



national network  
for neighbourhood  
improvement

# Birchwood Big Local Report

February 2026



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# About this evaluation

**This report presents the findings of a 'critical friend' evaluation<sup>1</sup> of the Birchwood Big Local programme, undertaken to capture learning and inform the development of the Pride in Place programme, and the award of £20million funding over a ten-year period for Birchwood West Pride in Place, commencing 2026.**

The evaluation draws on a comprehensive evidence base, including in-depth interviews with a total of 30 individuals with a connection to Birchwood, including local residents, members of voluntary and community sector organisations, council officers, elected members, volunteers and delivery partners, as well as members involved in the Big Local partnership itself. Interviews were conducted in-person and remote, over a six-week period, with five days spent in Birchwood getting to know the neighbourhood and members of the community, alongside a desk-based document review and qualitative insight from the Birchwood community.

Quantitative data has been used where it is available, although the evidence of long-term impact is difficult to demonstrate due to limited baseline data and the absence of formal outcome monitoring. The need for a baseline survey of local residents to measure their perceptions of the local neighbourhood prior to the commencement of Pride in Place is something that should be considered. A draft survey has been prepared to support community engagement around Pride in Place, the short timescales and limited sample size of Birchwood residents on the Citizens Panel made it unviable to go into the field.

Consistent with a critical friend approach, the evaluation offers an independent and balanced assessment of how the programme operated, what it delivered and what learning should inform the development of the Pride in Place initiative in Birchwood West Middle Layer Super Output Area (MSOA).

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1. A 'critical friend' approach combines independence and objectivity with a clear commitment to learning and improvement. It is not an audit or inspection, but a constructive and reflective form of challenge that seeks honest insight to understand what worked, what didn't and why. It recognises the effort, goodwill and complexity inherent in long-term community-led work and frames the evaluation as a constructive learning process rather than a judgement against fixed metrics.



# Executive summary

Birchwood Big Local formed part of the national Big Local programme, which between 2012 and 2026 invested long-term funding directly into 150 disadvantaged communities. The programme enabled residents to identify local priorities and lead change, contributing to visible improvements in social infrastructure – including enhanced parks and green spaces, new or upgraded community facilities – and helping rebuild local social capital through support for a wide range of community groups and activities. Evidence from areas with resident-led, locality-based approaches shows statistically significant improvements in local economic strength, reduced child poverty and lower crime rates.<sup>2</sup>

In Birchwood, the Big Local partnership acted on locally identified priorities such as play facilities for children and young people, public realm improvements, and community safety initiatives (including speed monitoring devices). The partnership's central focus, however, became a proposed housing development that aimed to safeguard green spaces, create new recreational facilities and establish a long-term income stream to fund their maintenance. When this development stalled and was eventually dropped, alternative approaches were explored. This involved a pivot to making substantial grants to local grassroots organisations – many of which would have struggled without this support.

Residents and volunteers involved in Big Local nationally report increased confidence, new skills and stronger understanding of how to influence decisions affecting their area. This pattern was echoed in Birchwood, where partnership members described greater trust, stronger connections and increased community confidence – an important foundation on which Pride in Place can now build. Alongside strengthened networks and improved local facilities, Birchwood Big Local leaves a lasting legacy in the form of a Community Land Trust (CLT), enabling community ownership and control. The CLT is recognised within the Pride in Place programme as a valid intervention for community-led development.

The evaluation identified several factors that shaped delivery. These included heavy demands placed on a small core group of volunteers; the difficulty of sustaining broad community engagement over a decade; tensions between ambitious aspirations and the partnership's capacity to deliver complex capital projects; and shifts in the wider external environment. Communication also emerged as a recurring theme: while early engagement was strong, some residents felt that expectations – particularly around youth provision – were not consistently met.

Although challenges emerged where ambition outpaced capacity, Birchwood's willingness to think boldly was also a significant strength. Ambition should not be discouraged. With over £20m available over ten years, the Pride in Place programme represents an opportunity for Birchwood West to realise the "art of the possible," provided that ambition is supported by feasibility testing, technical advice and realistic financial modelling.

Interviews highlighted broader community dynamics that shaped perceptions and outcomes, including fragmentation between neighbourhoods, mixed levels of trust in local structures and the strong symbolic importance of the proposed Jasmin Green development. For many residents, the project came to embody hopes for long-term sustainability, youth opportunities and a visible legacy. Its non-delivery understandably affected confidence.

While early community engagement was effective and helped develop an ambitious first Big Local Plan, participation narrowed over time as the focus shifted to the flagship housing development. Later innovations – such as a highly visible shop-front base in the shopping precinct – helped reestablish connections but could not fully overcome the pressures faced by an initiative reliant on a core number of dedicated volunteers, during unprecedented challenges including COVID-19 and inflationary shocks linked to the war in Ukraine. Stakeholders consistently acknowledged the dedication, goodwill and persistence of those who led and delivered the programme.

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2. <https://localtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/Everybody-needs-good-neighbourhoods-2.pdf>

The evaluation highlights the conditions needed for community-led investment to succeed: proportionate and enabling governance; alignment between ambition and delivery capacity; an appropriate balance of volunteer leadership and professional support; transparent, ongoing communication; and close partnership working between residents and statutory bodies.

Overall, Birchwood Big Local proved most effective where it delivered visible, place-based improvements that residents could experience directly and take pride in. While some interventions – such as speed monitoring devices – may not be widely associated with Big Local, their benefits have been felt across the community. Improvements to parks, play spaces and community facilities contributed positively to local pride and perceptions of Birchwood as a place to live.

At the same time, the programme faced challenges: an increasing misalignment between escalating ambition and available capacity; reliance on a small number of committed individuals; volunteer fatigue; and weakening community engagement late in the programme's lifecycle. These were exacerbated by external shocks, leading to inflationary construction costs, and by the complexity of the proposed development at Jasmin Green.

A further consequence of the intensive focus on the Community Land Trust and the Jasmin Green development was that significantly fewer resources were available for broader community development work. This contributed to challenges such as the limited and inconsistent opening of Diamond Park, which remained dependent on a small group of volunteers. While the volunteers who led this work were highly committed, the time needed to recruit and support new volunteers, was not invested, limiting the programme's ability to build wider community capacity. As Pride in Place moves forward, sustained and properly resourced community development will be essential to ensure that local facilities, engagement structures and volunteer networks are strengthened rather than left vulnerable to capacity constraints.

As Birchwood West prepares for the Pride in Place programme, these lessons provide a strong foundation. By building on existing strengths, addressing known risks, and prioritising inclusive engagement, early visible 'quick wins' and sustained trust-building, Pride in Place has the opportunity to support a more resilient and impactful model of neighbourhood working – one capable of driving and delivering meaningful, lasting benefits for the community.

The report concludes with a set of practical, Pride in Place-focused recommendations to guide a successful transition to the new model. These recommendations ensure that the programme builds on local and institutional memory, reflects community experience, earns resident trust, and is equipped to achieve long-term, positive change for Birchwood West.

# Context and purpose

## Policy and programme context

Birchwood Big Local was one of 150 neighbourhoods across England to each receive just over £1.15 million through the Big Local programme – an ambitious national experiment in community power. The programme aimed to direct long-term investment to communities experiencing higher levels of deprivation and which had historically not received their fair share of funding. It represented the National Lottery Community Fund’s largest ever endowment, running until March 2026, by which point all areas must have spent their allocation. Local Trust, which oversees Big Local, is also winding down as the programme concludes.

Birchwood was selected as a Wave 2 area in February 2012. Although some capacity funding supported early engagement and planning during 2013–2014, the programme began in full in 2015 with the launch of the first of four Birchwood Big Local plans.

The programme was founded on the principle that residents are the experts on their own area. With the right resources, support and autonomy, they are best placed to identify priorities, shape solutions and pursue change grounded in local character, assets and needs.

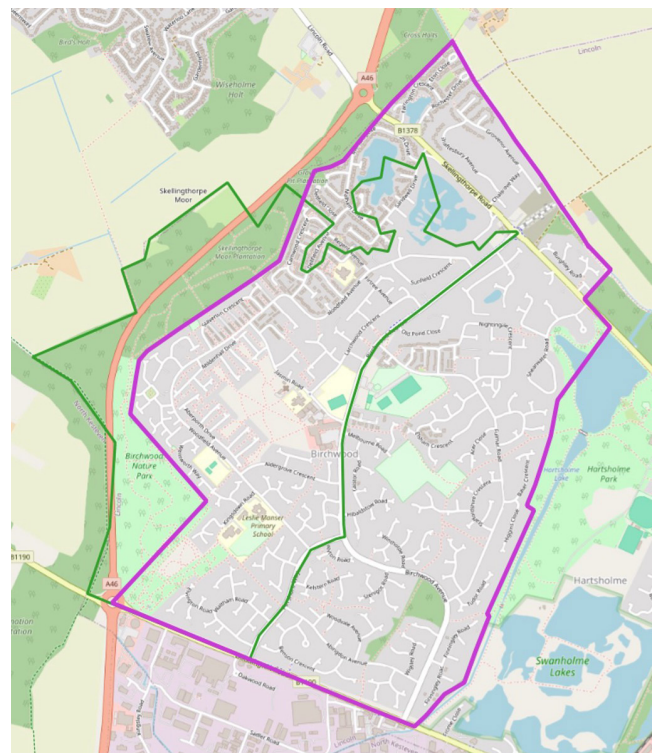
## Overall programme objectives

In Birchwood, Big Local operated across a ten-year period and represented a significant long-term investment in a defined geographical area. With a population of around 14,000, Birchwood was one of the larger Big Local areas, and was classified typologically as a ‘rural fringe’ area. Evidence suggests that populations of 8,000–10,000 are optimal for place-based, community-led regeneration and for building the social capital that underpins sustainable community development.

The Birchwood Big Local area comprised approximately 14,688 residents, living in 6,691 dwellings and two care homes.

Throughout its duration, the programme sought to improve quality of life, strengthen community capacity and enable resident-led initiatives across Birchwood. Its delivery took place within a complex and shifting context, shaped by pressures on public services, community fragmentation, uneven access to social infrastructure, changes to local governance, and the national and international impacts of Brexit, COVID-19 and the inflationary shock following the war in Ukraine.

The Birchwood Big Local programme has now concluded. In July 2025, Birchwood West MSOA – covering approximately half of the Big Local area – was announced as one of 20 Trailblazers within the government’s £5 billion Pride in Place programme. It is one of 244 areas across the UK set to receive £20 million of long-term investment over ten years.



Map: Birchwood, showing the Big Local and Pride in Place MSOA boundaries

While Pride in Place differs from Big Local in its structure, reporting requirements, scale of investment, and a capital:revenue split of 63:37 it draws clear inspiration from Big Local and earlier community-led regeneration initiatives such as the New Deal for Communities. Particularly relevant is the requirement that Neighbourhood Boards must be comprised of at least 51% people who live or work in the neighbourhood, and that within three years the Boards should transition to a “community-led delivery model.”<sup>3</sup>

This shift presents both an opportunity and a responsibility: to reflect candidly on Birchwood’s experience and apply the learning to support a stronger approach to neighbourhood working.

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## Rationale for the evaluation

This evaluation was commissioned to provide a proportionate and fit-for-purpose review of the Birchwood Big Local programme, broadly aligned with principles set out in HM Treasury’s *Magenta Book* (2020). Specifically, it seeks to understand:

- What was delivered through Birchwood Big Local
- How the programme operated in practice
- What difference it made to the community and those involved
- What lessons can be learned to inform the design and implementation of Pride in Place

The evaluation recognises that Big Local was not solely a funding programme investing in place, but also a long-term social process – one that invested in foundational social infrastructure and in people, built trust and encouraged learning and adaptation over time. For this reason, it does not attempt to judge success or failure in narrow terms, nor does it assess value for money. Instead, the emphasis is on learning, improvement and practical insight for the future.

The work was undertaken within acknowledged limitations, including significant time constraints, incomplete quantitative data and the absence of a comparison group. These challenges are common in community-led programmes. As such, the evaluation is primarily qualitative and insight-driven, drawing on lived experience, documentary evidence and stakeholder perspectives from across Birchwood.

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## Purpose and intended use

The primary purpose of this evaluation is to help inform the development of the Birchwood West Pride in Place initiative – building on local strengths and assets, addressing known challenges and applying the lessons of Birchwood Big Local. It also aims to reflect the community-identified priorities and lived experiences of residents and partners. Specifically, it seeks to:

- Capture the experiences and perspectives of residents, partners and stakeholders
- Identify what worked well, what worked less well, and why
- Distil practical lessons for future community-led and partnership-based work
- Provide actionable recommendations for the early stages of Pride in Place

A secondary purpose is to offer Lincoln City Council, local partners and stakeholders an accessible and balanced account of the Birchwood Big Local legacy, supporting transparency, organisational learning and reflection. To support a range of audiences, the report prioritises clarity, accessibility and practical insight rather than technical evaluation detail.

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3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pride-in-place-programme-prospectus/pride-in-place-programme-prospectus>

## Approach and positioning

The evaluation has been undertaken as a critical friend assessment – combining independence and objectivity with a constructive commitment to learning and improvement. It recognises the effort, complexity and goodwill that underpin long-term community-led programmes and seeks to reflect these realities fairly.

Rather than framing Birchwood Big Local as a fixed intervention to be judged against predetermined metrics, which is indeed not possible given the lack of national and local programme success indicators and that collecting evidence retrospectively is really difficult, the evaluation understands it as a dynamic, evolving process shaped by changing circumstances, shifting relationships and the lived experiences of residents and volunteers. This perspective is essential for appreciating both the programme's achievements and its challenges.

By adopting this approach, the evaluation aims to support a constructive transition from Big Local to Pride in Place – one that is grounded in evidence, informed by experience and focused on improving outcomes for Birchwood West.

# Methodology

## Approach to evaluation

This evaluation was designed and delivered as a critical friend evaluation, bringing together independence, objectivity, and a constructive, learning-focused perspective. The approach reflects the overarching purpose: to review the experience and legacy of Birchwood Big Local and to generate practical learning to shape the development of the Birchwood West Pride in Place initiative.

In line with the HM Treasury *Magenta Book* (2020), the methodology is intended to be proportionate and fit for purpose, taking account of decision-makers' needs, the available evidence, and the constraints of time and data. The emphasis is on understanding what happened, how, and why, rather than making narrow judgements about success or value for money.

The evaluation covers both:

- **Formative (process) aspects:** governance, partnership working, community engagement, planning, and decision making; and
- **Summative (impact) aspects:** delivery of activities, perceived outcomes, and Birchwood Big Local's contribution to changes in people, place, and relationships.

## Scope of the evaluation

The evaluation spans the entire lifespan of Birchwood Big Local – from inception to programme closure – with particular attention to how the programme evolved and how local circumstances influenced its direction.

The scope includes:

### Focus

- Governance structures and decision-making processes
- Outputs, activities, and initiatives delivered
- Outcomes and perceived impact at both community and stakeholder levels

### Timing

- Early programme ambition and set-up
- Mid-programme delivery and adaptation
- End-of-programme legacy and transition

### Key stakeholders

- Big Local partnership members and volunteers
- Local residents and participants
- Delivery partners and community organisations
- Lincoln City Council officers and elected members
- Other strategic partners and funders

The evaluation does not include a formal value-for-money assessment and does not seek to compare Birchwood Big Local with other Big Local areas or neighbourhoods.

## Methods and data sources

A mixed-methods approach was adopted, drawing primarily on qualitative evidence, supported where possible by documentary and quantitative data. This reflects the nature of Birchwood Big Local's work and the variability of consistent data across its lifetime.

### Desk-based review

A review of existing documentation included:

- Original Birchwood Big Local plans and vision documents
- Internal reports, papers, and programme updates
- End-of-programme and transition documentation
- Relevant council and partner reports (where available)
- Publicly accessible community information and local context materials

This review helped establish programme context, original intentions, and developments over time.

### Stakeholder interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a cross-section of 30 stakeholders, including:

- Big Local partnership members
- Local residents and volunteers
- Council officers and elected members
- Delivery partners and beneficiary organisations
- Youth and community leaders

Interviews explored experiences of Birchwood Big Local, views on what worked well or less well, and learning for Pride in Place. The semi-structured format provided consistency while allowing participants to raise issues they considered important.

### Community insight and qualitative evidence

The evaluation draws strongly on lived experience and qualitative insight, including:

- Narrative accounts from across the Birchwood area
- Perceptions of change over time
- Reflections on relationships, trust, and shared identity
- Narratives illustrating local pride, tensions, fragmentation, and strengths

Short examples and case illustrations are used where appropriate to illuminate key findings.

## Quantitative data

Quantitative data was limited and inconsistent across the programme's lifetime, and the evaluation does not rely on quantitative measures as its primary evidence base. The Big Local programme was not subject to a formal national evaluation, with local partnerships having the autonomy to decide on how they would measure success, including whether to do so at all. There is no baseline survey of local resident's opinion in Birchwood of which to measure performance against, so quantitative data is limited to largely the Census and Index of Multiple Deprivation, which has been used to provide some context and triangulate qualitative findings, as well as access to the Partnership Reviews and Partnership Surveys periodically carried out by Local Trust.

Appendix 1 covers a range of quantitative and time-series data that we have prepared for this evaluation to give a sense of how Birchwood has changed over the duration of the programme.

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## Analytical framework

Analysis was guided by:

- The Big Local outcomes framework (community capacity, skills and confidence, local action, perceptions of place)
- The emerging objectives and principles of the Pride in Place initiative

Evidence was analysed thematically, with attention to:

- Recurring patterns and contrasts across stakeholder groups
- Differences between areas within Birchwood and between community actors
- Changes over time: then and now
- Areas of consensus and divergence
- Practical implications for future delivery

This approach enables the evaluation to move beyond description and provide actionable learning.

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## Limitations and constraints

The evaluation was conducted within several recognised constraints, which should be considered when interpreting the findings:

- **Time limited fieldwork:** restricting the depth and breadth of primary data collection
- **Limited baseline and longitudinal data:** restricting the ability to evidence change over time quantitatively
- **No comparison group:** limiting attribution of outcomes directly to Birchwood Big Local and its activities
- **Reliance on retrospective accounts:** which may be affected by recall bias, availability bias or later experiences

These limitations are typical of long-term, community-led programmes. They are mitigated through triangulation of sources, clarity about evidence strength, and an emphasis on learning rather than strict attribution.

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## Ethics and sensitivity

Given the 'politically-sensitive' context, long-standing nature of local relationships, and personal investment of many individuals involved in the initiative, the evaluation was conducted with care and respect. Interviews were confidential, and findings are reported in ways that avoid identifying individuals unless explicitly agreed.

The evaluation acknowledges the commitment, emotional investment, and sustained effort of those involved in Birchwood Big Local and aims to represent achievements and challenges fairly.

## **Use of findings**

The findings and recommendations are intended to:

- Inform early design and governance decisions for Pride in Place in Birchwood West
- Support shared understanding and reflection among partners
- Strengthen inclusive, effective, and sustainable neighbourhood working in the Birchwood area as a whole, and in the city of Lincoln
- Provide a practical evidence base for decision-making

The methodology is designed to support these aims by prioritising relevance, clarity, and practical insight over technical complexity.

# Then and now: From original vision to lived experience

## Timeline: Key milestones in Birchwood Big Local (2012–2024)

**2012:** Announcement of Birchwood as a Wave 2 Big Local area; Birchwood Big Local Steering Group formed.

**2013:** Extensive community consultation around local priorities.

**2014:** Terms of Reference developed; endorsed as Partnership Board; community grants scheme created; Birchwood Buzz (quarterly self-funded magazine) launched.

**2015:** First Birchwood Big Local Plan (2015–2017) published; major community consultations around Melbourne Park and Jasmin Green, developed Big Local Profile, Vision for area and Review of Partnership Board.

**2016:** Birchwood Area Community Land Trust (BACLT) created as a legacy vehicle; Change of Locally Trusted Organisation from Learning Communities to Lincolnshire Co-operative Society; Drawings and business plan for Melbourne Park development; Diamond Park closed due to play equipment needing replacement; Consultation on new play equipment; Birchwood Big Local Project Worker appointed.

**2017:** Birchwood Big Local office opened; 'Design your park' project received over 100 submissions and 786 votes on two final designs; adoption of Central Lincolnshire Local Plan supporting the Jasmin Green development for the provision of housing and recreational amenities; BACLT submission of outline planning application (which was granted); BACLT acquisition of Diamond Park from Life Church Lincoln; Diamond Community Park event attended by circa 400 people; Decision to pause proposals for Melbourne Community Park; second Big Local Plan drafted (2018–2022).

**2018:** Diamond Park fully renovated and reopened.

**2019:** Community Housing Fund grant secured for BACLT; Project Team for Jasmin Green established; revision of Jasmin Green housing mix to include family homes.

**2020:** Registered Provider partner selection begins, Acis Group identified as preferred partner; COVID-19 impacts begin, including closure of Diamond Park; public consultation on Jasmin Green development.

**2021:** Youth and skatepark consultations reach 1,210 residents.

**2022:** Jasmin Green land transfer to BACLT approved by City Council with go-ahead for housing development and skate park; viability report submitted.

**2024:** Programme pivoted to grant making; Lincolnshire Community Foundation appointed to lead grant-making process; refresh of the 2022–26 Plan initiated.

A core aim of this evaluation is to consider how the original vision for Birchwood Big Local compares with the programme's experience and outcomes at its conclusion. This "then and now" perspective highlights both what was achieved and the structural, social and contextual factors that shaped delivery over time.

## The original vision ("then")

Early programme development was informed by four whole-area consultations, reaching large numbers of residents across Birchwood. This included full-area mailings and in person events. The Board revisited consultation on specific schemes, for example, returning to residents in 2017 regarding Melbourne Park before shifting to smaller scale improvements in response to community feedback.

When Birchwood Big Local began, it was driven by a strong sense of optimism and ambition. The programme set out to place real decision-making power in the hands of local residents, supported by long-term investment that would allow the community to identify priorities, build capacity and deliver change on its own terms.

The original vision centred on:

- A resident-led partnership, independent of the local authority
- Long-term, flexible funding for locally determined priorities
- A commitment to community empowerment over short-term service delivery
- Investment in both people and place
- Creating a positive legacy that would last beyond the programme's lifetime

Early engagement activity throughout 2013 and 2014 showed strong community interest in the initiative. Residents identified clear priorities around quality of life, youth opportunities, play and recreation, community spaces, safety, and activities that would bring people together. There was a prevailing belief that with time and resources, the community could design solutions that were more grounded, responsive and sustainable than externally driven interventions.

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## Early delivery and momentum

The initial years of Birchwood Big Local reflected this early energy. Establishing the partnership, consulting residents and producing the first plans created visibility, enthusiasm and local credibility. Big Local was widely viewed as an open and accessible programme offering genuine opportunities for residents to shape change.

Early projects and planning activity reinforced the belief that Big Local was a vehicle for resident-led action. There was a shared expectation that momentum would build steadily across the ten-year programme.

## Overview of Big Local Plans (2015–2026)

### Plan 1: 2015–2017

- ✓ Focused on large transformational capital projects (Melbourne Park; early Jasmin Green exploration).
- ✓ Proposed recruitment of Community Project Manager.
- ✓ Strong community consultation (e.g., 326 responses on Jasmin Green; multiple youth consultations).
- ✓ Sub groups established: Green Spaces, Communications, Land Transfer, with the use of 'task and finish' groups for specific activities.
- ✓ Detailed 2 Year Project Plan Budgeted at £773,000; £161,315 spent.

### Plan 2: 2018–2020 (extended to 2022)

- ✓ Consultation events with 195 residents (40% under 18).
- ✓ Increased visibility of youth needs; concerns over limited awareness of Birchwood Big Local. Recognition of responsibilities failing on a "small core number of volunteers". Action was proposed to address this, including through an Events sub-group and a 3-year Project Manager role.
- ✓ Respondents were asked "How would you like your £1 million pounds spent in Birchwood?", which did not generate many responses, with most respondents giving views on specific projects including Jasmin Green and Diamond Park.
- ✓ Greater emphasis on events, community engagement and volunteer recruitment.
- ✓ Budgeted at £901,500; £393,705 spent.

### Plan 3: 2022–2026

- ✓ COVID-recovery focus, including food bank support and digital inclusion. 4,500 families helped during 2020, with 1,000 activity packs distributed through local schools and 8 laptops to those at risk of digital exclusion.
- ✓ Development of Community Engagement sub-group, building on 40 strong volunteer group around Diamond Park, ongoing environmental improvements were a feature of the plan as well as legacy planning for BACLT.
- ✓ Review of what had worked well and where there could be improvement, with some focus on implications for the work of the Pride in Place Board.
- ✓ Strengthened partnership working for Jasmin Green's development.
- ✓ Budgeted at £607,572; £168,005 spent.

### Plan 3: Refresh (from April 2024)

- ✓ Working through three sub-groups: Communications; Green Spaces; Diamond Park and Community Engagement.
- ✓ Pivot away from Jasmin Green following inflation and viability issues.
- ✓ Lincolnshire Community Foundation appointed to deliver structured grant programme (£438,700 awarded).
- ✓ Re-evaluation of the future of BACLT as legacy vehicle for Birchwood Big Local and long-term asset strategies.

While Big Local demonstrated ambition and community-led vision, structured feasibility and risk assessment processes were limited in the earlier years. Formal gateway reviews and specialist advice only became consistently embedded from 2022 onwards, when the Project Group was established. Prior to this period, several proposals advanced on the basis of aspiration rather than fully costed feasibility, contributing to later delays and the eventual need to pivot toward a grant-making model.

## The lived experience over time ("now")

As the programme progressed, the picture became more complex. While Birchwood Big Local delivered a range of tangible and valued outcomes, the way the programme operated shifted in response to rising accountability requirements, delivery challenges and mounting external pressures.

By the end of the programme, interviewees described a mixed experience:

- Physical improvements – such as upgraded parks and enhanced community facilities – were visible and remain part of the local landscape
- A core group of residents and partners gained significant skills, confidence and experience
- Community groups, assets and local activities benefitted from significant investment as the programme pivoted to distributing grant funding

However, several challenges emerged:

- Engagement narrowed, with decisions increasingly made by a smaller group of people
- Governance and compliance demands became more dominant, at times overshadowing the original ethos of community-led action
- Volunteer fatigue became a major issue, affecting continuity and capacity
- Residents not directly involved in delivery found the programme less visible and harder to understand
- Some early expectations – particularly around youth and play facilities – were not met, leading to frustration and disengagement

Interview feedback also highlighted fragmentation between neighbourhoods, uneven participation and mixed levels of trust in local institutions. For some residents, these factors contributed to a sense that the programme did not consistently represent the whole community. Combined with unmet expectations, this resulted in disappointment and scepticism about future initiatives.

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## Impact of COVID-19

Birchwood Big Local was significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Activities and community events were curtailed, and although Board meetings moved online, the partnership, like many organisations, struggled to function as effectively. Morale was affected, and uncertainty around the future of the Jasmin Green development increased during this period, shaping later decision making and ultimately contributing to the pivot away from major capital proposals.

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## What changed – and why

The shift from original vision to lived experience reflects multiple interacting factors rather than a single cause, including:

- The challenge of sustaining broad community engagement over a long period
- Reliance on a small group of committed volunteers and increasingly complex responsibilities
- Increasing governance, risk management and accountability requirements
- Limited access to professional support for feasibility, costing and delivery of what were significant capital projects
- Wider contextual pressures, including funding constraints and policy changes
- Local social dynamics, differing identities and varying levels of cohesion

Although these factors reshaped how the programme functioned, the underlying commitment to improving Birchwood remained strong.

## Continuity as well as change

Despite the challenges, many of the programme's core values have endured. The principles of resident-led decision-making, fostering pride in the local area and belief in community capacity remain evident, and indeed stronger than ever. New grassroots initiatives such as CHOMP CIC (Community Health Offering Meals and Provisions), and Diamond Park Community Project, the new CIO created to manage Diamond Park, are testament to this.

Importantly, Birchwood Big Local has generated a considerable body of learning about what enables – and what limits – community led change. Stakeholders consistently emphasised that the programme should not be judged simply as a success or a failure. Instead, it should be understood as a long-term, complex endeavour that delivered meaningful outcomes while also revealing structural weaknesses that can now be addressed.

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## Implications for Pride in Place

The award of long-term Pride in Place funding, with a resident-majority Neighbourhood and transition to a community-led delivery model offers a key opportunity to apply this learning. The “then and now” analysis suggests that Pride in Place should:

- Continue to nurture the growth of grassroots groups and projects and engage with them on developing a shared vision for Birchwood West
- Provide clearer structures and professional support to sustain community engagement
- Balance ambition with deliverability, ensuring proposals in the first iteration of the Pride in Place Plan and Four-Year Investment Plan are realistic and resourced
- Build on the investment in local civic assets, in order to safeguard and enhance provision of social infrastructure key to building the stock of social capital
- Make learning, reflection and adaptation integral to programme design
- Rebuild trust and visibility, recognising that some residents may feel sceptical due to unmet expectations during Big Local
- Address potential cynicism by being transparent about expectations, decisions and constraints, and by demonstrating how Pride in Place differs in approach and structure – an opportunity to target hyper-local investment on the areas of highest community need within Birchwood West whilst navigating potential tensions from the bounded investment footprint

Understanding how Birchwood Big Local evolved – from original vision to lived experience – is essential in shaping a Pride in Place programme that is grounded in local reality, responsive to community needs and better equipped to deliver long-term, inclusive and visible change.

# Process findings: How Birchwood Big Local worked in practice

This section summarises how Birchwood Big Local operated over time, drawing on stakeholder interviews, document review and qualitative insight. It focuses on governance, decision-making, community engagement, partnership working and delivery processes. The emphasis is on learning from experience rather than assessing success or failure. Across interviews, participants expressed both pride in what was achieved and frustration about the constraints and pressures that shaped delivery.

## Governance and decision-making

### What worked well

Birchwood Big Local established a formal governance structure that created accountability and a clear route for resident-led decision-making. Partnership members developed a strong sense of ownership and responsibility for the programme, gaining skills in governance, compliance and strategic planning.

The partnership's independence from the council was initially seen as a strength. It reinforced the ethos of community control and enabled residents to pursue priorities they felt were meaningful. Stakeholders also highlighted the value of the partnership as a local convening mechanism – a place where community priorities could be articulated and pursued, even when their delivery required external cooperation.

The Partnership Board met monthly until March 2017, after which meetings moved to a bi-monthly cycle prior to COVID-19. Additional meetings were held where required. Given the scale and complexity of the Jasmin Green proposals, more frequent meetings may have supported earlier progress.

### Challenges and tensions

Over time, governance processes became increasingly complex and demanding. Stakeholders reflected that arrangements were not always sufficiently robust or supported to manage the risks associated with some proposed initiatives. This contributed to slow decision-making, frustration and, in some cases, the pursuit of proposals that were disproportionately ambitious relative to available executive capacity to drive them.

*"I think ambitions were too high... they were using the wrong levers to achieve the desired outcomes."*

*Senior Council Officer*

Several stakeholders felt that governance structures were not always experienced as inclusive. There was a perception that meetings could be off putting for new participants and that decision making appeared to be concentrated within a small core group. This made it difficult to refresh leadership and widen participation.

*"There was very little turnover of partnership, it was the same people for 10 years... it didn't feel like a genuine community-led project, quite a small, closed group leading small projects not advised by the community."*

*Birchwood resident*

Interviewees also described how formal procedures, reporting requirements and compliance obligations became increasingly dominant, at times overshadowing creativity and delivery. Managing complex workstreams through volunteer-led structures – without consistent specialist support – proved challenging. Legal, planning, procurement and funding requirements often created interdependent “gates” where delays in one area stalled progress elsewhere.

## Learning

The experience highlights the need for governance that is proportionate, enabling and designed to widen participation rather than inadvertently narrowing it. Where programmes involve higher risk or technical ambitions, governance should include clear gateway stages covering feasibility, risk, deliverability and legal readiness – helping protect community leaders while maintaining momentum.

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## Community engagement and participation

### What worked well

Early in the programme, significant effort was invested in community engagement. Initial consultation was widely viewed as genuine and meaningful, helping identify local priorities and build early trust. Visible projects – especially improvements to parks and community spaces – helped establish the programme’s presence.

Family fun days at Diamond Park were a notable example. These events attracted strong attendance, offering low-barrier opportunities for residents to participate and helping build relationships, increase the visibility of the Big Local and build a sense of ownership over one of the neighbourhood’s most valued shared spaces.

Residents and organisations who engaged directly with Birchwood Big Local often described feeling listened to and supported. Small grants and practical assistance were valued, particularly where other funding was scarce.

### Challenges and tensions

Sustaining broad-based engagement over a decade proved difficult. Over time, the programme became less visible to residents not involved in governance or delivery. Some felt it had become inward-facing, with limited communication about progress, decisions or constraints.

***“The project had very low visibility across the city’s partnership networks and was perceived as a bit of a ‘closed shop.’”***

*City council employee*

A recurring issue was the lack of accessible, positive spaces and activities for children and young people – a priority raised consistently and with urgency. For many, youth provision served as a practical need and a symbolic test of whether the programme could deliver visible change.

Consultation fatigue in the community also emerged, fuelled by both Big Local consultations and wider engagement activity from public bodies. This made it harder to re-engage residents who felt their earlier input had not led to tangible outcomes.

***“There was a lack of community consultation and testing of thinking... only the initial consultation and nothing since.”***

*Senior City Council Officer*

Interviews also suggested that visibility of impact mattered as much as impact itself: where Big Local supported activity behind the scenes – for example through room hire or equipment – its contribution was sometimes invisible to the wider public.

## Learning

Effective engagement must be continuous, varied and transparent, with clear feedback loops showing how community input shapes decisions. Visibility and communication are central to sustaining trust. Long-horizon or technical projects require clear explanations of timelines, constraints and dependencies to keep expectations realistic.

*"It's about building a really strong relationship... listening to the local community, but the local community also listening."*

*Local Councillor and Birchwood resident*

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## Leadership, capacity and volunteer experience

### What worked well

Birchwood Big Local contributed significantly to local leadership development. Many partnership members and volunteers reported gains in confidence, skills and understanding of how to influence change locally. Their commitment was consistently recognised by stakeholders.

### Challenges and tensions

Birchwood Big Local had an average of 12 partnership members between 2015 and 2023, which according to Local Trust's partnership reviews was broadly consistent with the Big Local average. However, the programme relied heavily on a small group of highly committed individuals. Over time, this created volunteer fatigue, and limited capacity to recruit or support new people. Responsibilities around governance, finance and project oversight were substantial and, at times, outstripped available support.

*"Volunteer fatigue... I don't know that enough attention was paid to that if I'm honest."*

*Local VCSE organisation leader*

Succession planning was limited, making the partnership vulnerable to changes in individual circumstances. Several interviewees described the emotional burden associated with carrying long-term responsibility for community expectations, particularly when progress was affected by external factors.

## Learning

Long-term community programmes require deliberate strategies for leadership development, support and renewal. Goodwill alone is not enough. Practical infrastructure – administrative support, project management and specialist advice – is essential if resident leadership is to be enabled rather than over-stretched. For community renewal to be sustainable and lasting in the longer-term, it needs to go beyond individuals and be about the collective impact of the partnership, and its role in building and harnessing the stock of social capital in the community and its collective efficacy.

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## Partnership working and relationships

### What worked well

Birchwood Big Local developed productive relationships with a range of local partners, including VCSE organisations and, at times, the local authority. These relationships enabled delivery of specific projects and provided access to additional expertise and resources. Where trust was strong, partnership working added value and helped bridge gaps between community priorities and institutional processes.

## Challenges and tensions

Relationships with the local authority were described as complex, and at times ambiguous. Independence was valued, but the absence of consistent professional support limited access to specialist skills in areas such as feasibility, costing and project management. Differences in working culture between community-led and institutional approaches sometimes created frustration on both sides.

*"They struggled with getting the right people around the table with the right professional experience and background as advisors."*

*Senior Council Officer*

Interview evidence highlighted that progress at key points depended heavily on timely permissions and assurance from the council. Where these were slow or unclear, momentum suffered. As Pride in Place involves larger-scale, statutory processes, the programme will rely even more on consistent, proactive support from the council as accountable body, particularly in terms of deploying the levers and interventions in the 'policy toolbox.'

Interview accounts also describe how partnership dependency and progress became most visible at critical decision points, e.g. on decisions around land access, legal readiness and planning requirements. Some accounts describe situations where uncertainty or institutional risk-aversion sometimes could effectively stall momentum.

*"It's got to be a really tight partnership between the local authority and the group... It's got to be a joint venture."*

*Senior Council Officer*

## Learning

Effective community-led delivery relies on clear, well-defined partnerships combining resident leadership with professional expertise, without undermining local ownership. For projects involving land, assets or development, roles and responsibilities should be agreed and documented early, including what decisions sit where, what 'readiness' means and how barriers are escalated and resolved.

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## Planning, Delivery and Adaptability

### What worked well

Birchwood Big Local demonstrated flexibility and adaptability in responding to emerging opportunities and constraints. Where projects were well-defined and feasible, the programme delivered visible improvements valued by residents – such as environmental enhancements, small-scale interventions and investment in local groups and facilities.

### Programme activities and outputs

Examples of operational outputs included:

- **Installation of benches and community seating** along Birchwood Avenue and other routes.

