by North Northamptonshire's plans to invest in their Council Chambers and make them virtually accessible to the public, enabling a higher level of public scrutiny (2021). Adur and Worthing's plan builds on community activity which was present during the lockdown (2020). The districts' plan to harness the networks that emerged to co-produce platforms and connect people across different generations (Adur & Worthing, 2020; p.8).

Co-production and community led initiatives were visible in the plans, reflecting general aims to be more inclusive, as they offer means of designing and delivering services in a more democratic way which gives local residents control over the decisions which effect their lives, with some local authorities emphasising the need to consider the view of the most vulnerable or most affected (Adur & Worthing, 2020; GLA, 2020; Isle of Wight, 2020; West of England, 2020; Bradford, 2021; Wigan, 2021). This suggests a shift to more deliberative forms of local governance which fundamentally perceives citizens as resources and assets who can be equal partners in developing and delivering policies to improve outcomes, as opposed to simply being viewed as passive consumers of services.

## 6.3 COMMON PLANS TO RECOVERY ACROSS POLICY AREAS

The researchers identified the most prominent themes including the strategic areas identified for review, that certain policy actions from the plans could be grouped under. The following themes are presented below, in the same order: net zero, place and spatial inequalities, socio-economic inequalities, young people, health, and actions within the councils. The councils which used the specific policy actions are listed and some examples from local authorities are used to illustrate policies in a non-exhaustive manner.

### 6.3.1 NET ZERO

Net zero focussed policies and tackling the climate crisis are prominent themes present across 26 of the 28 recovery plans. Only two plans omit any reference to the climate, net zero or the environment (Broadland & South Norfolk; North Northamptonshire, 2021).

## INCREASING THE GREEN ECONOMY BY PRODUCING MORE GREEN PROFESSIONS

Thirteen of the plans emphasise creating more jobs contributing to the green economy (GLA, 2020; West Midlands, 2020; South Yorkshire, 2020; Solihull, 2020; Bath & North East Somerset, 2020; Worcestershire, 2020; Lancashire, 2020; West Sussex, 2020; Nottinghamshire, 2020; Bradford, 2021; East Lindsey & Boston, 2021; Oxfordshire, 2021; Wigan, 2021; Wychavon 2021). An example of these plans includes

those by Sheffield City Region that aims to create more jobs through building retrofits, flood prevention works and support for green energy projects including solar, hydrogen and heat pumps (South Yorkshire, 2020, p.45).

## **SUPPORTING CIRCULAR BUSINESSES, REDUCED WASTE AND LOW CARBON LOCAL SUPPLY CHAINS**

Eight plans discussed supporting circular local businesses with reduced waste and low carbon initiatives (East Lindsey & Boston, 2020; GLA, 2020; Solihull, 2020; Harrow, 2021; Bradford, 2021; Adur & Worthing, 2020; Cornwall, 2020; Bath & North East Somerset, 2021). The District Councils of East Lindsey and Boston highlight their “Buy Local” procurement practices, which reduce the transport related carbon footprint and contribute to the local economy by supporting local suppliers (East Lindsey & Boston, 2020). The plans of Adur & Worthing also aim to support local supply chains through supporting local food systems to expand production, whilst also better managing the use of food waste and creating better access to healthy food for everyone, along with a food depot and food drops programme for the vulnerable (Adur & Worthing, 2020, p.8). As such, it seeks to target socio-economic based health inequality and encourages local supply chains. Part of Bradford’s ‘Green Economy’ initiative is to build a circular economy encouraging local businesses to invest in the reprocessing of recycled or by-product materials (2021, p.36).

## **TACKLING FUEL INEQUALITY BY RETROFITTING, PROVIDING RENEWABLE ENERGY SOURCES AND DEVELOPING ZERO CARBON NEW BUILDS**

Ten of the plans address the need to decarbonise by improving existing infrastructure and developing zero carbon new builds (East Lindsey & Boston, 2020; GLA, 2020; South Yorkshire, 2020; West Midlands, 2020; West Sussex, 2020; Bath & North East Somerset, 2021; Bradford, 2021; City of London, 2021; Harrow, 2021; Wigan, 2021). Some councils such as Adur and Worthing Districts vaguely cite the need to push the transition to renewable energy to reach climate targets (2020). South Tyneside’s plan contains more specific provisions regarding its efforts to decarbonise with a request to government for £80,000 in funding for the Holborn Renewable Energy Network which will see the creation of a low-carbon heat network and cut emissions by 20% providing 10 gigawatts of annual heating for the area, this would be enough energy to power 10 million UK homes for 1 hour [6] (2020). However, the plan does not outline which energy source will fuel the network. Twelve of the local authorities also note the importance of tackling fuel inequality by retrofitting to improve existing infrastructure to make it more energy efficient (Adur & Worthing, 2020; GLA, 2020; Nottinghamshire, 2020; South Tyneside, 2020; South Yorkshire, 2020; West Midlands, 2020; West of England, 2020; West Sussex, 2020; Bath & North East Somerset, 2021; Bradford, 2021; Harrow, 2021; Rother, 2021). The West Midlands’ plan discusses plans to provide funding for immediate energy efficiency measures for 6,000 fuel impoverished homes (2020, p.5).

## **INCREASING ACCESS TO AND REGENERATING GREEN AND AQUATIC SPACES**

An important aspect of many of the plans is increasing access to and improving the quality of green spaces and natural environments (Adur & Worthing, 2020; GLA, 2020; Sheffield, 2020; Solihull, 2020; South Yorkshire, 2020; Bath & North East Somerset, 2021; City of London, 2021; East Lindsey & Boston, 2021; Middlesbrough, 2021; Rother, 2021; Wigan, 2021; Wychavon, 2021). For the largely rural district of Rother a notable feature is its policy to work with local environment officers to green and rewild spaces, with benefits envisaged for the environment and wildlife as well as for the health and wellbeing of residents and the aesthetics of the area in general (2020, p.7). One of the plans also includes a provision for working with partners to regenerate local marine and estuarine ecosystems (Adur & Worthing, 2020). The aim of this policy is improving water quality, restoring kelp, seagrass and saltmarsh habitats, delivering a range of ecosystem services including increased fish stocks, carbon capture, biodiversity offsetting, and flood risk management (Adur & Worthing, 2020, p.10).

## REGENERATING BROWNFIELD SITES TO BUILD NEW HOMES

Three local authorities also include plans for the regeneration of brownfield sites for new buildings and homes (East Lindsey & Boston, 2020; West Midlands, 2020; Middlesbrough, 2021). The West Midlands' Plan seeks government investment to bring forward at least 35,000 homes (including 15,000 affordable homes) delivered on regenerated brownfield sites, which support the aim of tackling housing inequality and creates more jobs (2020, p.3). The aim is multi-faceted, seeking to improve the local housing offer and target socio-economic inequalities while creating local employment and regenerating the environment.

## SUPPORTING ACTIVE TRAVEL AND GREENER TRANSPORT TO REDUCE AIR POLLUTION

Twenty of the plans discuss the need to reduce traffic and support greener transport and active travel such as walking and cycling (Adur & Worthing, 2020; East Lindsey & Boston, 2020; GLA, 2020; Isle of Wight, 2020; Lancashire, 2020; Sheffield, 2020; South Tyneside, 2020; South Yorkshire, 2020, West of England, 2020; West Midlands, 2020; West Sussex, 2020; Bath & NE Somerset, 2021; Bradford, 2021; City of London, 2021; Harrow 2021; Lewisham, 2021; Oxfordshire, 2021; Rother, 2021; Wigan, 2021; Wychavon, 2021). This was one of the most prominent features of policies targeting net zero and the environment. This is exemplified by Bradford announcing plans to introduce new 20mph traffic zones and Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) to contribute to cleaner air and promoting active travel by seeking to reduce vehicle traffic and creating new cycle and walking paths (2021, p.35). Oxfordshire's plan includes creating LTNs in Oxford city in addition to improving and creating segregated cycle lanes and wider pavements (2021, p.33-34). Moreover, the plan highlights Oxfordshire's ambition to become the UK's first all-electric bus city and to enable investment and ensure reliable sustainable infrastructure for electric vehicle charging (Oxfordshire, 2021, p.33).

## ADAPTING INFRASTRUCTURE TO DEAL WITH THE CONSEQUENCES OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Several plans raise the need to adapt infrastructure to deal with the consequences of climate change such as flooding (Adur & Worthing, 2020; GLA, 2020; South Yorkshire, 2020; Sheffield, 2020). Sheffield City Region emphasises the need for flood prevention infrastructure works in addition to a tree planting programme with the dual aim of reducing flooding while improving wildlife habitats and increasing neighbourhood access to nature (South Yorkshire, 2020).

## IDENTIFYING FUNDING AND DEVELOPING PARTNERSHIPS FOR LOW CARBON AND RENEWABLE CLIMATE FOCUSED PROJECTS

Ten plans seek to identify and secure funding, both from the government and privately for low carbon and renewable energy focussed projects (Adur & Worthing, 2020; Cornwall, 2020; Solihull, 2020; South Yorkshire, 2020; West of England, 2020; West Sussex, 2020; Worcestershire, 2020; SLP, 2021; South Tyneside, 2021; Wychavon, 2021). This is exemplified by South Tyneside's ambition to ensure it is at the fore of UK Low-Carbon Heat research and delivery, by seeking funding of £15.9 million for the Holborn Renewable Energy Network and collaborating existing energy networks and the local LEP (South Tyneside, 2021). Sheffield City Region's plan proposes creating a partnership with companies that can help facilitate active travel, such as bicycle manufacturers (South Yorkshire, 2020, p.43).

## TRAINING AND IMPROVING SKILLS ON ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Nine plans recognise the need to enhance the local skills market to ensure that local people have the skills to address environmental sustainability, including developing high-quality retrofits, zero carbon homes as well as other areas such as sustainable agriculture (South Tyneside, 2020; West of England, 2020; West Sussex, 2020; Bradford, 2021; Harrow, 2021; Oxfordshire, 2020; SLP, 2021; Wigan, 2021; Wychavon, 2021). Wychavon District highlights the importance of training young people who are embarking on careers by providing apprenticeship grants to business working in green technologies (Wychavon, 2021).

Oxfordshire's plan contains a strong emphasis on creating skills centres that educate and train in the delivery of green construction, sustainable agriculture, sustainable food production and precision farming across the County (Oxfordshire, 2021, p.7). Bradford similarly underlines the need to develop local expertise in retrofitting, sustainable food production and hydrogen powered vehicles (Bradford, 2021, p.29).

## **RETAINING MAJOR SHIFTS TO ACTIVE TRAVEL AND HOME WORKING TO REDUCE TRAVEL POLLUTION**

The increase in remote working and active travel habits during the pandemic is framed by several plans as a priority to retain the major shift in remote, near-home and hybrid working habits and reduce travel related carbon emissions (Adur & Worthing, 2020; Rother, 2020; Lewisham, 2021). Further information on these plans to capitalise on behaviour changes from the pandemic can be found in section 6.2.1.

## **ENGAGING RESIDENTS IN TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE**

Two plans raise the importance of engaging residents in tackling climate change (Adur & Worthing, 2020; Middlesborough, 2020). Middlesborough's plan briefly touches on calling on local businesses and people to take on more sustainable lifestyles (2020). Adur and Worthing intend to actively engage residents by holding a climate assembly with them to promote change locally by stimulating deliberative democratic practice and building actionable local projects in the community (2020, p.10).

### **6.3.2 PLACE AND SPATIAL INEQUALITIES**

'Place and spatial inequality' is a prominent theme throughout the plans and is discussed as a target for recovery across all 28 of the plans. These plans placed significant emphasis on revitalising town centres, improving services and inclusivity.

## **INVESTING IN INFRASTRUCTURE AND REPURPOSING UNUSED BUILDINGS TO MODERNISE URBAN CENTRES**

Eight plans prioritise investing in infrastructure to level-up the economy, and on re-purposing unused buildings to modernise urban centres (Adur & Worthing; Cornwall, 2020; GLA, 2020; South Yorkshire, 2020; Middlesborough 2020; Nottinghamshire, 2020; Harrow, 2021; Wigan, 2021). Part of the GLA's plan to create 'High Streets for All' depends on bringing vacant and unused buildings into productive use, to facilitate near home working (2020). Similarly, Adur and Worthing's plan focuses on the re-purposing unused buildings to provide flexible spaces for start-ups and small businesses (2020, p.5).

## **SUPPORTING LEVELLING UP BY ENHANCING THE AFFORDABLE AND SOCIAL HOUSING OFFER**

Fourteen recovery plans discuss the need to support levelling up by enhancing the public and social housing offer and by building more affordable housing (Adur & Worthing, 2020; Cornwall, 2020; East Lindsey & Boston, 2020; Isle of Wight, 2020; Lancashire, 2020; Nottinghamshire, 2020; South Tyneside, 2020; South Yorkshire, 2020; West of England, 2020; Bath & North East Somerset, 2021; Bradford, 2021; Middlesborough, 2021; Oxfordshire, 2021; Wigan, 2021). Under Wigan's and Cornwall's plans, the local housing offer will be improved by bringing empty homes back into use for housing (Wigan, 2021, p.28; Cornwall, 2020, p.19). The West of England's plan targets investment for affordable housing (2020, p.6). Whilst Adur and Worthing, and South Tyneside focussed on creating more social housing to alleviate and prevent homelessness (Adur & Worthing, 2020; South Tyneside, 2020).

## **IMPROVING CONNECTIVITY THROUGH TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE LINKS**

As part of the recovery of 'place' and to address spatial inequality, councils have focussed on improving transport connectivity and infrastructure links (Broadland & South Norfolk, 2020; Cornwall, 2020; Isle of Wight, 2020; Lancashire, 2020; Nottinghamshire, 2020; Rother, 2020; South Tyneside, 2020; South Yorkshire, 2020; West Midlands, 2020; West of England, 2020; West Sussex, 2020; Worcestershire, 2020;

Bradford, 2021; Middlesbrough 2021; Oxfordshire, 2021; SLP 2021; Wigan, 2021). Rother's plan has the objective to grow the public transport network to enhance rural access (2020). South Tyneside makes the case for a transformational transport scheme that will help to unlock employment by boosting the linkages between residents and major manufacturing employment areas through the improvements to major roads and rail stations (2020).

## **IMPROVING ACCESSIBILITY TO NECESSITIES THROUGH THE DEVELOPMENT OF 15-MINUTE COMMUNITIES**

Five plans discuss the innovative '15-minute city' policy concept, alternatively known as 15-minute communities or neighbourhoods (West of England, 2020; Bradford, 2021; Harrow, 2021; SLP, 2021; Oxfordshire, 2021). According to this policy people should have everything they need to live their lives within a 15-minute walking or cycling radius from their home. More information on this policy area can be found in section 6.2.1. of this review.

## **WORKING WITH DIVERSE COMMUNITIES AND THOSE MOST AFFECTED BY THE PANDEMIC TO CO-DEVELOP COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES**

Plans recognise the need to work with diverse communities to co-produce activities that reflect local needs with a focus on those most affected by the pandemic (Adur & Worthing, 2020; Broadland & South Norfolk, 2020; GLA, 2020; Solihull, 2020; West of England, 2020; City of London, 2021; Lewisham 2021; North Northamptonshire, 2021; Oxfordshire, 2021; Wigan, 2021; Wychavon, 2021; Rother, 2021). Part of the GLA's aim to 'Build Strong Communities' is to ensure that all Londoners have access to volunteering through local community hubs by 2025 and support Londoners to lead the recovery in their own communities through peer support and cross-generational work to address loneliness and social isolation, for example by putting young people in contact with senior citizens and supporting exchanges between the generations (2020).

## **DEVELOPING AND REJUVENATING LOCAL ATTRACTIONS IN THE COMMUNITY**

Developing and rejuvenating local attractions, protecting community and cultural spaces and encouraging the return of the visitor economy are important aspects of the place-based recovery for councils (Adur & Worthing, 2020; East Lindsey & Boston, 2020; GLA, 2020; Sheffield, 2020; South Tyneside, 2020; South Yorkshire, 2020; West Sussex, 2020; Bradford, 2021; City of London, 2021; Lewisham, 2021; North Northamptonshire, 2021; Oxfordshire, 2021; Rother, 2021; Wychavon, 2021). A priority for Sheffield City Council is stimulating investment in the cultural sector; the plan will see the renewal of the Central Library and the Graves Art Gallery to provide spaces for knowledge, learning, art, and creativity (Sheffield, 2020, p.21). One of the initiatives in the East Lindsey and Boston Plan, is a public-private project to regenerate run down parts of the town, by building a new leisure centre, a health-hub, riverside cafes and restaurants; and improved retail frontages, set within an attractive parkland area (2020, p.9). This is of particular importance to the area, which is dependent on tourism and hospitality related business, which is a similar priority across coastal communities generally.

## **ACHIEVING DIVERSITY AND INCLUSIVITY WITHIN THE AREA**

Five local authorities highlight the need to promote the area as inclusive and diverse (Isle of Wight, 2020; Solihull, 2020; West of England, 2020; City of London, 2021; Oxfordshire, 2021). Oxfordshire outlines the need for the renewal of 'place' to be shaped by the local community and to create places that are inclusive and engaging for everybody to visit and enjoy (2021). The City of London's place-based recovery will see the Corporation embark on a five-year marketing campaign fostering a sense of inclusion and wellbeing, as well developing community-led events and activity content (City of London, 2021, p.17).

## ESTABLISHING CULTURAL, COMMUNITY AND DEVELOPMENTAL FUNDING

Eight plans recognise that an important aspect of their place-based recovery is encouraging funds and investment in the cultural and community sectors as well as for development and infrastructure (Cornwall, 2020; Lancashire, 2020; South Yorkshire, 2020; West Midlands, 2020; West of England, 2020; West Sussex, 2020; North Northamptonshire, 2021; Rother, 2021). The West of England's plan highlights the creation of a Cultural, Creative & Digital Development Fund which could support the sectors of the local economy, significantly impacted by pandemic, to adapt and innovate in response to changed consumer and visitor demand (2020, p.30).

### 6.3.3 SOCIO-ECONOMICS INEQUALITIES

The pandemic laid bare and aggravated socio-economic inequalities, which was acknowledged by all the plans. Although all the plans acknowledge socio-economic inequalities, only 26 of the plans provided proposals to address this.

## EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS SUPPORT

Twenty plans aim to provide support with finding employment and building skills necessary for employment, with a focus on the unemployed, at risk of redundancy, are self-employed whose income is severely affected, have health conditions or may face other barriers (Adur & Worthing, 2020; Broadland & South Norfolk, 2020; Cornwall, 2020; East Lindsey & Boston, 2020; GLA, 2020; Isle of Wight, 2020; Nottinghamshire, 2020; Sheffield, 2020; Solihull, 2020; South Tyneside, 2020; South Yorkshire, 2020; West Midlands, 2020; West of England, 2020; West Sussex, 2020; Worcestershire, 2020; Bradford, 2021; Harrow, 2021; Oxfordshire, 2021; SLP, 2021; Wychavon, 2021). Examples of support include career coaching and training in confidence skills. The SLP's plan seeks to deliver the partnership for 'Better Working Futures', an employment support programme funded by the Department of Work and Pensions and the European Social Fund for the long term unemployed and those with health or disability challenges (SLP, 2021, p.21). Another programme, 'Constructing South London' will see the creation of a construction academy, increasing pathways into construction jobs, particularly for ethnic minorities and women (SLP, 2020, p.21). As part of its pandemic recovery Bradford is working with West Yorkshire CA, on employment hubs, designed to facilitate options for retraining (2020, p.32). The West Midlands will similarly work on up-skilling its workforce by retraining 24,000 adults over three years to benefit that enable them to move into high-skilled jobs (2020, p.20). Harrow will develop routes leading to vocational qualifications in Health, Social Care, IT and other growth sectors in the borough to achieve higher skilled jobs for residents (2021, p.13).

## NO WRONG DOOR

Four of the local authorities discuss a 'No Wrong Door' approach to employment to ensure people seeking work can more easily navigate and access the support they need (GLA, 2020; Bradford, 2021; Harrow, 2021; SLP, 2021). Further information about this policy can be found in section 6.2.4.

## SUPPORTING THE CHILDCARE AND EDUCATION SECTOR

Seven of the plans include support for the childcare and education sectors, in addition to supporting access to childcare, free school meals, Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) provisions and other child poverty focused activities (Sheffield, 2020; South Yorkshire, 2020; Bath & North East Somerset, 2021; Bradford, 2021; Rother, 2021; Wigan, 2021; Wychavon, 2021). Wigan's Holiday Activities and Food (HAF) programme will ensure that children and young people who are eligible to benefit-related free school meals get access to a range of activities and food over school holiday periods (2021, p.20).

## SECURING FUNDING AND IMPROVING ADVICE AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC SUPPORT SERVICES

Two local authorities address the need to improve the number of and connections to advice services such as crisis support, domestic abuse support, benefits, debt, housing and immigration and support excluded groups accessing services in health, schools and faith settings (GLA, 2020; Wychavon, 2021). For example, a vital aspect of the GLA's plan to establish 'a robust safety net' is creating a single point of access that connects Londoners to a range of advice services (e.g., benefits, debt, housing, utilities, immigration) and crisis support (e.g., financial support, food) (2020,14). Several councils note their plans to develop partnerships and establish funding partners to develop and improve the gaps in crisis support, advice, and socio-economic services (GLA,2020; Solihull, 2020; West of England, 2020).

## IMPROVING WELFARE SERVICES AND ACCESS TO NECESSITIES

Nine plans contain measures for improving the welfare offer and delivering more affordable necessities such as food and housing in deprived communities with a focus on preventing and reducing homelessness (Adur & Worthing, 2020; GLA, 2020; Isle of Wight, 2020; Solihull, 2020; South Yorkshire, 2020; North Northamptonshire, 2021; Oxfordshire, 2021; Wigan, 2021 Wychavon, 2021). One district plan focuses on creating a "housing first" model for people sleeping rough with complex needs to access multi-agency support, accommodation, and coaching (Adur & Worthing, 2020, p.8). To support social mobility and reduce inequalities Sheffield City Region's plan proposes an income grant supporting the most disadvantaged people to overcome barriers such as: childcare, digital access and skills, transport, and housing (South Yorkshire, 2020, p.22).

## DIGITAL ACCESS FOR ALL

Seventeen plans underscore the need to push forward digital access by improving internet in areas with poor coverage and enhancing digital skills of unemployed, school children, the elderly and the vulnerable (Adur & Worthing, 2020; Cornwall, 2020; GLA, 2020; Isle of Wight, 2020; Lancashire, 2020; Nottinghamshire 2020; Solihull, 2020; South Tyneside, 2020; West of England, 2020; West Sussex, 2020; Worcestershire 2020; Bradford 2021; Harrow; 2021; Oxfordshire, 2021; Rother, 2021; SLP, 2021; Wigan, 2021). Several plans contained provisions regarding digital access such as making full fibre broadband available in areas with poor coverage, like social housing or rural communities (GLA, 2020; Harrow, 2020 Rother, 2020). Regarding rural areas, Oxfordshire's recovery envisages a rural voucher programme to enable an additional 600 premises to be connected to full fibre broadband to enable rural remote working (2020, p.26). The GLA's plan also seeks make it easier for Londoners to access free Wi-Fi outside their home by identifying public spaces – such as libraries – where it possible to work online for free (GLA, 2020).

Three plans also include measures to target digital poverty by providing financial and training support (GLA, 2020; South Yorkshire, 2020; Oxfordshire, 2021). Oxfordshire's plan seeks to combat digital poverty through targeting skills support and funding to existing outreach activities with the most deprived communities in the area (2021, p.21). The GLA's plan will focus on training job seekers and the most vulnerable in digital skills, understanding how to use digital devices and providing the data allowance needed to lift individuals out of digital exclusion (GLA, 2020, p.17).

## MOTIVATING EMPLOYERS TO TAKE SOCIO-ECONOMIC ACTION AND CREATE BETTER EMPLOYMENT

Creating accessible jobs that pay the living wage is mentioned by six plans (Cornwall, 2020; Isle of Wight, 2020; South Yorkshire, 2020; West of England, 2020; SLP, 2021; Wigan, 2021). The City of London's plan was the only council to discuss socio-economic diversity in the workplace as part of its recovery (2021). The authority is working to increase employer engagement and accountability to improve socio-economic diversity at senior levels in finance and professional service firms (City of London, 2021, p.13). Cornwall's Plan outlines the goal to identify towns that may wish to pilot becoming "Real Living Wage" accredited towns (2020, p.14). However, this remains vague in that it only commits to identifying potential locations



as opposed to making a commitment to creating an actual living wage. Whilst the West of England's plan shares more detail on how they will achieve this; they will establish a 'Good Employer Standard' led by anchor institutions across the region that provide good, accessible jobs, which are paid the Real Living Wage (2020, p.6).

### 6.3.4 BUSINESS AND THE ECONOMY

The economy and business, are very present across the plans, with many of them being framed primarily in terms of economic recovery. The economic and business recovery were particularly focussed on business support and the safe re-opening of high streets, tourism, and hospitality sectors. For the purpose of this review, we focused on measures that were not directly related to the lockdown but related to longer term economic recovery and renewal, which is covered across 24 plans.

#### DELIVERING PROGRAMMES TO HELP LOCAL BUSINESSES GROW

Nineteen of the recovery plans contain actions aimed at supporting business growth such as business-to-business mentoring, digital education, leadership support, business schooling and advice, providing meeting space, procurement support, and support for Brexit (Adur & Worthing, 2020; Broadland & South Norfolk; Cornwall, 2020; East Lindsey & Boston, 2020; Lancashire, 2020; Nottinghamshire, 2020; Sheffield, 2020; Solihull, 2020; South Tyneside, 2020; South Yorkshire, 2020; West of England, 2020; West Sussex, 2020; Worcestershire, 2020; Bradford, 2021; Harrow, 2021; North Northamptonshire, 2021; Oxfordshire, 2021; SLP, 2021; Wychavon, 2021). Broadland and South Norfolk districts propose facilitating business-to-business support through the creation of sectoral clusters so businesses can support and learn from each other, and ensuring local businesses have the opportunity where appropriate, to bid to supply the Councils with goods and services (2020, p.7).

#### SUPPORTING SMES, START-UPS AND YOUNG ENTERPRISES

Eight of the recovery plans include initiatives for supporting start-ups and young enterprises (Adur & Worthing, 2020; Isle of Wight, 2020; Lancashire, 2020; Solihull, 2020; Sheffield, 2020; West Sussex, 2020; Worcestershire, 2020; Harrow, 2021; Bradford, 2021; Oxfordshire, 2021). Oxfordshire's recovery plan includes provision of a purpose-built creative and cultural industries hub near Oxford city centre that will be a focal point for accelerating growth in start-ups in the sector (Oxfordshire, 2020, p.19). Adur and Worthing will re-purpose existing buildings to provide flexible space for start-ups and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), providing the digital infrastructure needed to foster their growth and development (Adur & Worthing, 2020, p.4).

#### ENSURING AVAILABILITY OF FIT-FOR PURPOSE BUSINESS ACCOMMODATION

Five recovery plans discussed ideas to build fit-for-purpose business accommodation (Cornwall, 2020; South Tyneside, 2020; West Sussex, 2020; Bath & North East Somerset; Harrow, 2021). South Tyneside's plan seeks to drive growth in emerging industries by building a fit for purpose business accommodation that can take advantage of opportunities in logistics, offshore wind, digital, healthcare and the movement of large corporate and government departments (2020). Such an accommodation will serve to diversify the local economy and provide higher skilled jobs for residents (South Tyneside, 2020).

#### SUPPORTING THE TOURISM, CULTURAL, HOSPITALITY AND CREATIVE SECTORS

Four plans emphasise the need to deliver grants or relief to businesses in the tourism, cultural, hospitality or creative sectors (Cornwall, 2020; Solihull, 2020; West of England, 2020; Rother, 2021). 10 plans discuss focus on improving footfall to hospitality and tourism areas through events and attractions (such as developing technology hubs, hosting sports and cultural events) (Adur & Worthing, 2020; East Lindsey

& Boston, 2020; Sheffield, 2020; City of London, 2021; West midlands, 2020; West Sussex 2020; Harrow, 2021; North Northamptonshire, 2021; Oxfordshire, 2021; Wychavon, 2021). The West Midlands' Plan emphasises the importance of realising the economic benefits generated by the increased footfall and spending from the Birmingham Commonwealth Games and Coventry City of Culture (2020, p.9). The City of London pledges to explore opportunities to animate weekend and nightlife such as traffic free-Saturday nights and Sundays (2020). Regarding its visitor economy, East Lindsey & Boston are working on a new programme of events tailored to the reputation of each market town such as food festivals and antique fairs (2020, p.16).

## **ENHANCING JOB CREATION AND MAINTENANCE IN THE HARDEST HIT SECTORS**

Creating more employment opportunities through the development of new transport networks, building works and new hospitality and tourism attractions is a significant aspect of 10 plans (Lancashire, 2020; Nottinghamshire, 2020; Sheffield, 2020; Solihull, 2020; South Yorkshire, 2020; West Midlands, 2020; West of England, 2020; South Tyneside, 2020; Bradford, 2021; Rother, 2021). Nottinghamshire's Plan focusses on expanding the social care workforce and retrofitting homes with green technologies to spur job creation (2020, p.19) The West Midlands shared its unique opportunity for job creation through infrastructure projects such as the High Speed Two railway (HS2), which will also serve to enhance linkages between people and jobs. Its plan outlines its ambition to accelerate the commercial and housing development around the HS2 Interchange station (West Midlands, 2020, p.8). Lancashire's plan commits to creating a new coastal tourism strategy with a clear events programme which will create opportunities for businesses and pop ups (Lancashire, 2020; p.11).

## **IMPROVING GLOBAL CONNECTIONS, BUILDING LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS AND SECURING FUNDING**

Improving global connections by attracting overseas business to the UK and facilitating trade from the UK is raised by five plans (Harrow, 2021; SLP, 2021; West Midlands, 2020; West of England, 2020; Oxfordshire, 2021). Harrow's plan outline's the need to establish the areas global presence as a well-connected hub for overseas businesses to use as a base for satellite offices in London (Harrow, 2021).

Building partnerships between businesses, universities and local authorities feature in three of the plans (West Sussex, 2020; Bradford, 2021; SLP, 2021). The SLP references the BIG South London programme which builds on a partnership between boroughs, universities, and businesses to stimulate innovation that contributes to economic recovery and growth (2021, p.16).

Eighteen of the plans highlight the need to make use of existing grants, including pandemic related-support and to focus on initiatives that could improve investment in the area to support employment and economic growth (Adur & Worthing, 2020 ;Broadland & South Norfolk, 2020; Cornwall, 2020; East Lindsey & Boston, 2020; Lancashire, 2020; Nottinghamshire, 2020; Sheffield, 2020; South Yorkshire, 2020; West Midlands, 2020; West of England, 2020; West Sussex, 2020; Worcestershire, 2020; Harrow 2021; North Northamptonshire, 2021; Oxfordshire, 2021; Rother, 2021; SLP, 2021; Wychavon, 2021).

### **6.3.5 YOUNG PEOPLE**

Young people were an important aspect of the plans as they were hit hard by the pandemic, missing out on education and employment opportunities. Addressing the needs of young people was discussed across 22 plans, particularly in relation to inequalities in educational attainment, skills, employment and wellbeing.

## **MENTORING, SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND SPECIAL EDUCATION**

The GLA's plan lays out the 'New Deal for Young People' which will see that all young people are entitled to a mentor and have access to quality local youth activities by 2024 (2020). The personalised mentoring schemes will support young people facing different barriers – with their social skills, educational skills,

employment skills and provide mental health support (GLA, 2020, p.15). South Yorkshire will provide subsidised digital and technical training programmes as part of its ‘young people’s skills’ guarantee (2020p.23). Sheffield City Council’s plan is helping to deliver some of the objectives within South Yorkshire CA’s ‘young people’s skills’ guarantee by establishing a youth hub to provide a single point of contact for young people to access independent advice and guidance and implementing a mentoring scheme linking schools with recent graduates (Sheffield, 2020, p.13).

One plan outline enhancing local provision for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) to reduce the need for more distant and costly specialist support placements and provide a higher quality of support at the local level (Bath & North East Somerset, 2021). The plan seeks to ensure that children with SEND are provided with equal opportunity at school and do not miss on important opportunities or experience lower educational attendance or attainment due to lack of available support provision.

## EMPLOYMENT AND BUSINESS SUPPORT

Nineteen of the plans specifically discuss support measures for young people in relation to employability through training programmes and employment hubs, with a focus on those at risk of becoming NEET (not in employment, education or training) (Adur & Worthing, 2020; East Lindsey & Boston, 2020 GLA; 2020; Isle of Wight, 2020; Lancashire, 2020; Sheffield, 2020; Solihull, 2020; South Tyneside, 2020; South Yorkshire, 2020; West of England, 2020; West Midlands, 2020; West Sussex, 2020; Worcestershire, 2020; Bradford, 2021; Harrow, 2021; Oxfordshire, 2021; Rother, 2021; SLP, 2021; Wigan, 2021). The West Midlands ‘Get people back into work’ will focus attention on equipping young people with the skills needed for the future through apprenticeships – it will help over 38,000 young people to obtain apprenticeships and work experience, 27,000 to complete qualifications and receive practical training and track and engage 45,000 in the labour market (2020, p.3). A specific sub programme will support young people leaving care to access training and work opportunities. A specific programme In the West of England will support young people leaving care to access training and work opportunities (2020). The Isle of Wight’s plan briefly mentions an ‘Island Opportunities’ programme aimed at supporting youth business entrepreneurship and start-ups by providing business mentoring, marketing and PR support, and help with funding (2020).