Early Big Local plans committed to the installation of new benches on Birchwood Avenue and other key pedestrian routes, intended to provide resting points within the neighbourhood. Further planning work with the City Council explored additional bench locations in later years. However, interviews with residents highlighted challenges in securing long-term maintenance of these benches once installed, with the suggestion that the Council did not adopt responsibility despite early indications this would be the case.

- **Speed monitoring equipment**, delivered through partnership with Lincolnshire County Council, addressing local road safety concerns.

The introduction of mobile speed monitoring equipment in response to road safety concerns demonstrated productive partnership working. Although relatively modest, this intervention reflected the programme's ability to respond to practical local issues and secure statutory cooperation. Data from the devices is obtainable, and could give an accurate record of its impact in reducing speeding.

- **Hiring of a Community Development Worker**, which strengthened coordination and engagement.

As volunteer fatigue increased and governance and project responsibilities grew more demanding, Birchwood Big Local invested in a Community Development Worker to strengthen coordination, broaden engagement and provide delivery capacity. This step marked a shift towards a more sustainable blend of professional and volunteer input.

These smaller-scale outputs illustrate that tangible improvements, supported by adequate technical and staff capacity, can make a significant contribution to resident confidence and perceptions of progress.

### **Planning processes**

Early ambitions centred on complex, high-impact schemes such as Jasmin Green and Melbourne Road Park. Over time, feasibility challenges, governance requirements, changing community attitudes, partnership dependencies and external shocks (COVID-19, construction inflation) together with the impending deadline and for all Big Local funding needed to be spent by March 2026, required a shift towards more realistic, phased planning.

When projects were tightly scoped, supported by early feasibility, aligned with partner expectations and manageable within volunteer and staff capacity, delivery was significantly more successful.

### **Grant-making and the role of Lincolnshire Community Foundation**

As the feasibility of large-scale projects declined and timelines shortened, Birchwood Big Local pivoted to grant-making as the delivery mechanism for its remaining funds. This ensured unspent money was invested locally and used to address community needs in alignment with the Big Local plans.

Lincolnshire Community Foundation (LCF) played the central role in the administration of the grant-making process in the final stages of the programme. LCF acted as the delivery partner responsible for:

- Receiving Big Local funds
- Managing application and assessment process
- Ensuring fair and transparent decision-making
- Distributing grants to local organisations
- Handling monitoring and reporting requirements

This process was triggered when Birchwood Big Local formerly pivoted away from the Jasmin Green development in late 2023-early 2024 and sought a trusted intermediary to ensure funds were distributed quickly and compliantly.

### **Grant-making outputs**

Through LCF's administration, grants were distributed to:

- Local youth and sports organisations
- Voluntary and faith-sector groups
- Small community groups providing activities, support and targeted interventions
- Organisations addressing hardship, food insecurity and social isolation
- Community facilities needing minor capital or equipment investment

Interviews consistently described the grant-making period as one of the most visible and practically beneficial phases of the programme, particularly given the low availability of alternative local funding.

## How the process operated

The LCF-administered process was generally viewed as clear, straightforward, timely and well-aligned with community needs. However, practical considerations were also highlighted, including:

- Funding often strengthened existing provision rather than creating new community-led initiatives
- Some residents perceived the use of faith-based facilities (e.g. church sites) as raising accessibility concerns.

Despite these tensions, interviewees widely recognised that the LCF partnership enabled funds to be deployed quickly and responsibly when internal delivery capacity was limited. For a full list of grants made please see Appendix 2.

## Challenges and tensions

Some planned initiatives, particularly those involving land or development, were significantly beyond the programme's capacity and support structures. Weaknesses in feasibility, risk management and access to specialist advice became more visible as pressures increased.

As delivery pressures increased and the programme neared its end, these constraints shaped decision-making. Grant-making became a pragmatic response to gaps in capacity for designing and managing complex projects. While this ensured funds were spent locally, it did not always support lasting community capacity or legacy.

The lack of clear delivery milestones and outcome measures limited opportunities to adjust or redirect work as circumstances evolved. External circumstances, including the COVID-19 pandemic and construction inflation linked to the war in Ukraine, further disrupted project feasibility and timelines.

As one interviewee reflected:

*"If it hadn't been for the Ukraine war building works and infrastructure improvements would already have gone in. And of course, COVID didn't help."*

*Member of Birchwood Big Local Board and Birchwood resident*

These experiences illustrate the importance of contingency planning, realistic phasing and avoiding reliance on single, high-risk projects where delays in one area can stall progress across the programme.

## Challenges due to a lack of a 'Plan B'

Throughout the programme, Birchwood Big Local placed strong emphasis on the major capital ambitions, particularly Jasmin Green and Melbourne Park. Despite clear risks, and the requirement for all funds to be spent by March 2026, partnership confidence in progressing the flagship housing-linked proposals meant that a clear fallback option was not developed. Although alternative ideas were discussed (such as refurbishment of the Boiler House), no structured 'Plan B' was adopted. Consequently, when viability challenges emerged, the partnership had to pivot quickly towards grant distribution to ensure all funding matched priorities and could be spent within programme deadlines.

## Learning

Ambition must be matched with appropriate support to ensure its deliverability. Early feasibility work, realistic planning and ongoing review are essential to sustaining progress and confidence. Where complex work is pursued, programmes need staged decision points, clear escalation routes for barriers and accessible communication that helps residents understand timescales and dependencies.

The experience of Birchwood Big Local also highlights that:

- Visible, deliverable improvements build community confidence
- Sustainable delivery requires appropriate professional capacity
- Grant-making can be an effective mechanism in the right circumstances, particularly when partnered with a trusted intermediary such as LCF

- Long-term success depends on aligning ambition, capacity, partnership support and community expectations from the outset.

These lessons will be critical as Birchwood West sets out on delivery of Pride in Place, where delivery will need to be both realistic and responsive, supported by clear roles and suitably resourced community leadership.

# Jasmin Green: A process case study

The proposed Jasmin Green development was the most ambitious and symbolically significant initiative pursued during the Birchwood Big Local programme. Although ultimately not delivered, its trajectory offers important learning about community-led decision-making at scale, the interaction between ambition and feasibility and the practical realities of complex, place-based projects.

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## Background and ambition

The original vision for Jasmin Green combined multiple objectives:

- The development of housing for older residents
- The creation of a new skate park and play provision for young people
- A long-term revenue mechanism to maintain these facilities

From the outset, the Birchwood Big Local partnership approached Jasmin Green with a strong focus on legacy and long-term sustainability. The intention was not simply to deliver housing and facilities, but to establish a community-led model capable of generating income to maintain the skate park, play provision and wider local assets over time. This mirrored approaches seen in other Big Local areas where community-owned assets have created durable, post-programme revenue streams.

However, as development work progressed and costs rose, it became clear that the project income no longer aligned with the scale of capital investment required. The model that initially appeared viable became increasingly difficult to sustain under changing market conditions, reducing the likelihood that it could deliver both new homes and reliable surplus income.

This experience provides an important lesson for Pride in Place: the need for Boards to explore sustainability and long-term financial models early and rigorously, ensuring that legacy ambitions, while valuable, are grounded in realistic assessments of cost, risk and future operating capacity.

For residents, the appeal of the scheme was also deeply emotional and symbolic. The scheme appealed to many residents because it appeared to offer a sustainable solution to two long-standing local priorities: youth facilities and visible investment in the area. For some, it came to symbolise the promise of Big Local itself: a tangible, lasting legacy led by the community.

The first Big Local Plan reported how the City Council approached the Partnership “with a proposal for community-led housing on part of Jasmin Green”, noting that the draft Local Plan, was due for formal consultation and proposed allocating part of the site for housing. Birchwood Big Local’s plans for 49 units of community-led housing was in accordance with national policy at the time that was supportive of CLTs and community-led housing models, and reflected a genuine desire to secure a development that would benefit the community and a sustainable legacy by generating revenue to maintain the park and a planned skate park.

It also met a number of strategic priorities for Birchwood Big Local, BACLT, the City and County Councils and other key partners as well as contributing to economic growth and projected to result in over £7million invested in the local economy. There was evidence of effective and meaningful partnership working between key stakeholders, such as the formalisation of a Project Team, and the ability at times to access specialist agencies, advice and support. The revenue grant offer of up to £267,750 from Homes England’s Community Housing Fund Programme

for BACLT and encouragement of a capital bid was testament to the initial credibility of the proposal, and support for the development by East Midlands Community Led Housing, means that it should be seen as a successful example of leveraging additional investment, with no Birchwood Big Local monies used to go towards the housing, but which would see over £300,000 spent on a skatepark. If successful, the project would have been one of the biggest examples of urban CLT development in the country.

In addition, the later decision to select a house association partner rather than for BACLT to become a registered social landlord itself and undertake development represented recognition of the limitations of a board with a core group of volunteers. Whilst risk points included the dependence of the development on the transfer of the freehold, which the council agreed in 2022, and the ability to finance the development through the housing association development partner, nothing in the close collaboration between partners and various reviews conducted into the proposals suggested there was a risk it was not viable. However, when spiralling construction costs meant the original preferred partner deemed it non-viable, the scheme was left increasingly exposed, with the size of the development increasingly out of proportion to the £13,000 annual income that ground rents would have been generated for upkeep of the skatepark.

Some critiques of the proposals concluded that there could have been simpler solutions for the land transfer and use of S106 monies for community amenities and a commuted sum for their future maintenance, but there was nothing inherent in the proposals to suggest it would not be able to proceed until the inflationary implications on construction costs and materials of the Russian invasion of Ukraine became clear. Together with the stipulations of Local Trust funding that all grants had to be spent by March 2026 at the latest, with zero possibility of extensions beyond that date due to the spend out of the entire programme and closure of Local Trust itself, it became clear that it would not be possible to proceed, and that an alternative plan was needed to spend the balance of Birchwood Big Local's funding.

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## Complexity and feasibility requirements

However, the proposal carried significant technical, financial and governance demands. Even in its early conception, the scheme relied on a combination of interdependent variables: land availability, formal agreements with external delivery partners, statutory processes, procurement and planning requirements, risk assessment, legal and financial viability and long-term maintenance responsibilities.

Managing these elements requires professional expertise, project management capacity and structured feasibility assessment. For a volunteer-led partnership, the scale and interdependence of these requirements proved challenging. Interviews indicate that, while effort and intent were strong, feasibility processes were not consistently robust or fully sequenced, and that technical dependencies emerged faster than the partnership's capacity to manage them. This complexity also meant that demonstrating long-term sustainability, central to the original revenue-generating vision, required more detailed feasibility work than the partnership had the capacity to sustain.

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## Evolving conditions and external factors

External circumstances also played a material role. Rising construction costs, inflationary pressures and the broader disruption associated with the COVID-19 pandemic affected the viability of the partnership's intended delivery model. In addition, the programme's fixed timelines left limited scope to renegotiate, redesign or extend the project schedule once feasibility challenges emerged.

These contextual factors compounded the internal pressures and placed further strain on an already complex proposal.

## **Governance, partnerships and decision-making**

The Jasmin Green experience also highlights the practical challenges of navigating governance boundaries and partnership expectations. The Birchwood Big Local partnership sought to maintain its independence and community-led ethos, while the council, as a landowner and statutory authority, needed to ensure compliance and manage risk. This created an inherent tension between autonomy and assurance.

Interview accounts indicate that communication between partners was sometimes uneven and that key dependencies, such as planning requirements, legal considerations or costed delivery models, were not always addressed early enough to build shared understanding or momentum. Where processes depended on multiple “gates” being passed (e.g. planning readiness, technical studies, procurement steps), delays in one area affected progress across the whole scheme.

Although the scheme did not progress to construction, interviews indicate that the work undertaken by Birchwood Big Local nonetheless laid important foundations for the subsequent council-led development now planned to progress on site. The early exploration of housing options, feasibility studies, community conversations and articulation of local priorities helped prepare for later activity. In this sense, the Jasmin Green process has a legacy of its own: shaping expectations, elevating the site’s strategic importance, and helping partners understand what matters locally.

The implication for Pride in Place is twofold:

1. Physical regeneration led by statutory partners needs to be communicated carefully, acknowledging the groundwork laid by earlier community-led efforts; and
2. There is an opportunity to connect future investment with long-standing resident priorities, including aspirations for enhanced facilities for children and young people.

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## **Expectations and symbolic impact**

For many residents, Jasmin Green became emblematic of Big Local’s promise: a visible, long-term investment in both young and older people and a marker of pride in Birchwood. As such, the project carried significant emotional and reputational weight.

Its eventual non-delivery had a significant impact on the perceptions of the programme overall. Interviews suggest that, for some residents, the non-delivery contributed to disappointment, scepticism and a sense that early consultation did not result in the outcomes hoped for. This highlights the importance of managing expectations, sequencing ambition and communicating clearly about constraints, risks and dependencies.

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## **Joined up asset management and legacy considerations**

While volunteers and ‘keyholders’ helped maintain Diamond Park, the absence of a formal maintenance agreement or management plan created uncertainty about the long-term stewardship of the asset. Future programmes such as Pride in Place will need to ensure robust asset management arrangements accompany major investments.

## Learning from the Jasmin Green experience

The Jasmin Green case illustrates several key learning points for community-led programmes:

- Ambition and community leadership must be matched and balanced by capacity and professional support to drive things forward and deal with risks and complexity as they arise, particularly in complex projects.
- A focus on future sustainability and income generation, and leveraging of external funding should be encouraged and supported. The scale of the Jasmin Green proposal reflected a strong and legitimate desire for transformational change in Birchwood, and backing of the plans by organisations such as the National Community Land Trust Network through inclusion in its Urban CLT Project 2014-17, and success in a £268,000 grant from Homes England through the Community Housing Fund in 2020 reflects the seriousness with which the proposal was originally developed.
- The community's willingness to imagine ambitious possibilities is a strength that Pride in Place should nurture. With £20m investment, Pride in Place has the potential to realise the art of the possible, provided that ambition is paired with early feasibility work, technical support and realistic financial modelling.
- Clarity of roles and responsibilities is crucial. Projects involving land, assets or statutory processes need early agreement on who leads, who assures and how decisions are escalated.
- Feasibility, legal processes and procurement involve interdependent "gates". Where these are not aligned or resourced, project timelines and confidence can be adversely affected.
- Expectations require careful stewardship. High profile proposals generate symbolic value and need proactive communication about risks, timelines and limits.
- Legacy ambitions require early, realistic and well-supported financial modelling. Community-led organisations may need technical, commercial and legal expertise to assess whether proposed income-generation models can match the scale of investment required. Future programmes such as Pride in Place should embed this support to avoid early misalignment between long-term aspirations and financial feasibility.

These lessons align with the broader process findings of this evaluation and provide important insight for the design and delivery of Pride in Place.

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## Evaluation boundaries

This evaluation does not attempt to reconcile differing accounts of specific decision or provide a forensic reconstruction of project chronology or deep dive into the financial assumptions underpinning the development. Such an exercise would require a separate, specialist project review and fall outside the proportionality expected of a critical friend evaluation. The focus here is therefore on what the experience reveals about community-led delivery, partnership working and the enabling conditions required for large-scale projects.

# Big Local outcomes and impact

This section assesses the outcomes and impacts of Birchwood Big Local, examining the difference the programme made for people, place, and community capacity. The analysis draws primarily on qualitative interview evidence, supported by documentary review and limited quantitative data. The emphasis is on perceived and experienced change rather than on attributing outcomes to a single intervention.

## Ability to identify local needs and take action

### Findings

There is strong evidence that Birchwood Big Local enhanced the community's ability to identify local needs and turn these into action. The original 2015–17 Big Local plan reflected priorities that residents consistently raised, including:

- Quality and safety of green spaces
- Opportunities for children and young people
- Community facilities and places to meet
- Pride in the local environment

Over time, the programme supported a range of initiatives aligned with these priorities, through both direct delivery and grant-making. Stakeholders described Birchwood Big Local as providing a recognised, legitimate mechanism for discussing, prioritising, and acting on community concerns – often in ways that had not previously been possible.

However, the ability to take action was not evenly distributed. Those involved in the partnership or delivery gained confidence, agency, and understanding. For example, as measured by Local Trust's regular survey of partnership members<sup>4</sup>, the percentage of Birchwood Big Local partnership members who agreed with the following statement increased from 2016 to 2024:

- People in my Big Local area are willing to help each other
- People in this Big Local area can be trusted
- I personally can influence decisions in my Big Local area

However, other residents remained less aware of how decisions were made or how they could influence them. Some described feeling disengaged – driven more by low visibility or unclear processes than by lack of interest.

4. It is important to note that surveys did not capture responses from the same partnership members at each time point in time, and that the response rates changed over time.

### **Birchwood Big Local objectives and evidence of delivery**

Birchwood Big Local set out long-term ambitions informed by early neighbourhood survey work:

- **Cleaner, brighter and safer spaces** – Delivered through park improvements, defibrillators, benches, environmental enhancements and community led maintenance.
- **Opportunities for children and young people** – Supported through youth groups, sporting provision, equipment, grants and events.
- **A great community with stronger connections** – Evidenced through events, volunteer led activities and local partnership work.
- **Raising aspirations and reducing child and family poverty** – Supported through grant funding of community groups working on hardship, food support and targeted activities.

Between 2018 and 2020, volunteers contributed **9,314 hours**, representing a social investment of **£121,082** (based on £13/hour).

Birchwood Big Local took action across all its stated ambitions through grants, groups, events and environmental projects.

### **Assessment**

Birchwood Big Local made a meaningful contribution to strengthening local capacity to identify and respond to community needs, particularly among those directly engaged. The challenge lay not in identifying what the community needed but in sustaining this capability at scale across a diverse population.

### **How Birchwood Big Local approached measuring success**

In its first Big Local Plan, the partnership asked: *“How will we know it has worked?”* It proposed using a ‘set of measures’ to provide a baseline and comparing conditions after ten years to early programme data. Potential indicators included crime and unemployment levels, community garden use, and resident perceptions.

However, no formal baseline dataset or agreed ‘set of measures’ was established, and no subsequent resident survey was conducted. Despite this, strong qualitative evidence emerged from interviews, particularly around the value residents place on Diamond Park.

Between March 2018 and March 2020, Birchwood Big Local held 22 events at Diamond Park and other local venues, with around 3,350 attendees. Consultation responses on play equipment and the involvement of around 40 volunteers at the park at its peak further illustrate strong engagement and local value.

## Skills, confidence, and leadership development

### Findings

A consistent theme across interviews was the positive impact of Birchwood Big Local on the confidence, skills, and leadership capacity of participants involved in governance, volunteering, and project delivery. Reported benefits included:

- Increased confidence in chairing meetings and making decisions
- Greater understanding of funding, governance, and accountability
- Improved ability to work collaboratively with statutory and voluntary partners
- A stronger sense of legitimacy when representing the community

For some, Big Local served as a stepping stone to further participation in community or civic roles. Several interviewees described it as their first sustained experience of structured decision-making.

These benefits, however, were concentrated among a relatively small group of people. There was limited evidence of systematic approaches to widening skills development or supporting progression for new participants or ensuring succession. This contributed to a reliance on a narrow leadership base.

### Assessment

Birchwood Big Local was effective in building skills and leadership capacity for those directly involved, but less successful in embedding skills and confidence across a broader cross-section of residents.

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## Delivery of activities and initiatives

### Findings

Birchwood Big Local delivered a range of tangible outputs over its lifetime, including:

- Improvements to parks, play areas, and public spaces
- Support and grant funding for community groups
- Investment in community facilities and local assets

These outputs were widely recognised and valued, especially where they created visible, lasting improvements to the local environment. Residents repeatedly cited Diamond Park and youth/sports provision as examples of projects that strengthened pride in place and visibly demonstrated the programme's value.

Not all planned initiatives were delivered as originally envisaged. Some projects encountered delays, feasibility issues, or changes in scope. Non-delivery of several high-profile proposals, which were made ultimately unviable due to circumstances outside of the control of the partnership, affected perceptions of progress, particularly among residents who had engaged early and held strong expectations. For many interviewees, flagship ambitions became symbolic reference points for judging the programme overall.

### Assessment

Birchwood Big Local successfully delivered several visible and valued initiatives, with the strongest impact where projects aligned closely with community priorities and were achievable with available capacity. However, that the flagship Jasmin Green development failed had a significant negative effect on some perceptions of the overall success of the Big Local.

### **Case study 1: Diamond Park – demonstrating the impact of targeted capital investment to create a place for connection**

Diamond Park was consistently identified by residents and stakeholders as one of Birchwood Big Local's most successful and valued interventions. The refurbishment transformed an existing play area into a safer, more attractive, and better used community space.

Residents described Diamond Park as "something you can actually see", highlighting its clear, tangible benefits. Increased use – particularly by families with younger children – was widely reported, particularly in warmer months and interviewees noted that it became a reliable point of connection for families with younger children. Its visibility meant that even residents with limited awareness of the broader programme understood its impact.

At the same time, comments relayed to a Councillor suggest that not all families were able to benefit equally. A number felt that the park was inaccessible at points, with several describing it as 'never open', indicating uneven experiences of access across the community.

Overall, the project demonstrated the value of realistic, deliverable investments. Unlike more complex proposals dependent on multiple variable, Diamond Park was relatively straightforward to plan, cost and deliver. Stakeholders viewed it as evidence that targeted, place-based improvements can disproportionately boost community confidence, pride and perceptions of safety.

### **Case study 2: Birchwood Colts – grassroots sport as a source of belonging**

Birchwood Colts, a long-standing grassroots football club, received Big Local funding that enabled it to expand participation, purchase new equipment and maintain accessible fees.

For many families, the club represents one of the few structured, positive activities available for children and young people living in Birchwood. Parents and volunteers described it as a "lifeline", providing routine, social connection, and a sense of belonging. Interviewees noted that without the club, many young people would need to travel outside Birchwood for organised sport, which was an issue for those without car ownership.

### **Case study 3: Arise Church – benefits and tensions of faith-based delivery**

Arise Church received grant funding administered by Lincolnshire Community Foundation during the final phase of Big Local, specifically for a new storage container to expand food bank capacity and the creation of a "community garden" behind the church building. This was designed to support residents experiencing financial pressure and to provide a welcoming outdoor space for members of the community and as a place to deliver church activities.

For those engaged with the church, the projects were viewed positively. Stakeholders described Arise Church as a consistent, trusted presence offering practical support and a sense of community connection at times when other local provision was limited. The addition of the garden and food storage capacity enabled the church to increase its reach and run more structured support activities for local families.

However, interview evidence also highlighted concerns about accessibility and perceptions of neutrality. Some residents felt uneasy about significant Big Local investment being located in a religious setting, especially where the garden was not clearly separate from church premises. Several perceived an implicit expectation that residents must "go through the church" or be comfortable with its ethos to benefit.

This case study illustrates both the strengths and limitations of relying on faith based organisations as delivery partners. While they can provide trusted, embedded support and deliver practical benefits quickly, community-led programmes should ensure that publicly funded assets are clearly accessible to all residents, regardless of background or belief, and that perceptions of conditionality are actively managed. This learning is particularly relevant for the design of Pride in Place, which will need to balance the energy and capacity of local civil society organisations with a commitment to openness, neutrality and inclusive access.

## Case study 4: The Boiler House – an important but under-optimised community asset

The Boiler House is one of Birchwood's few multi purpose community centres and was frequently cited as a valuable asset with untapped potential. Several interviewees highlighted both the value of the facility and the limitations of its current form. The inside of the building was described as functional but the external environment (fencing, security railings and a lack of greenery) is viewed as unwelcoming and not reflective of a community asset. Issues such as high heating costs due to the metal roof and limited shower facilities were also cited as barriers to full activation of the space.

This significant physical asset can play a central role in community life in Birchwood, but it will be essential that any capital improvements are paired with ongoing revenue investment, as well as ensuring that attention is given to how this space is designed to ensure that decisions are community-led.

## Making a difference to priority needs

### Findings

While the absence of baseline data limits the ability to measure change quantitatively, interviewees consistently identified positive contributions, including:

- Improved quality and usability of local spaces
- Increased opportunities for community activity and connection
- Strengthened community networks and relationships

Big Local was one of several influences on local change, rather than a single driver. Outcomes were often achieved through collaboration between residents, partners and other funding streams. In many cases, Big Local played an enabling or sustaining role.

### Assessment

Birchwood Big Local contributed to modest but meaningful improvements in priority areas, particularly at a local and experiential level. Its impact is best understood as incremental and contributory, not transformational in isolation.

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## Perceptions of Birchwood as a place to live

### Findings

Some interviewees felt that Birchwood Big Local contributed positively to perceptions of the area, particularly through:

- Pride in improved local spaces
- A sense that investment was happening
- Increased visibility of community-led action

These views were strongest among those directly involved in or aware of Big Local activities. The Local Trust survey of partnership members reported that the number of those who stated that they felt the following often or all the time increased:

- Optimistic about the future
- They were dealing with problems well
- Feeling close to other people

For some residents, however, awareness of the programme was limited, and its contribution to overall perceptions of the area was less clear. Several interviewees noted that ongoing behind the scenes support was not always recognised as Big Local activity.

External factors, including wider economic and social changes, also shaped how people felt about Birchwood, making it difficult to isolate the influence of Birchwood Big Local.

### **Assessment**

Birchwood Big Local enhanced local pride and perceptions of place among those engaged in its work, but its influence across the wider community was uneven and limited.

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## **Legacy and sustainability**

### **Findings**

The legacy of Birchwood Big Local includes:

- Physical improvements and community assets
- Strengthened networks and relationships
- A small cohort of residents with enhanced skills and experience
- Learning about enablers and constraints for community-led delivery
- A vehicle in the form of the Birchwood Area Community Land Trust

However, the sustainability of its initiatives remains uncertain. Without continued funding or support structures, much of the capacity and momentum generated by Birchwood Big Local risks dissipating. Stakeholders highlighted the importance of the transition to Pride in Place to secure and build on this legacy.

### **Assessment**

Birchwood Big Local leaves a meaningful but fragile legacy, comprising physical improvements, strengthened networks and increased confidence and experience amongst a small group of residents, as well as important learning about what enables and constrains long-term community-led work. However, it is heavily reliant on people, relationships and informal capacity rather than embedded structures, making it vulnerable to loss over time. Its longer-term impact will depend significantly on how learning is carried forward and how Pride in Place is designed and implemented.

The early intention to create a long-term, income generating community asset at Jasmin Green offers important learning for Pride in Place. Many Big Local areas successfully built sustainability through asset ownership and revenue-generation models; Birchwood's experiences shows that these ambitions require early financial and risk modelling, technical support and clear governance. Pride in Place should ensure sustainability is tested from the outset rather than assumed.

# Summary of impact findings

Overall, this evaluation finds that Birchwood Big Local:

- Enabled residents to identify and act on community priorities
- Built confidence, skills, and leadership among a core (but limited) group
- Delivered visible and valued improvements to the local area
- Contributed to Pride in Place and strengthened community connections
- Faced challenges in evidencing and sustaining impact at scale

These findings underscore the importance of applying Big Local learning to Pride in Place – particularly around sustainability, inclusion, visibility of impact and balancing ambition with local capacity.

## Summary of impact against Big Local outcomes

Big Local outcome	Evidence of contribution	Strength of evidence	Key caveats
<b>1. Communities better able to identify local needs and take action</b>	Original plans reflected locally identified priorities; residents involved in partnership and projects reported increased agency and ability to act; range of initiatives delivered addressing agreed needs.	<b>Moderate</b>	Capacity uneven across community; impact strongest among those directly involved.
<b>2. People have increased skills and confidence</b>	Partnership members and volunteers reported increased confidence, governance skills and understanding of funding and decision-making; some progression into wider civic roles.	<b>Moderate</b>	Benefits concentrated in a small core group; limited systematic skills development or succession planning.
<b>3. The community makes a difference to the needs it prioritises</b>	Tangible outputs delivered (e.g. parks, community facilities, grants); strengthened networks and collaboration supported delivery.	<b>Low to Moderate</b>	No baseline for comparison; outcomes best understood as contributory rather than attributable.
<b>4. People feel their area is a better place to live</b>	Improved pride in area linked to visible physical improvements and community activity; positive perceptions among engaged residents.	<b>Low to Moderate</b>	Awareness and impact varied and limited across population; wider external factors strongly influence perceptions.
<b>Cross-cutting: Legacy and sustainability</b>	Physical assets, learning, relationships and experienced community leaders remain.	<b>Moderate</b>	Sustainability dependent on future support and successful transition to Pride in Place.

## Overall assessment

Birchwood Big Local made a meaningful contribution to people, place and community capacity, with strongest impact where engagement was sustained and outcomes were visible. Limitations in data and scale mean impact is best understood qualitatively and contextually. In terms of Pride in Place, a baseline survey of a proportionate sample of local residents would generate the required data with the ability to have sample size to produce findings that would be statistically significant at a 95% confidence interval.

# Lessons learned from Birchwood Big Local

## Reflections from Birchwood Big Local Partnership (2022–2026)

### What we learned:

- ✓ Better understanding of community project development
- ✓ Developing motivation and drive for long-term projects
- ✓ Allocating funding and prioritising effectively
- ✓ Addressing public concerns through communication
- ✓ Working effectively via Zoom during COVID
- ✓ Delivering facilities and community events
- ✓ Encouraging personal development of Board members
- ✓ Becoming adaptable and responsive as a group
- ✓ Growing and sustaining a volunteer base
- ✓ Managing time expectations and recognising slippage
- ✓ The need for more volunteers
- ✓ Difficulty recruiting new Board members
- ✓ Recognising that “the Board can’t do it alone”
- ✓ Identifying strong volunteer willingness in the community
- ✓ Understanding what activities and events residents value most

### What we could have done differently:

- Increased volunteer and Board recruitment
- Engaged young people more proactively
- Attracted youth-focused partner organisations
- Explored additional projects (e.g., the Boiler House)
- Engaged more widely with community groups
- Made meetings more fun and accessible
- Held more informal, community-based activities
- Recruited younger Board representation
- Improved communication with residents
- Held more community events at Jasmin Green
- Consulted residents on how they want to be involved
- Asked residents how the Board can communicate better
- Asked more consistently what local people need
- Improved communication about achievements
- Analysed neighbourhood-level differences more deeply
- Involved young people in the skatepark development

This section distils the key lessons emerging from the evaluation, drawing on stakeholder interviews, resident perspectives and documentary evidence. These reflections are not critiques of individuals or decisions; rather, they highlight what the Birchwood Big Local experience shows about how long-term, community-led programmes work in practice. They directly inform the design and delivery of the Birchwood West Pride in Place initiative.

## Taking risks and being experimental: What Big Local was designed to do

A defining feature of Big Local was its ambition to give communities the freedom to take risks, test ideas and learn through doing. Unlike traditional funding programmes, it created the space for residents to be bold and explore new approaches – even when the pathway forward was uncertain. This experimental ethos was fundamental. It unlocked innovation, built autonomy and strengthened genuine community ownership.

### The benefits of supporting experimentation

Across Birchwood Big Local, the advantages of this ethos were visible:

- **Ambition and imagination:** The flexibility to “think big” generated ideas such as the proposed Jasmin Green development – an initiative rooted in long-term aspirations for local economic and social benefit. Residents described the opportunity for “legacy building”, revenue generation and the creation of meaningful community assets.
- **Stronger community capability:** Engagement with complex projects increased residents’ skills, confidence and organisational understanding. Even when initiatives did not reach delivery, the process itself contributed to local capacity-building.
- **Collaborative learning:** The willingness to experiment encouraged iterative problem solving with partners – from technical agencies to local authority teams – and helped clarify what was realistically achievable within local systems.

### The challenges of managing risks

Experimentation also brought predictable difficulties, consistent with experiences across other Big Local areas:

- **Ambition vs. institutional caution:** Interviews highlighted a recurring mismatch between the Board’s aspirations and the more risk-averse approach of statutory partners, particularly in relation to land, legal processes and decision-making under uncertainty. This slowed momentum at key points.
- **Expectations exceeding technical capacity:** Community-led organisations often lack the specialised skills required for major development projects. This created dependencies, slowed delivery and allowed differing interpretations of responsibility to emerge.
- **External shocks intensifying risk:** COVID-19, construction inflation and shifting partner priorities created instability that further undermined already challenging projects.

### What this means for future programmes

The Birchwood experience suggests that innovation depends on risk taking, but success requires:

- Clear, early agreements on roles, responsibilities and authority
- Institutional partners that enable experimentation rather than constrain it
- Structured learning loops to ensure insights from innovation are captured and feed into future practice
- Ambition aligned with realistic capacity and system constraints

Future programmes such as Pride in Place can retain Big Local’s learning ethos while offering stronger scaffolding for complex or high-risk proposals.

*"You can't fault the time and effort of local volunteers to get the development over the line."*

*Birchwood stakeholder*

Delivery of ambitious capital projects under Pride in Place, with its 37:63 revenue to capital split, will require early, deep and sustained collaboration with the local authority. Many of the approximately 80 policy levers available to Neighbourhood Boards depend on strong statutory partnership, mirroring the collaborative approach that was beginning to take shape around Jasmin Green in 2022.

The Pride in Place area (Birchwood West MSOA) contains most but not all of the footprint of Birchwood Big Local. Local perceptions of Birchwood relate to the wider neighbourhood, including Hartsholme, which has lower levels of need and deprivation. Early communication for Pride in Place will need to recognise this and consider whether boundary adjustments, for example to include key community assets east of Birchwood Avenue such as the Leisure Centre or Birchwood Colts, would strengthen coherence and participation.

## **Community leadership is powerful – but can require professional expertise, support and executive capacity**

Birchwood Big Local demonstrated the strength of resident led leadership in shaping local priorities and driving community activity. However, the experience also highlights the limits of relying on volunteer-led structures to deliver complex, high-risk or technically demanding projects without sufficient professional support. The programme also showed that community leadership is not cost-free. Without ongoing access to professional, administrative and technical support, responsibility can become overly concentrated, leading to fatigue and reduced resilience.

Where ambitions extended into areas such as land development, housing delivery and long-term revenue generation, the partnership lacked sustained and timely access to the skills, experience and challenge necessary to manage risk effectively. This resulted in significant time and effort being invested in proposals that ultimately proved unviable when external circumstances changed.

**Learning for Pride in Place:** Community leadership thrives when it is enabled by consistent support, not when it is expected to substitute for professional capacity. It needs to be actively supported by access to appropriate professional expertise, clear accountability and realistic assessment of risk. Community-led should not mean the community is left to carry disproportionate responsibility. There needs to be a mutual understanding and self-awareness from professionals and the community alike as to who holds knowledge, skills and expertise and how these can best be utilised for the good of the community as a whole.

## **Ambition must be matched to capacity and deliverability**

A common theme was the mismatch between the scale of ambition and the capacity available to achieve it. Complex, high risk strategies were sometimes pursued to address relatively modest aims, diverting energy from simpler, deliverable solutions that might have responded to immediate community needs. This contributed to delays, frustration and, in some cases, non delivery – leaving a lasting impact on community confidence.

**Learning for Pride in Place:** Ambition matters, but it must be accompanied by appropriate support and resourcing. Early feasibility work, careful appraisal of options and a focus on proportionate solutions are essential for maintaining momentum and trust.

## Sustaining engagement over the long-term requires renewal and support

Continuity in leadership and institutional memory brought stability but also over time limited renewal and wider participation. Reliance on a small group of committed individuals made it difficult to refresh ideas, share workload and broaden ownership across the community. While this core group developed valuable skills and experience, the lack of systematic leadership renewal and support led to fatigue.

Whilst the needs of the community evolved during the lifetime of the Big Local project, it was evident that the Birchwood Big Local partnership did not always evolve in step. It is essential that leadership responds to and reflects the changing needs of the community which it serves and recognises that what might have been a priority at the outset doesn't necessarily remain so over time.

**Learning for Pride in Place:** Long-term place-based programmes must plan for leadership turnover, inclusion and renewal from the outset. Effective leadership should reflect, respond to and evolve with the changing needs of the community.

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## Governance must enable participation but also be sufficiently robust

The experience of Birchwood Big Local shows that governance arrangements must strike a careful balance. While excessive bureaucracy can deter participation, insufficient challenge and due diligence can expose community-led programmes to unacceptable risk. In Birchwood, governance structures evolved over time but were not always well equipped to scrutinise complex proposals or to support effective decision-making at scale.

As governance requirements increased, decision-making processes became more complex and less accessible to new participants. While accountability is essential, overly formal systems risk distancing communities from the very programmes designed to empower them.

**Learning for Pride in Place:** Governance should protect and amplify community voice, ensuring it is present, audible and sustained. Clear roles, strong accountability and proportionate assurance processes are vital – particularly where public funds and long-term liabilities are involved.

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## Visible, place-based quick wins build trust and legitimacy

The most successful elements of Birchwood Big Local were tangible, visible improvements – play areas, community facilities, small grants and other practical enhancements. These were easier to deliver, simpler to communicate and more widely valued by residents, including those not directly involved in governance.

Projects that resulted in visible improvements to the local environment were consistently cited as the most impactful. These initiatives helped residents see that engagement led to tangible outcomes and reinforced confidence in the programme. Ultimately, it's the way that people 'feel' in their community that will have the biggest impact on how they feel about the impact of funding from programmes such as Big Local.

**Learning for Pride in Place:** Early and ongoing delivery of visible improvements plays a critical role in building sustained engagement. Smaller, well-delivered interventions can have a disproportionately positive impact on pride, trust and participation, with such opportunities for quick wins early on able to help build initial credibility.