### 6.3.6 HEALTH

Health was a prominent theme in the recovery plans. All the papers refer to health and wellbeing to some degree, apart from the City of London (2021) and 22 of the plans include specific health focussed measures.

## REDUCING HEALTH INEQUALITIES

Fifteen of the plans involve initiatives focussed on reducing barriers and addressing health inequalities (Adur & Worthing, 2020; East Lindsey & Boston, 2020; GLA, 2020; SLP, 2020; West Midlands, 2020; West of England, 2020; Worcestershire, 2020; Bath & North East Somerset, 2021; Bradford, 2021; Lewisham, 2021; Middlesbrough, 2021; Oxfordshire, 2021; South Tyneside, 2021; Wigan, 2021; Wychavon, 2021). The West Midlands plan includes a ‘Radical Health Prevention Fund’ which will target key drivers of health inequality including obesity, diabetes and improving access to services for BAME communities (2020, p.12). The authority plans for private investment to support innovation in digital and data driven health and address the wider determinants of health (West Midlands, 2020, p.12). Three of the plans note the need to provide affordable healthy food locally to target health inequalities and create more sustainable local supply chains (Adur & Worthing, 2020; GLA, 2020; Bradford, 2021). Bradford’s plan specifically focuses on increased local sourcing and better availability of affordable healthy food (2021, p.51). The local authority plans to establish a business-led Bradford Sustainable Food System Council (BSFSC) to scope and prioritise areas for development and assess Bradford’s existing capabilities and opportunities for re-positioning and growth (Bradford, 2021, p.51). The GLA’s plan commits to co-designing healthy food

neighbourhoods (e.g., water fountains, green space, places for breastfeeding, healthy food options) and integrating high streets in the most deprived areas into these healthy food environments (GLA, 2020, p.17).

## MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Seven of the plans contain measures for investing in community mental health services, including domestic abuse support (Isle of Wight, 2020; GLA, 2020; Solihull, 2020; Broadland & South Norfolk, 2020; South Yorkshire, 2020; West of England, 2020; Bath & North East Somerset, 2021). The GLA's plan discusses its plan to develop a Wellbeing Ambassador programme in partnership with local communities, to build capacity and offer culturally appropriate training, support and coaching (2020, p.15). Four of the articles also emphasise the need to support general workforce health and wellbeing (physical and mental) (Solihull, 2020; West of England; South Yorkshire, 2020; Wychavon, 2021). The West of England will engage 10,000 people to take a mental health at work course (2020, p.32)

## COSTS AND INVESTMENTS

Bath and North East Somerset's Corporate Plan will see the Council work to better understand why their health and social care costs appear higher than similar authorities (2021). 12 plans outline aims to invest in training to increase the scale and quality of the labour supply in the health and social care sector, to address shortages, which became particularly apparent during the pandemic (GLA, 2020; Isle of Wight, 2020; Lancashire, 2020; Nottinghamshire, 2020; Solihull, 2020; South Yorkshire, 2020; West Midlands, 2020; West of England, 2020; West Sussex, 2020; Bradford, 2021; Harrow, 2021; Oxfordshire, 2021). Bradford will begin development of a unique medical education and training programme centred on prevention and community based integrated care (2021, p.36). The Council will also make a business case for the establishment of a medical school at the University of Bradford (2021, p. 48). The West Midlands' plan focussed attention on investing in health infrastructure with the planned creation of a 'Grand Central Diagnostics Hub' at the central Birmingham New Street rail station to alleviate pressure on the health system by reducing unnecessary hospital visits, cutting costs of existing NHS hospitals and reducing the backlog of screening visits and providing earlier diagnosis and treatment for cancer screening (2020, p.12).

### 6.3.7 ACTIONS WITHIN THE COUNCIL

## COUNCIL ORGANISATION

A few plans include measures focussed on the 'organisational' recovery of the council (Adur & Worthing, 2020; Broadland & South Norfolk, 2020; North Northamptonshire, 2021; Bath & North East Somerset, 2021; Wychavon, 2021). Four of the plans included measures to develop and implement strategies for 'remote' or 'agile' working by the council (Adur & Worthing, 2020; Broadland & South Norfolk; North Northamptonshire, 2021; Wychavon, 2021). Further information can be found in section 6.2.6. Some authorities shared plans to improve their accessibility and efficiency – Broadland and South Norfolk planned to review their council opening hours to be reflective of local needs and to develop a 24/7 digital self-service portal to access essential some services (2020). While Bath and North East Somerset's strategy sought to streamline council points of contact so that a single contact can provide advice and point residents to the correct service and avoid them being pushed from "pillar to post", and ensure services are updated to reflect local needs (2021, p.37).

In light of the pandemic, some local authorities also planned to review their staff health and wellbeing strategies to support personal and organisational resilience (Broadland & South Norfolk; North Northamptonshire, 2021; Wychavon, 2021). The Broadland and South Norfolk plan called to increase the number of staff who are trained as Mental Health First Aiders to enable more support capacity within the organisation (2020).

Lancashire's plan signals the County's (plus the councils of Blackpool and Blackburn with Darwen) collective intention to pursue increased devolution and the formation of a Mayoral Combined Authority, integrating the LEP (Lancashire, 2020, p.27). The plan is presented as a demonstration of their intentions

for increased collaboration and joint working. This is consistent with a growing trend for local authorities to push for increased devolution of power, funding, and decision-making through the formation of Combined Authorities, especially notable in the midlands and north of England.

## COMMERCIALISATION

Several local authorities discuss aims to increase their revenue streams in light of rising expenditure and diminished income during the pandemic (Adur & Worthing, 2020; Broadland & South Norfolk, 2020; Bath & North East Somerset, 2021). Broadland and South Norfolk's plan highlights that both councils aim to increase the commercialisation of their operations such as through their improving their leisure offers with a focus on outdoor activities to become increasingly self-sufficient in the long term (2020, p.13).

## 6.4 CASE STUDY FINDINGS

Across the five case studies, it appeared that the COVID-19 pandemic created a collective imperative which led to a policy acceleration across recovery plans, rather than policy innovation or an agenda reset. The common policy areas that underwent acceleration included increases in flexible working and digital connectivity and inclusivity, increased focus on the climate and access to natural environments, and an increased focus on addressing inequalities incorporating access to better jobs and skills, and transport connectivity. All those policy areas relate in some regard to key strategic areas identified for review of net zero, place and spatial inequality and, socio-economic inequality. The case studies and some plans also highlighted the link between health and wealth, with an emphasis on better quality jobs leading to improved health outcomes.

## COLLABORATION

Across all the case studies, similar findings were identified in terms of changes to authorities because of the pandemic and the development of recovery plans. The most discussed changes were approaches to collaborative working to develop and implement recovery plans. All representatives discussed that this had led to cultural changes across their authority in creating and maintaining partnerships both externally and within the authority. Within local authorities there was a sense of closer collaboration across departments and with constituent authorities, with Combined Authorities working with their local authorities and County Councils working with constituent District Councils. The case studies reported an increase in external collaboration during the plans' development with local enterprise partnerships, chambers of commerce, public services (health and social care, transport, education and police), the business community and the voluntary sector. There were also three authority representatives that went on to describe structural changes within their authorities as a result of this, this included the OxLEP and Oxfordshire local councils working together unlike before; the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (SYMCA), local authorities and South Yorkshire LEP working together closely; and the formation of the London Recovery Board by the GLA and its transformation into the London Partnership Board.

All the local authorities have implemented projects from the recovery plans to some degree based on the discussions with the five representatives. Some of the participants flagged, however, that the recovery plans should not be viewed in isolation as they are linked to previously developed strategies or have fed into new strategies. The SYMCA and the OxLEP both discussed that they were able to use their funding beyond what was initially planned as they were also able to use funding from the Government and other sources.

## FUNDING

Four of the representatives discussed that their recovery plans had been developed as an 'ask for funding' to the government, with some authorities recognising the unlikelihood of receiving their full request. Whilst the GLA representative shared that their plan had more of a societal focus than economical, so the projects were funded by individual boroughs and the GLA. Plans were funded from a range of different sources including UK Government COVID support funding, the Levelling Up Fund, Getting Building funding, the

UK Shared Prosperity Fund, the EU Development Fund, and authorities own funding streams. However, it is important to note that the plans have not been funded in their entirety and to some extent remain aspirational. In terms of challenges faced by the local authorities, many of the interviewees discussed the need for more flexibility with funding opportunities. This included ensuring funding was not strictly ring-fenced for specific deliverables, so if deliverables could be covered by other funding, or for less money than expected, the funding could be used to implement other deliverables. The flexibility of funding was raised as important to enable the pivoting and blending of funding to target multiple outcomes. Some interviewees also discussed the need to ensure funding was not timebound, as delays and unexpected factors could mean that by the time projects are setup, the funding would need to be used within months.

More specifically, some of the interviewees were critical of the competitive nature of bidding for Levelling Up Funding and felt that it should be based on need instead. Similarly, some representatives discussed issues with access to funding, such as Oxfordshire, which is not eligible to apply for Levelling Up Funding or South Tyneside which has had its bid rejected while more affluent areas have had bids accepted. Some interviewees also discussed previously receiving funding from the EU Development Funds, which since Brexit has been replaced by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) and contains less funding.

## GREATER DEVOLUTION

The need for further devolution was discussed by South Tyneside and the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), both representatives from these authorities discussed that with this, they would gain further power and access to funding to be able to implement more of the projects within their plans and make decisions on how they will be funded. The WMCA's devolution deal is set to create a long-term funding agreement and enable more power over business rates, transport, retrofit funding and post-16 education and skills.

## EVALUATION

Most of the interviewees shared that their plans had not included mechanisms for formal evaluation. Although the OxLEP representative confirmed that their plan had included key performance indicators to allow for evaluation, this evaluation was not publicly published. The other four plans did have elements that allowed for internal evaluations, with teams and committees that monitor the implementation of projects and discuss any needs to update plans. Some level of reporting was perceived as important by local authorities in terms of accountability to the central government, with the representative from SYMCA sharing that in order to benefit from increased devolution, it was important to be able to justify the funding by monitoring implementation.

Detailed summaries of each of the five case studies can be found below.

### CASE STUDY 1: SOUTH YORKSHIRE MAYORAL COMBINED AUTHORITY (SYMCA)

**Region:** Yorkshire and the Humber

**Recovery plan name:** Renewal Action Plan (RAP) (2020)

**Political leadership:** Labour

**Population:** 1.4 million

**Percentage of households not deprived in any dimension:** 44.2%

**Role of participant interviewed:** Senior Officer

**Involved in developing the plan:** Yes

**The development of the recovery plan and changes to the authority since the pandemic**

The Senior Officer shared that the RAP was framed as an ask for investment to recover from the socio-

economic fallout from the pandemic and equally to contribute to the national Levelling Up agenda. The participant noted that *“it was a huge ask at over £1 billion, which we got nowhere near, it was based on a worst-case scenario ask to the Government, so we had to paint the picture that we needed as much funding as possible”*. The participant shared that the funding they did receive was mainly from UK Government pots, COVID and business support grants, and *“then whatever money we could from the Mayoral Combined Authority”*. Unlike some other authorities, they did not deploy EU Development Funding as this budget had already been spent.

The Senior Officer shared that since the onset of the pandemic they had seen significant changes in the Combined Authority (CA). The Sheffield City Region CA was formed in 2014 and became the SYMCA in 2021. The participant shared that COVID brought about changes in the way the CA works, as in most areas of the country, with increased remote, hybrid and flexible modes of working which continue in the post-pandemic context. According to the Senior Officer changes were already starting prior to COVID with a shift towards a more collaborative approach in terms of working with constituent local authorities, in developing the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) 2021-2041 [7] and coordinating and deploying UK SPF funding. However, this collaborative approach was strengthened in the co-development of the Renewal Action Plan (RAP). This was demonstrated by the Senior Officer – *“The plan was co-developed with our local authorities, chambers of commerce and the LEP (local enterprise partnership) ... that collaborative approach [has] been really positive and that’s now underpinning how we do other projects together...in terms of working as partners we’re actually in a much better place now than before the pandemic”*. Unlike other CAs which will see the integration of LEPs over the coming year, in South Yorkshire the LEP and the CA were already working as one and based in the same building.

Changes to collaborative working in relation to health and the economy as a result of the pandemic were also highlighted by the participant. This was also in part due to the CA’s new Mayor in 2022, who is also the Chair of the Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) board, which has led to increased collaboration with health services – *“Before the pandemic economic and health impacts were treated as separate, but COVID really illustrated how inextricably linked both are. And as an organisation we’ve changed, we’ve got a new Mayor and a much bigger focus on health now”*. Additional changes to the CA that the Senior Officer highlighted, have included greater devolution of power to the CA which will be discussed in greater depth in the sections below. In addition to health and wellbeing the Senior Officer shared that there is now a greater emphasis on net zero and community engagement within the CA.

## POLICY RESET DUE TO THE RECOVERY PLAN

The Senior Officer shared that the policies from the RAP were not perceived to be consistent with a policy agenda reset stemming from COVID but rather represented the continuation of previous strategies.

*“The way we saw this was as a COVID iteration of the policies [from the previous SEP published in 2015] which was more about job numbers and gross value added, than improving people’s lives and transforming the economy. The new plans [the RAP and SEP for 2021-2041] focus more on inclusive growth and better jobs”*.

As such, the participant framed the RAP as a funding opportunity to deliver on the ambitions that had already been agreed and adapt them to COVID where necessary. The participant shared that COVID helped to accelerate focus on areas such as innovating the economy by attracting start-ups, and through upskilling and vocational training, along with an increased focus on transport, health and social care. The Senior Officer shared that it was important to focus on vocational training and upskilling because *“we have a gap between our young people just not having those qualifications to access these jobs [social care, manufacturing and engineering] and an ageing workforce”*.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICIES FROM THE RECOVERY PLAN

Many of the policies contained in the plan had progressed to implementation as shared by the Senior Officer but they flagged the plan shouldn’t be viewed in isolation as many of the policies contained within

it relate to other published strategies, namely the SEP 2021-2040.

The Senior Officer confirmed that many of the policies that had been implemented were not identical to those in the RAP, and instead had been used to fund other areas – *“Because the economic impact wasn’t as bad as we feared, we were able to use the RAP to fund policies and areas that were in the SEP”*. The plan is therefore being implemented as a package and built into wider business support discussions and not simply COVID recovery, as shared by the participant.

*“We’ve managed to use the RAP around the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF), so that’s why it funded some of the acceleration and innovation programmes [that the] SPF wasn’t funding... and on the skills side [RAP focussed more] on young people because the UK SPF [focussed] is more on helping people back into work”*.

When looking at businesses within the COVID recovery plan, the Senior Officer shared that the RAP projects they focussed on most were about up-skilling for future opportunities rather than supporting those that faced mass redundancies and insolvencies. This was partly because of the extra investment from the government at a national level for the furlough scheme, which led to the SYMCA pivoting focus on spending funding on upskilling for the future, especially for young people in skills relevant to the region. But also, because the industries that were worst affected by the pandemic were hospitality and tourism, which are not as significant for South Yorkshire’s industry as manufacturing or logistics is.

Much of the recovery plans around health such as reskilling and helping long-term unemployed people with health conditions were addressed by other programmes run by the SYMCA such as the Working Win programme [8]. The Senior Officer also shared that the CA was primarily focusing on net zero objectives through the UK SPF low carbon grant scheme to support small and medium enterprises with opportunities to reduce their carbon footprint. Other plans targeting net zero that the Senior Officer thought overlapped with those from the RAP included the 2020 Active Travel Implementation Plan [9], the 2022 Energy Strategy and a Local Nature Recovery Strategy, expected to be published in 2025.

The Senior Officer shared that they hadn’t updated the RAP or had plans to, however as already highlighted they would be using the funding from it to support other areas.

## WHAT HAS WORKED WELL AND CHALLENGES FACED DURING IMPLEMENTATION

In terms of areas that had worked well, the Senior Officer shared that the plans from the RAP that focussed on vocational support such as training and apprenticeships in addition to support for businesses including support with digitalisation, had been implemented successfully. The Senior Officer also shared that the funding from the RAP had been especially important because unlike the UK SPF it was not ring-fenced for specific policies but rather enabled authorities to use their devolved powers to decide how best to fund the recovery in their area.