## Engagement must be continuous, inclusive and responsive

Initial engagement activity was strong, but sustaining engagement over time proved more difficult. Where communication reduced or feedback loops were unclear, residents were more likely to disengage or feel disconnected from decision-making. In addition, the methods of communication were not designed to ensure engagement with harder to reach communities, for example young people, or those with English as a second language.

**Learning for Pride in Place:** Engagement should be designed as an ongoing dialogue between the Neighbourhood Board and local residents, with clear feedback on how community input influences decisions, or what has happened as a result. Methods of engagement should be varied and designed to ensure that the whole community is enabled to participate.

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## Impact exists – but is hard to evidence without embedded evaluation

While there is clear qualitative evidence of positive change, limited quantitative data constrained the programme's ability to demonstrate outcomes, inform decision making or support structured learning.

**Learning for Pride in Place:** Evaluation must be proportionate but embedded from the outset to support adaptation, accountability and legacy-building.

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## Legacy requires intentional transition

Birchwood Big Local leaves skills, assets and experience, but these gains are fragile without continued investment in them. The delivery of Pride in Place in part of the Big Local area is therefore a pivotal moment to build on its foundations, and entities created under the programme such as the Community Land Trust.

**Learning for Pride in Place:** Legacy is not automatic. Pride in Place presents an opportunity to think beyond the ten-year time frame, and seek to put in place arrangements that will outlast the original funding and leverage additional funding from the public, private and philanthropic sectors. Careful thought should be given to continued functionality of the Community Land Trust.

## Trust and visibility are fragile and must be rebuilt

Awareness of Birchwood Big Local varied widely towards the end. For some residents, Birchwood Big Local became associated more with unfulfilled expectations than with its achievements, whilst for others it had provided much needed grant funding at a difficult time. For those who are unaware of the programme, Pride in Place offers the opportunity of a fresh start, whilst ensuring its investments in the neighbourhood are safeguarded.

**Learning for Pride in Place:** Rebuilding trust will require visibility, consistency, meaningful early action and communication. Delivering achievable improvements early will be essential to showing that Pride in Place is different.

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## From learning to application

Taken together, these lessons show that the value of Birchwood Big Local lies not only in what it delivered, but in what it reveals about community-led change over time. Pride in Place has the opportunity to apply this learning in a way that strengthens delivery, reduces known risks and builds a more sustainable model of neighbourhood working in Birchwood West.

These lessons directly inform the recommendations set out in the next section.

# Recommendations for Pride in Place

This section presents a set of recommendations to guide the implementation of the Pride in Place programme in Birchwood. They draw directly from learning generated through Birchwood Big Local and aim to support a resilient, sustainable and inclusive model of neighbourhood working. The focus is on ensuring that residents remain in the driving seat, and that their priorities, expectations and ambitions shape the programme throughout the next decade.

These recommendations are not a prescriptive blueprint. Instead, they offer a series of guiding principles and practical actions that respond to the risks, opportunities and learning identified through this evaluation. They reflect both its formative and summative findings.

## Communications and engagement

### Sustained community engagement

Deep, ongoing and creative community engagement will be essential to rebuilding trust and confidence. Engagement should not be front loaded or limited to formal consultation – both of which risk creating fatigue. Instead, it should be continuous, varied, responsive and embedded into everyday life in Birchwood.

#### Recommended actions:

- ✓ Develop a community engagement plan to support the MP and local authority to guide Neighbourhood Board recruitment.
- ✓ Provide regular, visible communication about decisions, progress and constraints – for example, a quarterly resident newsletter delivered to every household after Neighbourhood Board meetings, informing residents of decisions, upcoming activities and events, and ways to get involved.
- ✓ Establish clear feedback loops demonstrating how resident input shapes decision making.
- ✓ Use inclusive and tailored engagement methods, particularly for groups unlikely to attend formal meetings – e.g., family fun days delivered with neighbourhood groups and existing local community assets.

### A visible community presence

A consistent presence in the neighbourhood builds trust, approachability and legitimacy. Many residents may not read formal updates or attend meetings, but they will recognise and respond to people who show up regularly in familiar places. By maintaining a visible, on the ground presence at different times of day and week, the Pride in Place team can demonstrate commitment, respond informally to questions or concerns and signal that the programme is rooted in everyday local experience rather than external decision-making.

### **Use of existing community assets**

Birchwood West already has valued gathering spaces—parks, community centre, schools, shops, sports facilities and faith venues. Using these familiar assets as engagement points reduces barriers to involvement and meets residents where they already are. It also strengthens relationships with organisations managing those spaces, supporting wider goals around partnership and sustainability.

### **Consider a community “shop front”**

A small, accessible “shop front” in a high-footfall area can act as a visible hub for information, drop-ins, engagement events and Board presence. This was evident during the Birchwood Big Local project with the shop space that the project occupied. It signals openness and transparency, provides a regular anchor point for residents to ask questions or share ideas, and offers a physical reminder that Pride in Place funding belongs to the community. Many successful neighbourhood programmes nationally have found that a highly visible base transforms engagement by making participation natural and informal, especially for residents who would never attend meetings.

### **Use of community noticeboards**

Community noticeboards, whether physical or digital, provide low-cost, high-visibility channels for sharing updates, opportunities, decisions and invitations. A regular presence on noticeboards around Birchwood West would help maintain Pride in Place transparency and visibility over time, reduce misinformation and reinforce that progress is being made. Used well, noticeboards can become an anchor of accessible communication for residents who prefer offline information, are digitally excluded or who are not or are less active on social media.

### **Regular walkabouts**

Walkabouts with residents, Board members, councillors, the MP and partners offer a practical, relational form of engagement that grounds decisions in lived experience. They allow people to point to issues directly, observe place-based priorities together and co-create solutions. Walkabouts also communicate respect for local knowledge and help the Pride in Place team understand everyday challenges that do not always emerge through formal mechanisms. Regular walkabouts, especially with schools, youth groups or older residents, deepen relationships and increase the visibility of the programme.

### **Online – building on good use of social media**

Birchwood already benefits from active local social media networks. Pride in Place can build on this by using online channels for quick updates, myth-busting, polls, short videos and celebrating progress. Effective digital communication expands reach, especially among younger residents and busy households. Done consistently, it allows the Board to maintain a dialogue between more structured engagement activities and ensures that the wider community sees how their input is shaping priorities and delivery.

## Community capacity building

### Combine community leadership with structured executive capacity

As stipulated under the programme's prospectus<sup>5</sup>, Pride in Place involves a strong commitment to deep and meaningful resident-led decision-making. This will need to be actively supported by appropriate executive capacity and professional expertise. This includes access to skills in feasibility, costing, project management, governance and risk management.

Professional support should enable, not overshadow, community leadership. It should protect residents from disproportionate risk while strengthening their decision making capability. Pride in Place includes access to support from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) Community Delivery Unit and the national Network for Neighbourhoods. Birchwood West should actively draw on this resource for technical advice, planning, procurement support and challenge on complex or high-risk proposals.

#### Recommended actions:

- ✓ Clarify which decisions sit within the Neighbourhood Board and which require professional assurance.
- ✓ Provide dedicated technical and project management support for complex or high risk proposals.
- ✓ Enable early access to independent advice for proposals involving land, property, asset development or long-term liabilities.

This approach ensures the community is empowered yet properly supported, operating within an appropriate, proportionate risk framework.

## Governance

### Establish clear, proportionate and enabling governance from the start

Strong governance is essential both to protect the community and to ensure compliance with the council's role as accountable body. Governance arrangements of the Neighbourhood Board and its projects should be proportionate to the scale and risk of activity, enabling participation while safeguarding deliverability and value.

Pride in Place will essentially operate through a quadripartite partnership: the Neighbourhood Board, Local Authority, local MP and wider community. Each plays a distinct role in assurance, leadership, engagement, legitimacy and decision-making. Governance should make these interdependencies explicit and ensure clear routes for joint problem-solving and escalation.

Under Pride in Place, the Neighbourhood Board is the primary decision-making forum, responsible for developing the 10-year Vision and 4-year Investment Plan, approving spending priorities, leading community engagement and ensuring decisions reflect local needs. Boards must operate transparently and publish minutes and decision logs. The Council retains statutory accountability for public funds and must therefore assure governance, compliance and risk management while enabling the Board to lead.

Given potential tension between statutory accountability and community-led decision-making, the governance framework, including Terms of Reference, decision-making responsibilities and assurance processes, should be co-created through an independently facilitated process (for example, via a critical friend or neutral delivery partner). This helps ensure that governance is legitimate, trusted and aligned to Pride in Place principles.

The effectiveness of this model depends on strong, collaborative partnership working between the Board and the Local Authority. As accountable body, the Council will need to provide consistent and timely support on procurement, legal advice, governance, planning and risk assurance. Equally the Board should be supported to

5. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/pride-in-place-programme-prospectus/pride-in-place-programme-prospectus>

lead, with clear routes for escalation, problem-solving and shared decision-making. Early clarity on how the partnership operates will help avoid past tensions and enable the Board to act confidently on behalf of the community.

Under Pride in Place:

- **The Neighbourhood Board** leads engagement, sets priorities, oversees the 10-year Vision and 4-year Investment Plan, approves spending and ensures decisions reflect local needs. It must publish minutes and decision logs.
- **The Council** holds statutory accountability for public funds, providing assurance on procurement, legal compliance, risk and financial stewardship.
- **The MP** offers civic leadership, supports Chair appointment and community engagement, and reinforces democratic accountability.
- **The Community** shapes priorities and participates through structured mechanisms such as forums, panels and ongoing engagement.

Pride in Place guidance emphasises that each area should develop a dedicated structure or Forum that ensures residents are represented in decision-making and have an accessible way to influence Board priorities. This could include a neighbourhood forum, residents' panel or youth panel that feeds directly into Board discussions. Establishing this early will help widen participation beyond Board members, strengthens legitimacy and create opportunities for young people, seldom-heard groups and community organisations to shape delivery.

Governance will also need to support the transition to a community-led delivery model by Year 3, meaning the framework should build community capability, support succession planning and prepare for organisational development if the Board becomes a CIC, charity or other local body.

#### Recommended actions:

- ✓ **Co-create and publish a clear governance framework:** Set out what the Board decides (e.g. priorities, plan approval, spending allocations) and how issues, disputes or barriers are escalated to the MP or MHCLG.
- ✓ **Introduce proportionate stages or "gateways":** Establish structured checkpoints for feasibility, risk, affordability, legal readiness, community engagement evidence and deliverability before major commitments are made. Gateways should reflect Pride in Place expectations around business cases, use of statutory powers, assurance and long-term financial implications.
- ✓ **Provide induction, training and ongoing support for board members:** Include orientation on Pride in Place roles, conflict of interest procedures, decision-making protocols, assurance requirements financial responsibilities and how to work collaboratively with LA officers and wider partners. Consider ongoing development linked to community organising, asset development, planning processes and the use of the Pride in Place toolkit.
- ✓ **Review governance arrangements early in delivery:** Conduct a light-touch review during the first year and again before finalising the first 4-year Investment Plan. This ensures governance remains inclusive, workable, legally robust and aligned with Pride in Place expectations, particularly as the Board grows in confidence and prepares for the transition to a community-led model.
- ✓ **Establish a resident forum or participation structure:** Create a dedicated mechanism (e.g. Residents' Forum, youth panel, neighbourhood forum, etc) that enables wider community representation and ensures ongoing community voice in decision-making beyond Board membership.

## Safeguard legitimacy and avoid dominance by individuals or groups

Long-term programmes can become dominated by a narrow group of individuals or attract participants primarily motivated by access to funding. This can undermine fairness, credibility and trust. Safeguards should therefore be designed into Pride in Place from the start.

### Recommended actions:

- ✓ Recognise that membership of a formal 'Board' may not appeal to some residents, and to seek involvement in Pride in Place through sub-groups, and the creation of a neighbourhood forum to help inform Board decision-making and reflect community perspectives.
- ✓ Use transparent, open recruitment processes for all board and sub-group or working/task-and-finish group roles.
- ✓ Apply clear conflict of interest standards and publish decision logs to reinforce accountability.
- ✓ Routinely review participation data and take proactive steps if representation narrows or voices become overly dominant.

This will strengthen the legitimacy and perceived fairness of the programme.

## Ensure executive capacity supports community priorities

The Big Local experience highlights that when communities are able to access appropriate resources and support, they can achieve the most ambitious of aspirations for their community and neighbourhood, as reflected by the Ambition Lawrence Weston story in Bristol.<sup>6</sup> Complex or high-risk proposals should only proceed where skills, capacity and risk management are in place to underpin them.

### Recommended actions:

- ✓ Undertake early feasibility and options appraisal for all major proposals.
- ✓ Ensure complex schemes proceed only with clear professional expertise and risk mitigation structures in place.

This will reduce the likelihood of delay, disappointment and sunk effort.

6. <https://www.learningfrombiglocal.org.uk/areas/lawrence-weston>

## Actively broaden participation and representation

Learning from Big Local highlights the importance of avoiding reliance on a small group of “usual suspects.” Pride in Place should be designed to encourage broad and diverse participation, avoiding reliance on a small number of highly engaged residents.

### Recommended actions:

- ✓ Actively recruit board and working group members from underrepresented groups including younger residents and diverse communities.
- ✓ Use flexible meeting formats, locations and timings.
- ✓ Value lived experience alongside formal skills, such as professional or technical backgrounds.
- ✓ Track and review participation trends to ensure ongoing representativeness.
- ✓ Representation should be monitored and reviewed over time, with proactive steps taken if participation narrows.

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## Programme delivery

### Prioritise ‘quick wins’ alongside longer-term change

Early delivery of visible, meaningful improvements will be important in demonstrating that Pride in Place is different from previous initiatives and help secure the community’s buy-in and support. This early phase should prioritise rebuilding trust and visibility in the community, particularly given the legacy of unfulfilled expectations from Big Local. This requires early, tangible action as well as sustained presence.

### Recommended actions:

- ✓ Identify and deliver visible improvements aligned with clearly expressed community priorities, and prioritise those that have are realistic in terms of short-term delivery.
- ✓ Communicate early successes clearly and consistently.
- ✓ Embed early wins within a broader long-term strategy to help momentum and confidence for longer-term work.

Maintaining a consistent on the ground presence will help to identify these quick wins. Clear communication of progress, including what can and cannot be delivered and why will further build trust.

## Make youth provision and inclusive spaces a clear priority

The lack of accessible, positive spaces and activities for children and young people emerged consistently as a critical issue. Pride in Place should treat this as a core priority rather than a secondary outcome. Youth focused investment should be shaped with young people themselves and reflect current needs and interests, rather than relying on outdated assumptions.

Capital investment must be balanced alongside revenue funding, within the constraints of the Pride and Place funding guidance, to support ongoing activity. Investment should prioritise flexible, multi-use spaces that can evolve over time.

### Recommended actions:

- ✓ Co-design youth provision with young people through structured mechanisms such as a youth panel.
- ✓ Invest in sustained, relationship-based youth work, not solely capital improvements.
- ✓ Prioritise flexible, multi-use spaces that can adapt to changing youth interests and demographic shifts.
- ✓ Align youth investment with existing expertise and providers while ensuring hyperlocal relevance.

## Balance capital investment with revenue funding

Evidence from Birchwood Big Local suggests that revenue funding is critical to sustaining activity, maintaining assets and supporting people-based interventions. Pride in Place should ensure capital projects have clear plans for ongoing management, maintenance and activity, with clear requirements for sustainability plans to accompany any capital investment. Capital investment alone does not create sustainable change. Long-term viability depends on adequate revenue funding for programming, staffing, maintenance and activation.

### Recommended actions:

- ✓ Require sustainability and maintenance plans for all capital proposals.
- ✓ Consider revenue implications at the outset, including staffing and activation needs.
- ✓ Avoid creating or developing new community assets that rely on fragile or unsustainable volunteer capacity.
- ✓ Take a 'maintenance-first' approach to ensure long-term return on capital investment.

## Focus on people as well as place

While physical improvements matter, they are not sufficient for long-term change on their own. Pride in Place should ensure sustained investment in people, relationships and capacity.

### Recommended actions:

- ✓ Provide leadership development opportunities for emerging and younger residents.
- ✓ Strengthen local networks between community organisations, voluntary groups and statutory partners.
- ✓ Support community-led activity and decision-making beyond individual capital projects.

This focus will help build resilience and reduce dependency on time-limited funding.

# Learning and reflection

## Embed learning, reflection and evaluation from the outset and throughout delivery

Pride in Place should adopt a proportionate, practical evaluation framework that supports learning rather than compliance or retrospective judgement.

### Recommended actions:

- ✓ Establish a clear baseline and shared understanding of success. A survey of a representative sample of local residents can provide the necessary baseline from which to measure performance. It should be repeated at the halfway stage, and again at the end of the ten years.
- ✓ Combine qualitative insight and lived experience with simple quantitative indicators.
- ✓ Build regular opportunities to reflect, adapt, and improve delivery into governance processes. This should pay particular attention to balancing the need to refresh Board membership and the importance of succession planning, whilst maintaining stability, minimising high-level of turnover, and recognising the importance of institutional memory.
- ✓ Share learning openly and accessibly with residents and partners.

Evaluation should be seen as a practical tool for decision-making, not an end-of-programme exercise.

## Overall

Pride in Place represents a significant opportunity to build on the strengths and achievements of Birchwood Big Local while addressing its structural weaknesses. Success will depend less on the scale of ambition and more on the quality of design, delivery, relationships, governance, support and communication.

By focusing on trust, realism and inclusion and sustained support, Pride in Place can establish a more resilient, credible and impactful model of neighbourhood working in Birchwood West.

# Conclusion and closing reflections

This evaluation has provided a proportionate and learning oriented review of Birchwood Big Local, to inform the development and implementation of the Birchwood West Pride in Place initiative. It offers an honest, evidence-based reflection on a long-term community programme that combines ambition and resident leadership with a number of structural and operational challenges familiar across neighbourhood-level interventions.

The experience of Birchwood Big Local demonstrates that sustained community led investment can deliver meaningful outcomes. The programme contributed to improvements in the physical environment, strengthened local social infrastructure and enabled residents to develop confidence, skills and civic leadership capacity. These achievements represent genuine public value, especially within a context of constrained local authority budgets and increasing operational pressure on statutory services.

However, the evaluation also highlights that community led programmes require intentional design, ongoing support and clear structures if they are to remain resilient over time. Birchwood Big Local faced challenges common to many neighbourhood-based initiatives, including governance complexity, reliance on volunteer capacity, limited access to professional support and the difficulty of sustaining broad engagement over extended periods. For some residents, unmet expectations, particularly in relation to high profile proposals, affected trust and perceptions of progress.

The experience also shows the impact of focusing too heavily on a single, complex capital proposal. The significant time, attention and organisational energy dedicated to the CLT and the Jasmin Green development meant that wider community development work did not receive the sustained investment it required. This affected initiatives such as Diamond Park, where opening hours and activation relied on a small group of volunteers. While their commitment was substantial, the programme did not create the volunteer pathways or succession planning needed to recruit new volunteers or build broader community capacity. This illustrates the importance of balancing ambition with the ongoing, everyday work of nurturing and sustaining local participation. For Pride in Place, this underscores a critical requirement: without consistent, well-resourced community development capacity, the programme risks replicating the same vulnerabilities and may struggle to embed change that endures beyond individual volunteers or short-term enthusiasm.

These challenges are not unique to Birchwood, nor do they reflect a lack of commitment or effort. Instead, they underline the structural realities of delivering long-term, place-based work and reinforce the importance of partnership approaches that balance community leadership with appropriate professional, organisational and strategic support.

The “then and now” perspective shows that the Birchwood Big Local programme evolved in response to changing circumstances, capacities and priorities. While some early ambitions were reshaped or constrained over time, the programme demonstrated adaptability, with the core values of resident leadership, community pride and local agency remaining consistent strengths. The programme’s legacy therefore lies not only in its tangible outputs but in the learning, it generates for future place-based work.

Pride in Place provides a timely opportunity to build on this legacy and to establish a more resilient model for neighbourhood working in Birchwood West. The findings from this evaluation suggest that the initiative will be most effective where it:

- Sustains a clear commitment to resident involvement and local ownership
- Implements transparent and proportionate governance and delivery arrangements
- Invests in capacity-building, relationship building and community cohesion alongside physical improvements
- Embeds a continuous learning and reflective practice approach
- Aligns ambition with deliverability, sustainability and community trust building.

The transition from Birchwood Big Local to Pride in Place should be understood as an evolution rather than a new beginning. The learning from Big Local offers a strong evidence base from which local government, partners and the community can codesign a more integrated, inclusive and sustainable model for local neighbourhood development in Birchwood West.

As a critical friend evaluation, this report does not seek to make definitive judgements. Instead, it is intended to support local government officers, elected members, community partners and residents to engage in constructive reflection and informed decision-making as Pride in Place moves into delivery. If the learning identified here is applied in practice, Pride in Place has the potential not only to deliver visible improvements in Birchwood West but also to rebuild confidence, strengthen local relationships and build a renewed sense of shared responsibility for place.

Ultimately, the success of Pride in Place will depend not only on what is delivered, but on how it is delivered, through transparent partnership working, clear governance, inclusive engagement and a shared commitment to learning from the past to shape a more confident and resilient future for Birchwood West.



# Acknowledgments

This evaluation was shaped by the insight and reflections generously shared by those involved in the Birchwood Big Local programme and by members of the wider community. Their openness and willingness to reflect on both achievements and challenges have been essential to the depth and quality of this report. We also acknowledge the support provided by the Council throughout the evaluation process, including access to information, contextual expertise and guidance. While no individuals are named here, the collective contribution of all involved is recognised with appreciation.

# Endnotes

- 1. Birchwood Big Local Plan 2015–2017** ([Big Local Birchwood plan FINAL 2015–2017](#))  
Used to establish the original vision, community priorities, governance structures, early consultation, and initial plans for green spaces and community-led development.
- 2. Birchwood Big Local 3-Year Plan 2018–2020** ([Birchwood Big Local 3 year plan 2018–2020 FINAL](#))  
Referenced for progress updates, consultation outcomes, development of Diamond Park, early Jasmin Green proposals, and evolution of partnership structures.
- 3. Birchwood Big Local Plan 2022–2026 (including revisions in 2024)**  
[BBL Plan April 22 - Mar26](#)  
[BBL Plan April 22 - Mar26 - refresh](#)  
[BBL Plan April 22 - Mar26 - refresh \(002\)](#)  
Used to confirm delivery priorities, changes following the non-delivery of Jasmin Green, renewed emphasis on grants, and legacy proposals.
- 4. Birchwood Big Local – Awards and Priorities (August 2024)** ([BBL Awards Aug 24 - Priorities](#))  
Used to confirm grant allocations, including amounts awarded to community groups and evidence of support to organisations such as Arise Church (multifunctional garden space).
- 5. Jasmin Green Land Transfer Documents**  
[Transfer of Land at Jasmin Green to Birchwood Area Community Land Trust](#)  
[Decision - Transfer of Land at Jasmin G.](#)  
Used for the chronology, governance parameters, planning requirements, land transfer conditions, risks and responsibilities, and council expectations.
- 6. Homes England Community Housing Fund Contract** ([Agreed HCF Contract Pre Signatures](#))  
Used to confirm grant allocations, milestones, conditions of funding, and financial compliance requirements associated with the Jasmin Green feasibility work.
- 7. BACLT Jasmin Green Project Development & Viability Reports (September 2021)**  
[BACLT. Jasmin Green Project Development and Viability report – September 2021 \(2\) \(3\)](#)  
[BACLT. Jasmin Green Project Development and Viability report – September 2021](#)  
Used to reconstruct the technical case for the housing and recreation plan, including viability assessments, consultation evidence, development design, risk analysis, and housing provider partnerships.
- 8. Lease Agreement: Birchwood Area Community Land Trust – Unit 26** ([Lease – signed 25Nov16](#))  
Referenced for background on BACLT’s legal structure, assets, and operational responsibilities.
- 9. Letter from City of Lincoln Council (January 2024)** ([Letter from Lincoln Council Jan 2024](#))  
Used to clarify council expectations regarding future skatepark proposals, planning conditions, community consultation thresholds, and requirements for demonstrating local support.
- 10. Skatepark Master Programme Narrative (2024)** ([Summary & Narrative to Support Master Programme](#))  
Used to inform process mapping, procurement steps, planning stages, and community engagement expectations for skatepark development.

### **11. Notes and Internal Summaries** (Notes)

Used to consolidate funding records (e.g. Homes England, Lottery, Co-op), past grants, and financial summaries referenced across the evaluation.

### **12. Interview Material (Anonymous)**

The evaluation draws on 30 anonymised stakeholder interviews conducted between late 2025 and early 2026. These informed findings on:

- partnership functioning and capacity
- community perceptions of Big Local
- views on Diamond Park, Jasmin Green, youth provision and legacy
- reflections on grant accessibility and inclusivity (including perspectives on faith based organisations)

No individuals are named or identifiable in this report.

### **13. Local Trust – Big Local Programme Guidance**

Referenced for programme design principles, expected outcomes, and national guidance on partnership governance, legacy, and grant-making.

### **14. HM Treasury (2020). *Magenta Book: Guidance for Evaluation***

Used to inform methodology, proportionality of approach, and limitations.

# Bibliography

## Primary Birchwood Big Local Documents

- Birchwood Big Local Partnership Board. *Birchwood Big Local Plan 2015–2017 (Final Version)*. October 2015.
- Birchwood Big Local Partnership Board. *Birchwood Big Local Plan 2018–2020*. 2017.
- Birchwood Big Local Partnership Board. *Birchwood Big Local Plan 2022–2026*. (BBL Plan April 22 – Mar 26; BBL Plan April 22 – Mar 26 – refresh; BBL Plan April 22 – Mar 26 – refresh (002))
- Birchwood Big Local. *Awards and Priorities – August 2024*.
- Birchwood Big Local. *Notes – Funding Summary*.

## Birchwood Area Community Land Trust (BACLT) and Jasmin Green project

- Birchwood Area Community Land Trust. *Jasmin Green Project Development and Viability Report – September 2021*. Two versions: (BACLT. *Jasmin Green Project Development and Viability report – September 2021 (2) (3)*; BACLT. *Jasmin Green Project Development and Viability report – September 2021*)
- City of Lincoln Council. *Transfer of Land at Jasmin Green to Birchwood Area Community Land Trust*.
- City of Lincoln Council. *Decision Report – Transfer of Land at Jasmin Green*.
- Homes England. *Community Housing Fund Programme – Grant Allocation (BACLT)*.
- City of Lincoln Council. *Letter Regarding Jasmin Green Proposals*. January 2024.

## Diamond Park and community asset management

Birchwood Area Community Land Trust. *Lease Agreement – Unit 26, Birchwood Shopping Centre*. November 2016.

## Skatepark development

Eddisons. *Summary & Narrative to Support Master Programme – Birchwood Skatepark*. February 2024.

## Anonymised interview material

A series of anonymised interviews with local stakeholders and residents were conducted between December 2025 and January 2026. These interviews informed findings related to:

- perceptions of Big Local governance and impact
- experiences of local organisations receiving Big Local funding
- community views on Arise Church and accessibility of faith based funding
- youth provision, grassroots activity, and local services
- views on Diamond Park, Jasmin Green, and legacy planning

No names, roles or identifiable personal details are included in the evaluation.

## Programme and methodology sources

Local Trust. *Big Local Programme Guidance and Learning Resources*. (Used for historical context, programme expectations, and legacy guidance)

HM Treasury. *The Magenta Book: Guidance for Evaluation*. 2020 Edition. (Used to inform evaluation design, proportionality, and limitations)



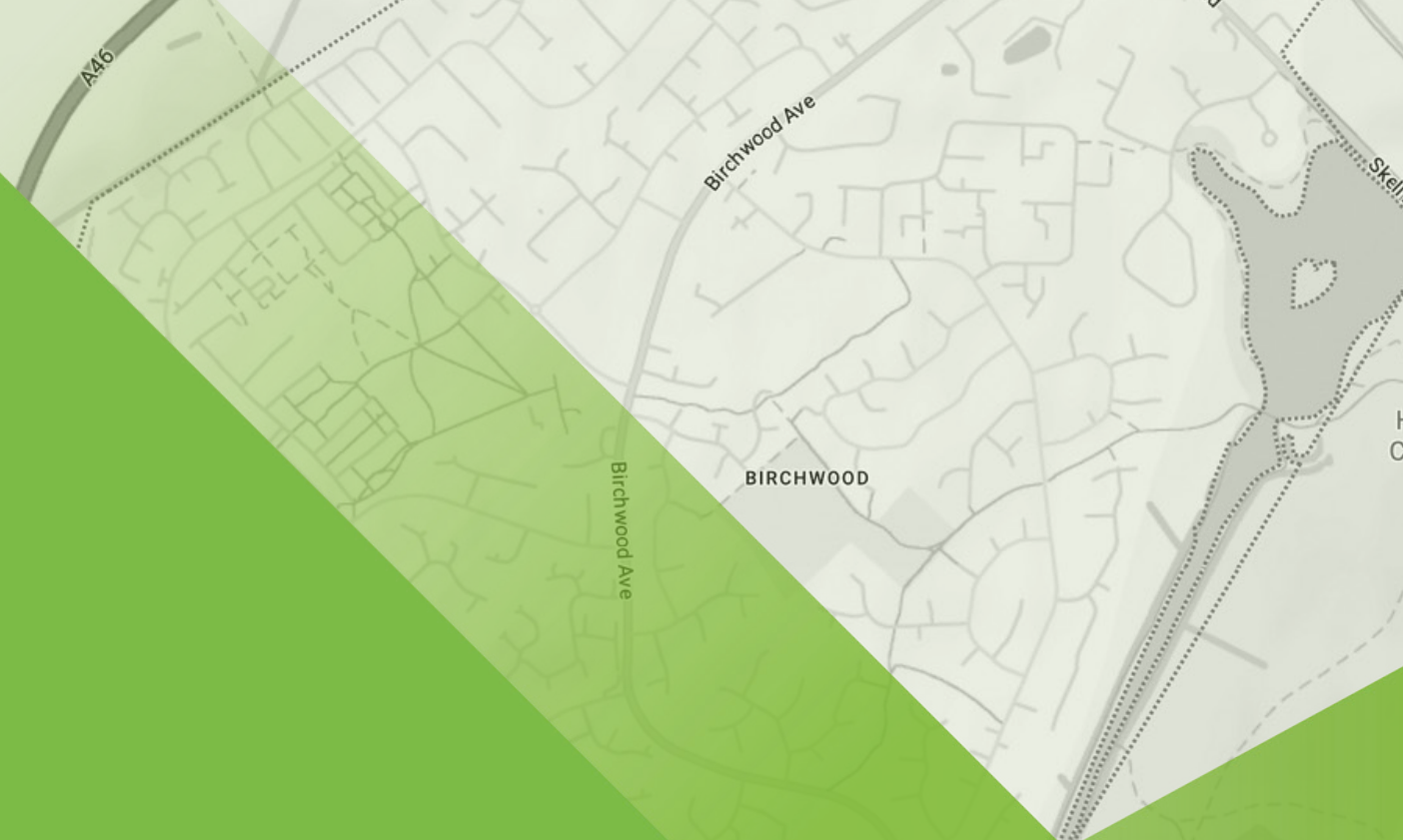
**national network  
for neighbourhood  
improvement**

# Appendix

1. Contextual data for Birchwood Big Local
2. Summary of bids
3. Indicative baseline residents' survey
4. Evaluation framework going forward
5. Birchwood West Pride in Place  
3ni neighbourhood data report



national network  
for neighbourhood  
improvement



Appendix 1

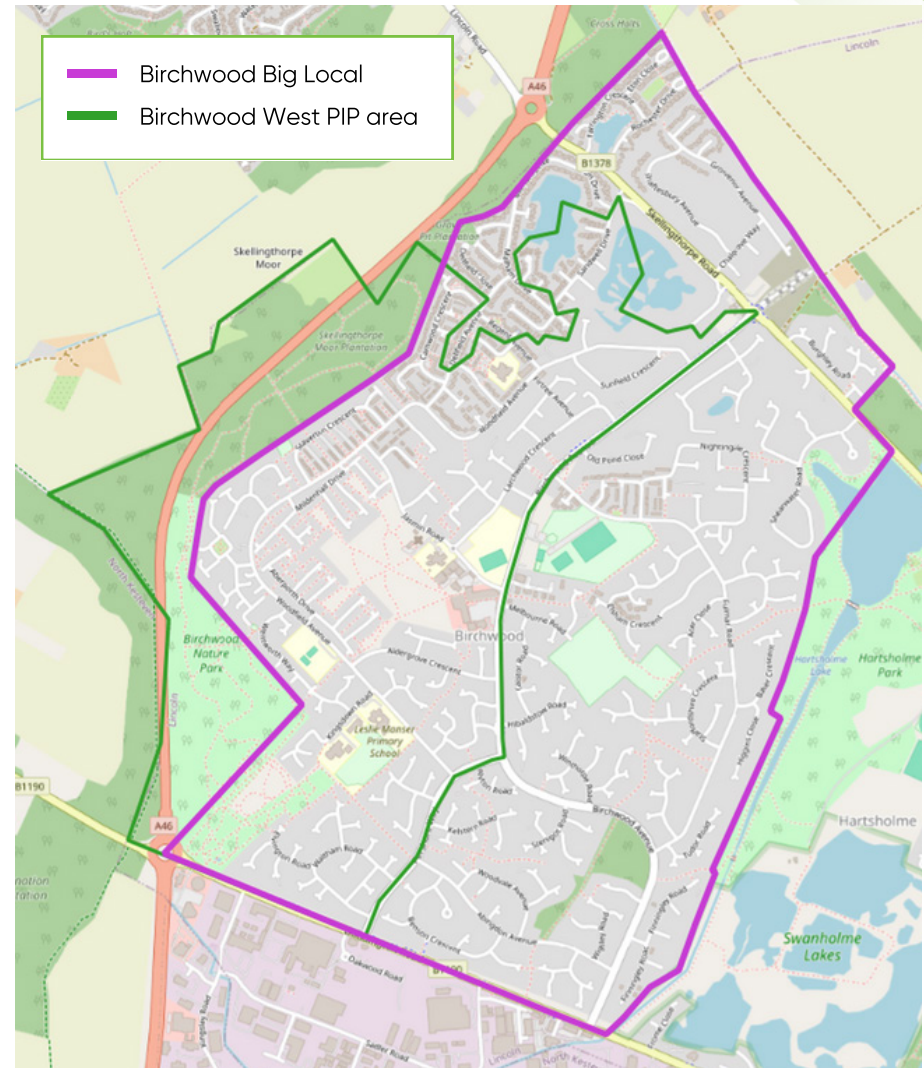
Contextual data for

# Birchwood Big Local

# Findings consistent with the qualitative evaluation

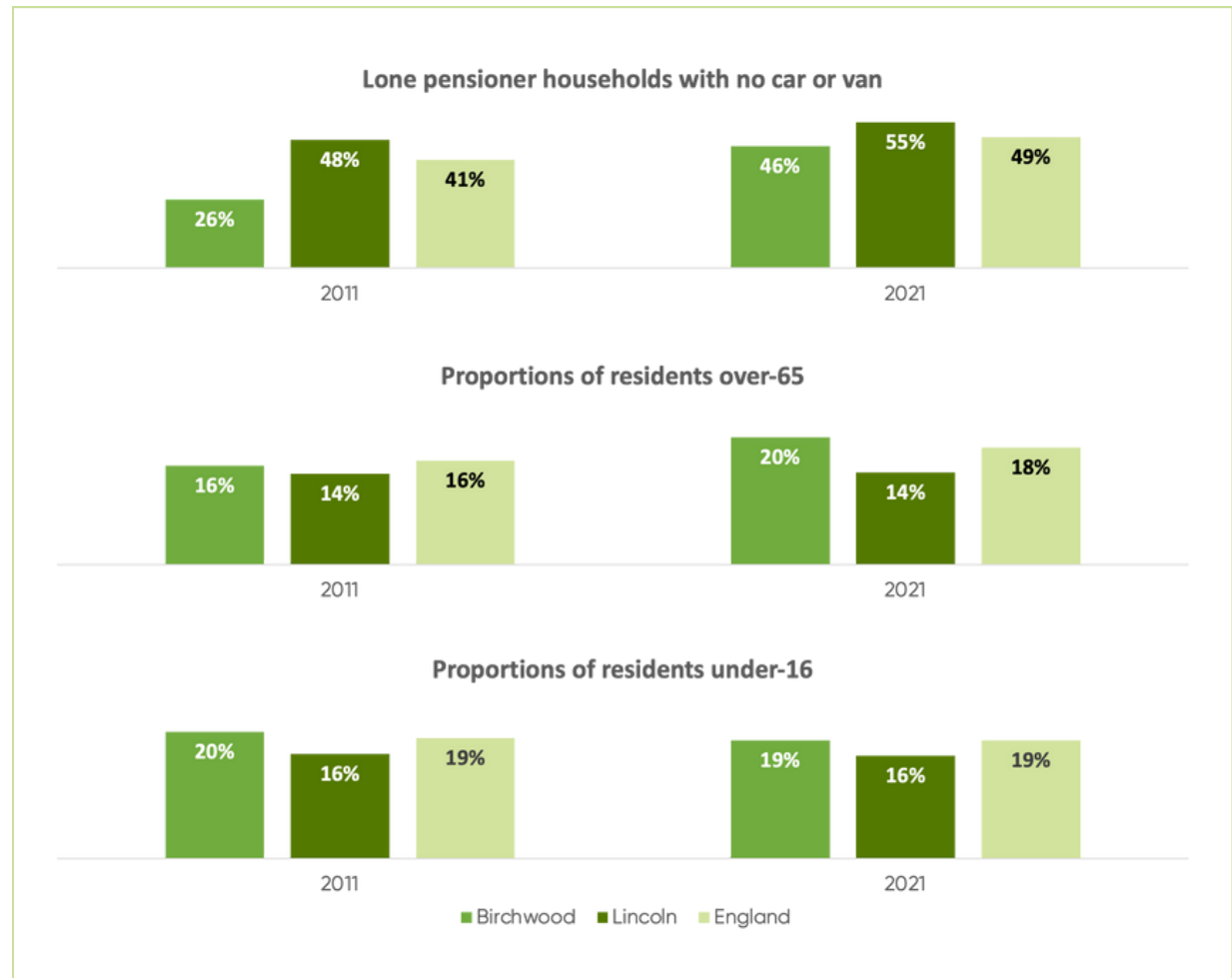
The analysis of quantitative trend data showing changes over time broadly supports the qualitative findings in this evaluation:

- The original conception of the Jasmin Green project to provide housing for local older residents and facilities for children and younger people was in line with the demographic changes facing the area, and meeting the needs of the higher percentage of residents aged over-65 and under-16 compared to the city average.
- Demographic and health-related shifts - particularly as a result of the growing older population and rising disability-related benefits - underline the importance of continuing to invest in foundational social infrastructure, given that social capital, participation and diverse networks improve self-rated health.
- Worsening mental health also underscores the need to build and strengthen the local social relationships that can support local connections, bolstering peer support and community-led provision. Social capital interventions benefit older people's mental health.
- Local community skills provision needs more attention to help improve local economic outcomes in the broadest sense, as well as develop bridging social capital which can open up access to opportunities, resources and support structures.
- Trends in anti-social behaviour reinforce the feedback from community consultation and the report's emphasis on the need to invest in ongoing activities for children and young people, which can have a diversionary effect on anti-social behaviour. Initiatives that build friendship networks and create a safe and secure local environment improve adolescent mental health.