*“We got a pot of money that was not ring-fenced for a change, and this is a good example of how devolution should work in practice. If you trust in Combined Authorities and Mayors elected by the people to decide what’s best for their area that is a much better way of doing it... having lots of different funding pots that authorities have to compete for, spend time on writing bids, and then end up with a zero-sum game ... that is not a way to do strategic economic development”*.

The participant also noted that the funding was important for the CA to implement policy objectives because overall authorities were receiving considerably less funding under the UK SPF than they used to under the European Regional Development Funds.

In relation to the challenges the SYMCA faced the Senior Officer shared that this was mainly around being a relatively new CA that didn’t have the programmes or supply chains they needed to implement in place. They faced challenges unlike longer established CAs that would have been able to upscale and evolve already existing programs and implement plans more quickly. Similarly, the Senior Officer shared that their team responsible for implementing plans was relatively small, which also made it challenging to implement the plans at speed.



## EVALUATION OF THE RECOVERY PLAN

The Senior Officer flagged that the plan did not include a system for evaluation, however the SYMCA does have an evaluation team that internally evaluates programs such as these, which is growing in size and importance as the authority takes on more devolved powers. The participant acknowledged that a fundamental aspect of devolution is that with greater funding and responsibility authorities must also demonstrate increased accountability – *“we’ve got to illustrate and prove that we’re offering value for money and delivering for people. Otherwise, why should they devolve further power to us”*.

### CASE STUDY 2: OXFORDSHIRE LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP (OXLEP)

**Region:** South East

**Recovery plan name:** Oxfordshire’s Economic Recovery Plan: The ERP Action Plan (2021)

**Political leadership:** Apolitical (Oxfordshire County Council is led by a coalition of the Liberal Democrats, Labour and Green parties)

**Population:** 725,000

**Percentage of households not deprived in any dimension:** 55.9%

**Role of participant interviewed:** Board Member

**Involved in developing the plan:** Yes

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE RECOVERY PLAN AND CHANGES TO THE AUTHORITY SINCE THE PANDEMIC

The Board Member shared that the Oxfordshire’s Economic Recovery Plan (ERP) was developed in response to a government call, framed as an investment ask for the government. The plan as discussed in the interview had been financed through funding across the OxLEP and Oxfordshire’s local authorities, including competitive bids, pandemic related funds and private match funding. The OxLEP also deployed about £20 million in residual European Development Funds; funding which in the UK must finish by the end of 2023. The participant highlighted that although the Oxfordshire LEP led the ERP, it was a joint plan with local authorities and key service providers including health, transport and social care – *“we had to as a system think...how can we [LEP], now working with you as local authorities...deploy resources and help filter activities to create a more coherent plan”*.

COVID was highlighted by the participant as accelerating changes in the ways of working within the OxLEP, including increased home-based working and use of digital platforms. The participant shared that with this created a cultural shift in the organisation, including trialling a four-day work week. The Board Member also noted changes during the pandemic in the way the OxLEP worked with local authorities and partners such as the police, health services, universities and transport. This was also reflected in the way that the ERP was developed, and it included working more closely together and meeting weekly, which continues today, and taking a more holistic approach to work rather than siloed ways of working – *“one positive lasting legacy of the devastation of COVID, [is] that we’ve been able to find better ways of working together because there was a collective imperative”*. It is noted that the OxLEP and local authorities recognise the interconnected nature of challenges and the need for interconnected responses in policy areas and geography.

## POLICY RESET DUE TO THE RECOVERY PLAN

The ERP was flagged by the Board Member as a way of reaffirming the direction that the OxLEP and local authorities wanted to go in. The participant shared that the themes – ‘people, place, business and connectivity’ – had run through the LEP’s past economic plans and were adapted to the COVID context in the ERP, with a more pronounced focus on inclusivity and inequalities – *“there is real focus in the plan around inclusivity... those who are furthest away from the labour market, those who have been most*

*impacted by COVID, how do we make sure they get the support they need”.*

Thus, many of the policies did not present a reset but rather a reiteration of previously developed policy objectives. The first stream of activities in the plan were based on existing activities that were already underway and had potential for realignment to support the economic recovery. Moreover, many of the net zero objectives within the ERP were linked to the Pathways to Zero Carbon Oxfordshire (PAZCO) plan [10], that was developed by Oxfordshire councils over the COVID period – *“[PAZCO] was about responding to the challenges of climate change, net zero and government policy. But it was also about how we create opportunities for our communities and businesses who have been impacted since the EU exit or over COVID”*. The policy area within the ERP that the Board Member thought the pandemic was credited with causing the most significant acceleration was regarding transport and digital connectivity with much work taking place on active travel routes and rolling out 5G to rural communities.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICIES FROM THE RECOVERY PLAN

According to the interview, most of the plans included in the ERP now have funding in part or in full and are undergoing some stage of implementation. There were, however, some plans that had not been funded which has led to their de-prioritisation of implementation, but not abandonment. The Board Member noted that although the development of the plan was led by the LEP the implementation was being led by different organisations and authorities across the county. Some key examples of approaches from the ERP being implemented included:

- The 2023-2025 Social Contract programme [11] that tackles social mobility and inclusion through mentoring, skills development, and apprenticeship advice for employers is live.
- The development of the Visitor Economy Renaissance programme [12] which will be delivered by March 2024, includes plans that support the creative, culture and heritage tourism of the area.
- The completion of a Green Construction skills centre [13] to offer a variety of training programmes for young people in green construction and upskilling for those already in the sector.
- The process of making a substantive bid to the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology to establish the authority as 5G Innovation Regions [14].
- The Inclusive Economy Charter and Partnership [15] was developed to make the county’s economy fairer for everyone through means of inclusive recruitment and providing fairer wages.
- Leveraging the unspent Apprenticeship Levy [16] (employers funding apprenticeships) to create further opportunities.

The participant noted that the Government made a range of resources available so the LEP and local authorities were able to use the funding beyond what was initially planned – *“Some of the target proposals that we had in the plan in terms of labour supply, supporting businesses to grow, particularly tackling social mobility and inclusion, those are all areas that we have managed to maintain momentum in beyond the initial programme”*.

## WHAT HAS WORKED WELL, AND CHALLENGES FACED DURING IMPLEMENTATION

The Board Member shared that the plan primarily enabled – *“us to talk to the Government in a more proactive way about the measures that we wanted to implement, it allowed us to identify the resources we had and the resources we felt we needed”*. The participant also shared that the whole system way of working with the OxLEP, local authorities and services was a key factor in the successful development and implementation of the ERP, further enabled by maintaining regular weekly meetings in the post-COVID landscape.

Another facilitator that the Board Member thought helped during the implementation of the ERP was that the OxLEP had 10 years of organisational capacity, experience and expertise in producing economic plans and strategies. The participant thought this enabled the plans within the ERP to be mobilised quickly also because relationships were already established with the partners responsible for implementing plans on

the ground. Additionally, as the ERP contained many reiterated policy objectives, the participant shared that it meant they already had employment and social mobility programmes in development or in place which could be adapted or applied to the COVID recovery context. Having plans in place when government funding was released meant that the County already knew what it was doing, and they were positioned to fit the eligibility for funding.

In terms of challenges faced, the Board Member was critical of funding which required competitive bidding that created a sense of competition for resources between different local authorities. Similarly, the interviewee flagged issues with timebound parameters being assigned to funding, which sometimes meant – *“there was a risk that our local authorities might not be able to fully deploy their allocation within the timeframe”*. The Board Member flagged that they would have appreciated greater flexibility of support from the government. Other challenges included the authority being one of the net contributors to the UK economy however this revenue was often reduced and redistributed by the Government, which often led to the local authority having to bid for other competitive sources. The participant flagged that some sources of funding were inaccessible such as Levelling Up Funds as Oxfordshire did not meet the criteria as it is one of the wealthier regions in the country, despite there being significant disparities in health within the county. The Board Member also flagged the significant challenge that since COVID there has also been a financial crisis compounded by Brexit and the war in Ukraine.

## EVALUATION OF THE RECOVERY PLAN

The Board Member shared that they had evaluated the ERP, the plan included Key Performance Indicators that were assessed by the OxLEP Chief executive and key leads of the programmes. The evaluation took place initially every month, then quarterly and now twice annually to *“track progress and identify opportunities for new funding or opportunities... to move funding around to support multiple priorities”*. The participant shared that the internal evaluations had not been published publicly.

It was also made clear during the interview that the OxLEP is currently developing another economic plan with the local authorities that builds on the ERP, to consider what has been achieved, what has changed and how to make further progress with policy initiatives beyond the COVID recovery context – *“basically it’s (the new economic plan) a refreshed post-COVID, post-EU exit of the economic data and analysis, so we are kind of re-baselining. It builds on the themes that were identified through the Local Industrial Strategy and then the Economic Recovery Plan and looks at where we need to go now”*.

## CASE STUDY 3: SOUTH TYNESIDE METROPOLITAN COUNCIL

**Region:** North East

**Recovery plan name:** South Tyneside Economic Recovery Plan (2020)

**Political leadership:** Labour

**Population:** 148,000

**Percentage of households not deprived in any dimension:** 43.3%

**Role of participant interviewed:** Senior Officer

**Involved in developing the plan:** Yes

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE RECOVERY PLAN AND CHANGES TO THE AUTHORITY SINCE THE PANDEMIC

According to the Senior Officer the South Tyneside Economic Recovery Plan was *“viewed as an opportunity to reiterate ongoing policy objectives at the time, particularly pivoting our economy towards net zero”*. The participant shared that the authority recognised the importance of positioning itself with clear plans for incoming government stimulus and was among the first authorities to publish a plan *“within the report [we] tried to map out ongoing projects and how that fitted into the response to the pandemic. And then came*

*up with a way of framing it under three main drivers in the report – skills, green growth and inclusivity*". It was also noted that the plan was also used as a pitch to lobby the government for funding and is framed as contributing to the Levelling Up agenda.

However, while the participant shared that there had been no direct funding as a result of the recovery plan, the Council had accessed funding through various means including some bespoke government funding, the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) and through the local authority's council revenue and capital investment budgets. The local authority has also been able to raise its profile having been named a Levelling Up Partnership, an Arts Council England Priority Place and as an identified Department for Education 'Education Investment Area'. The Senior Officer shared that the plan was informed by the North East Local Enterprise Partnership's (LEP) 2019 Strategic Economic Plan [17], which emphasises creating better jobs for the local population. The interviewee characterised the development process as being positive and collaborative with buy-in across the board.

The Senior Officer shared that there had been significant change at the local authority since the pandemic, with significant cultural changes with *"a lot more focus on bringing your authentic self to work and flexible working"* and the digitalisation of work. There has also been a renewed emphasis on community engagement.

The participant shared that the local authority has also shown much greater recognition of the social determinants of health and the intrinsic links between the economy and health. The pandemic's impact on young people, employment levels and rising economic inactivity has led the authority to place more explicit emphasis on reducing inequalities and creating a more inclusive economy in the borough which has fed into their new 20-year strategic vision.

## POLICY RESET DUE TO THE RECOVERY PLAN

Although the plan was framed as largely being a continuation of an existing policy agenda, the Senior Officer thought that recovery plan innovated the way policies were conceived, with a greater focus on reducing the inequalities exposed by the pandemic. The Senior Officer shared that there had been a significant push towards digitalisation within the local authority including full fibre broadband and mobile connectivity, which was really catalysed by the pandemic. There was significant emphasis in the plan on the linkages between health and wealth, the participant confirmed the recovery process needed to tie these together through employment, earnings, skills, transport and housing quality.

The Senior Officer shared detail on the South Tyneside Pledge [18] which is a community wealth building programme stemming from the recovery plan. The Economic Recovery plan raised the need to move away from more precarious forms of employment such as seasonal work, notably in the hospitality sector and focus on higher skilled green jobs such as the Nissan's Electric Vehicle 'gigafactory' (electrification and decarbonisation technologies) or in renewable energy. The Senior Officer shared that *"with the barriers around skills, it felt really important to have a big focus on that element. So, a number of the measures... are all around trying to change the kind of skills system and the skills landscape within the borough"*.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICIES FROM THE RECOVERY PLAN

According to the Senior Officer most of the actions had been implemented to some degree, and many aspects of the plan still had currency. The Senior Officer shared that the South Tyneside Pledge had been implemented to get local organisations to commit to taking steps to boost economic activity, reduce health inequalities, reduce carbon emissions and increase training and apprenticeship opportunities with a focus on health and social care sectors. The authority has also implemented a Care Academy [19] as shared by the participant, which focuses on adult social care to address a *"significant gap"* in the proportion of carers in the area, which was acutely exposed during the pandemic, by promoting the field and providing the skills required for the role. The participant also touched on the Skills Hub South Tyneside Works [20], which is a platform that has been developed to refer people seeking training, upskilling, and reskilling. The Senior Officer shared – *"the upskilling aspect of the economic recovery plan is not just creating those jobs but ensuring that local people have the skills and the access to those jobs"*.

## WHAT HAS WORKED WELL AND CHALLENGES FACED DURING IMPLEMENTATION

The Senior Officer shared that one of the main successes from the recovery plan, had been that so far over 200 organisations had signed up to the South Tyneside Pledge. The participant also shared that working as a whole system approach had been a positive experience, especially working closely with health and transport partners as well as the Confederation of Business Industry, Federation of Small Businesses and Trade Union Congress, and not doing so in a siloed manner. The participant also raised that the plan had led to the focus upon poverty and the subsequent partnership working on cost of living through the South Tyneside Poverty Group, which is a multi-agency collaboration led by the Council with partners from the public services and the voluntary sector with the aim of reducing and mitigating the impacts of poverty in the borough. The group holds monthly meetings, coordinates anti-poverty related activity, and conducts regular ‘cost of living’ and ‘warm space’ surveys to inform decision making.

The Senior officer also shared that an important aspect was having a well-positioned plan at an early stage based on a longer-term vision and with clear policies including targeted outcomes – *“doing that piece of mapping work to start with and looking at what potential solutions or projects could address those challenges was key. It helped create a sense of direction and influenced subsequent plans”*.

The Senior Officer also voiced some of the challenges that the local authority had faced around financial constraints, firstly due to the past decade of austerity measures the local authority’s budget has halved in the past 10 years. There was also frustration with the local authority’s inability to access certain funding streams, most notably two unsuccessful bids in accessing Levelling Up Funds. To that end, the Senior Officer was critical of funding which was supposed to help develop the parts of the country that need it most, but which is also competitive in nature – *“Our leader has been quite vocal in saying Levelling Up funding shouldn’t be competitive. It should be allocated according to need rather than affluent areas in the south east getting funding and areas like South Tyneside not getting anything”*.

The Senior Officer shared that whilst this has been a challenge, it has caused the authority to revert their focus – *“the fact that we weren’t successful through some government funding streams like the Levelling Up Funds, has put more focus on us to raise our profile. I guess if you’re in Westminster and Whitehall, you may not know where South Tyneside is or the problems we face. So, it’s trying to raise that profile amongst key decision makers”*.

According to the Senior Officer many of the policies were framed as being contingent on South Tyneside forming part of a Mayoral Combined Authority in the North East, as that would enable the area to access more pots of funding and give it greater power over a broader range of issues. South Tyneside belongs to the North East Combined Authority (NECA), which does not possess the same devolved powers or resources afforded to an MCA. A new North East Mayoral Combined Authority (NEMCA) will be created in May 2024, combining seven local authorities across the North of Tyne Combined Authority and the NECA [21]. In line with other MCA’s the NEMCA will hold devolved powers over transport, skills, planning and regeneration, and economic development. The anticipated Mayoral Combined Authority will enable South Tyneside to access devolved funding and decision-making powers.

## EVALUATION OF THE RECOVERY PLAN

In terms of evaluating the recovery plan, the Senior Officer shared that this had not taken place, as the plan was supposed to provide a strategic direction rather than providing hard and fast deliverables. However, the participant shared that many of the policies from the recovery plan had fed directly into the ‘Our South Tyneside Vision’ [22], which is their current strategic plan, and contains a performance evaluation framework.