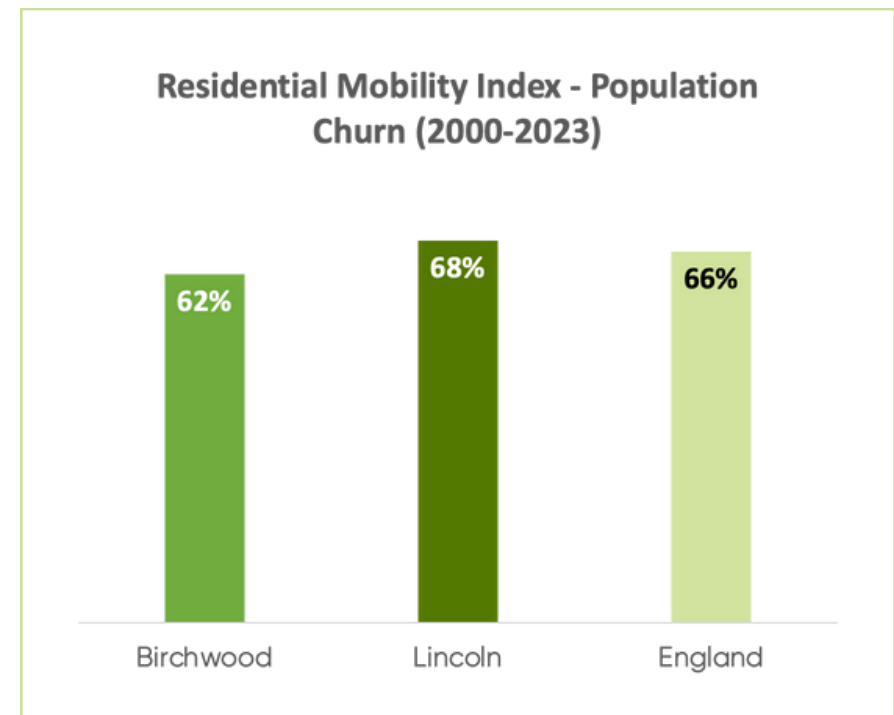
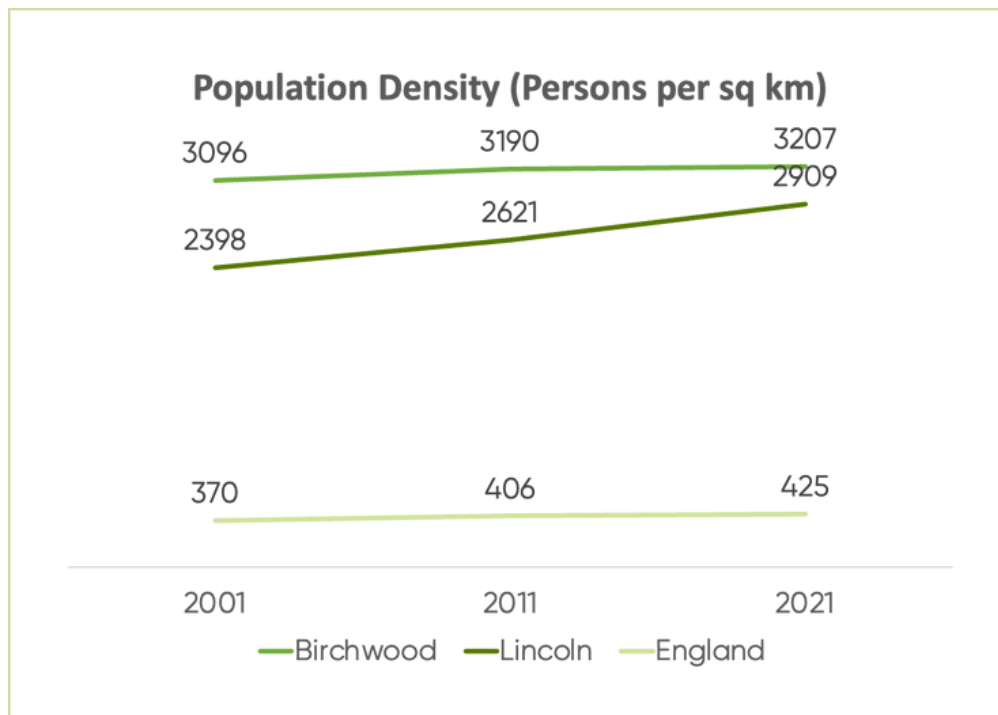
# Demographic changes in Birchwood Big Local: an ageing population increases need for accessible foundational social infrastructure to build connections and relationships

- While the proportion of residents aged under-16 remains static across Lincoln as a whole, there is a still higher percentage under-16 in Birchwood, despite dropping just under a fifth of the population. The proportion of over-65's in Birchwood increases more than in Lincoln or England (+4pp vs. 0pp and +2pp), comprising a fifth of the local population. A slightly more pronounced ageing shift could be taking place in Birchwood.
- From 2011 to 2021, there have been increases in the proportions of lone pensioner households with no car or van across Birchwood, Lincoln and England – with the biggest increase seen in Birchwood (+20pp). This suggests a potential increase in the risk of isolation and vulnerability for elderly residents living on the periphery, the need for social infrastructure to help address this, and local facilities such as public seating to support access to public transport.



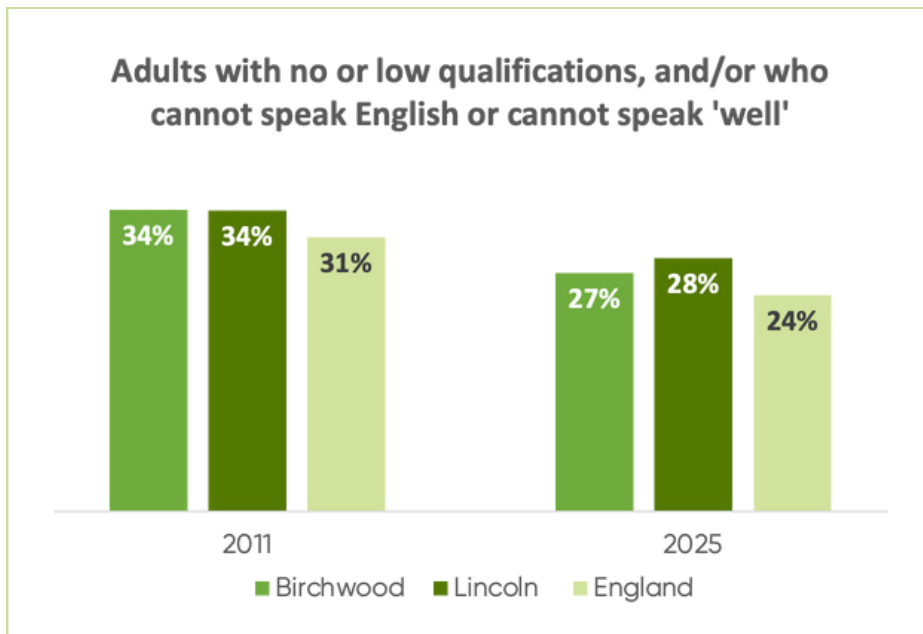
## Stable population density and relatively lower household churn should provide good conditions for building stronger community

- Population density per square kilometre in the Birchwood Big Local Area ('Birchwood') has remained steady over a 20-year period (2001-2021), unlike Lincoln where it has grown more considerably. Population churn from 2000 to 2023 is also moderately higher in Lincoln than it is across Birchwood (+6pp).
- Though only a moderate difference, Birchwood is more, which should provide better conditions with which to build up local community capacity and strengthen bonding, bridging and ultimately linking social capital.



# Skills have improved in Birchwood and employment remains steady, but illness and disability are a bigger consideration now

- The proportion of adults aged 25-64 who have no or low qualification and/or who can't speak English well has decreased moderately in Birchwood, and by similar proportions to Lincoln and England (-7pp, -6pp, -7pp respectively). There are moderate increases in top social grade across all three areas – which is determined by occupation. The shift is most pronounced nationally (-6pp; 2011-2021).
- Pandemic increases excepted, the proportions of unemployment benefit claimants has remained stable the last few years.
- While there has been moderate decreases in those with no or low skills and/or low levels of English proficiency in Birchwood, the figure is just over a quarter of all adults, who live further from education provision compared to other Lincoln residents, suggesting access to basic skills in the community would be beneficial to improved outcomes.

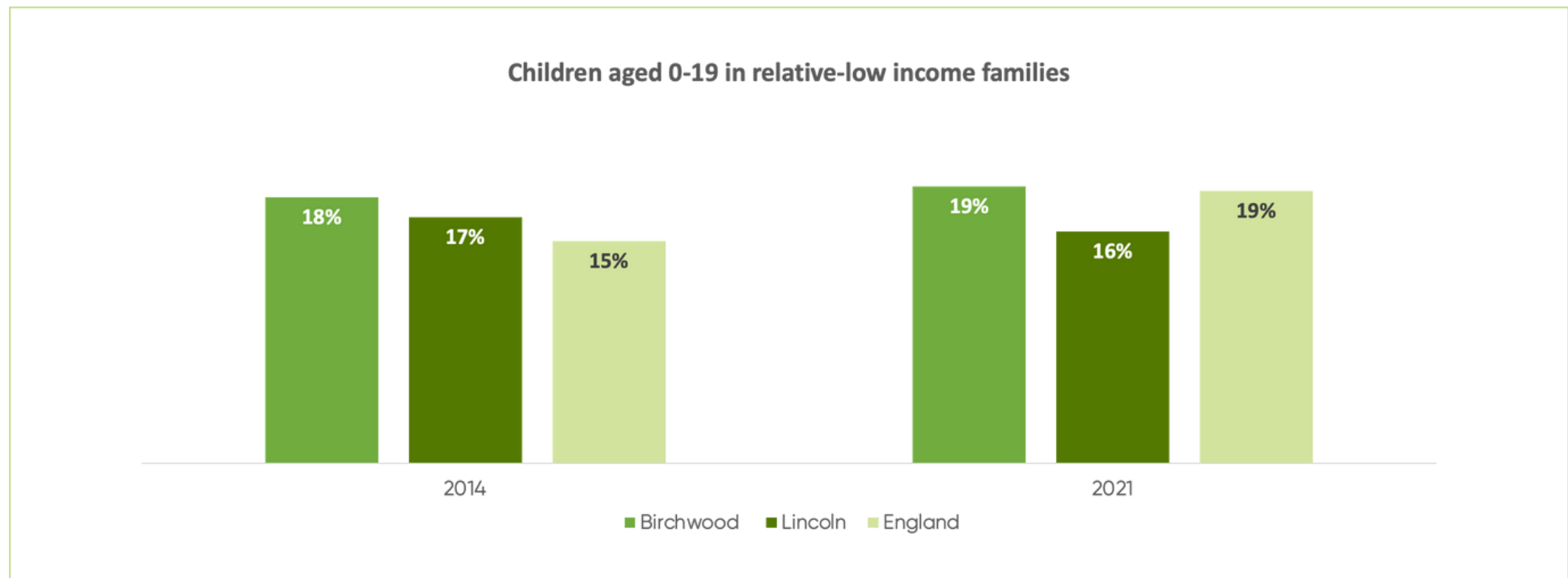


### Unemployment benefit claimants (Jobseekers Allowance and out of work Universal Credit)



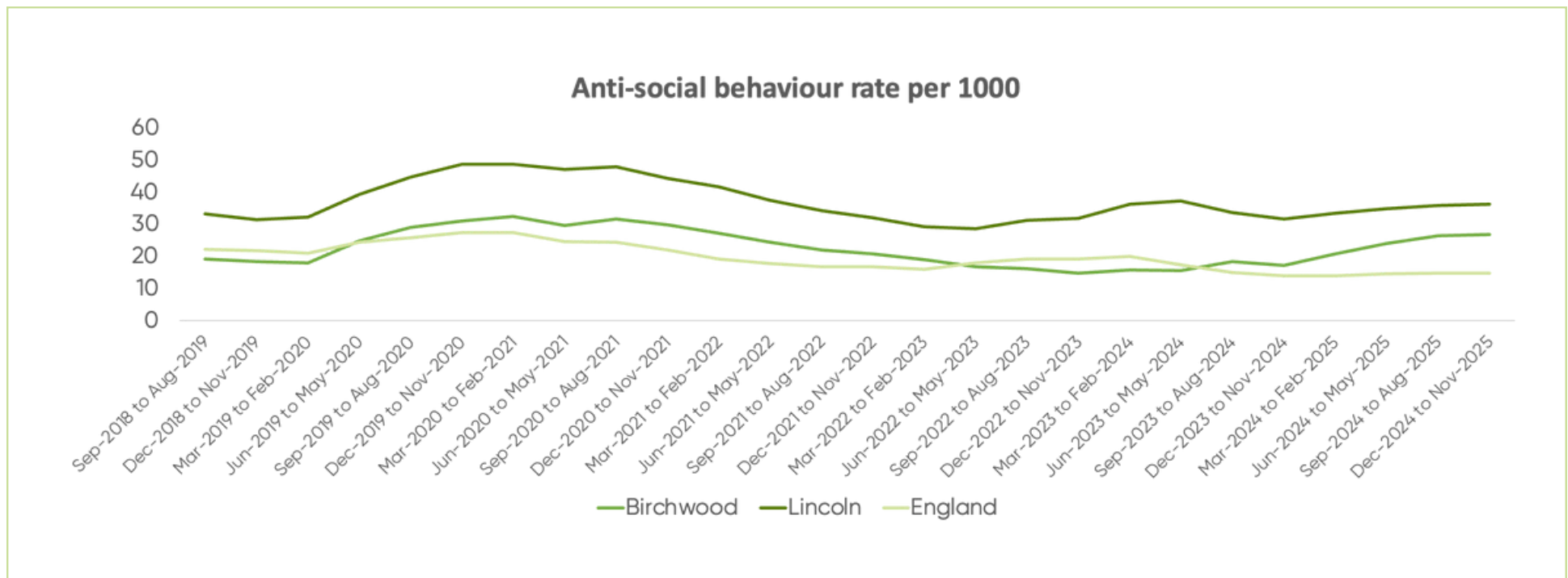
## Proportion of children in low-income families shows a key vulnerability that needs addressing

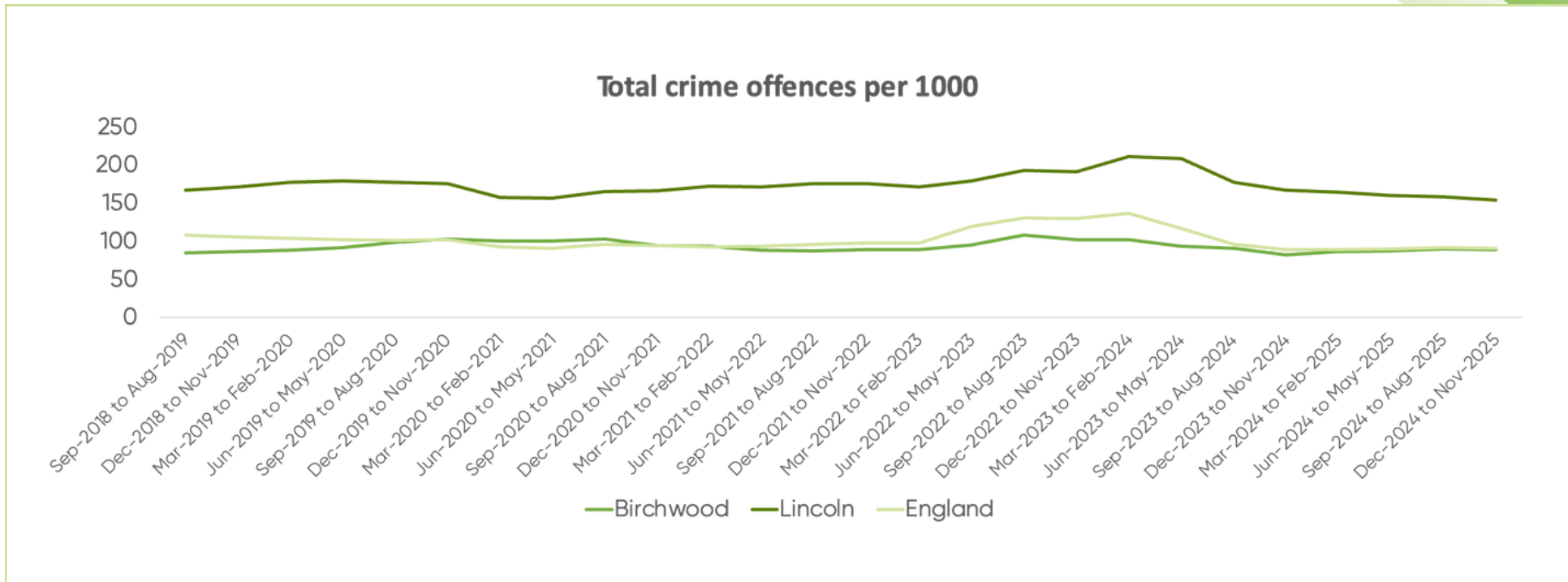
- Whilst the number of children in relative low-income families has dropped across Lincoln, the proportion in Birchwood Big Local has risen, and now mirrors the national average.
- Just under a fifth of residents who are 19 and under may need support from the many intersecting challenges that come with being a dependent in a low-income family. Investment in the surrounding community to build the local stock of social capital can offer a protective shield to those children and can be vital to ensuring better outcomes. Provision of local amenities and support for activities to build opportunities for children and young people will be important, as well as ensuring young people from low-income families are not excluded from engagement.



# Crime levels in Birchwood are stable long-term but anti-social behaviour has been on the rise in recent years

- Birchwood's anti-social behaviour rate per 1000 residents has steadily climbed down from the high point seen during the pandemic but is once again increasing, suggesting that action to tackle anti-social behaviour and improve community safety could be an important priority for the community under Pride in Place.
- The Total crime rate per 1000 residents across Birchwood is in line with the national trend and is stable long-term, other than increases seen during the pandemic. Lincoln has a much higher rate of criminal offences by comparison.



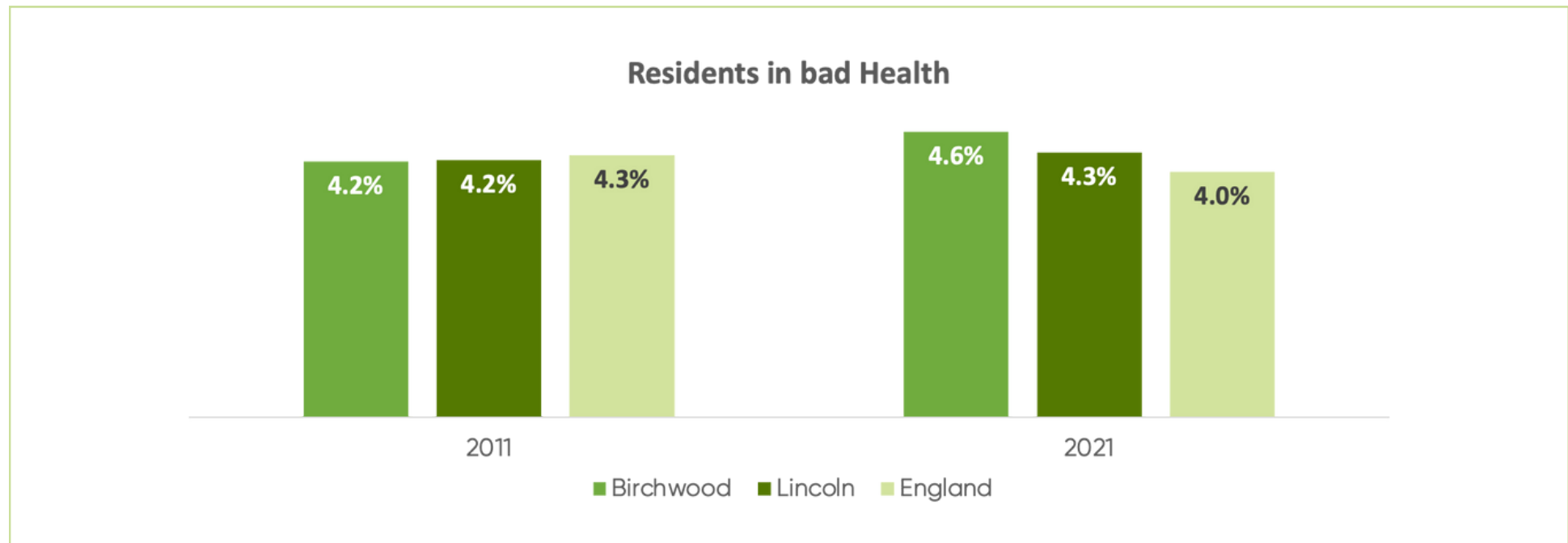


### Implications for Big Local’s legacy and Pride in Place:

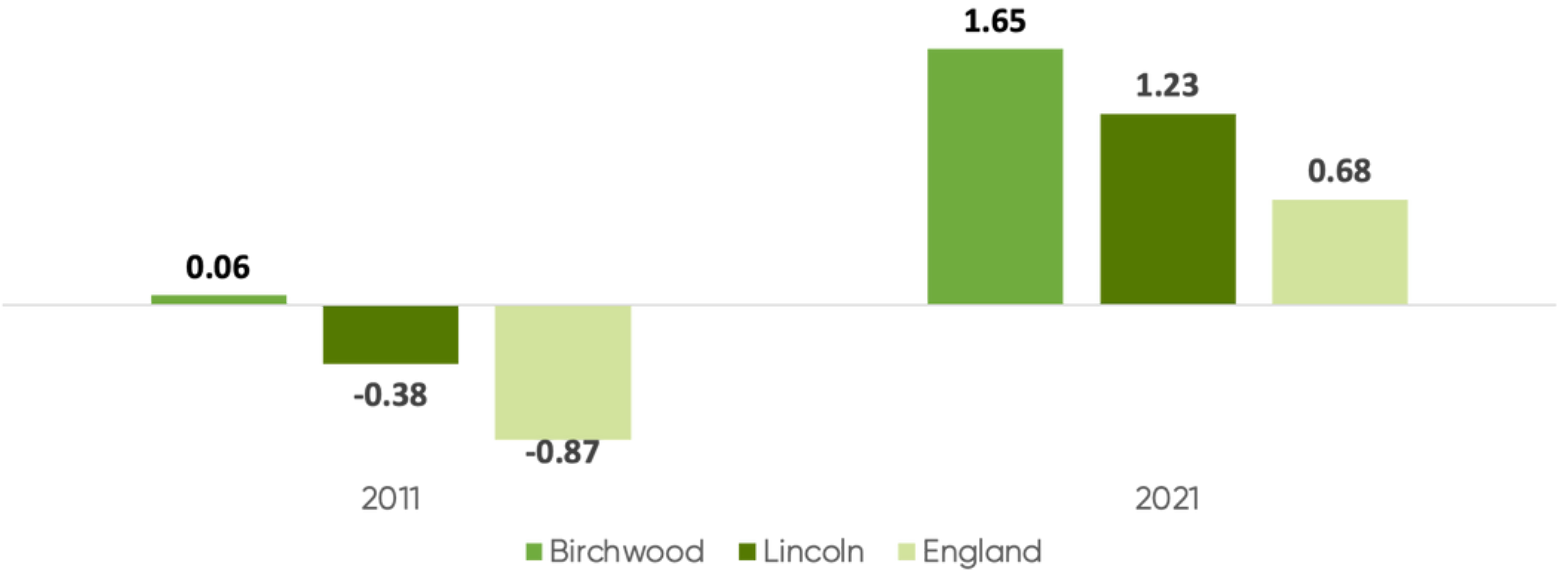
- One of the aims of the Big Local Programme was to increase the degree to which residents thought their area was an even better place to live. Helping local police to tackle recent increases in anti-social behaviour through community coordination and youth engagement could go some way towards increasing resident satisfaction in the area.
- Leveraging civic assets like Diamond Park and providing opportunities to do this should give Pride in Place the opportunity to build on Big Local’s legacy, providing visibility and to help build trust and engagement.

## Mental health need rose sharply in Birchwood between 2011 and 2021 and should be a major priority when building stronger community ties

- There was a 0.4% rise in the proportion of those in bad health in Birchwood compared to a 0.1% across the city.
- Mental health need, however, increased considerably across all three areas but most notably across Birchwood. The Small Area Mental Health Index (SAMHI) shows deviations of LSOA-level scores from a single national average in mental health referrals, prescriptions, hospital attendance, disability and PIP claims.
- Greater community and peer support for mental health is paramount given Birchwood's levels of need. Community efforts and initiatives to build relationships and address loneliness could complement public service provision.



### Small Area Mental Health Index

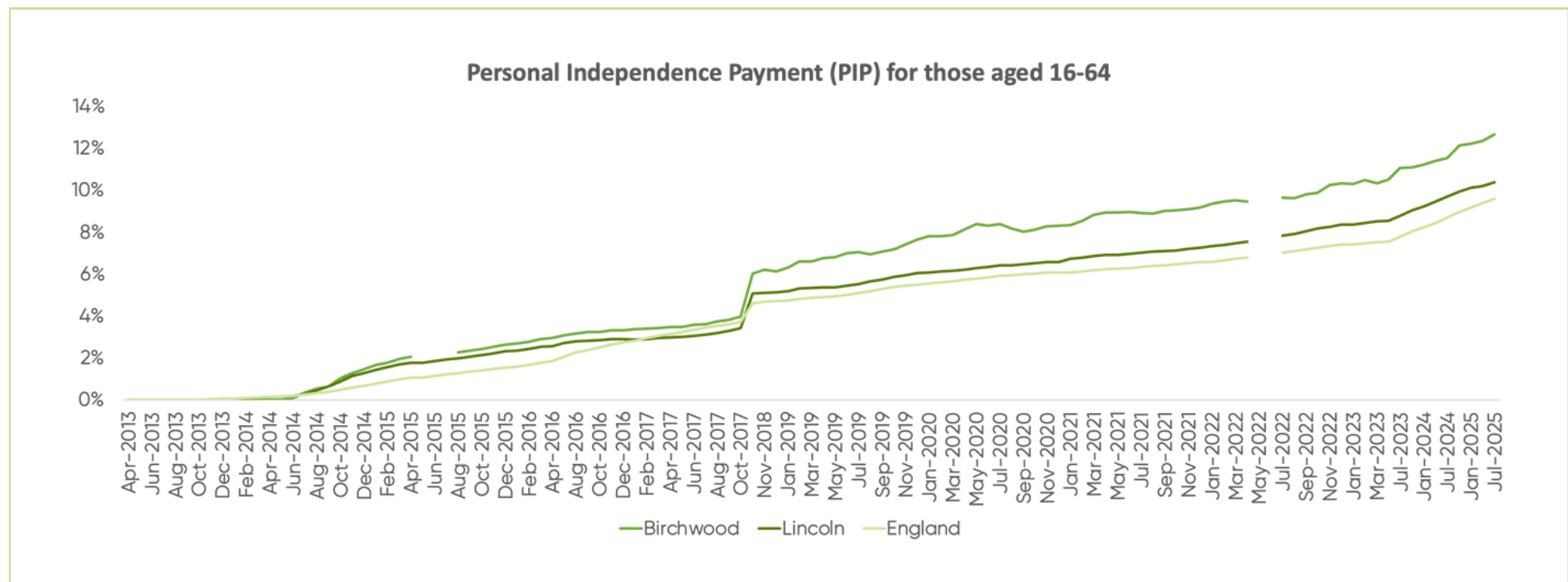


**How to read this chart:**

- < -0.5 Low need
- 0.5 to +0.5 Typical (0 represents national average)
- +0.5 to +1.0 Moderately high need
- +1.0 to +1.5 High need
- > +1.5 Very high need

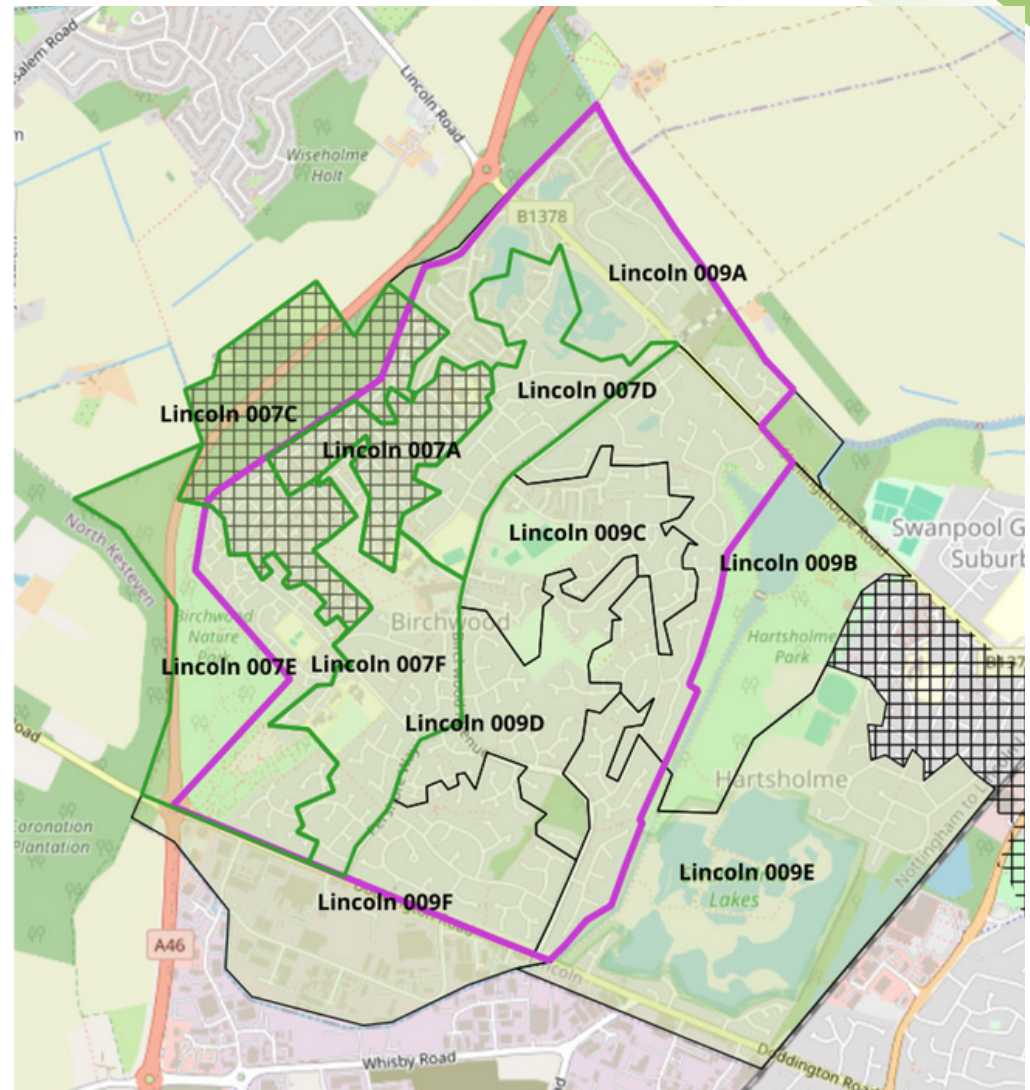
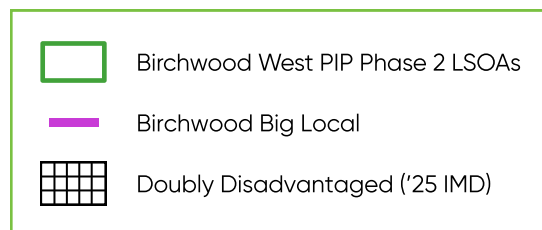
# Personal Independence Payments are rising faster in Birchwood's Big Local area than in Lincoln or the rest of the country

- Personal Independence Payments have gone up steadily, but most steeply in Birchwood, suggesting increased need for working age adults in ill health, who are terminally ill or living with disabilities.
- Faster increases in PIP in Birchwood underline the need to make any community efforts under Pride in Place as accessible and inclusive as possible. Some PIP claimants may suffer a greater degree of isolation than non-claimants and may warrant additional focus in future interventions.

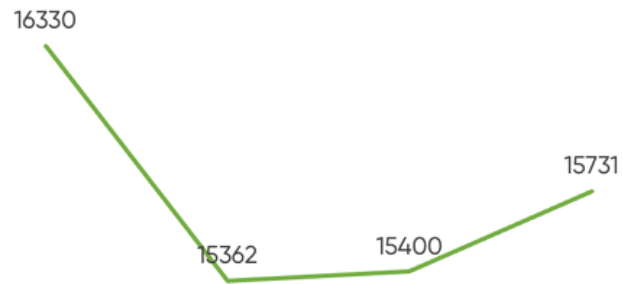


# Modest improvement in average IMD rank masks persistent pockets of severe deprivation

- Mean IMD rank fell sharply in 2015 (worsening deprivation) compared with 2010.
- Since 2015, mean rank has improved steadily to 2025, indicating greater reduction in deprivation in Birchwood.
- 2025 remains more deprived than 2010 overall, despite post-2015 improvement.
- Two LSOAs (Lincoln 007A and Lincoln 007C) remain in IMD Decile 1 throughout 2015 – 2025 (persistent highest deprivation).
- Most other LSOAs show minimal decile improvement over the same 10-year period, suggesting entrenched relative patterns despite overall improvement.



### Mean IMD Ranks - Birchwood LSOAs



IMD Rank 2010    IMD Rank 2015    IMD Rank 2019    IMD Rank 2025

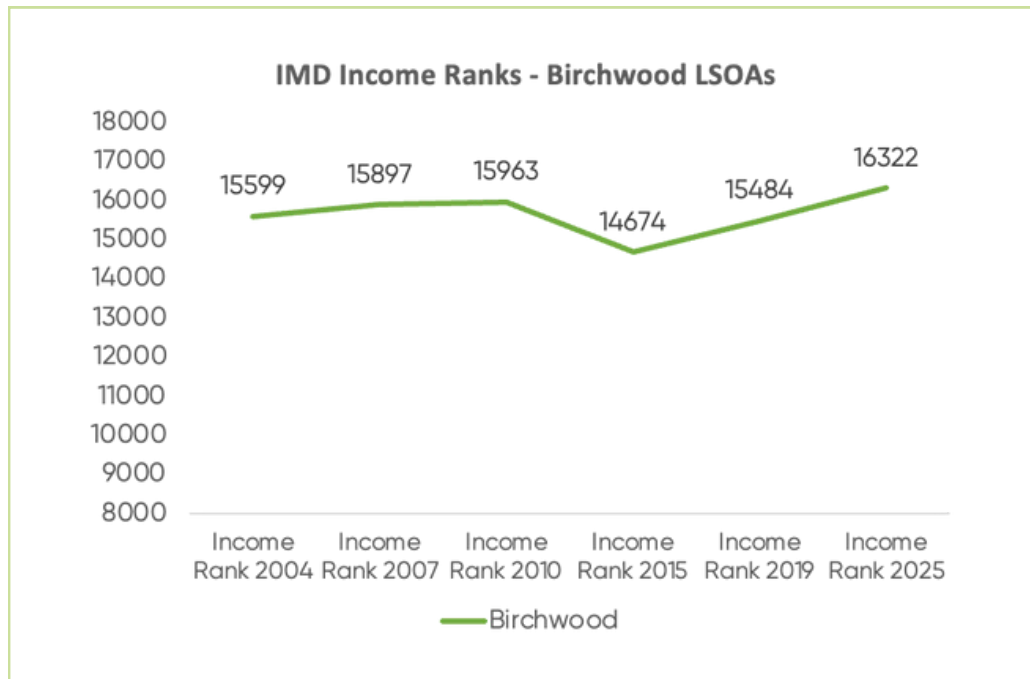
*NB: A rank closer to 1 means worse deprivation*

LSOA code	IMD decile 2015	IMD decile 2019	IMD decile 2025
E01026127	1	1	1
E01026129	1	1	1
E01026131	3	3	3
E01026162	5	5	5
E01026159	6	6	5
E01034690	6	6	6
E01034689	6	6	5
E01026158	7	6	8
E01026130	7	7	7
E01026163	8	7	8
E01026160	9	8	9

# Persistent deprivation with limited and uneven improvement across domains

## Income deprivation

- The Income rank in Birchwood fell in 2015 (worsening deprivation), before recovering by 2025 to above 2010 levels.
- Two LSOAs remain in Decile 1 (most deprived) through 2015–2025.
- Most other LSOAs show little decile movement, with only small upward shifts into less deprived deciles.



## Income domain

LSOA code	Income deciles 2015	Income deciles 2019	Income deciles 2025
E01026127	1	1	1
E01026129	1	1	1
E01026131	3	3	3
E01026162	4	5	5
E01026159	5	6	6
E01034690	5	5	6
E01034689	5	5	5
E01026158	7	7	9
E01026130	7	8	7
E01026163	8	8	8
E01026160	8	9	8

## Employment deprivation

- The Employment rank in Birchwood declined steadily from 2007 to 2019 (worsening deprivation), with partial improvement by 2025.
- Two LSOAs remain in Decile 1 (most deprived) through 2015–2025.
- Limited decile change overall suggests entrenched employment disadvantage.

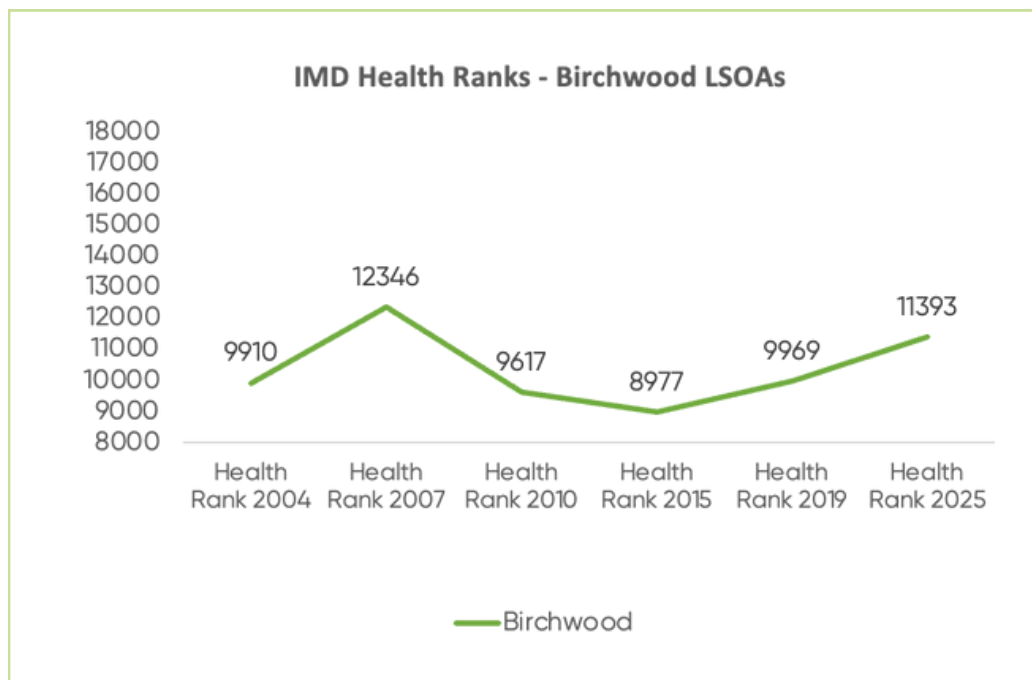


## Employment domain

LSOA code	Employment deciles 2015	Employment deciles 2019	Employment deciles 2025
E01026127	1	1	1
E01026129	1	1	1
E01026131	3	3	3
E01026162	4	3	4
E01026130	5	5	5
E01026159	6	6	6
E01034690	6	5	5
E01034689	6	5	6
E01026158	7	6	6
E01026163	8	7	6
E01026160	9	8	8

## Health deprivation

- The Health rank in Birchwood worsened in 2015, then improved through 2019 and 2025.
- Two LSOAs remain in Decile 1 (most deprived) through 2015–2025.
- Greater decile churn than income and employment domains suggests uneven and fragile improvements.

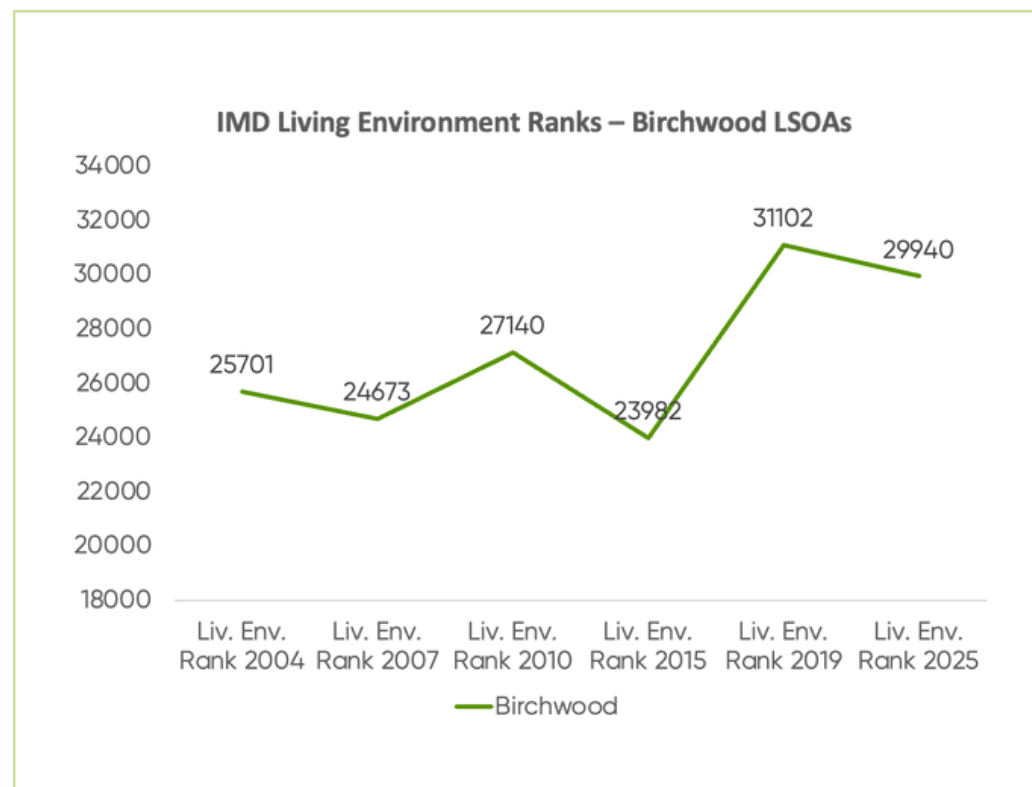
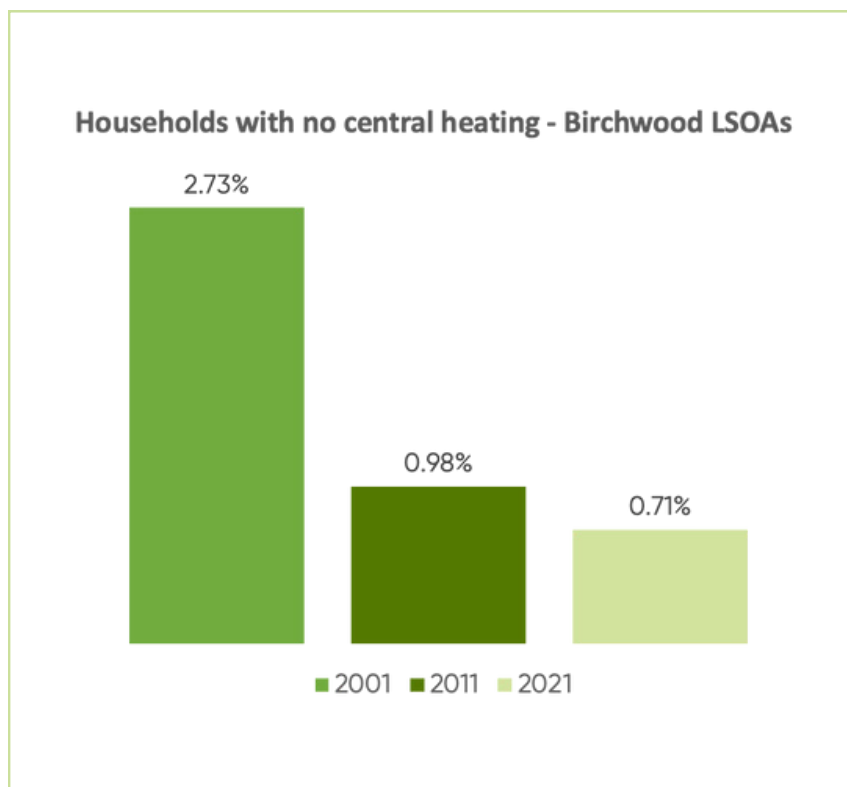


## Health domain

LSOA code	Health deciles 2015	Health deciles 2019	Health deciles 2025
E01026127	1	1	1
E01026129	1	1	1
E01026131	2	1	2
E01026159	3	3	4
E01026163	4	5	5
E01026130	4	4	6
E01026162	4	4	4
E01034690	4	5	4
E01034689	4	5	3
E01026158	5	4	5
E01026160	5	6	7

# Living Environment conditions have improved significantly since 2015

- The Living Environment rank in Birchwood worsened in 2015, before improving markedly in 2019 and remaining relatively stable in 2025.
- Most LSOAs shift into higher (less deprived) deciles by 2019, with this improvement largely sustained to 2025.
- There is a long-term reduction in households with no central heating (2001-2021), supporting the observed improvement in living environment conditions.



LSOA Code	Liv. Env. Deciles 2004	Liv. Env. Deciles 2007	Liv. Env. Deciles 2010	Liv. Env. Deciles 2015	Liv. Env. Deciles 2019	Liv. Env. Deciles 2025
E01026158	9	9	10	8	10	9
E01026163	8	9	9	8	10	10
E01026160	9	8	10	8	10	10
E01026131	7	7	7	7	8	9
E01026159	8	7	8	8	10	8
E01026130	9	9	9	8	10	9
E01026162	8	8	9	7	10	10
E01034690	9	8	9	8	10	10
E01034689	9	8	9	8	10	9
E01026127	5	5	6	6	9	9
E01026129	9	9	9	8	10	9

# Technical Notes

## The Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) explained

The Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) provide the official measure of relative deprivation for small areas Lower Layer Super Output Area (LSOAs) in England.

Data for Birchwood Big Local in the Index of Multiple Deprivation is available at LSOA only – areas that comprise some of the output areas investigated in previous slides, with LSOAs being larger than Output Areas.

The IMD captures multiple, overlapping forms of disadvantage that affect people's day-to-day lives, using 39 indicators grouped into seven domains:

- **Income Deprivation**
- **Employment Deprivation**
- **Education, Skills and Training**
- **Health and Disability**
- **Crime**
- **Barriers to Housing and Services**
- **Living Environment**

Each domain reflects a different aspect of deprivation, and together they provide a composite score and **national rank for every LSOA (1 = most deprived)**.

## Mean ranks, deciles and Doubly Disadvantaged Neighbourhoods (DDNs)

### Why look at the mean IMD ranks across LSOAs?

Using the mean IMD rank gives a simple, high-level picture of deprivation across a whole neighbourhood made up of several LSOAs. It shows whether the area is becoming relatively more or less deprived over time.

*NB: The average rank is not population-weighted – each LSOA counts equally and should be interpreted only as a broad measure of change due to methodology changes wave to wave which reduce the extent to which we can unequivocally say changes are meaningful.*

### Why use LSOA deciles to track change?

Deciles (1 = most deprived 10%) group LSOAs into broad national bands, making trends easier to see. Because small rank shifts can be misleading, deciles give a clearer view of whether an LSOA is moving into or out of the most deprived parts of England over time.

### Doubly Disadvantaged Neighbourhoods (DDNs)

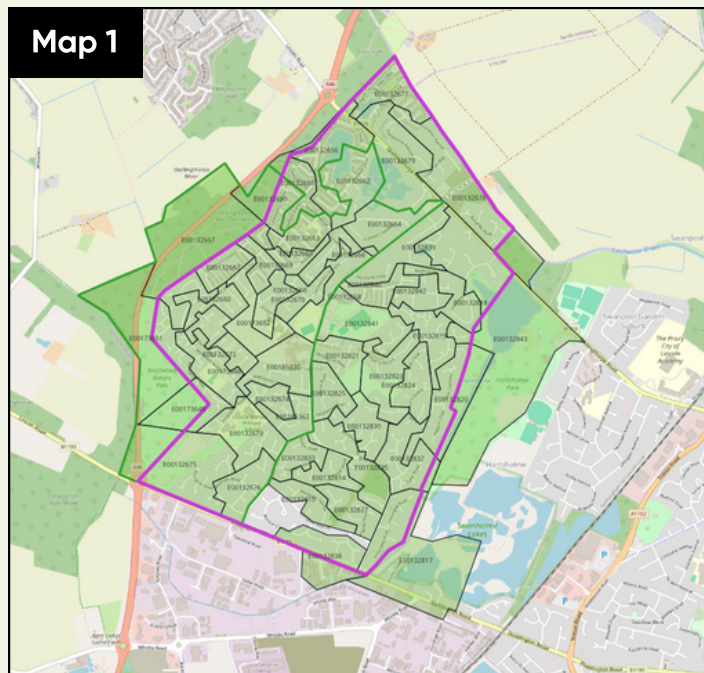
DDNs are LSOAs that appear in:

- the **bottom 10%** of the **IMD 2025**, and
- the **bottom 10%** of the **Community Needs Index 2023**.

They highlight areas experiencing both structural deprivation and a lack of social infrastructure.

## About the quantitative data in this report

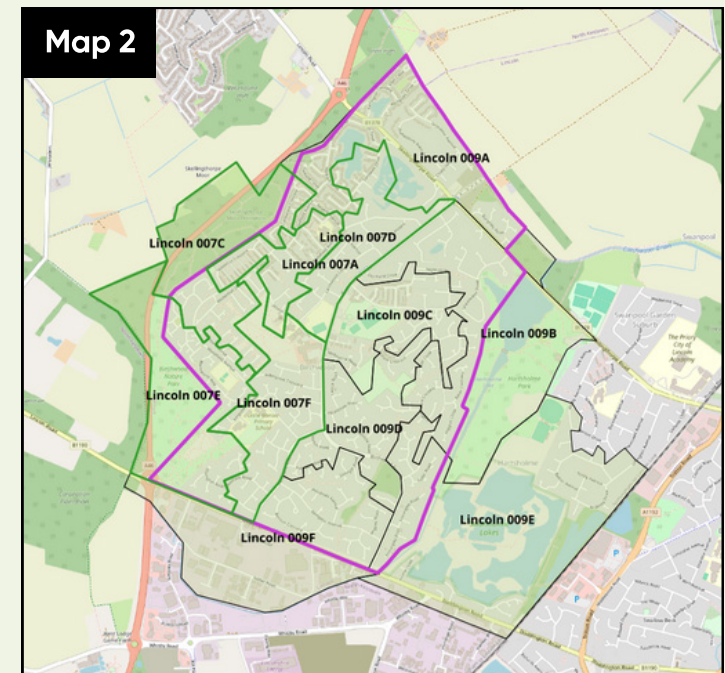
1. The quantitative trend data in the first half of this report is shown for an area made up of the smallest standard geography available – **Output Areas (OA)** – shown in Map 1. Trend data displayed in the first half are population weighted means of the Output Areas shown in Map 1. These Output Areas were derived from the 2011 Census.
2. The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) data shown in the second half of the report is shown at **Lower Layer Super Output Area (LSOA)** level and means are not population weighted. The Community Needs Index (CNI) and Social Capital Score (SCS) heatmaps in later slides show Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs). Where there is data displayed next to heatmaps these are showing population weighted LSOA means for those areas. The relevant LSOAs are shown in Map 2. These LSOAs were derived from the 2021 Census.



- Output Areas (OA)
- Birchwood Big Local
- Birchwood West PIP MSOA

Birchwood West Phase 2  
MSOA population (2021):  
**7,319**

Birchwood Big Local  
population (2021):  
**14,460**



- Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOA)
- Birchwood Big Local
- Birchwood West PIP LSOAs



**national network  
for neighbourhood  
improvement**

## Appendix 2

# Summary of bids

Information provided by Lincolnshire Community Foundation:

Focus	£
Upgrade community facilities including Defibs (UCF)	£165,000.00
Children and Young People (CYP)	£60,000.00
Tackling Poverty (TP)	£115,000.00
Green Spaces (GS)	£70,000.00
<b>Amount available</b>	<b>£410,000.00</b>

Name of applicant	Project	Award £
<b>Upgrading community facilities</b>		
Michael Watson (Changs Hapkido)	Replace exercise mats	£1,875.60
St Luke's Youth Centre	New windows	£8,195.92
13th Lincoln Birchwood Scout Group	Improvement to facilities (new boiler, flooring, chairs/tables etc.)	£45,612.43
St Luke's & St Martin's Church, Birchwood	Replacement of car park	£24,192.00
Birchwood Colts JFS	Improvement to facilities (storage, security, groundworks, etc.)	£33,920.00
Woodlands Infant School	'Wrapping' of School Library	£3,540.00
Arise Church, Birchwood	To create a multifunctional garden space	£48,203.10
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>£165,539.05</b>
<b>Children and Young People</b>		
Acts Trust, Lincoln	Youth Activities	£27,128.29
YMCA Lincolnshire	Support for pre-school children and teenagers	£29,412.50
Linkage Community Trust, Toynton All Saints	Access to sensory bus for people with disabilities	£45,827.50
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>£102,336.29</b>
<b>Tackling Poverty</b>		
Blessings Food Service CIC, Birchwood	Provision of food and activities for vulnerable residents	£15,530.00
CAB Lincoln & Lindsay	Advice Service delivered from Birchwood Families Centre	£40,607.00
GoGro CIC, Lincoln	Community cohesion project delivered through cooking	£9,968.00
LIVES, Horncastle	To train community lifesaving champions	£26,000.00
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>£92,137.00</b>
<b>Green Spaces</b>		
Hill Holt Wood, Norton Disney	Management & conservation of the Plantation woodlands site	£36,700.00
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>£36,700.00</b>
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£396,712.34</b>



## Appendix 3

# Indicative baseline residents' survey

### Birchwood West MSOA: Baseline resident questionnaire

A baseline survey of a representative sample of local residents could help in the evaluation of Pride in Place by ascertaining residents' perceptions of their neighbourhood in 2026, before Pride in Place commences. It could also provide information to help inform the Neighbourhood Board about current local priorities, and support engagement activity around Pride in Place.

Interviews could be carried out face-to-face in residents' homes, with a representative sample of residents, and quotas by age, gender, tenure, and work status. To be statistically significant for a population of 7,319, a sample size of 366 for a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error would be needed.

These are the sort of questions a baseline survey could seek to answer.

### Pride in Place: What it means for your neighbourhood

Your neighbourhood has been chosen by government as a **Pride in Place area**, which means it will receive £20 million in funding and support over the next 10 years to improve the places you use every day and strengthen community life. It will be spent on the priorities identified by local residents.

#### How decisions are made

A **Neighbourhood Board** will be set up for your area to bring together residents, local businesses, grassroots campaigners, workplace representatives, faith, and community leaders and those with a deep connection to their area.

Neighbourhood Boards must include:

- Local MP
- At least one ward councillor
- An independent chair
- Local residents (at least 51% of the Board should be people who live or work in the neighbourhood)

The Board will work closely with the whole community to identify priorities and develop a **Pride in Place Plan**. This plan must show that it reflects what **local people want**, and funding is only released once that's clear. Neighbourhood Boards also continue engaging residents throughout the 10-year programme.

#### What the money can be used for

Funding can support the improvements **you want to see** in your local area, such as:

- Revitalised high streets and improved local facilities
- Investment in parks, green spaces, and community buildings
- Activities and projects that build stronger relationships and a greater sense of belonging
- More opportunities for culture, community life and easier access to local services

These investments in your area will aim to make it a more thriving place, strengthen community connections and give local people more control over shaping their neighbourhood's future.

## What this means for you

As a resident, you'll have opportunities to:

- Shape priorities for your neighbourhood
- Take part in community events
- Apply to join the Neighbourhood Board and be involved in any sub-groups
- Work with your Neighbourhood Board to ensure investment goes towards the improvements you care about

For more information on how to get involved please contact [INSERT EMAIL HERE] or visit [INSERT WEBSITE HERE].

---

## Introduction

The questionnaire you are about to take will take roughly 10-15 minutes to complete. Any and all answers will be kept confidential and the answers to the survey questions will be kept anonymous at all times. Anonymous data from the survey will be stored and shared publicly over the next few years but any Personally Identifiable Information (PII) – such as your name and email – will be destroyed after a period of 6-12 months once it is no longer necessary for us to store. All such data will be kept safe using a double encryption system for maximum safety.

We may require data like your name and email during that initial 6-12-month period if we need to do any follow up research. If you have any queries after today please contact [INSERT RELEVANT EMAIL HERE].

*Closed-ended question – single choice:*

**INTRO 1. Do you consent to us contacting you again in the next 6-12 months for similar research that focusses on how to improve the local area?**

- Yes       No

*Closed-ended question – single choice:*

**INTRO 2. Do you consent to having your personal data stored by [INSERT RELEVANT ORG HERE] for the next 6-12 months?**

- Yes       No
- 

## Thriving places

*Closed-ended question – single choice:*

**1. Do you think that over the past two years your area has...**

- Got better to live in  
 Got worse to live in  
 Not changed much (hasn't got better or worse)

*Closed-ended question – single choice:*

**2. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your local area as a place to live?**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Very satisfied                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Fairly dissatisfied |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fairly satisfied                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Very dissatisfied   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know          |

*Closed-ended question – single choice:*

**3. Generally, how satisfied are you with the local services and amenities in your local area?**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Very satisfied                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Fairly dissatisfied |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fairly satisfied                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Very dissatisfied   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know          |

*Open-ended question:*

**4. In your own words, what would make Birchwood a more thriving place over the next 3–5 years?**

- Don't know

*Or could have multiple choice from list of options:*

**What two things would most improve the quality of life in your neighbourhood for yourself and other residents?**

*Closed-ended question – single choice:*

**5. Overall, how satisfied are you with the quality of public spaces in Birchwood?**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Very satisfied                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Fairly dissatisfied |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fairly satisfied                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Very dissatisfied   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know          |

*Open-ended question:*

**6. Which specific spaces in the neighbourhood most need attention, and why?**

- Don't know

*Open-ended question:*

**7. In terms of local investment and building a strong community, what would most improve daily life in Birchwood?**

- Don't know

## Stronger community

*Open-ended question:*

**8. We're interested to know how we could help local residents build a stronger sense of community. What do you think helps people connect with each other locally – and what gets in the way?**

Don't know

*Closed-ended question – single choice:*

**9. To what extent do you agree or disagree that this local area is a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together?**

Strongly agree

Somewhat disagree

Somewhat agree

Strongly disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Don't know

*Closed-ended question – single choice:*

**10. How often do you feel lonely?**

Often

Hardly ever

Some of the time

Never

Occasionally

Don't know

*Closed-ended question – single choice:*

**11. How safe do you feel walking locally after dark?**

Very safe

Not at all safe

Fairly safe

Don't know

Not very safe

*Closed-ended question – single choice:*

**12. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: 'I feel I belong very strongly to my immediate neighbourhood'?**

Strongly agree

Somewhat disagree

Somewhat agree

Strongly disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Don't know

*Closed-ended question – single choice:*

**13. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: 'People here tend to borrow things or exchange favours'?**

Strongly agree

Somewhat disagree

Somewhat agree

Strongly disagree

Neither agree nor disagree

Don't know

*Closed-ended question – single choice:*

**14. How often, if at all, would you say you chat to your neighbours:**

- |  |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Very frequently     | <input type="checkbox"/> Never      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fairly frequently   | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not that frequently |                                     |

*Closed-ended question – single choice [Ask only if parent]:*

**15. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: 'I would feel comfortable asking a neighbour to mind my child/children briefly'?**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree             | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat disagree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat agree             | <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Neither agree nor disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know        |

*Closed-ended question – single choice:*

**16. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: 'I would feel comfortable asking a neighbour to keep a set of keys'?**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree             | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat disagree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat agree             | <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Neither agree nor disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know        |

*Closed-ended question – single choice:*

**17. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: 'People here pull together to improve the neighbourhood'?**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree             | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat disagree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat agree             | <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Neither agree nor disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know        |

*Closed-ended question – single choice:*

**18. Thinking about the people who live in this neighbourhood, to what extent do you believe they can be trusted?**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Many of the people can be trusted  | <input type="checkbox"/> None of the people can be trusted |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Some of the people can be trusted  | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A few of the people can be trusted |  |

*Closed-ended question – single choice:*

**19. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement: 'I would feel comfortable asking a neighbour to collect essential items if I were ill'?**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree             | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat disagree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat agree             | <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Neither agree nor disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know        |

## Taking back control

*Closed-ended question – single choice:*

**20. To what extent do you agree or disagree that you personally can influence decisions affecting your local area?**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly agree             | <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat disagree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Somewhat agree             | <input type="checkbox"/> Strongly disagree |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Neither agree nor disagree | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know        |

*Open-ended question:*

**21. What would make it easier for you to take part in shaping local priorities?**

- Don't know

*Closed-ended question – multiple choice:*

**22. Preferred ways to be involved:**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Meetings                | <input type="checkbox"/> Social media groups  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Online surveys          | <input type="checkbox"/> Community activities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Citizen panels          | <input type="checkbox"/> Pop-up events        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteering            | <input type="checkbox"/> Other                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Participatory budgeting | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Youth forums            |   |

*Open-ended question:*

**23. If you selected 'Other' or 'Don't know', how would you like to be involved?**

- Don't know

*Open-ended question:*

**24. What are your top three priorities for Birchwood over the next 12 months?**

Option 1:

Option 2:

Option 3:

- Don't know

## Community participation

*Closed-ended question – multiple choice:*

**25. In the last 12 months, that is since [DATE ONE YEAR AGO], have you done any of these things? Please include any activities you have already mentioned but not any related to your job.**

*Please select all that apply.*

- Been a councillor (for a local authority, town or parish)
- Been a school governor
- Been a volunteer special constable or volunteer at a higher rank
- Been a magistrate
- None of the above [SINGLE CHOICE]

*Closed-ended question – multiple choice:*

**26. And again, in the last 12 months, that is since [DATE ONE YEAR AGO], have you been a member of any of the following decision-making groups in your local area? Please include online groups and any activities you have already mentioned. Please do not include any activities related to your job.**

*Please select all that apply.*

- A group making decisions on local health services
- A decision-making group set up to regenerate the local area
- A decision-making group set up to tackle local crime problems
- A tenants' group decision making committee
- A group making decisions on local education services
- A group making decisions on local services for young people
- Another group making decisions on services in the local community
- None of the above [SINGLE CHOICE]

*Closed-ended question – single choice:*

**27. Have you taken part in community groups in the past 12 months?**

- |   |                                     |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, often     | <input type="checkbox"/> Never      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes, sometimes | <input type="checkbox"/> Don't know |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not very often |                                     |

Closed-ended question – single choice per row. If possible, randomise statement order:

**28. Have you been involved with any of the following groups, clubs or organisations during the last 12 months)?**

- **Children’s education/schools** (for example, Parent Teacher Associations, School governor, supporting fairs and fundraising, helping in school, running pupils’ clubs)  Yes  No
- **Youth/children’s activities** (outside school) (for example, youth clubs, sports clubs, hobby or cultural groups for children)  Yes  No
- **Education for adults** (for example, attending or teaching classes, mentoring, cultural groups, Students Union, College governor)  Yes  No
- **Sport/exercise** (taking part, coaching or going to watch) (for example, sports clubs or groups (such as football, swimming, fishing, golf, keep-fit, hiking), Supporter clubs)  Yes  No
- **Religion** (for example, attending a place of worship (church, chapel, mosque, temple, synagogue), attending faith-based groups, Saturday/Sunday school)  Yes  No
- **Politics** (for example, membership of, or involvement with, political groups, serving as local councillor)  Yes  No
- **Older people** for example, involved with groups, clubs or organisations for older people, such as Age UK, pensioner’s clubs, visiting, transporting or representing older people)  Yes  No
- **Health, Disability and Social welfare** (for example, medical research charities, hospital visiting, disability groups, social welfare (such as Oxfam, NSPCC, Samaritans, Citizens Advice Bureau), offering respite care, self-help groups (such as Alcoholics Anonymous))  Yes  No
- **Safety, First Aid** (for example, Red Cross, St. John Ambulance, Life Saving, RNLI, Mountain Rescue, helping after a disaster)  Yes  No
- **The environment, animals** (for example, national organisations (such as Greenpeace, National Trust, RSPCA), local conservation groups, preservation societies)  Yes  No
- **Justice and Human Rights** (for example, special constable, magistrate, legal advice centre, victim support, prison visiting or aftercare, justice and peace groups, community or race relations, LGBT groups, national organisations (such as Amnesty International))  Yes  No
- **Local community or neighbourhood groups** (for example, Tenants’ / Residents’ Association, Neighbourhood Watch, community group, local pressure group)  Yes  No
- **Citizens’ Groups** (for example, Rotary Club, Lion’s Club, Women’s Institute (WI), Freemasons)  Yes  No
- **Hobbies, Recreation/Arts/Social clubs** (for example, clubs or groups for the Arts (such as theatres, museums, amateur dramatics, orchestras), hobby or cultural groups (such as local history club, social club)  Yes  No
- **Trade union activity** (for example, membership of, or involvement with, a trade union.)  Yes  No
- **Some other group, club or organisation** [FIXED]  Yes  No

*Closed-ended question – multiple choice:*

**29. Have you been involved in any of the following activities, in the last 12 months, that is since [DATE]? Please only include those activities that were unpaid. Please don't include anything where you signed a petition but took no further action.**

*Please select all that apply.*

- Trying to set up a new service/amenity for local residents
- Trying to stop the closure of a service/amenity
- Trying to stop something else happening in my local area
- Running local services on a voluntary basis (for example, childcare, youth services, parks, community centres)
- Organising a community event (for example, a street party)
- Another local issue (type in)
- None of these [SINGLE CHOICE]

*Closed-ended question – multiple choice:*

**30. In the last 12 months, that is since [DATE ONE YEAR AGO], have you taken part in a consultation about local services or issues in your local area through any of these ways?**

*Please select all that apply.*

- Completing a paper or online questionnaire
- Attending a public meeting
- Being involved in a face-to-face or online group
- None of these [SINGLE CHOICE]

*Closed-ended question – single choice:*

**31. Have you been personally involved in helping out with a local issue or activity in the past 12 months?**

- Yes       No       Don't know

*Open-ended question:*

**32. In two years' time, what evidence would make you say Pride in Place is working to improve your area?**

- Don't know

## Appendix 4

# Evaluation framework going forward

The closure of Birchwood Big Local and the launch of Pride in Place present a significant opportunity – not only to apply learning to programme delivery, but also to embed learning, evidence and reflection from the outset. This section sets out a proportionate evaluation framework designed to support continuous learning, informed decision-making, accountability and trust-building throughout the life of Pride in Place.

The framework directly responds to the learning emerging from Birchwood Big Local, particularly around ambition, capacity, trust, visibility and sustainability. It is designed to ensure Pride in Place is experienced as different in approach, delivery and credibility.

The evaluation framework is intended to be:

- **Fit for purpose** – proportionate to the scale of activity and available resources
- **Learning-focused** – supporting adaptation, sequencing and improvement
- **Community-centred** – rooted in resident experience and perspectives
- **Decision-relevant** – supporting both strategic and operational choices
- **Sustainable** – capable of being maintained over the long-term

It aligns with the HM Treasury *Magenta Book* (2020), which frames evaluation as a tool for learning and policy improvement rather than solely a mechanism for retrospective accountability.

---

### Purpose of the framework

This evaluation framework supports continuous learning, adaptive delivery and shared accountability within the Pride in Place governance model. It reflects its unique structures—particularly around the role of Neighbourhood Boards, the development of a 10-year Vision, 4-year Investment Plan, and the expectation of deep, broad and sustained community engagement.

Evaluation should form a core element of Board governance, enabling the Board, Local Authority, MP and community to understand how well plans reflect local priorities and how effectively they are being delivered.

The evaluation framework for Pride in Place serves four core purposes:

1. **Learning** – identifying what is working, what isn't, and why
2. **Improvement** – enabling real-time adaptation of delivery and governance
3. **Accountability** – providing transparent evidence for residents, partners and funders
4. **Legacy-building** – supporting sustainability beyond the life of Pride in Place

Evaluation should therefore operate as an ongoing process that strengthens confidence, credibility and shared understanding, rather than a one-off end-of-programme activity. It should support confidence, credibility and shared understanding as well as performance.

## Strategic evaluation objectives

Government has set three core objectives for Pride in Place:

- **To build stronger communities** – All places should have strong relationships and a collective sense of belonging to their community. This helps bring people together to build community cohesion and resilience, helping people feel proud of their area and safe in their neighbourhood.
- **To create thriving places** – Every part of the UK deserves to have vibrant neighbourhoods and communities with busy high streets, a good range of local amenities and high-quality physical infrastructure.
- **To empower people to take back control** – Everybody should be empowered and in control of their lives and have a say over the future of their community.

The framework is structured around three strategic objectives that align with the learning from Birchwood Big Local and the objectives for Pride in Place.

### **Objective 1: Strengthen community leadership, involvement and local empowerment**

To support a model where residents act as active partners – shaping their neighbourhood, influencing decisions, co-designing priorities and participating in delivery.

Evaluation should assess whether the Neighbourhood Board is effectively enabling community power, ensuring residents have a clear and influential voice in shaping priorities and spending, and whether engagement is broad, sustained and genuinely inclusive, particularly for groups previously unheard.

### **Objective 2: Build community capacity and create the conditions for thriving, resilient places**

To enhance skills, confidence and capability across residents, community organisations, the council and delivery partners – enabling shared responsibility, effective collaboration and sustainable delivery.

Evaluation should consider whether strengthened capacity leads to high quality local spaces, improved infrastructure and activities that enhance the everyday experience of Birchwood West. It should examine whether partners are using resources, technical support and capability-building opportunities effectively to deliver high-quality, sustainable improvements to local environments, assets and services.

### **Objective 3: Grow local networks, trust and social capital for long-term resilience**

To develop strong, trusting relationships among residents, community organisations and public institutions – supporting collective action, shared practice and a sustained sense of belonging.

Evaluation should explore whether Pride in Place is building cohesive networks, deepening pride and strengthening trust between the Neighbourhood Board, residents and institutional partners, reflecting the programme's commitment to restoring belonging and rebuilding local relationships.

## Evaluation domains

Evaluation should be organised across five interconnected domains:

### 1. People

- Skills, confidence, leadership development within the Neighbourhood Board and its subgroups
- Representation, inclusivity and diversity of the Board (51% residents, etc.)
- Participation, inclusion and leadership renewal, including succession planning within the Board
- Resident experience, voice, strength of local community, trust and sense of influence

### 2. Place

- Improvements to the physical environment and use of local spaces delivered via the Pride in Place Plan
- Use of Pride in Place tools and powers (e.g. community asset transfers, planning levers, public realm interventions)
- Alignment with priorities identified through engagement
- Visibility and accessibility of physical, social and civic infrastructure

### 3. Partnerships

- Effectiveness of the quadripartite partnership (Board-LA-MP-Community)
- Governance quality and role clarity in decision making and financial compliance
- Trust, collaboration and shared accountability
- Access to professional expertise and support (planning, legal, procurement, design)
- Engagement of anchor institutions, community organisations and local businesses

### 4. Processes

- Quality of Board governance (transparency, conduct, conflict of influence management)
- Quality and reach of community engagement plan (as required before Pride in Place Plan approval)
- Decision-making processes and Board meeting effectiveness
- Adaptability and responsiveness to resident feedback
- Alignment with MHCLG monitoring and reporting cycles

### 5. Priorities

- Delivery against the Pride in Place Plan's 10-year vision and 4-year investment plan
- Ability to refresh the Plan based on learning, changing needs and engagement
- Evidence that investments benefit the defined neighbourhood and align with MHCLG prioritisation guidance

## Indicative evaluation questions

### Community leadership and engagement

- Who is involved in Pride in Place decision-making and delivery?
- How representative and diverse is the Board and its substructures?
- How effectively are engagement plans delivering 'deep, broad and sustained' involvement?
- How is the community's voice protected and supported and how well does the Board evidence that community feedback shapes the Pride in Place Plan?
- How are new community leaders identified, supported and integrated?