## CASE STUDY 4: WEST MIDLANDS MAYORAL COMBINED AUTHORITY (WMCA)

**Region:** West Midlands

**Recovery plan name:** Recharge the West Midlands (2020)

**Political leadership:** Conservative

**Population:** 2.92 million

**Percentage of households not deprived in any dimension:** 41.9%

**Role of participant interviewed:** Senior Officer

**Involved in developing the plan:** Yes

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE RECOVERY PLAN AND CHANGES TO THE AUTHORITY SINCE THE PANDEMIC

The Senior Officer shared that they were very closely involved with the development of the ‘Recharge the Midlands’ recovery plan. When the scale of the pandemic became clear and it was anticipated the Government were going to release significant stimulus, the WMCA repurposed two existing strategies the Local Industrial Strategy (2019) [23] and the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) [24]. Adapting the plans to the context and challenges presented by the pandemic allowed them *“to be on the front foot and provide deliverable solutions”*. It was noted similarly to other authorities that the policies in the plan received funding from a variety of Government pots. According to the participant, £66 million in funding was accessed via the Getting Building Fund and other funding was accessed through Local Growth Funds, UK Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) and UK Research and Innovation funds (UKRI). The Senior Officer acknowledged that a lot of support was provided directly by government funding for recovery relating to business support and unemployment/furlough.

The WMCA worked across a broad mix of partners from across the region including local authorities, universities, business groups and consultants to develop the recovery plan. According to the participant the WMCA acted as a convenor and *“picked up the baton to convene and bring [the] plan together”*. The main aim was to *“bring together a kind of lobbying and influencing plan to be able to realise some of those priorities”*. As such, the plan largely sought to attract government investment for priority projects to kickstart the economy across the Combined Authority. Consultants from PwC (PricewaterhouseCoopers) provided expertise regarding project management, and in relation to carrying out an economic appraisal focused on prioritisation. The participant shared that the constituent local authorities focussed more on developing plans for the community and societal aspects of the recovery for example regarding deprivation, health and wellbeing as illustrated by Wolverhampton’s Relighting our City Plan [25].

Since the plan was published in 2020 the Senior Officer shared that there had been numerous changes across the WMCA. This change was in line with trends across other authorities, to more flexible and hybrid forms of working, it was also noted that there had been a shift towards more collaborative working and holding *“more connected conversations across different authorities and services”*. However, the participant was also weary of ascribing cause and effect as they noted that changes in the CA’s way of working had also been related to the increase in devolution, especially since the Government’s Levelling Up the United Kingdom White Paper published in 2022 [26] and accordingly to the increased need to work together across different administrative boundaries with responsibilities become increasingly integrated under the CA. The Senior Officer raised that the Levelling Up White Paper [26] affirms that the UK Government will engage with the West Midlands and Greater Manchester to deepen their devolution deals, which will then act as models for other MCAs in the future. In line with its recommendations the CA has seen increased integration in the last 18 months across teams which has happened through COVID, but not necessarily because of it.

## POLICY RESET DUE TO THE RECOVERY PLAN

According to the Senior Officer the plan did not constitute a policy reset but rather functions as a reiteration of the WMCA's direction of maintaining momentum on big projects vital to the region's economy through the pandemic. The WMCA's approach was to let the Government support alleviate the pressure on them related to unemployment, furlough, welfare, universal credit. The participant also acknowledged that the plan was more of a response to the economic shock rather than to the specific context around the pandemic – *“what we put forward was more in relation to the size and scale of the economic shock. So, in other words, you know there could have been any other type of major economic shock”*. The participant went on to note that Brexit had a significant impact with EU workers increasingly going home.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICIES FROM THE RECOVERY PLAN

With regards to implementation the Senior Officer did not detail specific projects but noted that most projects under the Getting Building Fund stream have been implemented. These were shovel-ready infrastructure and building projects aimed at fuelling economic growth and jobs. The Senior Officer also went on to share that most programmes in the plan had seen some level of delivery and funding – *“70-75% of those programmes have seen some kind of response”*. Despite this, the participant acknowledged that more could have been done and there remains more to do, indicating that with further devolved powers and funding, the WMCA would be able to do more – *“the plan and the government could have done more, still now more could be done... it's part of our work on the deeper devolution deal... and the next spending review to be able to do what's needed at scale. But just because we've set ourselves a very, very high ambitious bar doesn't mean we should overlook the impacts that Recharge did have”*.

## WHAT HAS WORKED WELL AND CHALLENGES FACED DURING IMPLEMENTATION

The participant expressed the development of the plan was a challenging process for the WMCA due to a lack of experience in the early stages when informing its development – *“capacity was thinly scattered across a lot of organisations and, other than my director and me, there wasn't a lot of depth or capacity within the CA itself, so quite quickly we brought in some specialist support, in the form of consultants from PwC (PricewaterhouseCoopers)”*. The Senior Officer shared that bringing in the specialist consultants had served as a facilitator to gain expert perspective in a short timeframe. The Senior Officer shared that the plan's implementation had also been greatly facilitated by working closely with partners and by ensuring from the onset of the plan's development that there was buy-in across the board. Funding the plan was enabled by being prepared and having prioritised and adapted policies which could match recovery aims and funding provided by government.

## EVALUATION OF THE RECOVERY PLAN

The plan as discussed by the Senior Officer, had a steering committee set up to meet weekly and monitor the lobbying and funding mobilisation of the plan. However, the plan did not include a formal mechanism for evaluation as it was not a standalone strategy as the region already had the SEP and the Local Industrial Strategy – *“it would have been wrong to put in a sort of pure performance-based framework because as I said the region already had (strategies) covering that long-term activity”*. Nevertheless, the WMCA has *“a kind of economic dashboard that, covers the overall health of the economy and some more specific outcomes that we have, about boosting productivity, and supporting R&D investment”* – and according to the Senior Officer the measures included in the plan were captured there.

The Senior Officer shared that the plan has now fed into subsequent plans such as the Plan for Growth [27] that was published at the end of 2022 and focuses on long term opportunities for the region's growth in an overarching sense. The participant also shared that the WMCA is currently developing an *“economic place strategy using the springboard, or the spur, of the deeper devolution deal that we've agreed with Government”*.

## CASE STUDY 5: GREATER LONDON AUTHORITY (GLA)

**Region:** Greater London

**Recovery plan name:** London Recovery Programme (2020)

**Political leadership:** Labour

**Population:** 9 million

**Role of participant interviewed:** Senior Officer

**Involved in developing the plan:** Yes

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE RECOVERY PLAN AND CHANGES TO THE AUTHORITY SINCE THE PANDEMIC

The Senior Officer shared that the GLA led on the plan's development, however there was a huge amount of public engagement and consultation that went on *"the aim being very much that it was an engagement led programme that was run with Londoners and local organisations"*. The participant shared that the Recovery Programme had a significant focus on societal recovery, emphasising people and place and socio-economic aspects of recovery and renewal. The Senior Officer highlighted that the GLA had a separate Economic Recovery Framework (2021) [28] which focused on the wider economy and business which acted more as an 'ask' for investment from Government.

The Senior Officer shared that the GLA had changed quite fundamentally since the onset of the pandemic and the development of the plan. As in other local authorities the GLA saw a significant shift to more flexible and hybrid modes of working which have continued post pandemic. According to the participant the Authority *"just launched a new hybrid working policy that really cements the kind of hybrid nature of the organisation now"*.

The participant also confirmed that the GLA had seen a significant shift to more collaborative and joint working with partner organisations, specifically with London Councils, the umbrella body representing the 32 London Boroughs – *"our relationship with London Councils, before was less productive than it could have been, but the pandemic forced us to come and work together, now our relationship with other councils is significantly stronger"*. According to the participant this largely stemmed from the imperative of working in the face of the pandemic across political boundaries, business groups, the voluntary sector and the rest of the public sector (police, health and social care, transport).

The partnership was originally conceived as the London Recovery Board and has now become the London Partnership Board. The partnership took a mission-based approach rather than prescribing specific policies, with working groups set up to drive the missions. Additionally, the GLA's budget processes changed in 2021/22 in order to better align with the Recovery programme, as explained by the Senior Officer – *"our budget was fit into the London Recovery Programme missions, we set our budget against those missions rather than against directorates and I think that demonstrates how the GLA put pandemic recovery at the very heart of the work that the organisation was doing"*.

The Senior Officer shared that the GLA had funded the Recovery team and related implementation for two years. However, because implementation in many cases was occurring at local authority level it was the responsibility of the boroughs to find funding for the missions – *"every programme that was part of the mission was funded individually by the [relevant] organisations"*. According to the Senior Officer the London Recovery Programme did not receive any direct government funding, but it was likely that on a borough level some of the councils would have. The participant also highlighted a new London Funders joint funding stream called PROPEL [29] – *"which is like an umbrella body for any kind of grant giving organisations that was created in the pandemic and that is £100 million over 10 years for funding across three recovery missions: Building strong Communities, New Deal for Young People and a Robust Safety Net"*.



## POLICY RESET DUE TO THE RECOVERY PLAN

The biggest policy change or reset according to the participant was the formation of the London Recovery Board, which changed policy development across the city and has now become a long-term organisational collaboration – *“that was a positive legacy that was catalysed by COVID, but that remains relevant in the post-pandemic context...without the pandemic, we wouldn't have been able to bring that group of people together and it has been and it is extremely helpful to the city that they came together”*.

With regards to policy itself the most significant innovations that the Senior Officer thought was catalysed by the pandemic was the increased perception of the links between health and wealth and the accompanying need to increase access to green spaces and healthy environments. The participant emphasised that health and wellbeing were a cross-cutting theme throughout the programme – *“in the recovery programme we had these nine missions, but we also had cross-cutting principles and health inequalities was one of those. And so, we worked with every mission team to identify what they were doing around health inequalities because each of them had a responsibility to help with those in a different way”*.

There was also a big push towards digitalisation with a focus on digital inclusion which resulted directly from the pandemic. The Senior Officer discussed the Digital Access for All programme [30] where organisations donated technology devices and worked with local authorities to improve internet access for the most deprived by focusing on access in social housing facilities.

Overall, however, the Senior Officer rejected the idea that the plan constituted a policy reset but rather represented a policy acceleration which required certain policies to be adapted to the context – *“it very much focused on issues that were highlighted and exacerbated by the pandemic, but [were] not necessarily new issues...it did shift the emphasis of those policies and how we were responding to those challenges”*.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICIES FROM THE RECOVERY PLAN

The Senior Officer confirmed that all nine of the missions were currently being implemented with a timeline through to 2025, although the participant admitted that it was harder to track implementation on the local authority level. Some of the missions in the plan such as the Robust Safety Net mission had remained particularly relevant due to the cost-of-living crisis. The Senior Officer noted that the Green New Deal was particularly ambitious but assured that progress was being made and that it was really a longer-term mission. With regard to retrofitting specifically there had been challenges, the London Partnership Board called for a workshop in March 2022 to address those challenges and develop a new plan around retrofit – *“there is a new plan around retrofit being developed between London Councils and the GLA, which is a positive that has come out of that mission because it wasn't working before, but hopefully we'll be able to get something more useful [now]”*.

## WHAT HAS WORKED WELL AND CHALLENGES FACED DURING IMPLEMENTATION

According to the Senior Officer the London Recovery Board, with its broad membership (reflected above) enabled a very positive experience of developing the plan as it led to buy-in across the board and created a sense of joint ownership. The participant shared – *“you have the Metropolitan Police meeting in the same space with the Federation of Small Businesses and the voluntary sector and the NHS, and these organisations wouldn't necessarily talk to each other, but they do in the board and connections are created”*. Involving such a range of different actors in the development and implementation of the plan enables a whole system approach to emerge which is useful for addressing complex cross-cutting issues. The Senior Officer also raised the fact that having a mission-based approach enabled the plan to be adaptable to local areas and helped to lead to wider buy-in – *“Each of the missions had their own goals, but the missions themselves didn't necessarily have strong delivery behind them. What that meant was that every organisation could see a place for them within that mission and could identify the programmes and the delivery that they needed to do [to] tailor them to their needs and communities”*.

The participant did however recognise challenges when working across so many boroughs and political

parties, especially with so many different potential issues to deal with which made it hard to identify which to prioritise. Nevertheless, *“it was a really positive challenge because it meant that we had to find those places where there was agreement, and it forced us to meet in the middle and reach consensus... we managed to come up with a lot of things that would work for all kind of parties and across all of London”*. Evaluation was a challenge according to the Senior Officer, as this was down to the different authorities responsible for implementation and funding the different areas. It was also acknowledged that although they didn’t receive government funding for this plan, they would have been able to achieve more with greater support from the Government.

## EVALUATION OF THE RECOVERY PLAN

As discussed, the participant shared that there was no strict evaluation mechanism of the plan. However, the Senior Officer noted that there are still meetings where progress is tracked, and plans are sometimes updated. The GLA’s website has updates under the Recovery Missions [31] with up-to-date action plans, reporting on implementation to date and details on next steps. The participant elaborated on previous discussion that it would be difficult to evaluate the plan as it was based on missions and did not include prescriptive policies – *“we have some reporting around the missions, but we didn’t have the kind of specific reporting that you would have around more metrical programmes”*.

Regarding future plans and the direction of the GLA beyond 2025 the Senior Officer indicated that it was very hard to predict, because they were nearing the end of a political cycle both nationally and in London. Nevertheless, the participant was hopeful that the London Partnership Board would remain part of the regions governing structure because although it emerged specifically out of the pandemic recovery context it is now perceived as a fundamental mechanism for policy deliberation and development in the capital.

## 7. CONSIDERATIONS AND PRINCIPLES

In the below section some considerations are provided for how the local authority plans relate to national government and higher-level authority policies, as well as considerations the funding of the plans.

### 7.1 CONSIDERATIONS FOR MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE

Several plans invoke the national ‘Levelling Up’ strategy, framing their plans as contributing to this objective and thereby contributing directly to national interests (Cornwall, 2020; Lancashire, 2020; South Tyneside, 2020; South Yorkshire, 2020; West Midlands; West of England, 2020; 2020; Bradford, 2021; Oxfordshire, 2021). The Sheffield City Region’s plan states that the investment the combined authority is asking for “will not just help rescue the South Yorkshire economy, it will also start to ‘level it up’” (South Yorkshire, 2020, p.4). The plan goes on to proclaim that it is “not just South Yorkshire, but the whole country” (South Yorkshire, 2020, p.12). This is echoed by South Tyneside underlining their recovery is for the benefit of the wider North East and the UK as a whole (2020).

A number of local authorities included in this review overlap with others, with districts that belong to counties, metropolitan boroughs that belong to Combined Authorities and London boroughs under the GLA. As such, it is important to consider the relation between plans to other levels of governance, even if not explicitly stated. It is also notable that some plans do not make any reference to higher level plans – for example Adur and Worthing Districts’ plan does not refer to the West Sussex plan, and Bath and North East Somerset’s plan does not mention the West of England CA’s plan.

The WMCA case study revealed that the recovery plan was an important moment for demonstrating the value of Combined Authorities regarding the economy in particular and that it enabled local authorities to focus on other more societal aspects of recovery – *“It was a milestone or proving point in the kind of soft power that we have, to bring together different authorities, to convene partners, let’s not underestimate the convening power that an elected mayor has here... the local authorities focused more on social and community aspects, but because of our experience we were able to operate at that strategic economic level”*.

The SLP's plan explicitly states that it fits in with and contributes to the London Economic Recovery Framework priorities with its five pillars of Jobs, Businesses, Thriving Neighbourhoods, Connected City and Global City, and two cross-cutting focuses on Achieving Net Zero and Narrowing Inequalities (SLP, 2020, p.15). Harrow's plan similarly states that in delivering priorities, it will also deliver sub-regional (West London Build and Recover Plan), regional (London Recovery Plan), and national priorities (UK Government Build Back Better) (2021, p.26).

Some more examples of local authorities acknowledging other levels of governance can be found below:

- Rother District: *"The order given for the Ambitions below reflects that of the East Sussex Recovery Plan: East Sussex Reset"* (2021, p.1)
- Bradford: *"we have been determined to align our Economic Recovery Plan with other existing and anticipated strategies and plans, in particular those of the Government and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) Economic Recovery Plan"* (2021, p.11)
- Sheffield City: *"These interventions will also work in conjunction with the Sheffield City Region (now South Yorkshire) Renewal Action Plan"* (2020, p.4)

This illustrates the importance of joint strategic planning across different levels of governance which is especially pronounced in times of crisis as it enables the pooling of resources and acknowledges that to achieve shared objectives different levels of governance must work together. The neighbouring districts belonging to the same county and London boroughs coming under the SLP to create a shared plan further highlight the nature of joint strategic planning across local government boundaries (Adur & Worthing, 2020; Broadland & South Norfolk, 2020; East Lindsey & Boston, 2020; SLP, 2020). Shifts to increased collaboration and joint strategic working across councils should be retained in the post COVID context, as demonstrated by the London Recovery Board's transformation into the London Partnership Board.

Local authorities should also engage in greater community engagement exercises to ensure that the work being done reflects the interests and needs of the local community. This will also help stimulate greater pride in place and trust in local government, in line with the aims of the Government's Levelling Up strategy [26].