### Capacity and capability

- What skills and confidence are being developed?
- Where is additional professional and practical support needed?
- Is capacity funding being used effectively for engagement, technical advice and early-stage development?
- What new skills are emerging among residents, Board members and partners?
- How well is the Board preparing for transition to community-led delivery by Year 3?
- How is leadership renewal being enabled?
- Is responsibility shared or becoming concentrated?

### Partnership working

- How effective are relationships between residents, council and partners?
- How effectively do the Board, LA, MP and community work together?
- Are roles and responsibilities clear?
- Is professional expertise accessible when needed?
- Is the Board receiving sufficient and timely support (legal, financial, planning)?
- Are community organisations being empowered as partners?

### Delivery and impact

- What progress is being made on the Pride in Place Plan's stated priorities?
- What difference is this making to people and place?
- How is the Plan being refreshed and reviewed?
- How visible, understood and valued are outcomes locally?
- How well are projects addressing the root causes of division, place-based decline or disengagement (as per Pride in Place objectives)?

### Sustainability and legacy

- How is the Board planning for the long-term beyond Pride in Place funding?
- How effectively is the Board exploring tools such as asset ownership, local investment, philanthropic funding, statutory powers, etc?
- How are revenue, asset management and maintenance and ongoing activity being planned for?
- What does a potential income-generation or future revenue stream look like for the Birchwood neighbourhood?
- What is the emerging pathway to a community-led model?
- How is learning being captured, shared and transferred?

## Methods and data sources

- A proportionate mixed-methods approach is recommended

### Qualitative

- Annual interviews with Board, LA, MP and community partners
- Focus groups and community conversations
- Case studies of decisions, governance moments and engagement campaigns
- Community conversations, listening campaigns, participation in neighbourhood forums
- Reflective learning sessions with Board/partnership

### Quantitative

- Pride in Place Plan delivery metrics (aligned to MHCLG categories)
- Engagement metrics required for Plan approval
- Monitoring returns (6-monthly and annual)
- Board composition diversity data
- Capital/revenue spend profiles
- Simple outcome indicators (e.g. usage, access, reach)

### Documents

- Pride in Place Plan (10-year vision and 4-year Investment Plan)
- Engagement Plans and evidence packs
- Board and governance papers and decisions
- Monitoring and delivery reports, including financial assurance documents

### Learning and feedback loops

To avoid the weaknesses identified in Birchwood Big Local, the framework should embed formal learning loops, including:

- **Quarterly Board reflection sessions prior to quarterly Board meetings** – review progress and risk and adapt delivery
- **6-month learning summaries** – aligned to MHCLG light-touch returns
- **Annual learning review** – aligned to the 12-month monitoring return
- **Plan refresh checkpoints** – during each 4-year investment cycle
- **Community feedback mechanisms** – share findings in accessible formats
- **Adaptive planning cycles** – adjust priorities, sequencing and delivery models

These learning loops should align directly with Pride in Place's statutory monitoring cycles, the 6-monthly light-touch returns and the 12-monthly performance review, ensuring learning is embedded in required reporting processes rather than added on top. Evaluation outputs should be designed for use, not just reporting.

## Roles and responsibilities

Note: The roles set out below relate specifically to evaluation responsibilities. These are distinct from the governance and decision making roles described earlier on page 45.

### Neighbourhood Board:

- ✓ Leads evaluation culture and transparency
- ✓ Oversees delivery and impact tracking
- ✓ Ensures community voice is evidenced
- ✓ Leads transition to a community-led model

### MP:

- ✓ Champions community voice and convenes stakeholders
- ✓ Provides civic and political leadership
- ✓ Ensures boundaries and membership reflect community interest

### Local Authority:

- ✓ Ensures financial assurance, procurement and subsidy control
- ✓ Supports evaluation capacity with professional expertise
- ✓ Publishes governance documentation
- ✓ Provides first-line assurance for MHCLG returns

### Community:

- ✓ Shapes priorities and scrutinises delivery
- ✓ Participates in panels, forums and evaluation activities
- ✓ Contributes to learning and feedback

Evaluation must be a shared responsibility embedded in delivery, not a separate activity.

## Proportionality and resourcing

Evaluation should be realistic and scaled to Pride in Place's funding cycles:

- Use simple tools and existing community infrastructure
- Maximise capacity funding to support engagement and community-led learning
- Embed evaluation in Board governance processes rather than creating new burdens
- Resource it with appropriate time and capacity
- Scale activity to delivery and risk

This ensures evaluation supports delivery rather than competing with it.

## From framework to practice

For Pride in Place, the evaluation framework should be:

- Agreed at programme outset
- Fully embedded in governance and delivery structures
- Reviewed annually
- Adapted in response to learning

A forward-looking evaluation model should operate as a living system of learning – ensuring Birchwood Big Local's experience directly strengthens the design, delivery and legacy of future neighbourhood work in Birchwood West.

## **Communicate clearly, consistently and accessibly**

Clear communication will be essential to address consultation fatigue and scepticism.

Pride in Place should:

- Use plain language to explain purpose, progress and decisions
- Be honest about constraints and trade-offs
- Celebrate success and acknowledge challenges openly

This approach will help strengthen legitimacy and long-term community confidence.

Taken together, these recommendations aim to ensure that Pride in Place builds on the strengths of Birchwood Big Local, addresses its known challenges, and establishes a sustainable, trusted model of neighbourhood working that can deliver meaningful outcomes for Birchwood West and the City of Lincoln.



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## Appendix 5

# Birchwood West Pride in Place

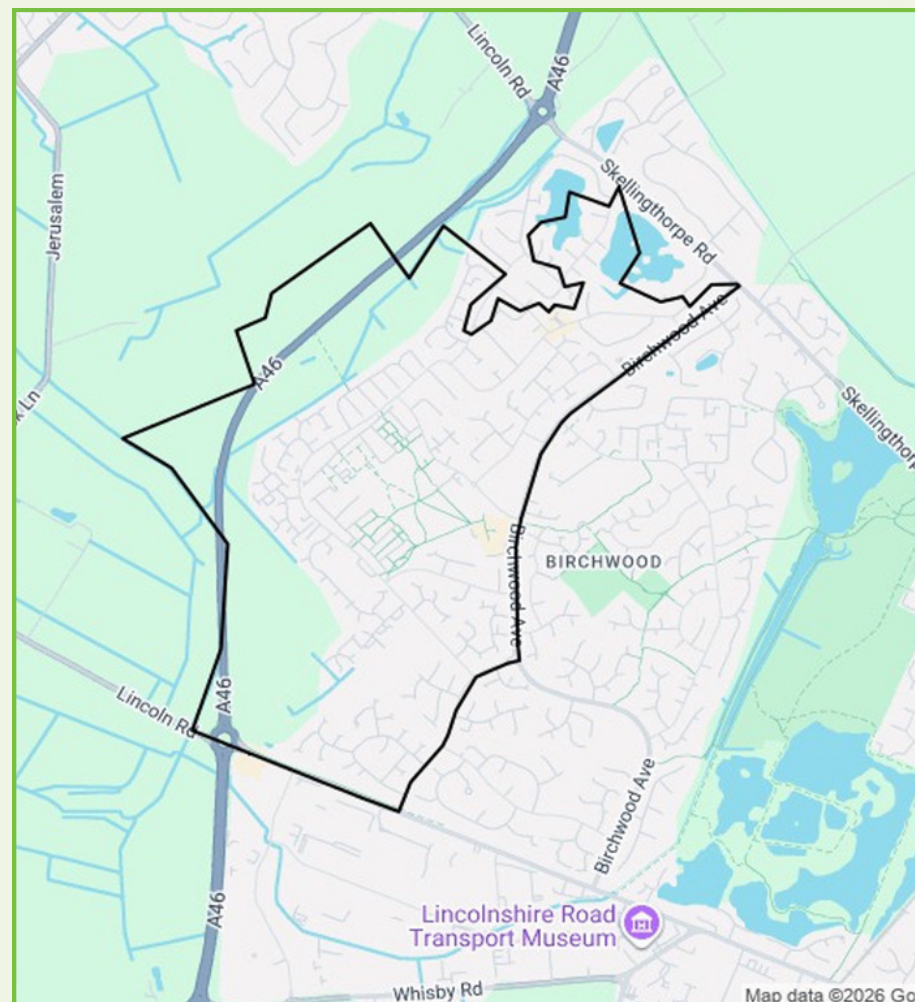
## 3ni neighbourhood data report

## How we have identified the area of Birchwood West

This report is based on the Birchwood West Pride in Place area, created by 3ni's Discovery Tool. The map image of the area is shown at the beginning of this report. The map imagery is provided by Google, using boundary definitions published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). Statistical and geographic data are sourced from the ONS and are used under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right [2025].

The report uses sophisticated aggregation and apportioning methods to calculate the data values in the charts and tables.

Alongside data for the Birchwood West area, we also display data for the selected comparator areas: Lincoln and England.





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## 3ni Discovery Tool – Full Report

This report provides an overview of data from the Community Needs Index (CNI) 2023, Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2025 and Social Capital Score (2026). It includes a breakdown of all CNI, IMD domains and SCS as well as the underlying indicators used to construct them. By exploring how Pride in Place neighbourhoods fare on each of these measures, it is possible to identify those hyper-local areas that experience the effects of double disadvantage (high on CNI and high on the IMD), as well as gain an insight into the drivers of this disadvantage in local communities.

### **About the indicators used in this report**

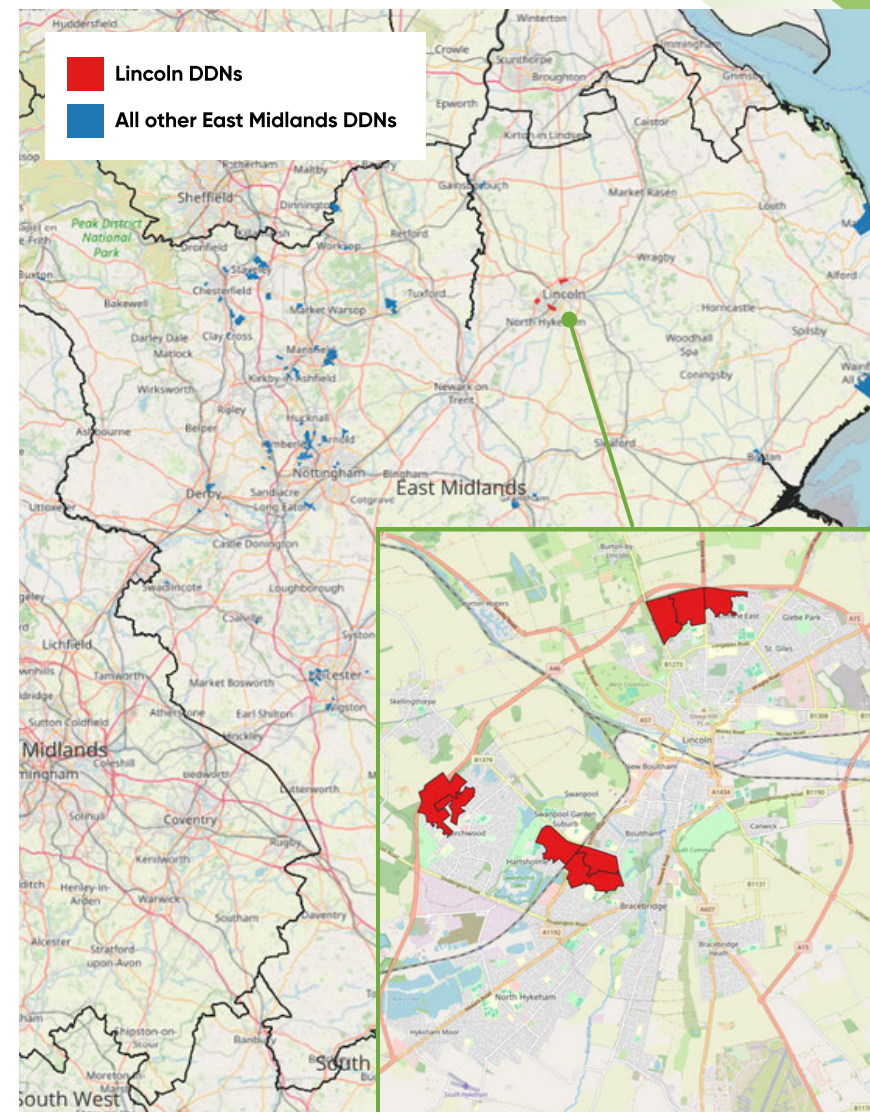
OCSI routinely collect all small-area data published by more than 50 government agencies and other reputable bodies. They identify key indicators relevant to local authorities, grantmakers and charities to include within this report and the Local Insight platform. OCSI manage and maintain all the data and provide comprehensive metadata to provide confidence it is using the most up-to-date data.

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**Nottingham and Leicester have largest shares of DDNs in the region;  
Lincoln has half as much as Leicester and a third as much as Nottingham.**

Local Authority	DDNs post-2025 IMD	DDNs pre-2025 IMD	% of regional total post-2025 IMD	% of regional total pre-2025 IMD
Ashfield	5	6	5%	6%
Bassetlaw	2	2	2%	2%
Bolsover	2	2	2%	2%
Boston	3	1	3%	1%
Chesterfield	7	5	7%	5%
Derby	5	6	5%	6%
East Lindsey	9	10	8%	9%
Erewash	5	3	5%	3%
Gedling	1	1	1%	1%
High Peak	3	3	3%	3%
Leicester	12	15	11%	14%
Lincoln	8	7	7%	7%
Mansfield	3	3	3%	3%
Newark and Sherwood	1	1	1%	1%
North-East Derbyshire	3	3	3%	3%
North Northamptonshire	6	8	6%	8%
North-West Leicestershire	1	1	1%	1%
Nottingham	23	25	21%	24%
South Derbyshire	1	0	1%	0%
South Holland	1	0	1%	0%
South Kesteven	3	1	3%	1%
West Lindsey	3	3	3%	3%
<b>REGIONAL TOTALS</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>106</b>		



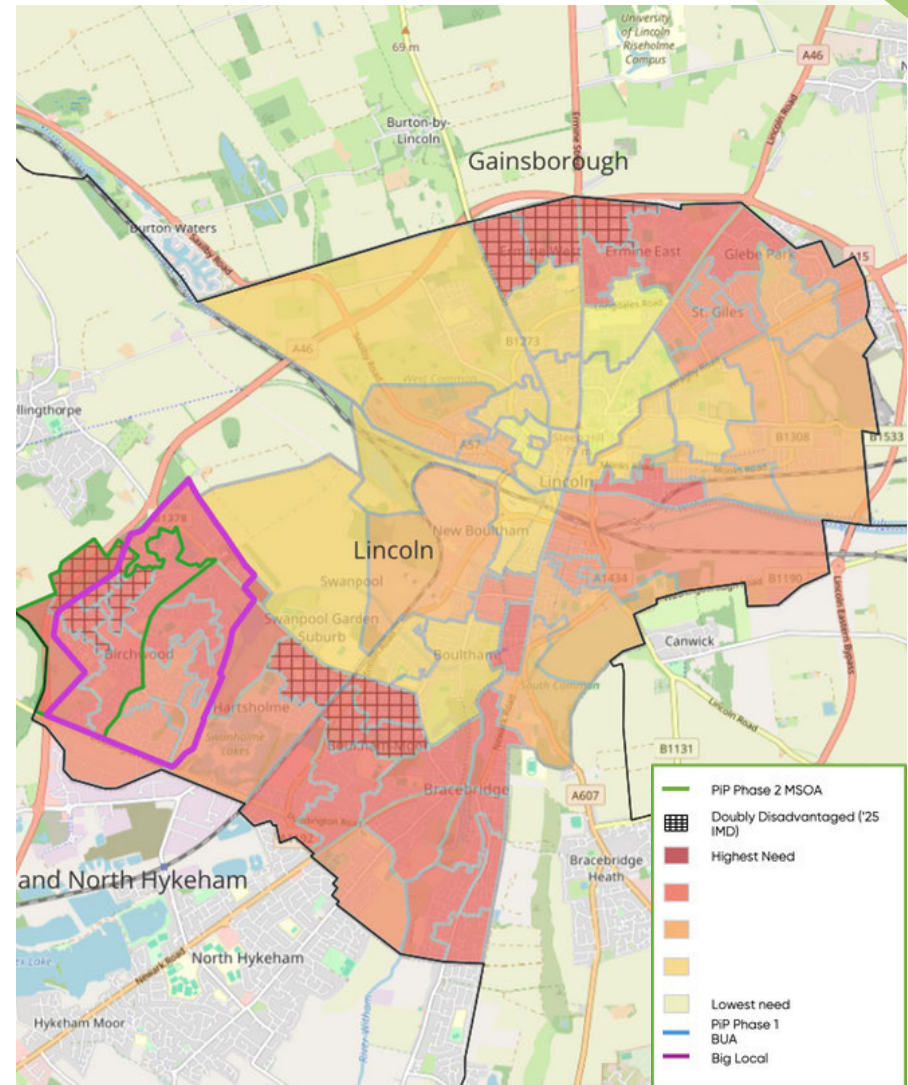
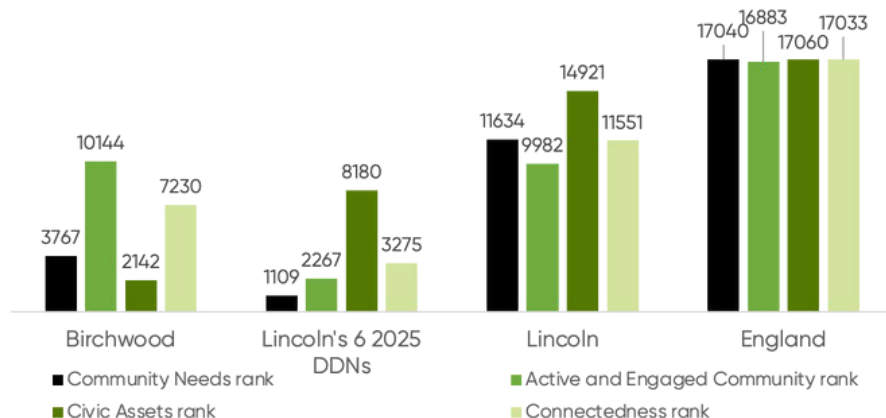
# Community Needs Index (CNI)

The CNI was developed to identify areas experiencing poor community and civic infrastructure, relative isolation and low levels of participation in community life. The index was created by combining a series of 28 indicators, conceptualised under three domains: Civic Assets, Connectedness and Active and Engaged Community.

- **Civic Assets:** measures the presence of key community, civic, educational and cultural assets in a close proximity of the area. These include pubs, libraries, green space, community centres, swimming pools – facilities that provide things to do, often at no or little cost, which are important to how positive a community feels about its area.
- **Connectedness:** measures the connectivity to key services, digital infrastructure, isolation and strength of the local jobs market. It looks at whether residents have access to key services, such as health services, within a reasonable travel distance. It considers how good public transport and digital infrastructure are and how strong the local job market is.
- **Active and Engaged Community:** measures the levels of third sector civic and community activity and barriers to participation and engagement. It shows whether charities are active in the area, and whether people appear to be engaged in the broader civic life of their community.

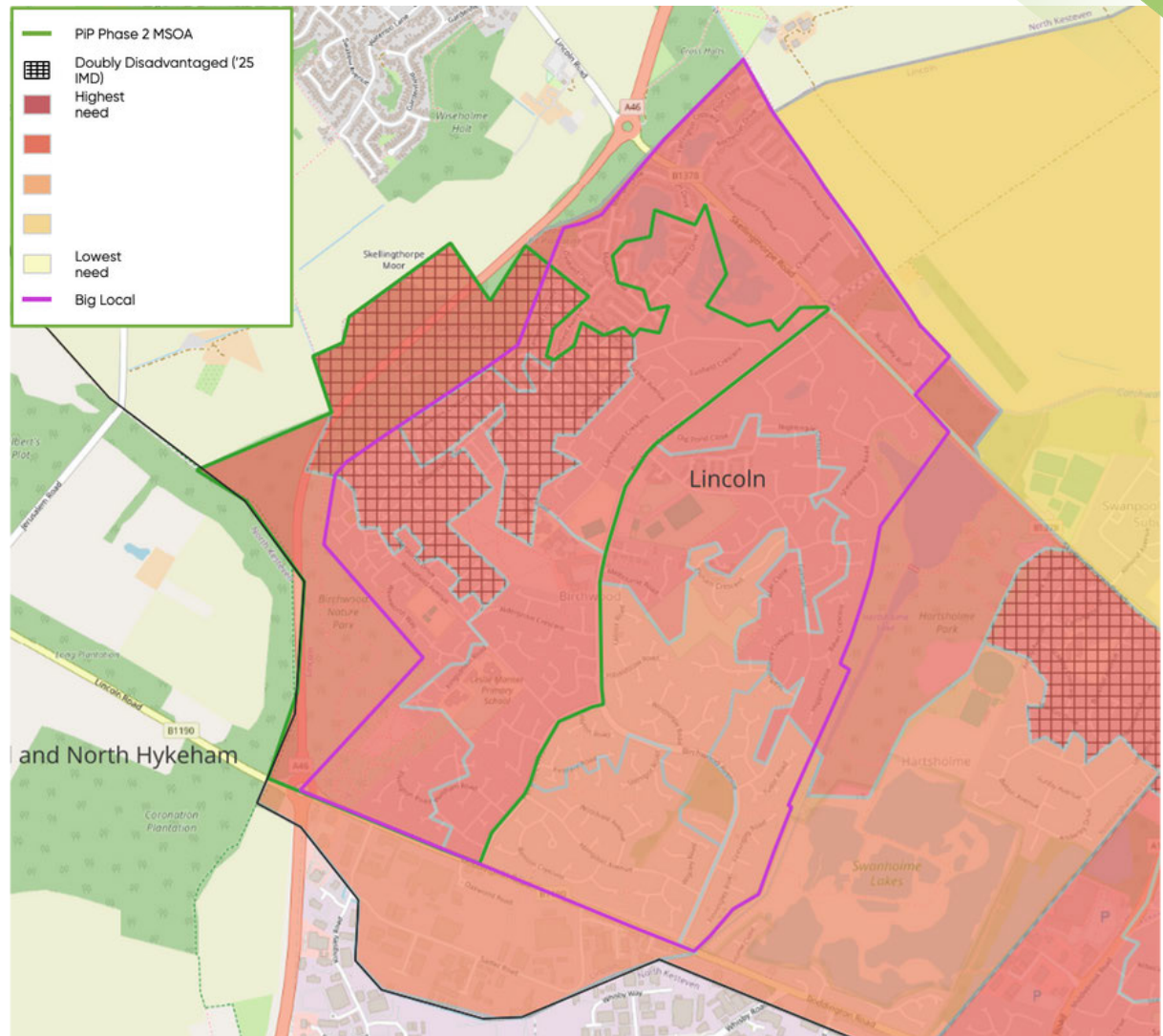
# Lincoln and Community Needs Index 2023 (CNI) LSOA Ranks

- The heatmap opposite shows LSOA CNI ranks according to national quintiles.
- The southern and northern peripheries of Lincoln are where the highest need is found, while need is generally lowest in the western part.
- Birchwood LSOAs are among those with the highest need in all of Lincoln and include two doubly disadvantaged neighbourhoods (DDNs) – neighbourhoods which appear in both the bottom 10% of the 2023 CNI and of the 2025 IMD.
- The city has eight DDNs in total – three in the northern part of the city, and five in the south. The six DDNs not in Birchwood rank much lower than Birchwood Big Local overall, and lower across Active and Engaged Community, and Connectedness domains as well. These six DDNs have a stronger Civic Assets rank than Birchwood does, however. Achieving greater asset levels may need to be an area of focus under Pride in Place in Birchwood West, therefore.



# Birchwood Big Local, the Birchwood West PiP area and their LSOA-level CNI ranks

- Birchwood West MSOA has higher levels of community need than the south-eastern part of the Birchwood Big Local area where it is more moderate.



The chart below shows the overall rank on the 2023 Community Needs Index (CNI), as well as a rank on each of the three CNI domains for Birchwood West, Lincoln and England. A lower rank indicates that an area has relatively higher levels of need.

Birchwood West has an overall CNI rank of 352. This means that Birchwood West has higher levels of need than Lincoln (11,634) and higher levels of need than England (17,040).

### Community Needs Index (CNI) and Domain Ranks



Source: Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion (OCSI) and Local Trust

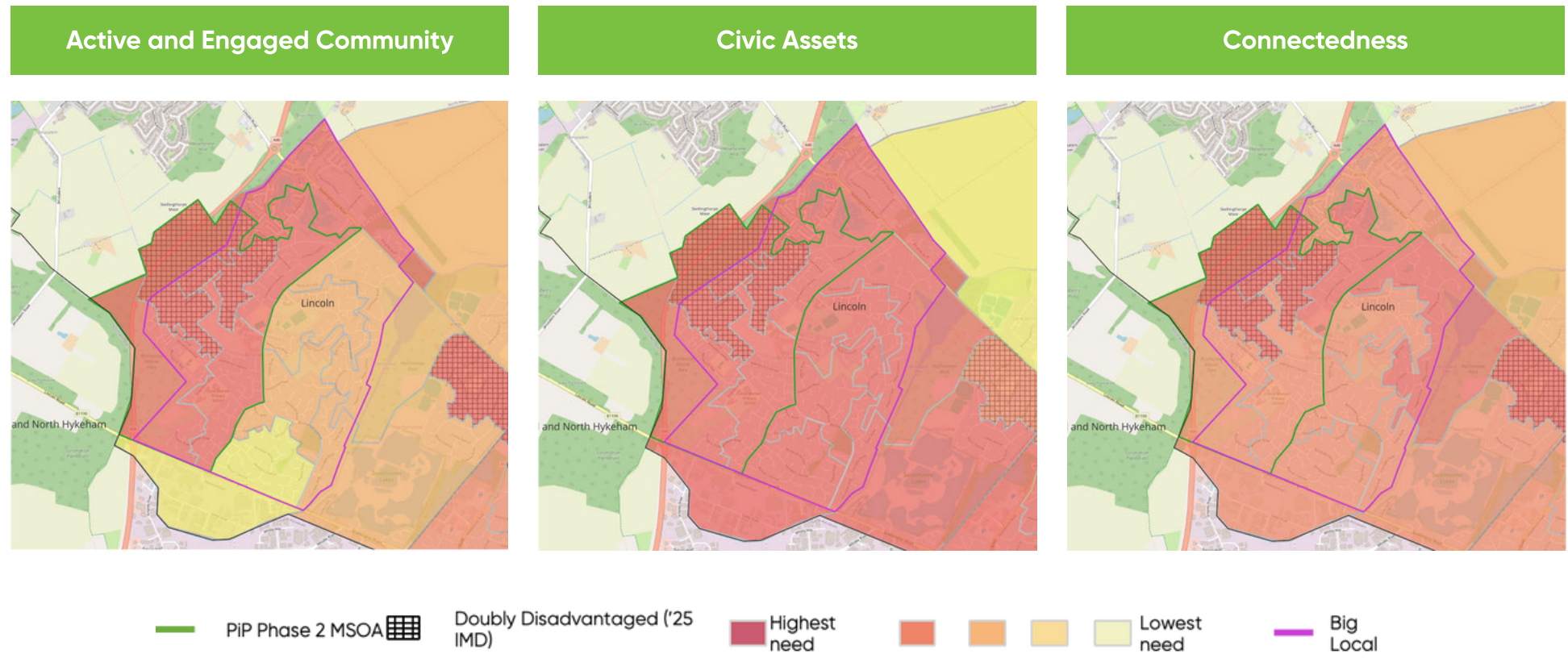
# Community Needs Index (CNI) Underlying Indicators by Domain

The tables below provide a summary of the underlying indicators that are used to construct the Community Needs Index under each domain.

For more details of the underlying indicators, including indicator descriptions and source details, see the [CNI 2023 Technical Methodology paper](#).

**Active and Engaged Community, Civic Assets and Connectedness ranks by LSOA: doubly disadvantaged LSOAs have consistently high need across all domains but the southern and eastern parts of Birchwood Big Local vary considerably by domain.**

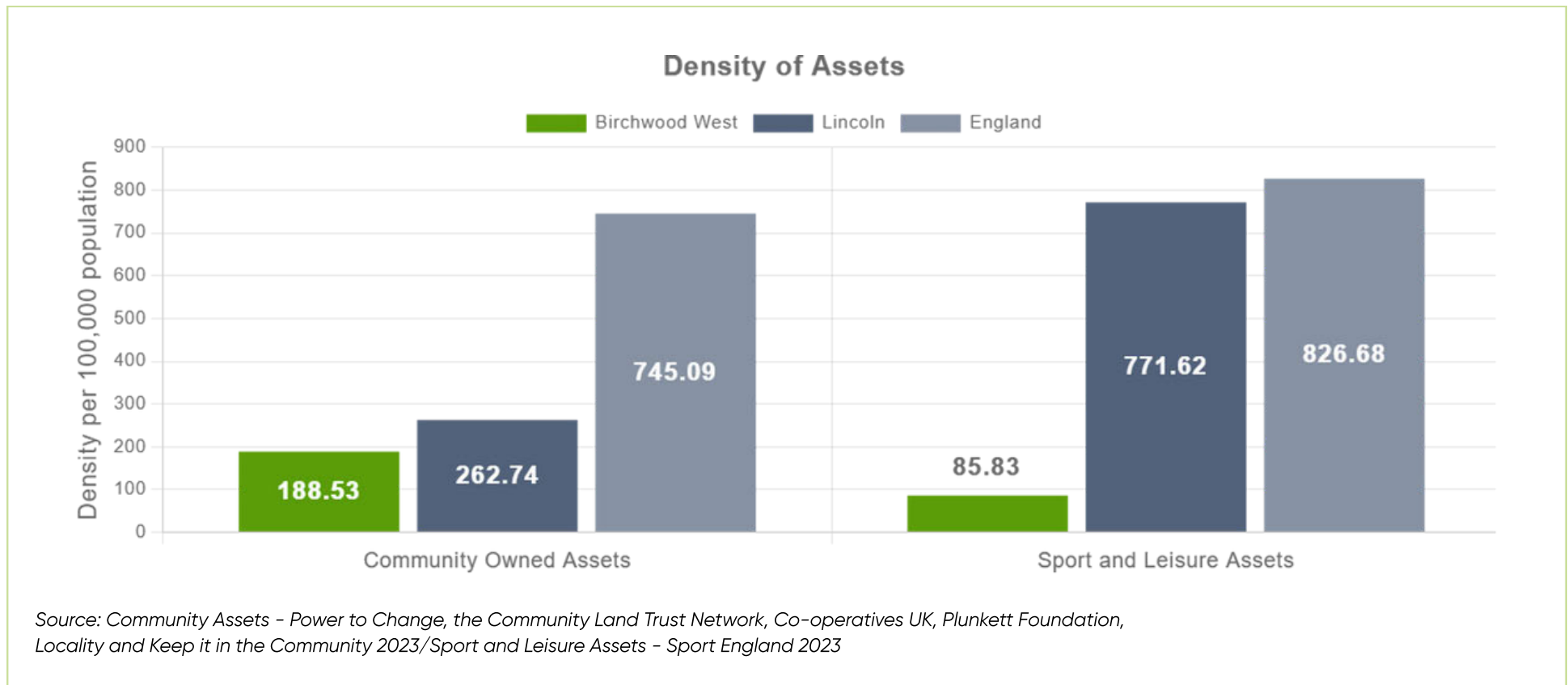
Community engagement is stronger than civic assets in the eastern part of the Big Local Area while connectedness is lowest across the northern peripheries the Big Local area. Understanding what is working well in eastern and southern Birchwood will be key to better outcomes in Birchwood West under Pride in Place. Using the high levels of active and engaged community in the eastern part of Birchwood will be key to building up a stock of civic assets there too.



# Civic Assets Domain

The chart below shows two of the underlying indicators that are used to construct the Civic Assets Domain: Density of Community Owned Assets and Density of Sport and Leisure Assets. These measures record the presence of key community assets that are in close proximity of the area per 100,000 population, including facilities that provide things to do, often at no or little cost.

As shown in the chart, Birchwood West has 188.53 community-owned assets per 100,000 population. This is less than the amount per 100,000 in Lincoln (262.74) and less than the amount per 100,000 in England (745.09).



# Connectedness Domain

The tables and charts below show some of the underlying indicators that are used to construct the Connectedness Domain – measuring connectivity to key services, digital infrastructure, isolation and strength of the local jobs market. This domain is broken down into two sub-domains: wider connectivity (including isolation, loneliness, digital exclusion and availability of GP services) and physical connectedness (including travel time to key services, access to green space and local jobs).

## Wider Connectivity Sub-Domain

The table below shows seven of the underlying indicators that are used to construct the wider-connectivity sub-domain. One of these measures is the Digital Exclusion Risk Index (DERI), where a higher score indicates a higher level of digital exclusion risk. This indicator explores the risk of digital exclusion at LSOA level derived from three components; age, broadband access, and deprivation.

In Birchwood West, the Digital Exclusion Risk Index (DERI) score is 3.29. This means that Birchwood West has a higher level of digital exclusion risk than Lincoln (2.99) and has a higher level than England (3.00).

### Connectedness Domain: Wider Connectivity Underlying Indicators

Source: CNI 2023

Indicator	Birchwood West	Lincoln	England
No Car	27.59%	28.38%	23.54%
Digital Exclusion Risk Index (DERI) score	3.29	2.99	3.00
One Person Household: Aged Under 66	19.49%	21.74%	17.28%
Percentage of people who feel lonely often	25.83	24.93	23.34
GP appointments per 1,000 patients	651.79	410.78	513.12
GP appointments 21 or more days after appointment is booked (as % of all appointments)	18.16	13.95	10.59
Same day GP appointments (as % of all appointments)	36.38	30.50	37.89

# Physical Connectivity Sub-Domain

The tables and charts below show the underlying indicators that are used to construct the physical connectivity sub-domain, including data on travel time to key services, access to green and blue spaces and local jobs.

## Travel Time to Key Services

The table below shows travel time to key services (by walking and public transport). These figures are derived from the analysis of spatial data on public transport timetables; road, cycle and footpath networks; population and key local services. The data shows the average minimum travel time – the shortest travel time by walking and public transport, averaged over the LSOA geographical area. Where the shortest journey is by public transport, an average of five minutes is added to allow for a margin for catching the service, but if a quicker walking journey is available, this will be used with nothing added.

In Birchwood West, the average travel time to the nearest town centre is 38 minutes. This is longer than the travel time in Lincoln (22 minutes) and longer than England (21 minutes).

## Travel Time to Key Services

Indicator	Birchwood West	Lincoln	England
Primary School	6	8	9
Employment Centre (>500)	9	8	9
Further Education	20	16	22
GP	10	10	13
Hospital	54	32	41
Secondary School	20	16	18
Town Centre	38	22	21

Source: Department for Transport (DfT)

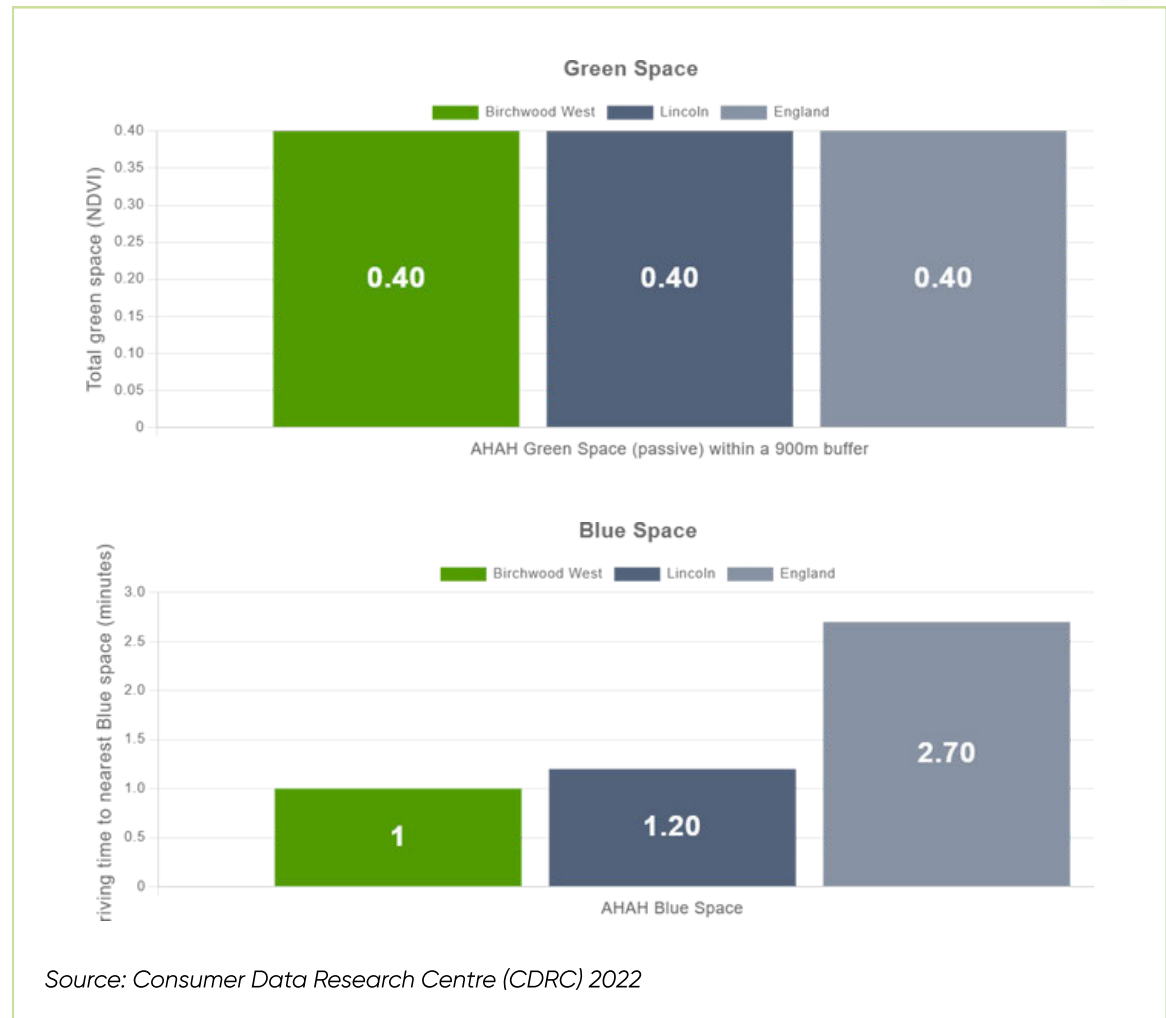
## Green and Blue Spaces (AHAH Index)

The charts below show accessibility to Green spaces and Blue spaces (in kilometres). These indicators are an input measure for the Access to Healthy Assets and Hazards (AHAH) index as part of the Physical Environment domain. The AHAH index is a multi-dimensional index developed by the CDRC for Great Britain measuring how 'healthy' neighbourhoods are.