## 7.2 CONSIDERATIONS FOR FUNDING

Most of the plans in the review are to varying extents dependent on funding from the Government. Some of the plans are framed as 'investment asks' from the UK government or directly reference that the implementation of plans depends on securing further Government funding and support (Lancashire, 2020; Solihull, 2020; South Tyneside, 2020; South Yorkshire, 2020; West Midlands, 2020; West of England, 2020; West Sussex, 2020; Bradford, 2021; Oxfordshire, 2021; SLP, 2021). The West Midland's document sets out a clear immediate ask of the Government for £3.2bn of investment over a three-year period (2020, p.1).

It appears that many of the programmes were largely unfunded at the time of the plans writing. Indeed, the Isle of Wight's plan notes that government funding in mitigating the pandemic's effects was insufficient and as such any recovery plans had to depend on pre-planned resources or finding alternative funding sources (Isle of Wight, 2020). A notable feature of the SLP cross-council collaboration plan is that it serves both as a strategy and as a means of petitioning the GLA and UK Government to request additional resources and flexibility in funding, stating that the plan seeks "support and investment from the Mayor of London, Government and other bodies to unlock South London's economic recovery and future vitality" (2021, p.4).

These findings were further supported by the in-depth case studies with four of the five interviewees confirming that the recovery plan had been developed as a bid for funding from the Government and as contributing to the national Levelling Up agenda. Across all of the case studies, the issue of funding was raised in relation to ring-fenced, timebound and competitive funding. Specifically, it was raised that Levelling Up Funding should not be competitive, instead it should be based on need as it is about improving the country as a whole and creating a national level playing field. This would help to prevent local authorities spending time and resources into developing plans that are unsuccessful and help to prevent

the development of unrealistic and budget constrained plans.

Lichfield’s’ survey indicates that 70% of local authorities and LEPs are severely constrained and do not possess sufficient resources to respond effectively and comprehensively to the economic impacts of COVID-19 in their local area [4]. Challenges are not solely related to government funding but also to staff shortages, budget cuts and the availability of existing funds to deliver recovery and key projects. Before COVID a lack of resources was already a common issue affecting local authorities following successive cuts to government grants [4]. This lack of resources was exacerbated by the pandemic and the subsequent increase in demand for socio-economic services. Further investigation is required to track UK Government funding initiatives since the plans were published.

### 7.3 PRINCIPLES FOR THE FUTURE

The Government’s Levelling Up White Paper 2022 [26] explicitly seeks to empower local leaders and communities, primarily in those places lacking local agency – as touched upon by South Tyneside’s case study which noted its move towards forming part of a new MCA. The Government strategy explicitly states that by 2030, all areas of England that want a devolution deal will have one with increased powers and a simplified, long-term funding settlement (26, p.234). Lancashire’s plan notes the County’s intent to form a Combined Authority, and the devolution deal is currently being discussed with the Government as part of the Levelling Up agenda [32].

As a result of the policy review and in-depth case studies the following principles have been developed as recommendations for the Government and local authorities to successfully accelerate policy change, particularly in the recovery from a crisis.

**Table 1. Principles**

<b>Greater devolution</b>	The UK Government should devolve greater powers to local authorities, including giving them increased ability to determine how to make use of existing funding and raise additional funds in order to pursue their strategic local priorities.
<b>Flexible and non-competitive funding</b>	The UK Government should ensure local authorities have access to more flexible funding opportunities that are not timebound, ring-fenced or competitive, as has been the case for Levelling Up Funding.
<b>Collaborative working</b>	Local authorities should prioritise increasing collaborative working, including seeking input from local businesses, services, and community groups to develop their strategic plans. In particular, where a crisis situation requires swift policy change and adaptation, it is essential to include all interlocking levels of governance and neighbouring local authorities in developing a collective strategic response.

## 8. CONCLUSIONS

The pandemic served as a catalyst for local authorities seeking to accelerate their policy agendas rather than a departure from past agendas, which has been identified both across the policy review, and within the case studies. Many of the local authorities have targeted increased support for net zero, the economy and widening inequalities, with an emphasis on young people, digitalisation and connectivity. Nevertheless, claims suggesting local authority responses to the pandemic would permanently reset the policy agenda do not appear true. Despite that, as shown in many of the plans and as discussed across the case studies there has been a change in the way policies are designed and implemented, and that is with a greater level of collaboration between local authorities and partners including Local Enterprise Partnerships, chambers of commerce, public services (health, transport, police etc.), the voluntary sector and business community, and even with other local authorities.

England's system of local governance appears to be characterised by a patchwork multi-level network of local authorities. Often these are overlaid with divergent geographical boundaries for public service delivery, such as police, transport and, health and social care; resulting in administrative fragmentation and complexity. The UK Government remains central to the arrangements and relationships that comprise the overall local governance system, with local authorities clearly dependant on central government for funding, as evidenced by numerous plans being effectively framed as funding requests. This was a common discussion point across the case studies too, with a call for more flexible funding that is not ring-fenced and timebound or competitive in nature. Similarly, there was recognition across the case studies that with greater devolution for local authorities, those with greater contextual knowledge of what is needed to enable recovery, would have access to more funding and a greater responsibility to decide on the most appropriate deliverables.

The review illustrates that net zero; place and spatial inequality; and socio-economic inequalities were present in the vast majority of recovery plans included in the review. Of prominence was place and spatial inequalities, with particular reference to inclusivity. Several other policy areas were identified across the included plans, these focussed on business and the economy; young people; health and the organisation of councils. These policy areas are not presented in a strictly siloed manner by the plans and are instead approached holistically and presented as being interrelated. This is largely due to the local authorities taking a co-benefit approach, involving environmental, social and economic opportunities to target multiple outcomes within their recovery plans. This is illustrated by environmental policy objectives being linked to the pandemic recovery insofar as they seek to create jobs and contribute to economic growth or seek to target spatial inequalities by enhancing people's health and wellbeing through access to natural environments and active travel routes. Many of the policies contained in the recovery plans (e.g., green spaces, transport, clean energy) do not appear to be directly linked to the socio-economic fallout from COVID but are rather driven by a broader political and macro-socio-economic context and compounded by a loss of momentum caused by the pandemic regarding such policy agendas; plans thereby act to reiterate, prioritise and accelerate work towards those objectives.

As a result of this research, the following principles have been formulated to support local authorities in accelerating policy changes in times of recovering from a crisis:

- Work towards greater devolution for local authorities.
- Ensure flexible and non-competitive funding sources are available for local authorities.
- Practice collaboration within and across local authorities and public services to design and implement recovery plans.

Questions for future research?

- To what extent can a local and place-based approach to policy fit with broader UK policy agendas, for example, the transition to a decarbonised and inclusive economy?

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## 10. APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1. OVERVIEW OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN ENGLAND

In England, local government is split across county councils, district councils, unitary authorities and London borough councils and, at the sub-regional level, mayoral and non-mayoral combined authorities and the Greater London Authority (GLA). There are two types of local government set-up. In some areas there is a single council, responsible for every local government function. These are known as ‘single tier’ councils and include Unitary Councils, Metropolitan Councils and London Boroughs. In other areas of England, there are two councils – one upper tier and one lower tier – which split local government functions between them. These are known as ‘two-tier’ councils and include County Councils and constituent District Councils. Unitarisation is a form of local government reorganisation that replaces county and district councils in ‘two-tier’ areas with a single tier ‘unitary’ authority. Please note, North Northamptonshire Council was established in 2021 and is the most recent area in England to undergo unitarisation.

There are also 10 Combined Authorities in England whereby groups of local authorities outside London can seek Government permission to ‘combine’ by pooling responsibilities and resources to receive new strategic powers in areas such as economic and transport policy. The constituent local authorities within Combined Authorities remain distinct entities delivering on their existing functions but can deliver new activities collectively across their given region. Most Combined Authorities are required to create a role for a directly elected mayor who leads the authority. As combined Authorities are directly composed of local councils the leaders of each constituent local authority also have decision-making powers as part of the executive, alongside the directly elected mayor.

The Greater London Authority (GLA) is a unique form of strategic authority with devolved powers. It is made up of two parts, with an executive – the Mayor of London, and the London Assembly, which scrutinises the Mayor’s decisions. The GLA has a range of strategic responsibilities including in areas of transport, policing, housing, and economic development. In contrast to Combined Authorities, the constituent local authorities (32 Boroughs) in London have no legal relationship with the GLA as it operates strategically across all of them and has distinct powers and responsibilities.

The Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP) is also not a local authority, however as with other LEPs it is a business led partnership between local authorities and local private sector businesses. LEPs are registered as private companies but receive government funding. For the sake of consistency this report will refer to all included entities as ‘local authorities’. From the 317 local authorities identified based on the UK Government list of councils (plus the GLA and three combined authorities), there were then 35 local authorities across 28 plans that were purposively selected to analyse their COVID-19 response plans.



## APPENDIX 2. CHARACTERISTICS OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES INCLUDED IN THE REVIEW

### Five plans were developed by nine London boroughs and the GLA

- Population sizes across the authorities: *between 9,000 (City of London) and 9 million (GLA).*
- Household deprivation across the authorities: *47.2 to 61% of households not facing deprivation in any dimension.*
- Political leadership across the authorities: *Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrats, or independent majority parties.*

### Three plans were developed by three Combined authorities (CA) that were located in either the West Midlands, Yorkshire and the Humber or South West England.

- Population sizes across the authorities: *between 956,000 and 2.92 million.*
- Household deprivation across the authorities: *41.9 to 52.1% of households not facing deprivation in any dimension.*
- Political leadership across the authorities: *Labour or Conservative leadership.*

### Five plans were developed across five Metropolitan districts that were located in either the North West, North East, West Midlands or Yorkshire and the Humber.

- Population sizes across the authorities: *between 148,000 and 557,000.*
- Household deprivation across the authorities: *43.0 to 50.7% of households not facing deprivation in any dimension.*
- Political leadership across the authorities: *Labour or Conservative leadership.*

### Five plans were developed by five Unitary authorities in the North East, South East, South West and East Midlands.

- Population sizes across the authorities: *between 140,500 and 570,500.*
- Household deprivation across the authorities: *42.2 to 54.1% of households not facing deprivation in any dimension.*
- Political leadership across the authorities: *Conservative, Alliance of Independent and Green party, Liberal Democrats, or Labour leadership.*

### Five plans were included from five County councils that were located in the East Midlands, West Midlands, North West or South East.

- Population sizes across the authorities: *between 610,000 and 1.55 million.*
- Household deprivation across the authorities: *48.0 to 55.9% of households not facing deprivation in any dimension.*
- Political leadership across the authorities: *Conservative or Liberal Democrat Labour and Green party coalition leadership.*

### Five plans were developed by eight District councils located within the South East, West Midlands, East Midlands or East England.

- Population sizes across the authorities: *between 93,000 and 142,500.*
- Household deprivation across the authorities: *39.8 to 51.7% of households not facing deprivation in any dimension.*
- Political leadership across the authorities: *Conservative, Rother alliance, or Labour leadership*

## APPENDIX 3. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES INCLUDED WITHIN THE REVIEW

LOCAL AUTHORITY	REGION	POLITICAL LEADERSHIP	POPULATION	PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLDS NOT DEPRIVED IN ANY DIMENSION
<b>London</b>				
Greater London Authority	Greater London	Labour	9 million	Not reported
City of London	Greater London	Independant Majority	9,000	59.8%
South London Partnership (SLP) (Plan developed by joined boroughs: Kingston upon Thames, Croydon, Merton, Richmond upon Thames, Sutton)	Greater London	Croydon: Conservative Kingston: Liberal Democrats Merton: Labour Richmond: Liberal Democrats Sutton: Liberal Democrats	SLP total: 1.2 million Kingston: 168,000 Croydon: 391,000 Merton: 215,000 Richmond: 195,300 Sutton: 209,600	Kingston: 55.8% Croydon: 48.0% Merton: 53.9% Richmond: 61.0% Sutton: 50.9%
Lewisham	Greater London	Labour	300,500	47.2%
Harrow	Greater London	Conservative	261,000	48.7%
<b>Combined authorities</b>				
West Midlands CA (Which includes the following metropolitan districts: Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Coventry, Dudley, Sandwell, Solihull, Walsall)	West Midlands	Conservative	2.92 million	41.9%
South Yorkshire CA (Which includes the following metropolitan districts: Barnsley, Doncaster, Rotherham Borough, Sheffield) <b>NB plan published when CA was known as Sheffield City Region</b>	Yorkshire and the Humber	Labour	1.4 million	44.2%

West of England CA (Which includes the following unitary authorities: Bristol, South Gloucestershire, Bath and North East Somerset)	South West	Labour	956,000	52.1%
<b>Metropolitan district authorities</b>				
Bradford	Yorkshire and the Humber	Labour	547,000	43.0%
Solihull	West Midlands	Conservative	216,000	50.7%
Wigan	North West	Labour	329,500	46.6%
Sheffield	Yorkshire and the Humber	Labour	557,000	45.4%
South Tyneside	North East	Labour	148,000	43.3%
<b>Unitary authorities</b>				
North Northamptonshire	East Midlands	Conservative	360,000	48.8%
Isle of Wight	South East	Alliance of Independents and Green Party	140,500	44.1%
Bath & North East Somerset	South West	Liberal Democrats	193,500	54.1%
Middlesborough Borough	North East	Labour	144,000	42.2%
Cornwall	South West	Conservative	570,500	46.1%
<b>County councils</b>				
Worcestershire County Council (Which includes the following district councils: Bromsgrove, Malvern Hills, Wychavon, Wyre Forest, the Borough of Redditch, city of Worcester)	West Midlands	Conservative	610,000	50.3%

Lancashire (Which includes the following district councils: Burnley, Chorley, Fylde, Hyndburn, Lancaster, Pendle, Preston, Ribble Valley, Rossendale, South Ribble, West Lancashire, and Wyre; and the following unitary authorities: Blackburn with Darwen, and Blackpool) N.B. the above district and unitary authorities are exploring the possibility of creating a combined authority for the North West	North West	Conservative	1.55 million (including Blackburn and Blackpool)	48.0%
West Sussex (Which includes the following district councils: Adur, Arun, Chichester, Crawley, Horsham, Mid Sussex, Worthing)	South East	Conservative	882,000	50.9%
Oxfordshire (Which includes the following district councils: Cherwell, West Oxfordshire, South Oxfordshire, Vale of White Horse, City of Oxford)	South East	Liberal Democrats (with Labour and Greens in coalition)	725,000	55.9%
Nottinghamshire (Which includes the following district councils: Ashfield, Bassetlaw, Broxtowe, Gedling, Mansfield, Newark and Sherwood, Rushcliffe Borough)	East Midlands	Conservative	825,000	48.6%
<b>District councils</b>				
Plan created by two District councils belonging to same County: Adur and Worthing	South East	Adur: Conservative Worthing: Labour	Adur: 64,500 Worthing: 111,000	Adur: 45.5% Worthing: 47.8%
Wychavon	West Midlands	Conservative	132,500	51.7%
Rother	South East	Rother Alliance – Independent, Liberal Democrat, Labour and Green Party	93,000	45.7%
Plan created by two District councils belonging to same County: East Lindsey and Boston	East Midlands	Conservative	East Lindsey: 142,500 Boston: 70,500	East Lindsey: 39.8% Boston: 40.9%
Plan created by two District councils belonging to same County: Broadland and South Norfolk	East of England	Conservative	Broadland: 132,000 South Norfolk: 142,000	Broadland: 51.0% South Norfolk: 51.7%

## APPENDIX 4. CHARACTERISTICS OF RECOVERY PLANS INCLUDED WITHIN THE REVIEW

LOCAL AUTHORITY	PLAN (YEAR) / ACCESS	AIMS AND OVERVIEW	PRIORITY AREAS
<b>London</b>			
Greater London Authority	<p>London Recovery Programme (2020)</p> <p>Available from: <a href="https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/recovery_programme_overview.pdf">https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/recovery_programme_overview.pdf</a></p> <p>Accessed: August 2023</p>	<p>COVID-19 disproportionately impacted on different communities further exacerbating deep seated inequalities which need to be addressed. The suburbs are changing, and local economies and high streets have been particularly affected, and there are significant pressures on the services that London Boroughs, the GLA, Transport for London (TfL) and others deliver.</p> <p>The London Recovery Programme, overseen by the London Recovery Board (now London Partnership), aims to restore confidence in the city, minimise the impact on communities and build back better the city's economy and society.</p>	<p>1. Reverse rising unemployment and economic downturn caused by COVID-19 impact (Inequality + Economy)</p> <p>Narrow Social, economic and health inequalities (Inequalities)</p> <p>2. Help young people with access to support and opportunities (Youth + Inequalities)</p> <p>3. Support communities, including those most impacted by the virus (place and space + inequalities)</p> <p>4. Accelerate delivery of a cleaner, greener London (net zero)</p> <p>5. Innovating and using digital tech &amp; data to meet emerging needs (Business +place and space)</p>