- Passive green space refers to recreational opportunities that occur in a natural setting requiring minimal development or facilities and providing areas for informal, self-directed activities for individuals or small groups. Figures are shown as the total green space areas available to each postcode in a range of a 900-metre buffer (passive) before creating LSOA averages.
- Blue spaces are water features that can be positive amenities. Blue space indicator is based on the distance people need to travel to access their nearest water body such as a beach, a lake and a river. Blue space locations such as beaches were acquired from OpenStreetMap and the mainland water bodies (lakes, rivers) were retrieved from the European Settlement Map (ESM 2012) raster dataset at a 5 meters resolution.

In Birchwood West the distance to green space is 0.4km. This is similar to the distance to green space in Lincoln (0.4km) and similar to England (0.4km).

The average distance to a blue space in Birchwood West is 1.0km. This is shorter than the distance in Lincoln (1.2km) and shorter than England (2.7km).



## Jobs Access Score

The bar chart below shows the overall Jobs Access score. This is a measure of connectivity developed by UK Onward and includes the number of jobs accessible by car and public transport across 15 minutes, 30 minutes, 60 minutes and 90 minutes timespans.

It also incorporates a “door-to-workplace” measure, including every journey stage from time spent walking to the car, driving, to parking and walking to an office - as well as average delays, timetabling and actual journey time on public transport. Together these measures form an overall Jobs Access score, the weighted average job count, combining driving and public transport. A higher score indicates greater levels of job accessibility.

In Birchwood West, the Jobs Access score is 311,728.78. This is higher than Lincoln (264,122.84) and lower than England (698,519.47).



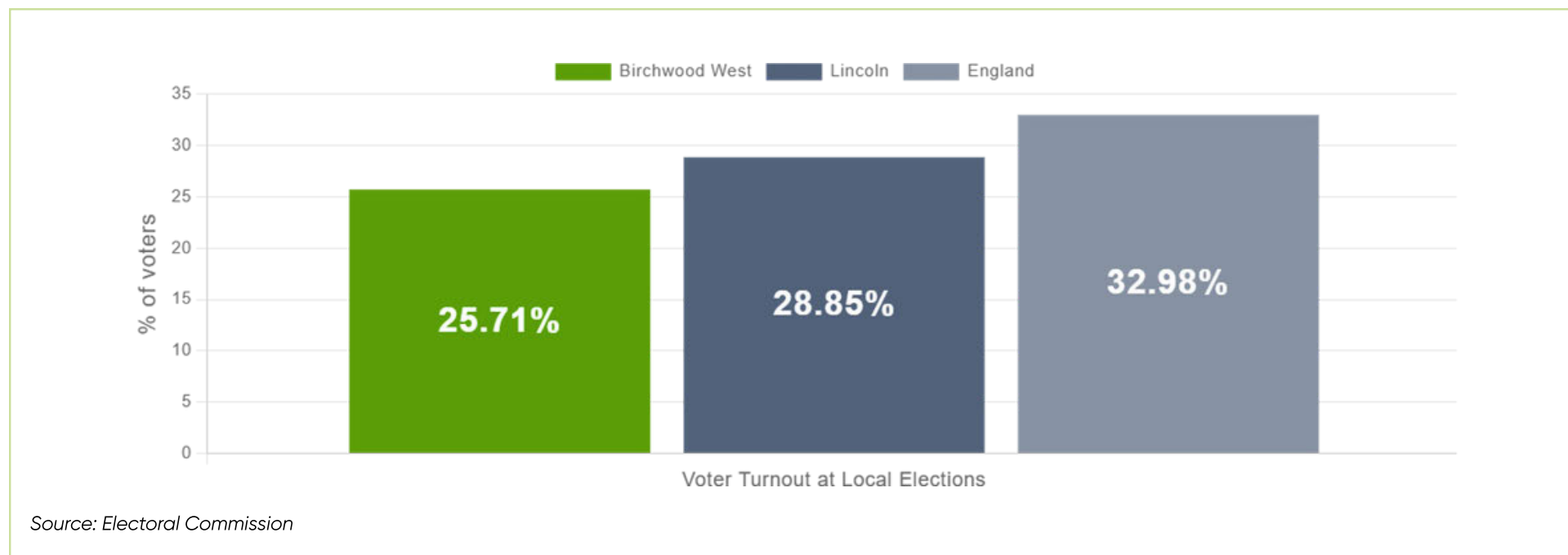
# Active and Engaged Community Domain

The charts and tables below show the underlying indicators that are used to construct the Active and Engaged Community Domain. This includes measures of voter turnout, local civic engagement, neighbourhood satisfaction, population churn and migration, the third sector, local funding and business debt and size.

## Voter Turnout

The chart below shows the valid voter turnout (%) at the most recent Local Council Election. There is some local variation in the frequency and date of Local Elections, with different parts of the country going to the polls at different times and with different levels of regularity so caution should therefore be advised when drawing direct comparisons between local areas, as the socio-political context varies from year to year with associated impacts on turnout rates.

The average proportion of people who turned up to vote at the most recent Local Council Election was 25.71% across Birchwood West. This is lower than the average voter turnout across Lincoln (28.85%) and lower than the average voter turnout across England (32.98%).



## Civic Engagement

The table below shows average self-reported levels of community and civic engagement. These measures are taken from the Community Life Survey and reflect whether individuals are working together in both political and non-political actions to protect public values or make a change in a community.

The proportion of people taking part in any civic engagement in Birchwood West is 40.99%. This is lower than the proportion in Lincoln (45.05%) and lower than the proportion in England (45.19%).

## Civic Participation

Indicator	Birchwood West	Lincoln	England
Taken Part in Consultation About Local Services	16.33%	17.99%	19.21%
Taken Part in Groups, Clubs or Organisations	57.08%	62.38%	64.06%
Taken Part in Civic Engagement	40.99%	45.05%	45.19%
Volunteered in Last 12 Months	59.11%	62.14%	63.02%

Source: Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS)

## Neighbourhood Strength and Cohesion

The table below shows average levels of neighbourhood strength and cohesion across Birchwood West, Lincoln and England. This reflects the residents' sense of community, engagement with their neighbours and attraction of living in the neighbourhood.

On average, 60.99% of residents in Birchwood West feel they belong very strongly to their neighbourhood. This is similar to the proportion in Lincoln (61.05%) and lower than the proportion in England (62.92%).

## Neighbourhood Strength and Cohesion

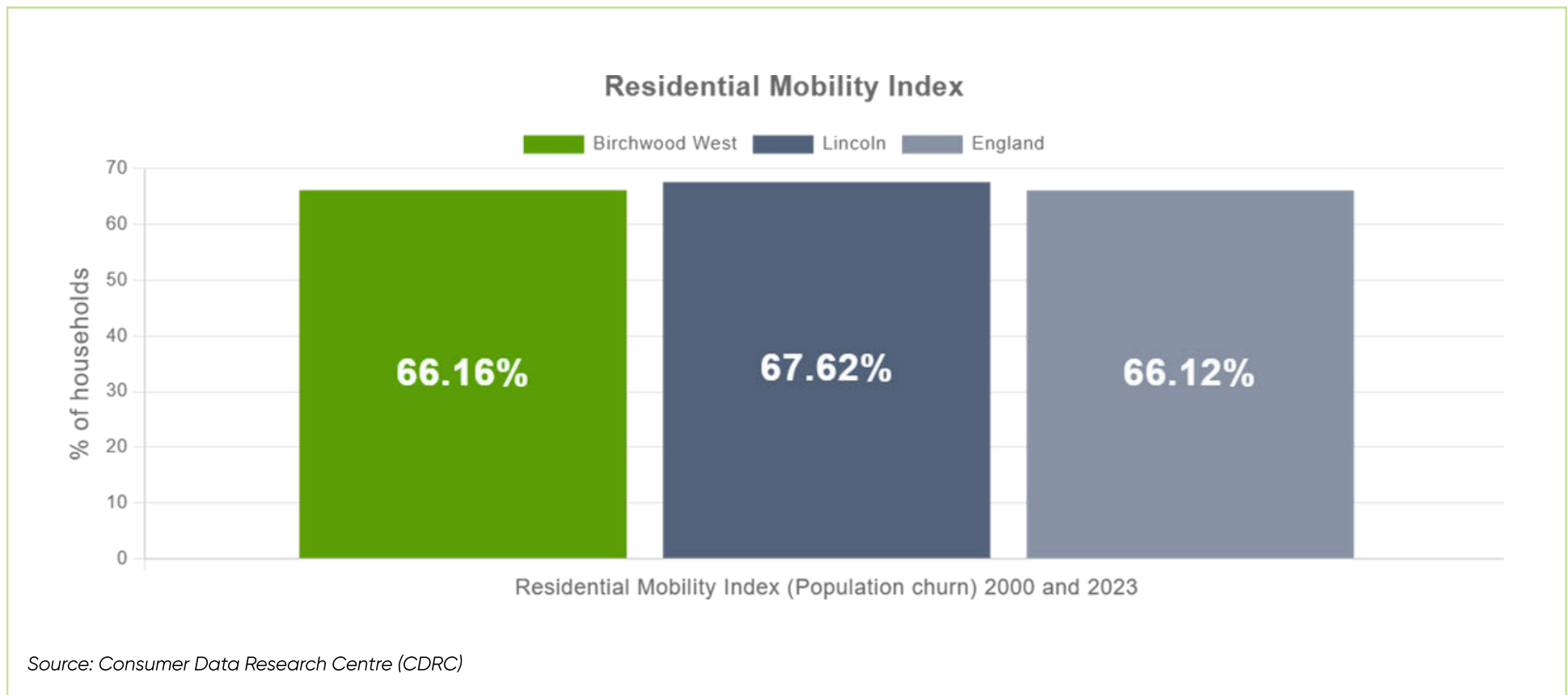
Indicator	Birchwood West	Lincoln	England
Feels Strong Belonging to Neighbourhood	60.99%	61.05%	62.92%
Borrow and Exchange Favours with Neighbours	33.77%	34.16%	36.13%
Never Chat to Neighbours	25.80%	28.46%	27.16%
Comfortable Leaving Keys with a Neighbour	59.57%	60.54%	62.80%
Comfortable Asking Neighbour for Shopping Essentials	52.43%	51.93%	53.56%
People in Neighbourhood Pull Together to Improve It	55.38%	57.20%	60.23%

Source: Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS)

## Residential Mobility Index

The chart below shows the proportion of households that have changed between the end of 2000 and the end of 2023. This data is based on the [Residential Mobility Index](#) which provides an estimate of the churn of the residential population in the UK. The estimates were built from linking administrative and consumer data, including electoral registers, consumer registers and land registry house sale data.

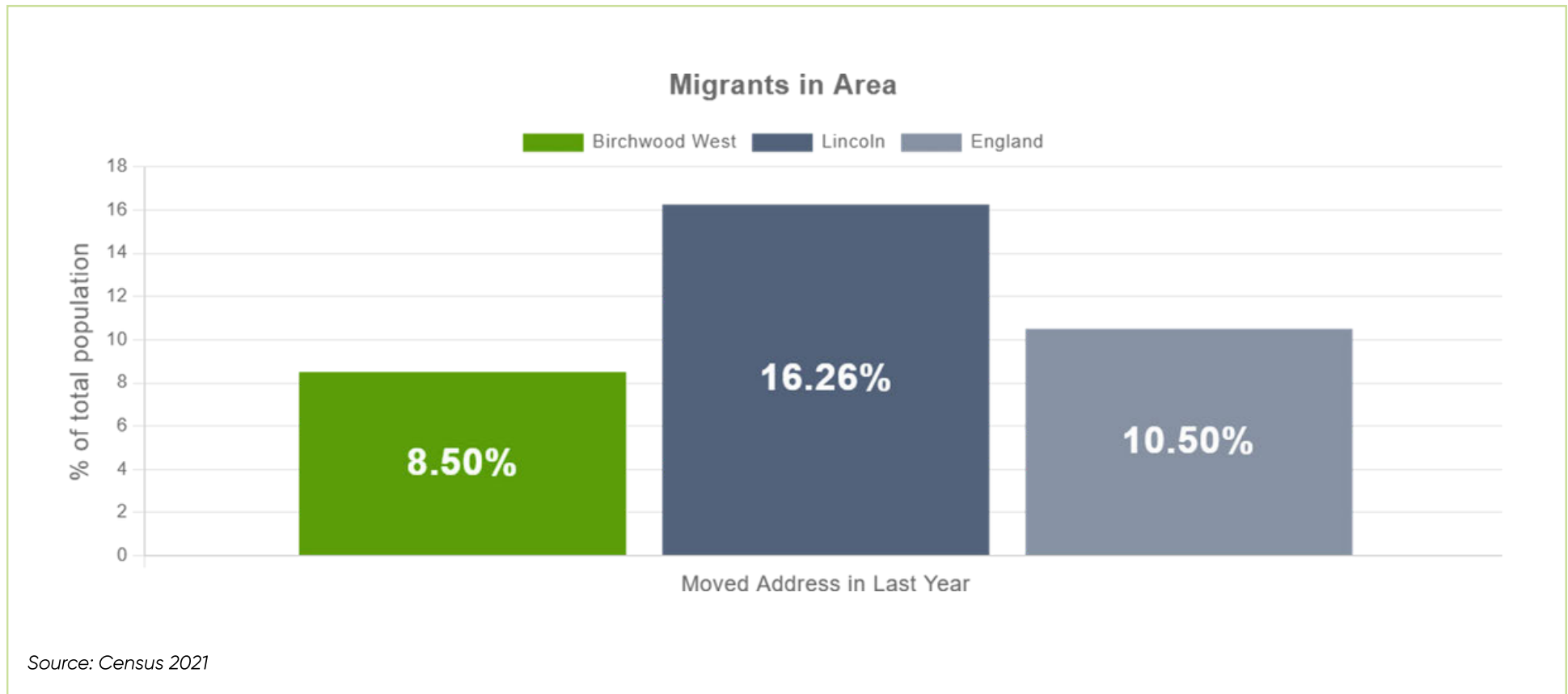
According to the Residential Mobility Index, 66.16% of households in Birchwood West have changed between 2000 and 2023. This is lower than the proportion in Lincoln (67.62%) and similar to the proportion in England (66.12%).



## People Who Have Moved Address in the Past Year

The chart below shows the number of migrants in a local area. The information is taken from the 2021 Census. Here a migrant is defined as a person with a different address one year before the Census to that on Census Day. The migrant status for children aged under one in households is determined by the migrant status of their next of kin.

In Birchwood West, the proportion of migrants was 8.5%. This is less than the proportion in Lincoln (16.26%) and less than the proportion in England (10.5%).



## Third Sector Organisations

The chart below shows the number of third sector organisations per 100,000 population in Mar-2025. Data is collected from the UK Third Sector Database.

Birchwood West has 55.07 third sector organisations per 100,000 population. This is lower than the number of third sector organisations per 100,000 across Lincoln (404.32) and lower than the number of third sector organisations per 100,000 across England (552.50).



## National Lottery Funding

The chart below looks at data on community funding, showing the combined total of grants made to local projects and organisations by the Big Lottery Fund between 2004 and 2021. Figures are presented as funding per 1,000 population.

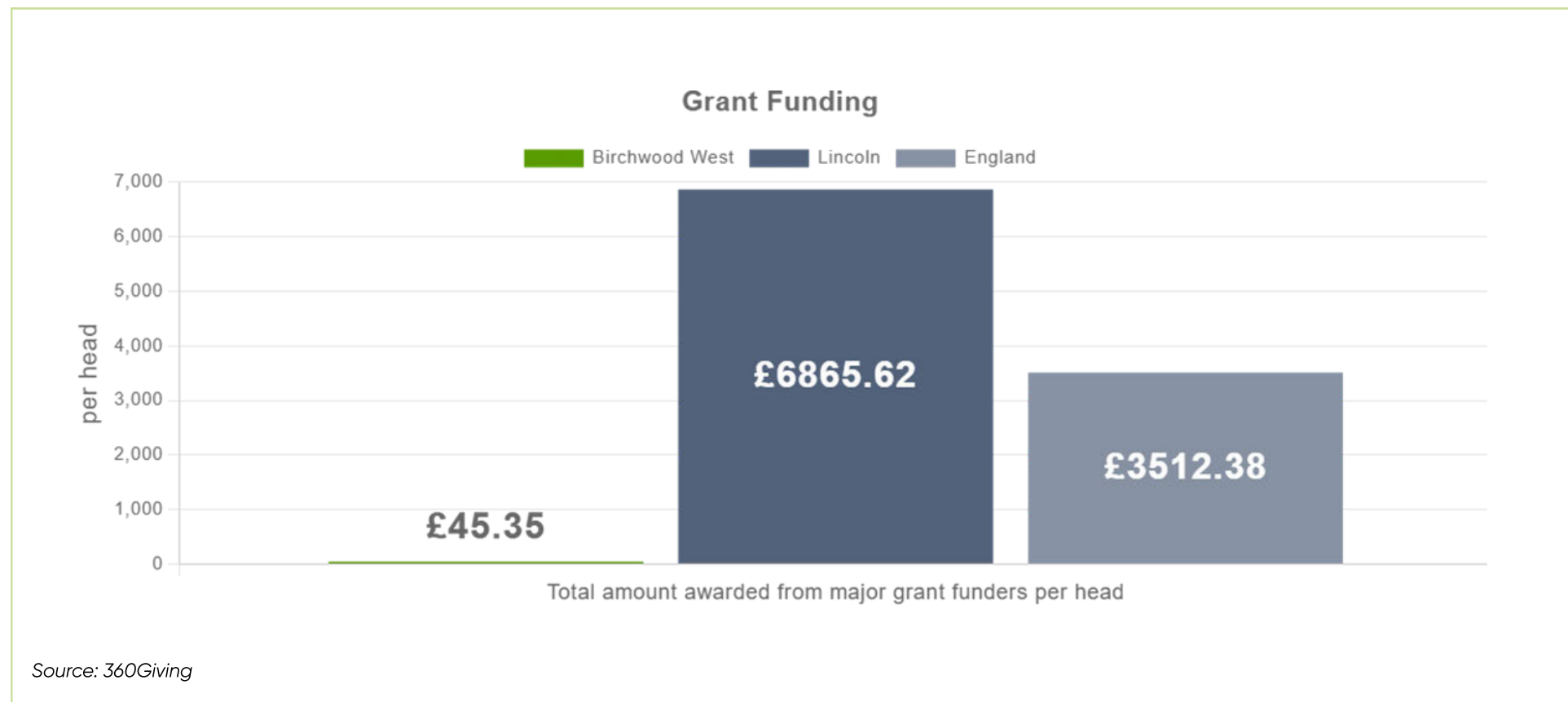
Birchwood West received £27,616.86 of funding per 1,000 population between 2004 and 2021. This is lower than the amount of funding per 1,000 across Lincoln (£99,777.59) and lower than the amount of funding per 1,000 across England (£37,971.67).



## Total Grants From Major Grant Funders

The chart below shows the combined amount of grant funding per head from the largest national grant giving organisations whose data has been subject to the 360Giving standard. The data is based on the location of grant recipients rather than the location of beneficiaries. The date of the grants awarded fall between 1991 and Nov-2025.

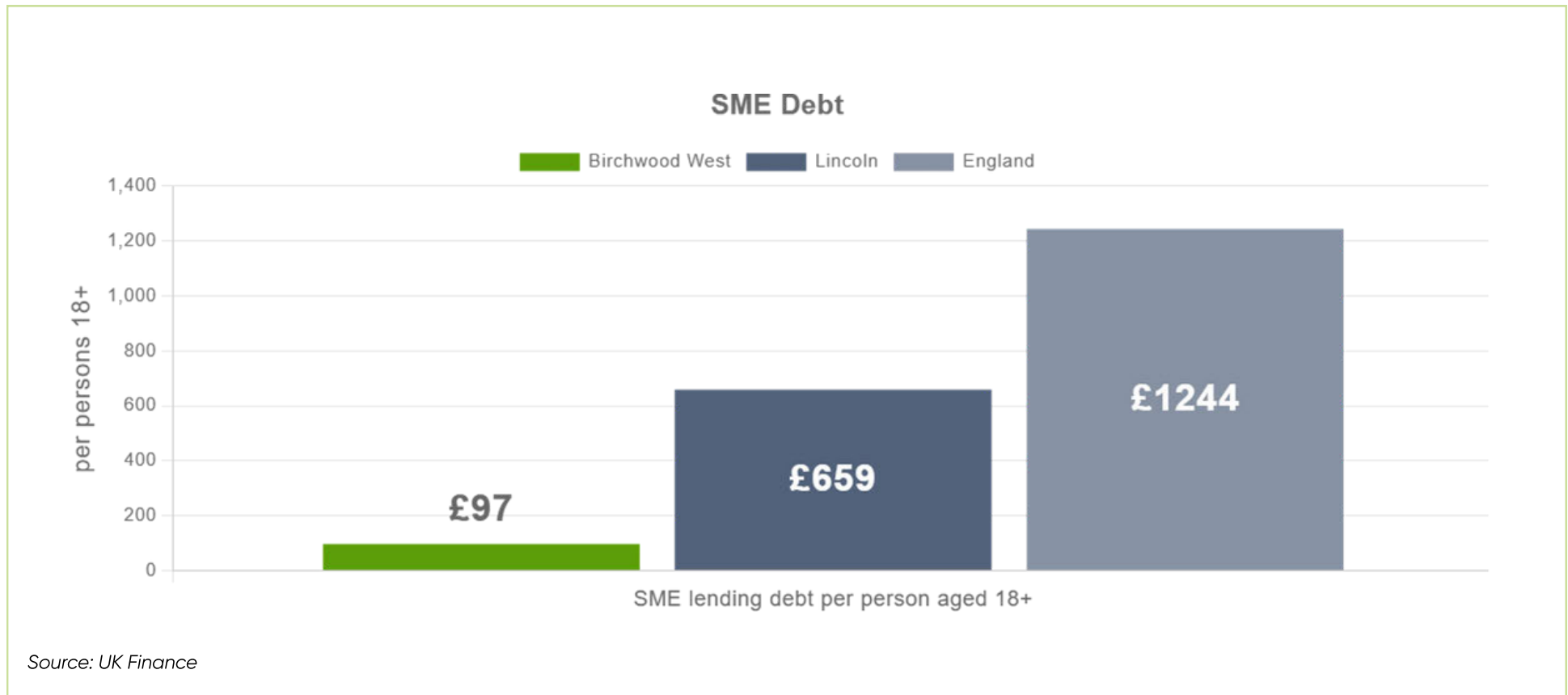
The total amount of grants issued from major grant funders per head in Birchwood West is £45.35. This is lower than the amount of funding per head across Lincoln (£6,865.62) and lower than the amount of funding per head across England (£3,512.38).



## SME Lending Debt

The chart below shows SME lending debt in Jun-2025, based on the total amount of borrowing outstanding on customer accounts for SME lending (Small and Medium-sized enterprises) divided by the population aged 18+.

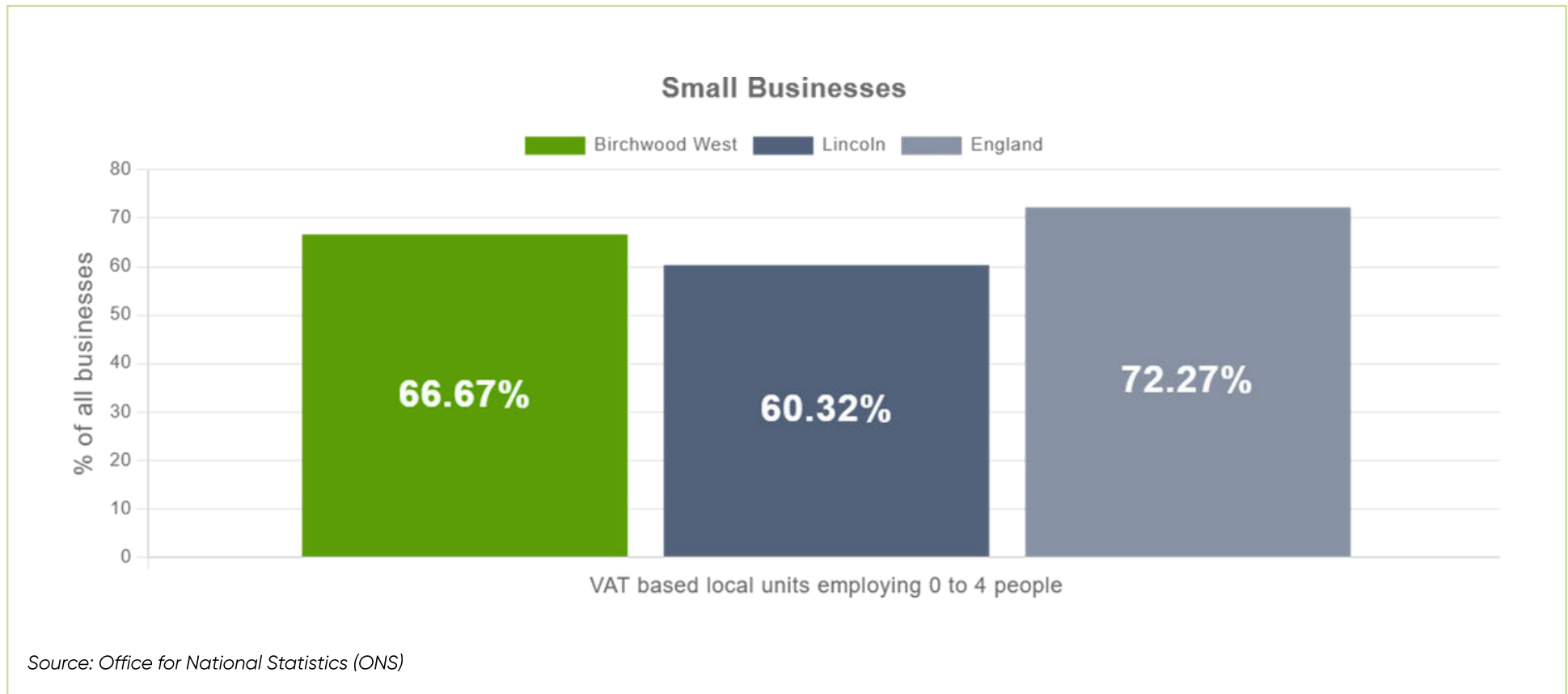
In Birchwood West, the average SME lending debt per person aged 18+ is £97, which is lower than Lincoln (£659) and lower than England (£1,244).



## VAT Business Units Employing 0-4 People

The chart below shows the proportion of VAT business units employing 0-4 people (small businesses) in 2025. The count of VAT registered local business units taken from the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR).

The proportion of small businesses (employing 0-4 people) in Birchwood West is 66.67%. This is higher than the proportion in Lincoln (60.32%) and lower than the proportion in England (72.27%).



# Indices of Deprivation (IoD) 2025

The Indices of Deprivation 2025 are a relative measure of deprivation for small areas (Lower-layer Super Output Areas) across England. The overall Index of Multiple Deprivation 2025 combines together indicators under seven different domains of deprivation:

Income Deprivation; Employment Deprivation; Education Skills and Training Deprivation; Health Deprivation and Disability; Crime; Barriers to Housing and Services and Living Environment Deprivation.

## Overall IMD Score and Rank

The table below shows the overall IMD score and rank in Birchwood West, Lincoln and England (where a lower average LSOA rank indicates that an area is experiencing higher levels of deprivation).

Birchwood West has an IMD rank of 8,179. This means that Birchwood West has higher levels of deprivation compared to Lincoln (12,291) and higher levels of deprivation compared to England (16,746).

## IMD 2025 Overview

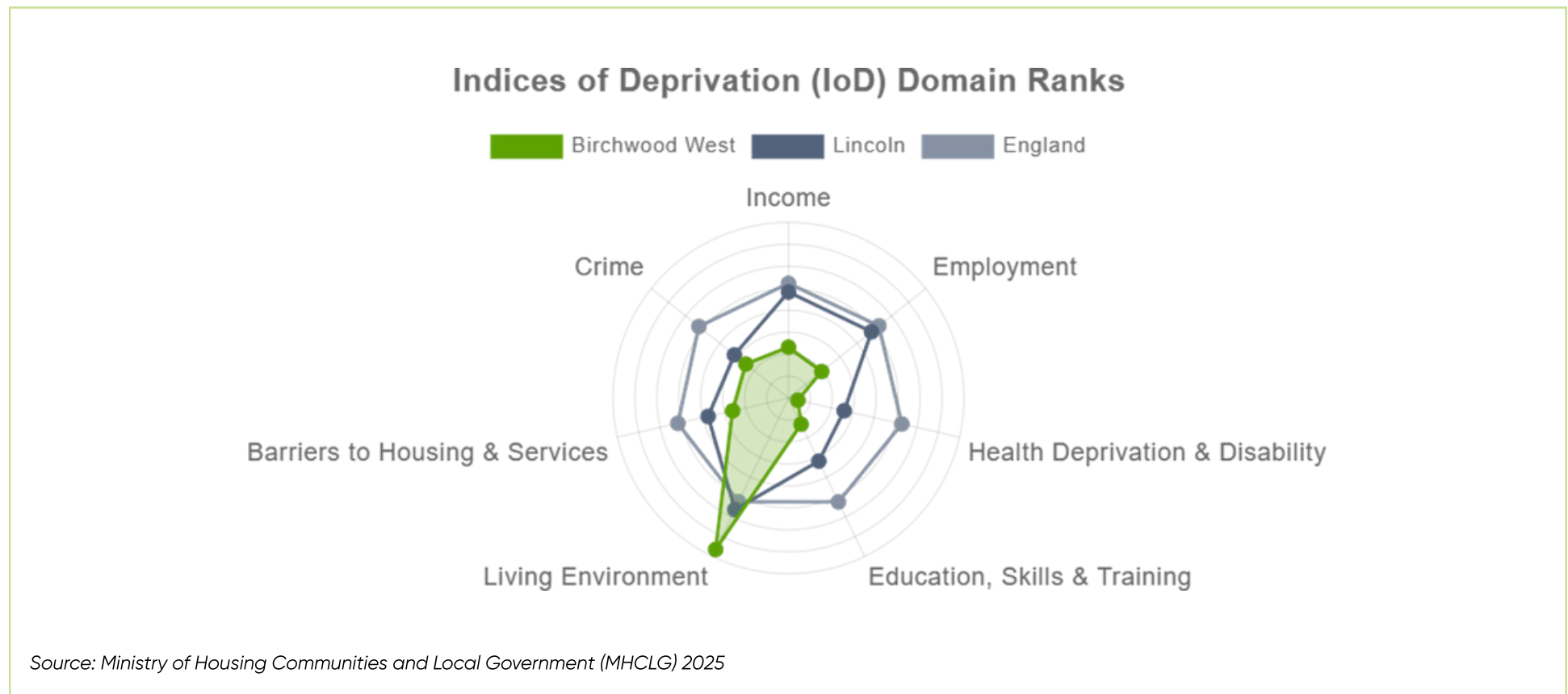
Indicator	Birchwood West	Lincoln	England
Index of Multiple Deprivation 2025 (IMD) Score	39.08	28.87	21.81
Index of Multiple Deprivation 2025 (IMD) Rank	8,179	12,291	16,746

Source: Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) 2025

# Indices of Deprivation (IoD) Domains, Sub-domains and Underlying Indicators

The data below provide an overview of each of the domains that make up the Index of Multiple Deprivation (2025), including the underlying indicators where these have been published and are publicly available.

The chart below shows how Birchwood West, Lincoln and England rank on each of the deprivation domains. A lower rank indicates that an area is experiencing higher levels of deprivation.



## Income and Employment Domains

The table below shows an overview of the Income and Employment domains. The Income domain measures deprivation relating to low income, including those who are out-of-work and those that are in work with low earnings. The employment domain measures involuntary exclusion from the labour market due to unemployment, sickness/disability or caring responsibilities. The Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) comprises children aged 0 to 15 living in income deprived families and the Income Deprivation Affecting Older People Index (IDAOPI) captures deprivation affecting older people. A higher rate = more deprived.

The proportion of people experiencing income deprivation in Birchwood West is 22.35%. This is higher than the proportion in Lincoln (15.48%) and higher than the proportion in England (12.86%). 17.43% of people are experiencing employment deprivation in Birchwood West. This is higher than the proportion in Lincoln (12.08%) and higher than the proportion in England (9.9%).

## Income and Employment Domains

Indicator	Birchwood West	Lincoln	England
IoD 2025 Income Score (Rate)	<b>37.30%</b>	<b>25.10%</b>	<b>23.19%</b>
IoD 2025 Income Deprivation Affecting Children (IDACI) Score (Rate)	<b>51.30%</b>	<b>43.20%</b>	<b>36.25%</b>
IoD 2025 Income Deprivation Affecting Older People (IDAOPI) Score (Rate)	<b>33.37%</b>	<b>20.70%</b>	<b>18.58%</b>
IoD 2025 Employment Score (Rate)	<b>22.65%</b>	<b>15.00%</b>	<b>13.40%</b>

Source: Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) 2025

## Health Deprivation and Disability Domain

The table below shows an overview of the Health, Deprivation and Disability domain, which measures the risk of premature death and the impairment of quality of life through poor physical or mental health. The table includes four of the underlying indicators that are used to construct the Health Deprivation Domain. For each of these underlying indicators, a higher score indicates that an area is experiencing higher levels of deprivation and these can be defined as follows:

- Years of potential life lost indicator measures premature death, defined as death before the age of 75 from any cause (the commonly used measure of premature death).
- Comparative Illness and Disability Ratio is an indicator of work limiting morbidity and disability, based on those receiving benefits due to inability to work through ill health.
- Acute Morbidity Indicator measures the level of emergency admissions to hospital, based on administrative records of inpatient admissions.
- Mental Health Indicator is a broad measure of levels of mental ill health in the local population. The definition used for this indicator includes mood (affective), neurotic, stress-related and somatoform disorders. The indicator is a modelled estimate based on four underlying sub-components from separate sources: suicide mortality data, hospital admissions, prescribing data; and health benefits data.

The table also shows the IoD 2025 Health Deprivation and Disability Rank (where a lower rank indicates that an area is experiencing high levels of deprivation). Birchwood West has a Health Deprivation Rank of 5,549. This means that Birchwood West has higher levels of health deprivation compared to Lincoln (9,128) and higher levels of health deprivation compared to England (16,982).

### Health Deprivation and Disability Domain and Underlying Indicators

Source: Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) 2025

Indicator	Birchwood West	Lincoln	England
IoD 2025 Health Deprivation and Disability Rank	<b>5,549</b>	<b>9,128</b>	<b>16,982</b>
IoD 2025 Years of Potential Life Lost Indicator	<b>82.44</b>	<b>82.05</b>	<b>58.79</b>
IoD 2025 Comparative Illness and Disability Ratio Indicator	<b>166.86</b>	<b>141.47</b>	<b>113.29</b>
IoD 2025 Mental Health Indicator	<b>1.07</b>	<b>0.59</b>	<b>-0.02</b>
IoD 2025 Acute Morbidity Indicator	<b>103.45</b>	<b>101.47</b>	<b>105.52</b>

## Education, Skills and Training Domain

The table below shows an overview of the Education, Skills and Training domain, which measures the lack of attainment and skills in the local population. The table includes the overall rank, the Adult Skills sub-domain rank, the Children and Young People sub-domain rank and two of the underlying indicators that are used to construct the domain.

The Adult Skills sub-domain measures the lack of skills in the local population and the Children and Young People sub-domain measures the lack of attainment in the local population. For each of the underlying indicators, a higher score indicates that an area is experiencing higher levels of deprivation and these are defined as follows:

- Entry to Higher Education Indicator captures the proportion of young people aged under 21 not entering Higher Education.
- Adult Skills and English Language Proficiency Indicator shows a non-overlapping count of those adults with no or low qualifications, and/or who cannot speak English or cannot speak English 'well'.

As shown in the table, Birchwood West has an Education and Skills Deprivation Rank of 6,798 (where a lower rank indicates that an area is experiencing higher levels of deprivation). This means that Birchwood West has higher levels of education deprivation compared to Lincoln (11,645) and higher levels of education deprivation compared to England (16,791).