<p>South London Partnership</p>	<p>Economic Recovery Action Plan (2021)</p> <p>Available from: <a href="https://southlondonpartnership.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/SLP-Economic-Recovery-Action-Plan-Sept-2021.pdf">https://southlondonpartnership.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/SLP-Economic-Recovery-Action-Plan-Sept-2021.pdf</a></p> <p>Accessed: August 2023</p>	<p>Each of the SLP councils is working with local communities and partners to support residents in the face of public health and economic challenges from Covid-19. They recognise that their economies face common challenges, or challenges that cross boundaries. The partnership has also supported collaboration between the boroughs on Covid-19 response.</p> <p>Plan provides overview of SLP, the context of recovery and sets out the areas of focus for collaborating to support local economic recovery and help the SLP collectively contribute to London’s overall economic recovery. It fits into the London Economic Recovery Framework, through which the SLP will continue to collaborate with other boroughs and partners around London. The plan also seeks support and investment from the MoL, UK GOV, and other bodies to unlock south London’s economic recovery and future vitality.</p>	<p>Key areas of work are around the economy – including innovation and business support, skills and employment, and infrastructure – and health and care.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Helping residents into good work and supporting upskilling, reskilling or other support to adapt to the changing labour market and addressing in-work poverty. (Employment and skills + inequality)</li> <li>2. Supporting innovation to improve business survival and renewal and increased productivity. (business &amp; economy)</li> <li>3. Improving sub-regional infrastructure and connectivity and making it more climate friendly (place and space + net zero)</li> <li>4. Addressing the climate emergency (net zero)</li> <li>5. Revitalising high streets and economic areas (economy + place and space)</li> </ol>
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<p>City of London Corporation</p>	<p>The Square Mile: Future City (2021) Available from: <a href="https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/assets/Business/the-square-mile-future-city.pdf">https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/assets/Business/the-square-mile-future-city.pdf</a> Accessed: August 2023</p>	<p>The plan aims to contribute to a diverse, sustainable and globally successful London and UK as a whole. It sets out the vision for the City of London to remain the pre-eminent hub for financial services (FS), professional services (PS) and technology over 5 years, grounded in the context of COVID-19's damaging socio-economic impact.</p> <p>Identifies six policy focus areas under the following three themes: Innovative Ecosystem (Economy &amp; Business) - Vibrant Offer (Place) - Outstanding Environments (Business, Place, Environment/Net Zero)</p>	<p>1. Innovative ecosystem:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Business – Encouraging growth and innovation.</li> <li>b. Opening opportunities to everyone and fostering talent</li> <li>c. Focus on creative industries, fintech, and artificial intelligence</li> </ol> <p>2. Vibrant Offer</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Tourism, retail and hospitality</li> </ol> <p>3. Outstanding environment:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Sustainable infrastructure and buildings,</li> <li>b. walking and cycling spaces, public spaces and streets</li> </ol>
<p>Lewisham Borough Council</p>	<p>Future Lewisham: Our borough's recovery (2021) Available from: <a href="https://lewisham.gov.uk/articles/news/future-lewisham-our-boroughs-recovery">https://lewisham.gov.uk/articles/news/future-lewisham-our-boroughs-recovery</a> Accessed: August 2023</p>	<p>The plan briefly outlines the four core themes running through the heart of plans for Future Lewisham and in light of COVID-19's impact. It focuses on the economy, the environment, the community and inequalities. It also provides statistics in relation to the pandemic.</p>	<p>Outlines the following four core themes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A greener future</li> <li>2. A healthy and well future</li> <li>3. An economically sound future</li> <li>4. A future we all have a part in</li> </ol> <p>Priority is placed on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating jobs</li> <li>• Supporting businesses</li> <li>• Decreasing inequalities in health and wealth</li> <li>• Preserving the environment</li> </ul>

<p>Harrow Borough Council</p>	<p>Harrow Economic Strategy 2021-2030 (2021)</p> <p>Available from: <a href="https://www.harrow.gov.uk/downloads/file/30046/Harrow_Economic_Strategy_2021_2030.pdf">https://www.harrow.gov.uk/downloads/file/30046/Harrow_Economic_Strategy_2021_2030.pdf</a></p> <p>Accessed: August 2023</p>	<p>The strategy is the second iteration of a previous economic strategy (2020), taking into consideration the pandemic' impact. This strategy builds on the Council's existing ambitions to make Harrow a great place to do business and to enjoy life, as set out in the Borough Plan 2020-2030. It also outlines statistics in relation to the pandemic's impact and the borough's immediate response, whilst outlining its longer-term strategy</p> <p>It aims to replace lost jobs and address inequalities exacerbated by the pandemic by improving the skills and employability of residents; and stimulating business growth and job creation</p>	<p>The objectives of this strategy are to deliver the following priorities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. High earning jobs within the borough: addressing low paid employment in the borough.</li> <li>2. Micro, Small and Medium sized enterprises grow sustainably within the borough: Addressing employment and encouraging entrepreneurialism.</li> <li>3. Employment opportunities to match skills available in the borough: Addressing need to travel for suitable employment.</li> <li>4. Local learning / opportunities match business needs / sectors.</li> <li>5. Vibrant town and district centres: Maintaining the Town Centres and District Centres as commercial hubs.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Combined authorities</b></p>			
<p>South Yorkshire CA (formerly Sheffield City Region)</p>	<p>Sheffield City Region Renewal Action Plan (2020)</p> <p>Available from: <a href="https://southyorkshire-ca.gov.uk/getmedia/bf2c27b2-a5c7-4ac5-ac64-b4f8798df095/Sheffield-City-Region-Renewal-Action-Plan-Document-Final.pdf">https://southyorkshire-ca.gov.uk/getmedia/bf2c27b2-a5c7-4ac5-ac64-b4f8798df095/Sheffield-City-Region-Renewal-Action-Plan-Document-Final.pdf</a></p> <p>Accessed: August 2023</p>	<p>In response to COVID-19's impact the CA developed this plan which aims to provide immediate help for local people, employers, and places, while also contributing to longer-term goals and the transformation of the City Region.</p> <p>The plan's purpose is to provide the MCA with a detailed action plan that will articulate the next steps for to renew the economy. A clear distinction has been made between immediate relief from COVID-19 (&lt;1 year), recovery and long-term resilience (1-3 years and 3+ years respectively), aligned with the Strategic Economic Plan (SEP).</p> <p>The plan is framed as an ask for investment from the Government and as contributing to the national 'Levelling up' strategy.</p>	<p>The plan is aligned with CA's policy objectives of: Growth, Inclusion and Sustainability. It puts forward actions based on the following three focus areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. People – supporting people adapt to the new economy and be better able to fill higher-skilled jobs.</li> <li>2. Employers – supporting businesses to adapt, survive and thrive in the new environment.</li> <li>3. Places – stimulating the local economy to create jobs and transform places.</li> </ol>



<p>West of England CA</p>	<p>West of England Recovery Plan (2020)</p> <p>Available from:  <a href="https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/West-of-England-Recovery-Plan.pdf">https://www.westofengland-ca.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/West-of-England-Recovery-Plan.pdf</a></p> <p>Accessed: August 2023</p>	<p>In the context of the pandemic's impact this programme aims to build back better, greener, and stronger. It presents a range of policies to be implemented until 2025. WECA is investing over £500m up to 2025 to support the region's recovery and economic development, in line with this plan and the local industrial strategy. The document outlines some pre and post pandemic statistics, outlines the immediate response and puts forward proposals for further recovery and renewal.</p>	<p>The plan is centred on being clean and inclusive and is built across the following five pillars:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Supporting and promoting business and creating jobs</li> <li>2. Training opportunities</li> <li>3. Strengthening inclusion to prevent further widening of inequalities.</li> <li>4. Supporting a green recovery to accelerate our transition to net zero carbon.</li> <li>5. Renewing places, creating greener, healthier, more vibrant places to live and work and so continuing to attract people from across the world</li> </ol>
<p>West Midlands CA</p>	<p>Recharge the West Midlands Kickstarting the West Midlands Economy: Our investment case to government (2020)</p> <p>Available from:  <a href="https://www.wmca.org.uk/media/3975/west-midlands-economic-recovery-our-ask-and-offer-hd-spreads.pdf">https://www.wmca.org.uk/media/3975/west-midlands-economic-recovery-our-ask-and-offer-hd-spreads.pdf</a></p> <p>Accessed: August 2023</p>	<p>This plan aims to address the short-term risks of COVID-19 by creating and safeguarding jobs, and also takes into account the longer-term improvements in regional innovation, competitiveness and resilience.</p> <p>The plan is framed as an ask for investment from the Government, which totals £3.2bn over the next three years. The plan will be enabled by investment in infrastructure, people and communities, underpinned by a business support programme</p>	<p>The plan covers businesses and the economy, the environment and the people who live there. It covers the following seven priority areas for policy action:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Create green manufacturing jobs</li> <li>2. Maximise job creation for local people</li> <li>3. Invest in healthcare innovation</li> <li>4. Build better digital and transport links</li> <li>5. Regenerate brownfield sites and build new homes</li> <li>6. Get people back into work</li> <li>7. Back our region's businesses</li> </ol>

Metropolitan district authorities			
<p>Sheffield City Council</p>	<p>Sheffield COVID Business Recovery Plan (2020)</p> <p>Available from:</p> <p><a href="https://democracy.sheffield.gov.uk/documents/s41012/Appendix%20-%20Sheffield%20Business%20Recovery%20Plan.pdf">https://democracy.sheffield.gov.uk/documents/s41012/Appendix%20-%20Sheffield%20Business%20Recovery%20Plan.pdf</a></p> <p>Accessed: August 2023</p>	<p>The plan identifies interventions to help focus efforts and resources to address the impact of the COVID crisis on Sheffield businesses and jobs and provide a route map for recovery. The plan is designed to complement other recovery plans (i.e., SCR/ South Yorkshire).</p> <p>The plan is for civic and city leaders spearheading Sheffield’s economic recovery response. It was produced by the Sheffield Business Response Group – a co-operation between the Cabinet Members for Business and Investment and the private sector.</p>	<p>The plan is structured around Relief, Recovery and Renewal. It contains six priority areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Stimulating the local economy</li> <li>2. Opening the city and district centres safely and securely</li> <li>3. Developing the skills base to help communities get back to work</li> <li>4. Helping to stimulate the conditions to encourage more start-ups</li> <li>5. Stimulating investment in culture to help rebuild confidence and visitor numbers</li> <li>6. Working with business leaders on a longer-term economic strategy for Sheffield</li> </ol>
<p>South Tyneside Borough Council</p>	<p>South Tyneside Economic Recovery Plan (2020)</p> <p>Available from:</p> <p><a href="https://publications.southtyneside.gov.uk/plans/south-tyneside-economic-recovery-plan/">https://publications.southtyneside.gov.uk/plans/south-tyneside-economic-recovery-plan/</a></p> <p>Accessed: August 2023</p>	<p>This plan was published online on the Council’s website. It is based on meeting the economic challenges of the pandemic, long-standing structural barriers to growth, EU Exit and climate change. It presents the key economic drivers of recovery and a series of interventions to help build the right conditions for future growth, with a major focus upon skills, green growth and inclusivity. It stresses the need to press on with ambitions set in motion before the pandemic, such as schemes vital to the regional recovery, like IAMP, Holborn Riverside and South Shields 365. The Plan aims to create 10,000 new jobs over the next 5 years.</p>	<p>The core principles are inclusive, green and sustainable growth. While the priority areas for action are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Turbocharge productivity (Business, economy, skills and employability)</li> <li>2. Investing in transport and digital infrastructure (Place and Spatial inequality)</li> <li>3. Catalyse green and sustainable transition: (Net Zero)</li> <li>4. Foster an inclusive recovery (Socio-economic Inequalities and Place and Spatial inequality)</li> </ol>

<p>Solihull Borough Council</p>	<p>COVID-19: Solihull's Economic Recovery Plan: Supporting whilst seizing opportunities from a crisis (2020)</p> <p>Available from:</p> <p><a href="https://eservices.solihull.gov.uk/mginternet/documents/s84117/Appendix%201_Economic%20Recovery%20Plan_full%20version%20%20FINAL%20CIRC.pdf">https://eservices.solihull.gov.uk/mginternet/documents/s84117/Appendix%201_Economic%20Recovery%20Plan_full%20version%20%20FINAL%20CIRC.pdf</a></p> <p>Accessed: August 2023</p>	<p>To support residents and businesses across the Borough to recover from the crisis and return Solihull to growth that is inclusive and supports the Council's Climate Change declaration. This plan is key to achieving the Council Plan to 2025 for sustainable inclusive growth "where everyone has an equal chance to be healthier, happier, safer and more prosperous through growth that creates opportunities for all" – by building a vibrant economy, promoting and delivering social value, enabling communities to thrive, actioning our climate change declaration and improving skills and access to good work.</p>	<p>The Plan focuses on four priority areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. People (employment, wellbeing, education)</li> <li>2. Business and sectors</li> <li>3. particularly major economic assets (Birmingham Airport, the NEC and Jaguar Land Rover)</li> <li>4. Place and investment</li> <li>5. Green recovery</li> </ol>
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<p>Bradford City Council</p>	<p>Bradford District's Economic Recovery Plan (2021) Available from: <a href="https://www.bradford.gov.uk/media/6290/bradford-district-economic-recovery-plan.pdf">https://www.bradford.gov.uk/media/6290/bradford-district-economic-recovery-plan.pdf</a> Accessed: August 2023</p>	<p>According to the plan the immediate prospects for recovery depend on controlling the pandemic, responding effectively, and addressing the effects of the UK's exit from the European Union (EU) and leveraging the opportunities from devolution. It sets out the actions needed now and over the next two years to accelerate the recovery from Covid-19, by sustaining employment and boosting productivity whilst continuing to build a more inclusive, sustainable and resilient economy for the subsequent period.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Equip the District's young and diverse population with the skills &amp; confidence to succeed</li> <li>2. Transition to a sustainable, resilient and connected economy</li> <li>3. Place: leverage Bradford's diverse cultural assets and distinctive places to drive economic growth.</li> <li>4. Health and wellbeing</li> <li>5. Upskill and support business to use new technologies and drive innovation.</li> </ol>
<p>Wigan Borough Council</p>	<p>Wigan's road to recovery and a brighter future (2021) Available from: <a href="https://www.wigan.gov.uk/Docs/PDF/Council/The-Deal/Wigan-Council-Road-to-Recovery-Plan.pdf">https://www.wigan.gov.uk/Docs/PDF/Council/The-Deal/Wigan-Council-Road-to-Recovery-Plan.pdf</a> Accessed: August 2023</p>	<p>Sets out how the council, public sector partners, businesses, community organisations and residents can work together to help the Borough recover from the pandemic's impact with a focus on the most affected. The document gives an overview of priority areas for recovery to be delivered by 2025.</p>	<p>The core theme running through the plan is to 'build back fairer', with the following five priorities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Invest in young people (skills, training, education)</li> <li>2. Rebuild local economy and businesses (e.g., low carbon economy)</li> <li>3. To support communities + health and wellbeing</li> <li>4. To confront local inequalities</li> <li>5. Regenerate places and the environment</li> </ol>

Unitary authorities			
Cornwall Council	<p>COVID-19 Economic Recovery Plan 2020-2021 (2020)</p> <p>Available from: <a href="https://democracy.cornwall.gov.uk/documents/s141564/Delivering%20and%20Sustaining%20Economic%20Growth%20Post%20COVID-19%20and%20the%20end%20of%20the%20EU%20Transition%20Period%20-%20Ap.pdf">https://democracy.cornwall.gov.uk/documents/s141564/Delivering%20and%20Sustaining%20Economic%20Growth%20Post%20COVID-19%20and%20the%20end%20of%20the%20EU%20Transition%20Period%20-%20Ap.pdf</a></p> <p>Accessed: August 2023</p>	<p>This document sets out the priorities and actions for the following 18 months to help Cornwall recover from the economic impact of COVID-19. It builds on work already undertaken by Cornwall Council since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. Covid-19 is presented as catalyst for change that starts the process of re-engineering the local economy. It is designed to outline the key principles that will underpin recovery work and detail tangible actions to start the process.</p>	<p>Thematic areas: People, Business and Places. Priority areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Economy/Business</li> <li>2. Inequalities</li> <li>3. Place</li> <li>4. Environment</li> </ol> <p>The plan presents four non-distinct stages of recovery:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Respond: Minimise impact on businesses, services and residents</li> <li>2. Reopen: Responsible reopening of businesses, services and infrastructure</li> <li>3. Recover: Support to business, infrastructure, places and people to ensure resilience</li> <li>4. Renew: Develop new vision and plans for Cornwall</li> </ol>

<p>Isle of Wight Council</p>	<p>A Better Island: Isle of Wight COVID-19 Recovery Plan (2020)</p> <p>Available from:  <a href="https://iwightinvest.com/recovery-plan/">https://iwightinvest.com/recovery-plan/</a>                  Accessed: August 2023</p>	<p>This plan was published in the form of a webpage on the Council’s website. It sets out the actions, existing or new, that will be key to a successful recovery, who will be involved in delivering them, crucially, how they might be resourced and how the Council might measure the progress it makes.</p> <p>In planning for recovery, the website highlights the following issues as vital to consider: Climate change, Brexit, future COVID-19 outbreaks and financial pressures.</p>	<p>Identifies three core pillars of recovery:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Community                         <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Address inequalities</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Economy                         <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Skills, employment</li> <li>b. Business support</li> </ol> </li> <li>3. Place                         <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Increase housing offer</li> <li>b. Improve transport</li> <li>c. Improve digital connectivity</li> <li>d. Sustainable and climate friendly</li> </ol> </li> </ol>
<p>Bath &amp;North East Somerset Council</p>	<p>Corporate Strategy 2020-2024 (2021)</p> <p>Available from:  <a href="https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/policy-and-documents-library/corporate-strategy-2020-2024">https://beta.bathnes.gov.uk/policy-and-documents-library/corporate-strategy-2020-2024</a>                  Accessed: August 2023</p>	<p>Strategy was designed and adopted before covid and subsequently adapted and updated to reflect the challenges brought on by the pandemic. It sets out priorities for the next four years, including how they will be delivered. It also looks at how the Council have responded to the COVID-19 pandemic, and how they will deliver on the strategy considering that. The document also contains a ‘Community Engagement Charter ‘which sets out how the Council will engage with residents in a meaningful way.</p>	<p>Priority areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The environment/climate.</li> <li>2. The economy</li> <li>3. Inequalities in life experience.</li> <li>4. Social care duties to support vulnerable residents.</li> <li>5. Working better with our local communities.</li> </ol>

<p>Middlesbrough Council</p>	<p>Strategic Plan 2021-24 (2021)</p> <p>Available from: <a href="https://modern.gov/middlesbrough.gov.uk/documents/s13547/Strategic_Plan_2021-24.pdf">https://modern.gov/middlesbrough.gov.uk/documents/s13547/Strategic_Plan_2021-24.pdf</a></p> <p>Accessed: August 2023</p>	<p>In January 2020, Council approved a Strategic Plan for 2020-23. COVID subsequently changed needs significantly and this second issuing of the plan reflects the impact of the pandemic. The plan is very basic and goes into limited detail regarding any implementation or funding. Sets out some achievements regarding what has been done to date and goes on to outline the council's key priorities according to the three thematic areas of People, Place and Business.</p>	<p>The plan contains three simple, interrelated themes, People, Place and Business and sets out the following seven priorities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. COVID-19 recovery</li> <li>2. Children and Young People</li> <li>3. Vulnerability and Inequality</li> <li>4. Crime and antisocial behaviour</li> <li>5. Climate Change</li> <li>6. Physical environment</li> <li>7. Town Centre</li> </ol>
<p>North Northamptonshire Council</p>	<p>Corporate plan: Covid-19 Recovery Plan (2021)</p> <p>Available from: <a href="https://www.northnorthants.gov.uk/corporate-plan/corporate-plan-covid-19-recovery-plan">https://www.northnorthants.gov.uk/corporate-plan/corporate-plan-covid-19-recovery-plan</a></p> <p>Accessed: August 2023</p>	<p>The plan is published as a single web page on the local authority's website, in bullet point form. It outlines the key actions for North Northamptonshire's recovery in relation the economy, the community and the council's organisation.</p>	<p>The plan is dived into the following three sections:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Economic Recovery</li> <li>2. Community Recovery</li> <li>3. Organisational Recovery (relating to the newly formed unitary authority)</li> </ol>

County councils			
<p>Lancashire County Council</p>	<p>Redefining Lancashire: Our Approach to 2Recovery (2020)</p> <p>Available from: <a href="https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/media/917897/redefining-lancashire-our-approach-to-recovery-25-june-2020.pdf">https://www.lancashire.gov.uk/media/917897/redefining-lancashire-our-approach-to-recovery-25-june-2020.pdf</a></p> <p>Accessed: August 2023</p>	<p>Lays out the first steps of Covid-19 recovery, setting out Lancashire’s economic priorities. It includes a series of projects and programmes designed to support the refunctoning of the County economy over the next year. Each programme is designed to respond to the immediate risks to main sectors, protecting existing employment and economic activity, while contributing to the delivery of longer-term transformational projects that will support economic growth in line with the emerging themes of the Greater Lancashire Plan.</p> <p>The aim is to focus on projects to protect employment and re-mobilise the economy. Focus on agreed measures which have far reaching consequences beyond the immediate scheme if allowed to be forgotten. ‘Shovel ready projects’ that can be delivered by 2022 that will support job creation and green recovery.</p>	<p>The policies and actions put forward in the plans cover the following areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Businesses and Economy</li> <li>2. Manufacturing</li> <li>3. Environment</li> <li>4. Inequalities</li> <li>5. Technology</li> <li>6. Transport</li> <li>7. Infrastructure</li> <li>8. Employment and Skills</li> <li>9. Town centres</li> <li>10. Tourism</li> <li>11. Youth</li> </ol>



<p>West Sussex County Council</p>	<p>Economy Reset Plan 2020-2024 (2020)</p> <p>Available from: <a href="https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/media/15054/economy_reset_plan.pdf">https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/media/15054/economy_reset_plan.pdf</a></p> <p>Accessed: August 2023</p>	<p>The Council's plan is guided by Government strategy and reflects what is known so far from evidence and intelligence on the impact of COVID-19; what has been learnt through the response to the COVID-19 crisis; the opportunities the Council are keen to embrace; and what it has been doing and proposes to do.</p>	<p>The plan is made up of 9 themes.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Protect and Revive Crawley and the Gatwick Diamond Economy</li> <li>2. Protect and Revive the Coastal Towns</li> <li>3. Protect and Revive the Rural Economy</li> <li>4. Enable Business Start-ups, Business Survival and Business Adaptation</li> <li>5. Enable Employment and Skills Recovery and Resilience</li> <li>6. and Revive Tourism and the Visitor Economy</li> <li>7. Enable a health and social care market for the future</li> <li>8. Capitalise on Digital Infrastructure and Technology</li> <li>9. Embed Climate Change and the Environment into the Reset</li> </ol>
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<p>Worcestershire County Council</p>	<p>Worcestershire’s Strategy for Restart and Recovery (2020)</p> <p>Available from: <a href="https://www.wlep.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/64733-Economic-Recovery-Plan-Summary-V02-Landscape-V05.pdf">https://www.wlep.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/64733-Economic-Recovery-Plan-Summary-V02-Landscape-V05.pdf</a></p> <p>Accessed: August 2023</p>	<p>Working together, the county and district authorities along with regulators and representatives of the business community, have met regularly since March 2020 to develop a COVID-19 economic recovery framework. The plan contains seven priority themes, and the aim of the plans are to guide investment that is needed to build future resilience against the changing economic environment and the impact on markets.</p>	<p>Plans have been developed across seven priority themes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Business Intelligence: collecting data and analysis of impact</li> <li>2. Information for businesses.</li> <li>3. Business support</li> <li>4. Transport and Infrastructure: digital infrastructure investment, re-start construction, reduce impact of flooding, and ensure County benefits from national programmes.</li> <li>5. Employment and skills: focus on youth and unemployed</li> <li>6. Town centres: Districts leading work to understand the implications for each of the main towns.</li> <li>7. Tourism: developing series of joined up campaigns to promote Worcestershire as a destination.</li> </ol>
<p>Nottinghamshire County Council</p>	<p>Recovery Action Plan (2020)</p> <p>Available from: <a href="https://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/media/2893819/covid-19-crisis-economic-recovery-action-plan-2020-to-2022.pdf">https://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/media/2893819/covid-19-crisis-economic-recovery-action-plan-2020-to-2022.pdf</a></p> <p>Accessed: August 2023</p>	<p>The plan aims to support a productive economy and a prosperous community with opportunity for all and plan aims to maintain progress towards visions and ambitions set out in the Council Plan. It also outlines the Governments national response and how Nottinghamshire has responded to the pandemic so far.</p>	<p>The following thematic areas are described in the plan:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. People</li> <li>2. Business</li> <li>3. Visitor Economy</li> <li>4. Place</li> <li>5. Infrastructure</li> </ol>

<p>Oxfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (OxLEP) and Oxfordshire County Council</p>	<p>Oxfordshire's Economic Recovery Plan: The ERP Action Plan (2021)</p> <p>Available from: <a href="https://www.oxfordshirelep.com/sites/default/files/uploads/Oxfordshire%20ERP%20Action%20Plan%20-%20FINAL%20%2826th%20February%202021%29_0.pdf">https://www.oxfordshirelep.com/sites/default/files/uploads/Oxfordshire%20ERP%20Action%20Plan%20-%20FINAL%20%2826th%20February%202021%29_0.pdf</a></p> <p>Accessed: August 2023</p>	<p>This Plan is designed to tackle the key findings evidenced by the 2020 ERP Economic Baseline Assessment, providing a comprehensive assessment of the pandemic's impact on Oxfordshire's economy. The plan is framed as an ask for investment to the Government. This Plan takes in some 70 activities, with an aggregate project value of c. £1.4 billion.</p> <p>It is a living document, intended to be under constant review and reiterated regularly to ensure that action and activity remain relevant and aligned to changing economic needs. It provides a flexible framework for Oxfordshire's partners to co-ordinate and target interventions to support recovery at the most effective level, where it is most needed – be it County-wide, at district level or in specific wards.</p> <p>It provides a comprehensive and co-ordinated County-level economic route map for recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, and the damage impacted on Oxfordshire's People, Places and Businesses.</p>	<p>Three strategic focus areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. People – relating to the jobs, skills, and mental/physical health of Oxfordshire's residents;</li> <li>2. Businesses – across the spectrum of firms' sizes and their sectoral specialisms; and</li> <li>3. Places – reviving and reimagining Oxfordshire's city, towns, villages, and rural areas.</li> </ol> <p>The plan puts forward the following four proposals:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reskilling People: outlining the key challenges in the People domain and the four activity streams which address these;</li> <li>2. Resilient Businesses: outlining the key challenges for businesses and the four activity streams which address these;</li> <li>3. Reviving Places: outlining the key challenges for Places and the four activity streams which address these;</li> <li>4. Rebuilding Connectivity: highlighting key infrastructure activities and requirements to adjust and adapt to COVID-19 impacts, and which are vital to the priorities set out under the Plan</li> </ol>
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District councils			
<p>Adur District &amp; Worthing Borough Councils</p>	<p>“And then....”: Bouncing back in post pandemic Adur and Worthing (2020)</p> <p>Available from: <a href="https://www.adur-worthing.gov.uk/media/Media,157351,smxx.pdf">https://www.adur-worthing.gov.uk/media/Media,157351,smxx.pdf</a></p> <p>Accessed: August 2023</p>	<p>Presents place-based activities and interventions that the two Councils will take to enable their communities to thrive, prosper, be healthy and resilient following the pandemic of Spring 2020. The plan frames the disturbance and challenge caused by the pandemic as an opportunity to accelerate work on “Platforms for our Places: Going Further” (2020-2022). This plan maintains the five proposed platforms and cross-references to “Platforms for our Places: Going Further” e.g. [P4OP: 1.1] to enable read across both plans where relevant.</p>	<p>The plan presents five priority platforms:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Prosperous Places</li> <li>2. Thriving People and Communities</li> <li>3. Tackling Climate Change and Supporting our Natural Environments</li> <li>4. Good Services and New Solutions (focus on council services)</li> <li>5. Leadership of Place (e.g., place branding)</li> </ol>
<p>Broadland &amp; South Norfolk District Councils</p>	<p>Broadland and South Norfolk: Our Plan for Recovery from the Covid-19 Crisis (2020)</p> <p>Available from: <a href="https://www.southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk/downloads/file/2338/council-agenda-27-july-2020-item-7-recovery-plan">https://www.southnorfolkandbroadland.gov.uk/downloads/file/2338/council-agenda-27-july-2020-item-7-recovery-plan</a></p> <p>Accessed: August 2023</p>	<p>The plans on how the two councils will support and drive the economic recovery and provide help for communities in response to the coronavirus pandemic. The recovery plan sets out how the two councils continue to look after their vulnerable residents and provide help for local businesses into the future. This document outlines the initial and strategic six-point plan for recovery based around three key themes. Action plans will underpin each of these areas, to manage delivery and to achieve the measures of success set out for each area.</p>	<p>The plan covers three themes, each with several actions.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Economy             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Employment</li> <li>b. Business support</li> <li>c. Communities</li> </ol> </li> <li>2. Inequalities</li> <li>3. Organisation &amp; Governance             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Transformation and commercialisation</li> <li>b. Updating ways of working</li> </ol> </li> </ol>

<p>East Lindsey District &amp; Borough of Boston (Strategic Alliance)</p>	<p>Strategic Alliance Covid-19 Recovery Plan 2021-2023 (2020)</p> <p>Available from: <a href="https://democracy.boston.gov.uk/documents/s12451/Appendix%20B.%20Recovery%20Plan.pdf">https://democracy.boston.gov.uk/documents/s12451/Appendix%20B.%20Recovery%20Plan.pdf</a></p> <p>Accessed: August 2023</p>	<p>This Plan sets out a range of practical measures to help the people and businesses of Boston and East Lindsey bounce back from the harm caused to the areas' economies and civil society by the "lockdowns" imposed on local businesses and communities to contain C-19. The plan also outlines how the council has responded to C-19 thus far, then outlines initiatives to be carried out and finally presents 'potential initiatives'.</p> <p>The plan focusses on two things:</p> <p>Identifying work which the two council's already committed to and showing how that will assist recovery;</p> <p>Highlighting opportunities for additional carefully targeted interventions to address issues of particular concern and which are likely to have a significant beneficial impact on those they are intended to.</p>	<p>The plan contains three themes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. People: targeting inequalities and creating opportunities</li> <li>2. Business: support and renewal</li> <li>3. Place: Infrastructure projects and environmental improvements</li> </ol>
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<p>Rother District Council</p>	<p>Rother District Economic Recovery Action Plan (2021)</p> <p>Available from:  <a href="https://rdcpublic.blob.core.windows.net/website-uploads/2021/07/Recovery-Plan-Final.pdf">https://rdcpublic.blob.core.windows.net/website-uploads/2021/07/Recovery-Plan-Final.pdf</a>                  Accessed: August 2023</p>	<p>In response to the COVID-19 pandemic a cross-party Economic Recovery Steering Group was set up to direct the actions of the Council in supporting the local economy as lockdown restrictions are eased. The group look at recovery in three stages: Immediate impact; Lockdown survival; and Recovery. Rother regeneration officers are using the action plan as an ongoing working document. The plan outlines the key priorities in Rother's response to the impact by C-19 on various sectors and tying that strategy in with the East Sussex Reset.</p>	<p>The plan identifies six target 'ambition' areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Supporting Business and stimulating the Economy</li> <li>2. Skills, employability, and workforce resilience</li> <li>3. Leisure, hospitality, tourism, retail and cultural</li> <li>4. Adapt and improve places</li> <li>5. Expand low carbon transport and energy infrastructure</li> <li>6. Capitalising on Digital connectivity</li> </ol>
<p>Wychavon District Council</p>	<p>Wychavon Covid-19 Recovery Plan 2021-2023 (2021)</p> <p>Available from:  <a href="https://www.wychavon.gov.uk/component/fileman/file/Covid/Wychavon%20Covid-19%20Recovery%20Plan%202021-23_A3.pdf?routed=1&amp;container=fileman-files">https://www.wychavon.gov.uk/component/fileman/file/Covid/Wychavon%20Covid-19%20Recovery%20Plan%202021-23_A3.pdf?routed=1&amp;container=fileman-files</a>                  Accessed: August 2023</p>	<p>This plan is brief at one page long in bullet point form. The actions in this plan have been shaped by the findings and recommendations from the local LGA Renewal and Recovery Panels and the Covid-19 Review Group's recommendations. They include a number of promises, actions from service plans, some leftover actions from Wychavon's original recovery plan and some new actions. It seeks to provide an overview of the council's plans to respond to the impact of C-19 and includes measures looking at longer term recovery and renewal.</p>	<p>The proposals in the plan are divided according to the following five themes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Economic</li> <li>2. Social</li> <li>3. Community</li> <li>4. Organisational</li> <li>5. Environmental</li> </ol>