### Education, Skills and Training Domain and Underlying Indicators

Indicator	Birchwood West	Lincoln	England
IoD 2025 Education, Skills and Training Rank	6,798	10,441	16,791
IoD 2025 Adult Skills Sub-domain Rank	9,818	12,595	16,780
IoD 2025 Children and Young People Sub-domain Rank	5,052	8,777	16,844
IoD 2025 Entry to Higher Education Indicator	0.93	0.90	0.88
IoD 2025 Adult Skills and English Language Proficiency Indicator	0.31	0.28	0.24

Source: Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) 2025

## Living Environment Domain

The table below shows an overview of the Living Environment domain, which measures the quality of the local environment. The table includes the overall rank, the Indoors sub-domain rank, the Outdoors sub-domain rank and six of the underlying indicators that are used to construct the domain. The Indoors sub-domain measures the quality of housing and Outdoors sub-domain contains measures of air quality and road traffic accidents. For each of the underlying indicators, a higher score indicates that an area is experiencing higher levels of deprivation and these are defined as follows:

- Housing in Poor Condition Indicator is a modelled estimate of the proportion of social and private homes that fail to meet the Decent Homes standard.
- Housing Energy Performance Indicator is a measure of the average 'energy performance' of residential buildings at LSOA level to reflect an element of housing quality.
- Housing Lacking Private Outdoor Space Indicator is derived from Ordnance Survey (OS) and Office for National Statistics (ONS) data on residential properties and associated private outdoor space. The indicator is based on a bespoke extract of property-level data provided by OS and ONS for the purpose of the IoD 2025.
- Air Quality Indicator is an estimate of the concentration of the four pollutants nitrogen dioxide, benzene, sulphur dioxide and particulates.
- Road Traffic Casualties Involving Injury to Pedestrians and Cyclists Indicator is based on reported accidents that involve death or personal injury to a pedestrian or cyclist.
- Noise Pollution Indicator represents the percentage of the population of each LSOA exposed to noise pollution greater than 55dB Lden.

As shown in the table, Birchwood West has a Living Environment Deprivation Rank of 29,168 (where a lower rank indicates that an area is experiencing higher levels of deprivation). This means that Birchwood West has lower levels of living environment deprivation compared to Lincoln (18,346) and lower levels of living environment deprivation compared to England (16,760).

### Living Environment Domain and Underlying Indicators

Indicator	Birchwood West	Lincoln	England
IoD 2025 Living Environment Rank	29,168	18,346	16,760
IoD 2025 Indoors Sub-domain Rank	29,054	19,126	16,873
IoD 2025 Outdoors Sub-domain Rank	22,372	15,271	16,590
IoD 2025 Housing in Poor Condition Indicator	0.07	0.16	0.16
IoD 2025 Housing Energy Performance Indicator	30.64	33.19	34.76
IoD 2025 Housing Lacking Private Outdoor Space Indicator	33.25	37.13	33.88
IoD 2025 Air Quality Indicator	2.35	2.49	2.58
IoD 2025 Road Traffic Casualties Involving Injury to Pedestrians and Cyclists Indicator	0.38	0.74	0.54
IoD 2025 Noise Pollution Indicator	0.22	0.30	0.37

Source: Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) 2025

## Barriers to Housing and Services Domain

The table below shows an overview of the Barriers to Housing and Services domain, which measures the physical and financial accessibility of housing and local services. The table includes the overall rank, the Wider Barriers sub-domain rank, the Geographical Barriers sub-domain rank and six of the underlying indicators that are used to construct the domain. The Wider Barriers sub-domain measures financial accessibility of housing including affordability and the Geographical Barriers sub-domain measures the physical accessibility and proximity of local services. The underlying indicators are defined as follows:

- Housing Affordability Indicator is a measure of the inability to afford to enter owner-occupation or the private rental market.
- Broadband Speed Indicator is a measure of the average broadband upload and download line-speeds (Mbit/s) for connections in the area.
- Patient-to-GP Ratio Indicator is a measure of the number of patients registered at a GP Surgery as a ratio of all Full Time Equivalent GPs.
- Household Overcrowding Indicators are measures of the proportion of households in an LSOA that are classed as overcrowded based on the Census 2021 'occupancy rating' for rooms and bedrooms.
- Connectivity Score Indicator is based on the Department for Transport (DfT) Connectivity Tool. In line with the concepts and methods adopted by DfT for their Connectivity Tool, the IoD 2025 indicator defines connectivity as someone's ability to get where they want to go by foot, bicycle or public transport, taking into consideration the primary purposes for travel (the main destination types) and the modes of travel (walking, cycling and public transport). It measures the travel time required to reach key destinations weighted by destination category (based on the proclivity of people visiting key destinations) and people's assumed travel preferences.

As shown in the table, Birchwood West has a Barriers to Housing and Services Deprivation Rank of 9,143 (where a lower rank indicates that an area is experiencing higher levels of deprivation). This means that Birchwood West has higher levels of barriers to housing and services deprivation compared to Lincoln (11,906) and higher levels of barriers to housing and services deprivation compared to England (16,492)

### Barriers to Housing and Services Domain and Underlying Indicators

Indicator	Birchwood West	Lincoln	England
IoD 2025 Barriers to Housing and Services Rank	9,143	11,906	16,492
IoD 2025 Wider Barriers Sub-domain Rank	12,580	9,495	16,516
IoD 2025 Geographical Barriers Sub-domain Rank	8,178	17,035	17,061
IoD 2025 Housing Affordability Indicator	0.60	0.43	0.04
IoD 2025 Broadband Speed Indicator	-0.23	-0.07	-0.01
IoD 2025 Patient-to-GP Ratio Indicator	1,405.32	2,243.84	2,219.80
IoD 2025 Household Overcrowding Indicator (Rooms)	0.07	0.06	0.07
IoD 2025 Household Overcrowding Indicator (Bedrooms)	0.05	0.04	0.05
IoD 2025 Connectivity Score Indicator	56.41	66.84	64.78

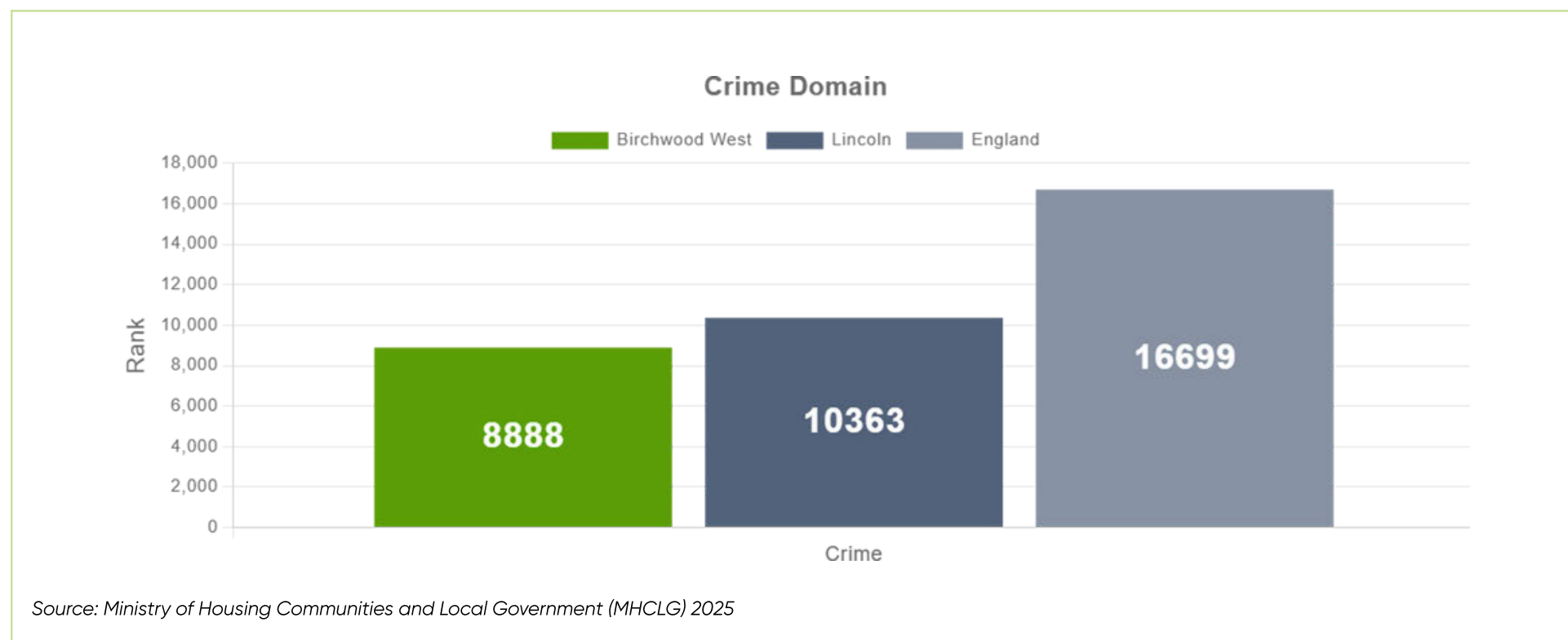
Source: Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) 2025

## Crime Domain

Crime is an important feature of deprivation that has major effects on individuals and communities. The Indices of Deprivation (IoD) 2025 Crime Domain measures the risk of personal and material victimisation at local level.

The following indicators are included: Violence with injury (including homicide); Violence without injury; Stalking and harassment; Burglary; Theft (including robbery, but excluding shoplifting); Criminal damage (including arson); Public order and possession of weapons; Anti-social behaviour. All indicators are presented as a rate per 1,000 at risk population. Data shows Average LSOA Rank, where a lower rank indicates that an area is experiencing higher levels of deprivation.

As shown in the chart, Birchwood West has a Crime Deprivation Rank of 8,888. This means that Birchwood West has higher levels of crime deprivation compared to Lincoln (10,363) and higher levels of crime deprivation compared to England (16,699).



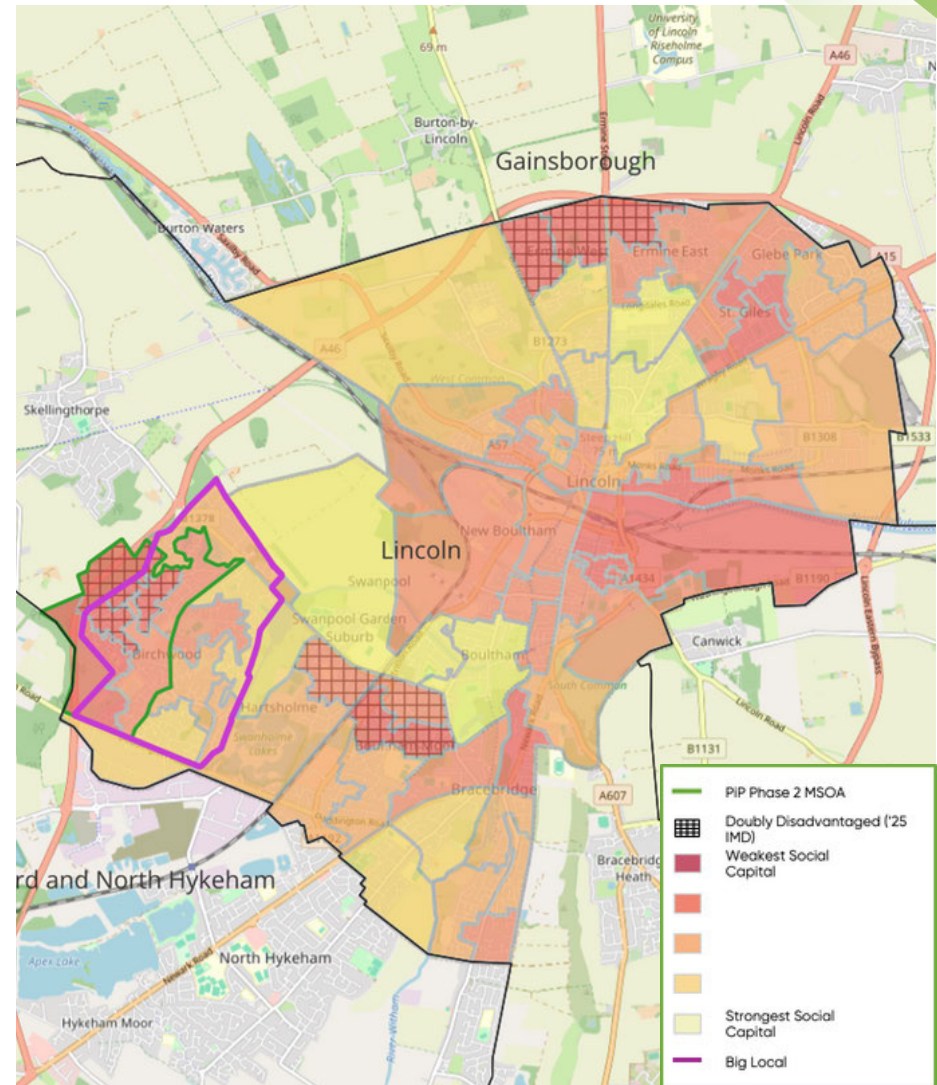
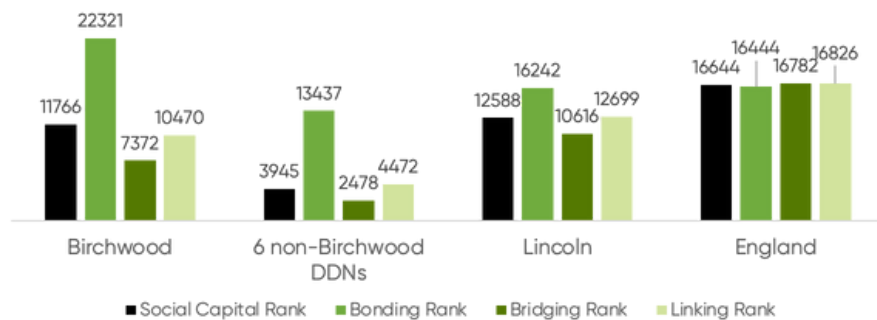
# Social Capital Score

Social Capital is often understood as a kind of community asset, impacting a communities capacity for resilience with a focus on neighbourhood cohesion, civic engagement and the availability of resources to maximise both. For the development of 3ni's Social Capital Score, Social Capital was understood through three interconnected dimensions which were each made up of a set of indicators or proxy indicators. These dimensions have then been combined to create an overall measure of Social Capital at neighbourhood level. A lower rank indicates greater need.

- **Bonding** - refers to the strong, close-knit ties among individuals with similar backgrounds, such as family, close friends, or neighbours. These connections foster a sense of belonging, emotional support, and shared identity within relatively homogeneous groups. This form of social capital is often associated with internal cohesion and resilience at the local level.
- **Bridging** - captures the relationships that span across diverse social groups, linking people from different ethnic, socio-economic, or cultural backgrounds. These ties are characterised by more distant but broader networks that promote the exchange of information, increase tolerance, and support inclusive community participation. Bridging ties are particularly important for social mobility and cross-community collaboration.
- **Linking** - refers to the vertical connections between individuals or communities and institutions, such as local government, public services, or other centres of power and authority. These relationships enable access to resources, opportunities, and influence beyond the immediate community, and are critical for navigating systems, improving outcomes, and addressing structural disadvantage.

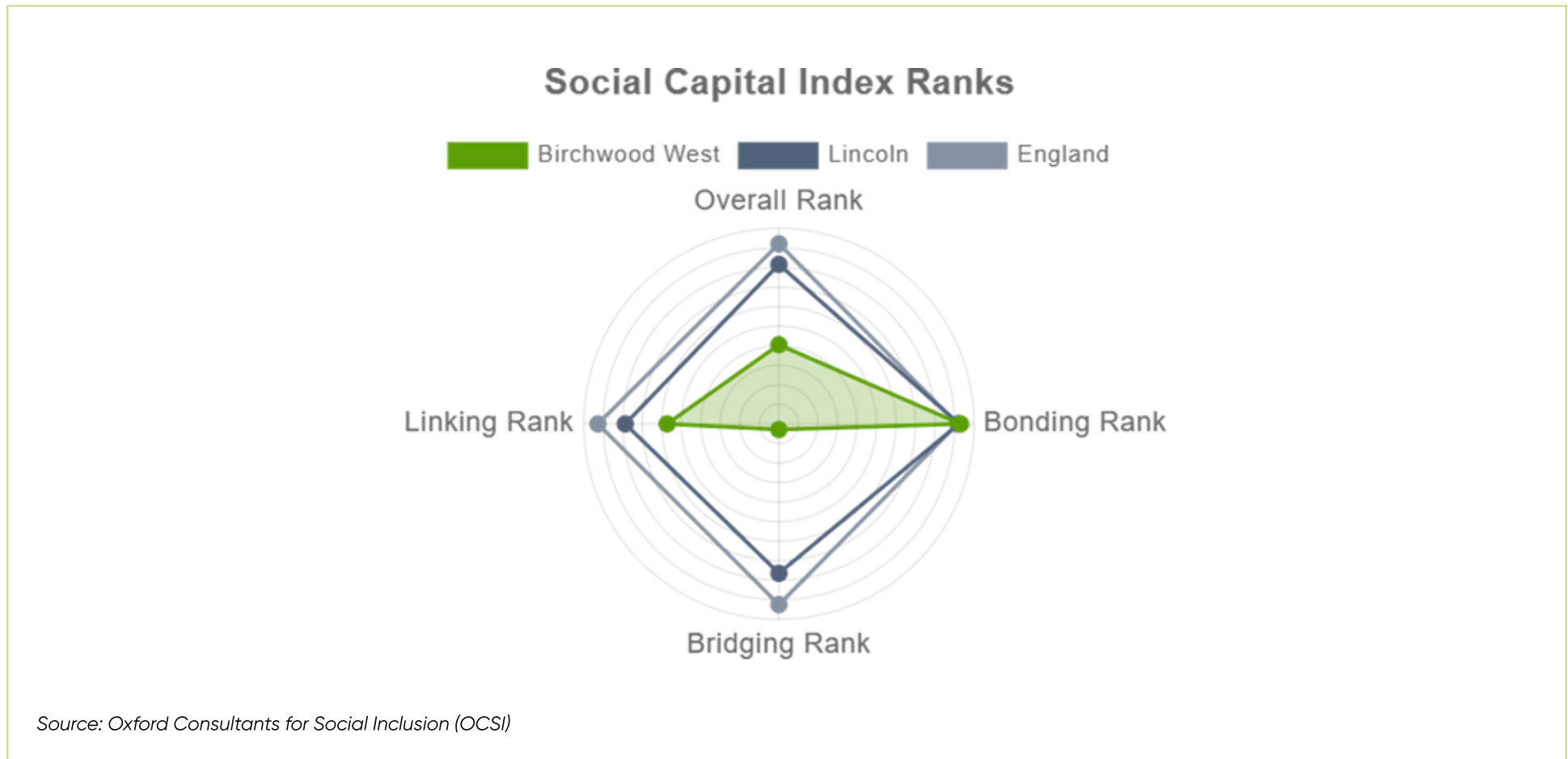
# Lincoln and Social Capital Score 2025 (SCS) LSOA Ranks:

- The heatmap opposite shows LSOA SCS ranks according to national quintiles.
- Lincoln’s social capital ranks are, overall, slightly stronger than are its CNI ranks, when compared to LSOAs nationally.
- Where community need was only moderate in central Lincoln, social capital is comparatively weaker, particularly in east-central Lincoln.
- Pockets of weaker social capital broadly correlate with higher community need, with the exception of some LSOAs across south-east Lincoln, with some areas showing moderately strong social capital despite high community need. Understanding how that can be used to build greater organisational capacity will be key to growing social infrastructure and lessening community need in south-east Lincoln. Building up wide volunteering networks that go well beyond Pride in Place is a key consideration here.
- The six DDNs not in Birchwood also have a considerably lower social capital rank than does Birchwood Big Local, and lower domains ranks as well. Birchwood’s bonding rank is especially high and something which could be used to build stronger community under Pride in Place in Birchwood West.



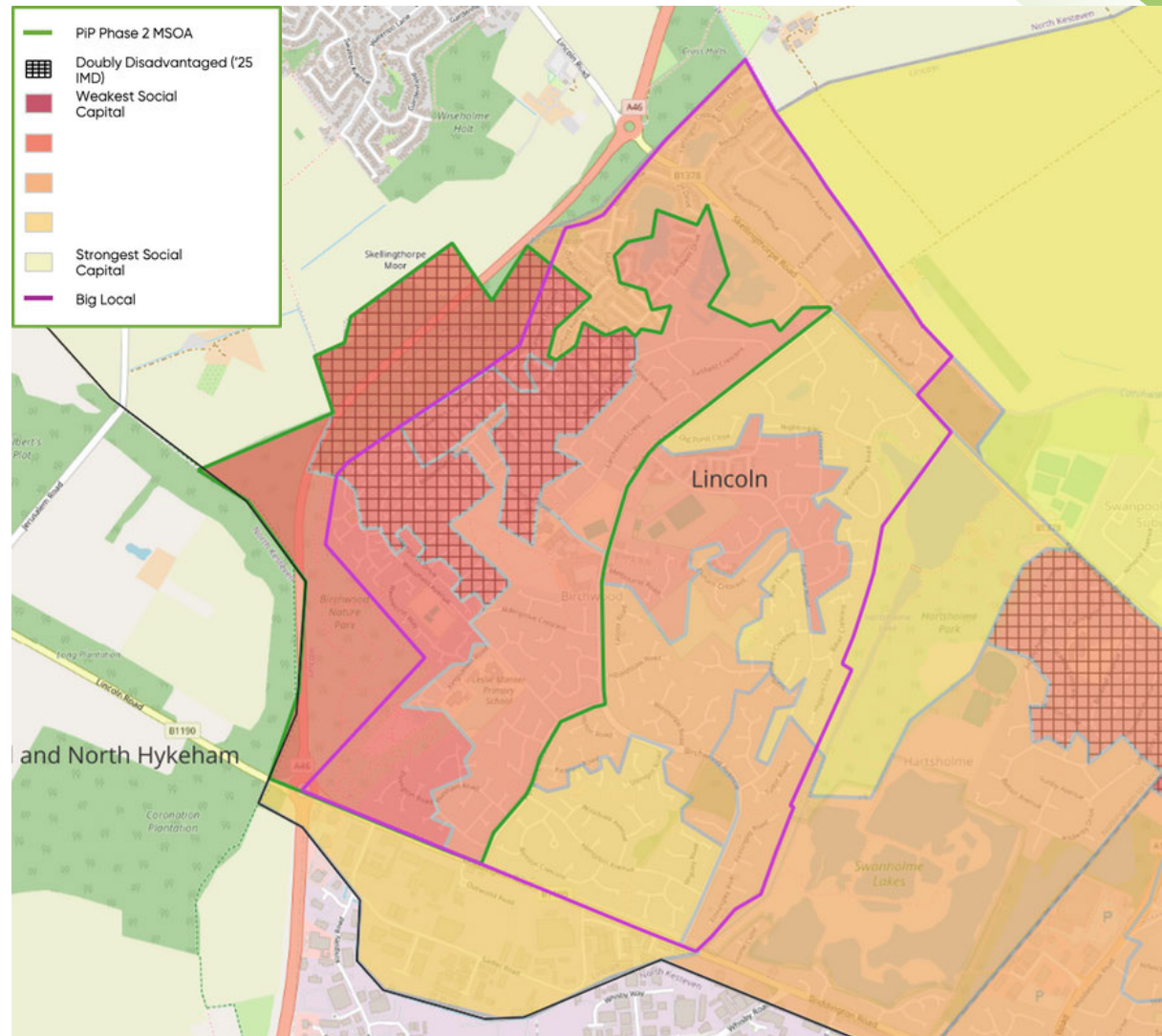
The chart below shows how Birchwood West, Lincoln and England rank on the overall Social Capital Score, as well as the three dimensions.

Birchwood West has an overall Social Capital rank of 5,069. This means that Birchwood West has higher levels of need compared to Lincoln (13,068) and higher levels of need compared to England (16,642).



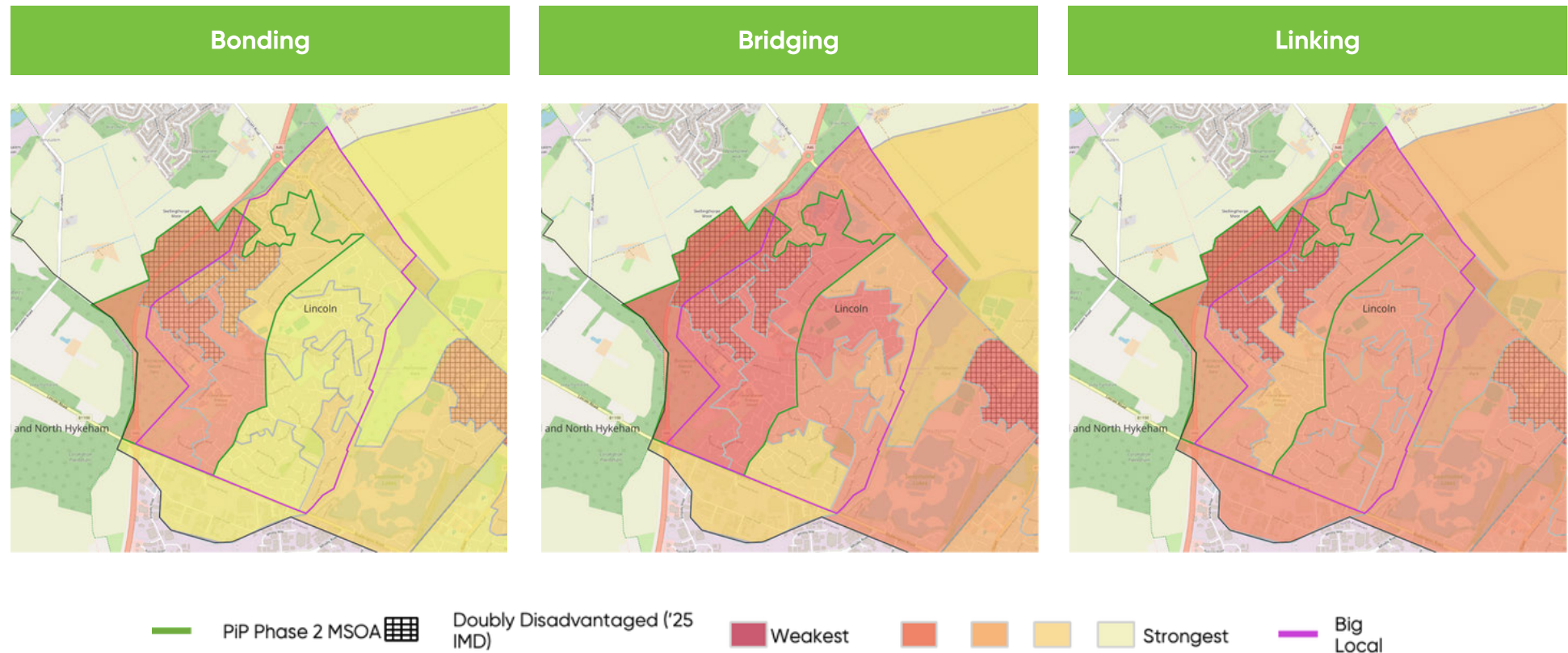
## Birchwood Big Local, the Birchwood West PiP area and their LSOA-level SCS ranks:

- Birchwood West is still a primary focus area with weaker social capital than the rest of the overlapping Big Local area where there is moderately strong social capital.
- While Pride in Place investment will help considerably in acquiring and maintaining the physical spaces that facilitate social interactions, it is vital that the programme ensures that activities, events and services are also prioritised. These will help to build social capital through increased social interactions in the area.
- A key consideration will be helping the community use its own resources and help residents to build up networks themselves to a large degree. Enabling social capital to build from within the community is vital to sustaining it over time.



**Bonding, Bridging and Linking ranks by LSOA: Bonding is a clear strength of the area but is not shared equally across the Big Local area, east to west, while linking capital is relatively weak and more uniform across the area.**

Bridging is a major weakness of the Big Local area but is also concentrated more in the west than the east. Bonding is a clear strength of the eastern part of the Big Local area. Understanding what underpins that success, while organising activities and events that build bonding up in Birchwood West will be key in the years ahead.



## Appendix: Data sources

Theme	Data	Data source / time period
3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report	Community Needs Index 2023: Community Needs rank	Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion (OCSI) (2023)
3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report	Community Needs Index 2023: Civic Assets rank	Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion (OCSI) (2023)
3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report	Community Needs Index 2023: Connectedness rank	Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion (OCSI) (2023)
3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report	Community Needs Index 2023: Active and Engaged Community rank	Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion (OCSI) (2023)
3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report	Density of Community owned assets	Power to Change, the Community Land Trust Network, Co-operatives UK, Plunkett Foundation, Locality and Keep it in the Community (2023)
3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report	Density of sport and leisure assets	Sport England (Feb-2023)
3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report	Households with no car (Census 2021)	Census 2021 (2021)
3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report	Digital Exclusion Risk Index (DERI) score	Greater Manchester Office of Data Analytics (2021)
3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report	One person household: Aged under 66 (Census 2021)	Census 2021 (2021)
3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report	Percentage of people who feel lonely often	Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) (2021 to 2022)
3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report	GP appointments per 1,000 patients	NHS England (Oct-2022)
3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report	GP appointments 21 or more days after appointment is booked (as % of all appointments)	NHS England (Oct-2022)

Theme	Data	Data source / time period
3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report	Same day GP appointments (as % of all appointments)	null (Oct-2022)
3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report	Travel time to nearest Primary School by public transport/walk	Department for Transport (DfT) (2019)
3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report	Travel time to nearest employment centre by public transport/walk (with more than 500 jobs)	Department for Transport (DfT) (2019)
3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report	Travel time to nearest Further Education Institution by public transport/walk	Department for Transport (DfT) (2019)
3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report	Travel time to nearest GP by public transport/walk	Department for Transport (DfT) (2019)
3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report	Travel time to nearest Hospital by public transport/walk	Department for Transport (DfT) (2019)
3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report	Travel time to nearest Secondary School by public transport/walk	Department for Transport (DfT) (2019)
3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report	Travel time to nearest town centre by public transport/walk	Department for Transport (DfT) (2019)
3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report	AHAH Green Space (passive) within a 900m buffer	Consumer Data Research Centre (CDRC) (2022)
3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report	AHAH Blue Space	Open Street Map ( <a href="#">link</a> ) (2017)
3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report	Jobs Access Score	UK Onward (2021)
3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report	Voter Turnout at Local Elections	House of Commons Library (2019 to 2024)
3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report	Taken part in consultation about local services (Community Life Survey)	Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) (2017 to 2021)
3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report	Taken part in groups, clubs or organisations (Community Life Survey)	Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) (2017 to 2021)

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Data</b>	<b>Data source / time period</b>
<b>3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report</b>	<b>Taken part in civic engagement (Community Life Survey)</b>	Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) (2017 to 2021)
<b>3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report</b>	<b>Volunteered in last 12 months (Community Life Survey)</b>	Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) (2017 to 2021)
<b>3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report</b>	<b>Feels strong belonging to neighbourhood (Community Life Survey)</b>	Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) (2017 to 2021)
<b>3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report</b>	<b>Borrow and exchange favours with neighbours (Community Life Survey)</b>	Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) (2017 to 2021)
<b>3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report</b>	<b>Never chat to neighbours (Community Life Survey)</b>	Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) (2017 to 2021)
<b>3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report</b>	<b>Comfortable leaving a set of keys with a neighbour for emergencies (Community Life Survey)</b>	Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) (2017 to 2021)
<b>3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report</b>	<b>Comfortable asking a neighbour to collect shopping essentials (Community Life Survey)</b>	Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) (2017 to 2021)
<b>3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report</b>	<b>People in neighbourhood pull together to improve it (Community Life Survey)</b>	Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) (2017 to 2021)
<b>3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report</b>	<b>Residential Mobility Index (Population churn) 2000 and 2023</b>	Consumer Data Research Centre (CDRC) (2023)
<b>3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report</b>	<b>People who have moved address in the last year (Census 2021)</b>	Census 2021 (2021)
<b>3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report</b>	<b>Third Sector organisations</b>	The UK Third Sector Database (Mar-2025)

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Data</b>	<b>Data source / time period</b>
3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report	The National Lottery Community Fund grant funding per 1,000 population (£) 2004-2021	The National Lottery Community Fund (2021)
3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report	Total amount awarded from major grant funders per head	360Giving (Nov-2025)
3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report	SME lending debt per person aged 18+	UK Finance (Jun-2025)
3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report	VAT based local units employing 0 to 4 people	Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2025)
3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report	Index of Multiple Deprivation 2025 (IMD) Score	Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2025)
3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report	Index of Multiple Deprivation 2025 (IMD) Rank	Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2025)
3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report	IoD 2025 Income Rank	Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2025)
3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report	IoD 2025 Employment Rank	Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2025)
3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report	IoD 2025 Health Deprivation and Disability Rank	Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2025)
3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report	IoD 2025 Education, Skills and Training Rank	Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2025)
3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report	IoD 2025 Living Environment Rank	Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2025)
3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report	IoD 2025 Barriers to Housing and Services Rank	Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2025)

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Data</b>	<b>Data source / time period</b>
<b>3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report</b>	<b>IoD 2025 Crime Rank</b>	Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2025)
<b>3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report</b>	<b>IoD 2025 Income Score (Rate)</b>	Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2025)
<b>3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report</b>	<b>IoD 2025 Income Deprivation Affecting Children (IDACI) Score (Rate)</b>	Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2025)
<b>3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report</b>	<b>IoD 2025 Income Deprivation Affecting Older People (IDAOPI) Score (Rate)</b>	Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2025)
<b>3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report</b>	<b>IoD 2025 Employment Score (Rate)</b>	Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2025)
<b>3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report</b>	<b>IoD 2025 Health Deprivation and Disability Rank</b>	Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2025)
<b>3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report</b>	<b>IoD 2025 Years of Potential Life Lost Indicator</b>	Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2025)
<b>3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report</b>	<b>IoD 2025 Comparative Illness and Disability Ratio Indicator</b>	Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2025)
<b>3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report</b>	<b>IoD 2025 Mental Health Indicator</b>	Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2025)
<b>3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report</b>	<b>IoD 2025 Acute Morbidity Indicator</b>	Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2025)
<b>3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report</b>	<b>IoD 2025 Education, Skills and Training Rank</b>	Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2025)

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Data</b>	<b>Data source / time period</b>
<b>3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report</b>	<b>IoD 2025 Adult Skills Sub-domain Rank</b>	Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2025)
<b>3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report</b>	<b>IoD 2025 Children and Young People Sub-domain Rank</b>	Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2025)
<b>3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report</b>	<b>IoD 2025 Entry to Higher Education Indicator</b>	Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2025)
<b>3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report</b>	<b>IoD 2025 Adult Skills and English Language Proficiency Indicator</b>	Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2025)
<b>3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report</b>	<b>IoD 2025 Living Environment Rank</b>	Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2025)
<b>3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report</b>	<b>IoD 2025 Indoors Sub-domain Rank</b>	Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2025)
<b>3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report</b>	<b>IoD 2025 Outdoors Sub-domain Rank</b>	Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2025)
<b>3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report</b>	<b>IoD 2025 Housing in Poor Condition Indicator</b>	Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2025)
<b>3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report</b>	<b>IoD 2025 Housing Energy Performance Indicator</b>	Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2025)
<b>3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report</b>	<b>IoD 2025 Housing Lacking Private Outdoor Space Indicator</b>	Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2025)
<b>3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report</b>	<b>IoD 2025 Air Quality Indicator</b>	Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2025)

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Data</b>	<b>Data source / time period</b>
<b>3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report</b>	<b>IoD 2025 Road Traffic Casualties Involving Injury to Pedestrians and Cyclists Indicator</b>	Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2025)
<b>3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report</b>	<b>IoD 2025 Noise Pollution Indicator</b>	Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2025)
<b>3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report</b>	<b>IoD 2025 Barriers to Housing and Services Rank</b>	Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2025)
<b>3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report</b>	<b>IoD 2025 Wider Barriers Sub-domain Rank</b>	Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2025)
<b>3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report</b>	<b>IoD 2025 Geographical Barriers Sub-domain Rank</b>	Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2025)
<b>3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report</b>	<b>IoD 2025 Housing Affordability Indicator</b>	Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2025)
<b>3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report</b>	<b>IoD 2025 Broadband Speed Indicator</b>	Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2025)
<b>3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report</b>	<b>IoD 2025 Patient-to-GP Ratio Indicator</b>	Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2025)
<b>3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report</b>	<b>IoD 2025 Household Overcrowding Indicator (Rooms)</b>	Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2025)
<b>3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report</b>	<b>IoD 2025 Household Overcrowding Indicator (Bedrooms)</b>	Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2025)
<b>3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report</b>	<b>IoD 2025 Connectivity Score Indicator</b>	Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2025)

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Data</b>	<b>Data source / time period</b>
<b>3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report</b>	<b>IoD 2025 Crime Rank</b>	Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) (2025)
<b>3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report</b>	<b>Social Capital Score: Rank</b>	Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion (OCSI) (Jan-2026)
<b>3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report</b>	<b>Social Capital Score: Bonding Rank</b>	Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion (OCSI) (Jan-2026)
<b>3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report</b>	<b>Social Capital Score: Bridging Rank</b>	Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion (OCSI) (Jan-2026)
<b>3ni Discovery Tool - Full Report</b>	<b>Social Capital Score: Linking Rank</b>	Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion (OCSI) (Jan-2026)



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improvement**



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improvement**

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