## DEMOS

# ALL EARS PUTTING THE PUBLIC AT THE HEART OF LEVELLING UP

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OCTOBER 2021

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This project was supported by the Politics and Economics Research Trust

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### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank the Politics and Economics Research Trust for their generous support for this project.

We are also extremely grateful to everyone that attended the roundtable we held to inform this report.

At Demos we would like to thank the following colleagues for their advice, support and hard work at various stages of the project: Amelia Stewart, Bibi Nubir, Charles Seaford, Ciaran Cummins, Harry Carr, Josh Tapper, Polly Mackenzie, Stephanie Lenz and Toby O'Brien. We would also like to thank James Sweetland for his help at the start of the project.

Ben Glover and Andrew Phillips

October 2021

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The government's commitment to levelling up is a noble one: the UK has been scarred by inequalities of place for too long. As its agenda takes shape, this report argues that the public must be put at the heart of levelling up for three primary reasons:

First, the public wants to be involved in decisions about levelling up. Drawing on new polling of the general public and the former red wall<sup>1</sup>, we find that:

• Nearly eight in ten - 77% of the general public and 79% of the former red wall - think that local people should be involved in decisions about how government money is used in their local area, with just 5% of both groups disagreeing.

This preference is so strong that the public prioritise local control rather than the quantity of funding: they are willing to accept less money if local people have more say over how the money is spent.

• The public are more than twice as likely to want less money for their local area and more say for local people over how it is spent (55% of general public and 53% of former red wall), compared to more money and less say (21% of general public and 23% of former red wall).

If levelling up is to be seen as legitimate by those it is trying to help, it must meaningfully involve the public in decisions about how money is spent.

Second, the public are not united on what levelling up should look like, including in the former red wall. For example, the public are split on whether they want new jobs in their local area if it means new people moving there:

• 37% of the general public want lots of new jobs even if it means new people moving to their area, while 42% prefer to have fewer people moving to their area even if it means fewer new jobs. The public are also divided over whether they want lower paid jobs more quickly, or better paid jobs over a longer period of time in their local area.

• 42% of the general public want lots of well paid jobs in their local area, even if it takes two or three years for them to become available; 39% of the public want lots of jobs in their local area within the next year - even if they are less well paid.

These divisions can only be bridged by bringing local people together to build consensus. This has to be done by local actors, partly because they are best placed to do so but also because the public thinks they are the right leaders for levelling up. We find that:

• Fewer than a fifth (17%) of the general public think the UK government is best placed to make decisions about their local area, while six in ten (60%) think local actors (local businesses, councils, community groups or residents) are best placed.

Third, the public does not have high hopes for their local area. Across a very wide number of indicators, less than a quarter of people in both the former red wall and nationally think any aspect of their local area will get better in the next five years. For example, we find that:

• Just a fifth of the general public (20%) and the former red wall (21%) expect the number of good, well-paid jobs to improve in their local area in the next five years.

Actively and meaningfully engaging the public about levelling up could overcome this scepticism. To achieve this, we want to encourage greater participation within the government's current levelling up frameworks and we recommend that:

<sup>1</sup> We define the former red wall as the fifty seats Labour lost to the Conservatives at the 2019 General Election in the North of England, the Midlands and Wales, plus Hartlepool which Labour lost in a 2021 by-election to the Conservatives.

• The assessment criteria for levelling up funding used by central government should be expanded to include considering whether bids have been designed with appropriate public participation.

As we have argued for separately, levelling up will only be a success if it is led by empowered local actors.<sup>2</sup> But if devolution is to work, it must also be accompanied by proper public participation, for the reasons outlined above. To achieve this we recommend that:

• Central government grant funding is made available for local government to invest in their ability to actively involve the public in decision making about levelling up.

We also find that the public wants levelling up to improve social as well as economic outcomes, though the public appears to put more weight on social rather than economic issues.

 88% of the general public would like to see improved physical social infrastructure - improved high streets, parks and public services - in their local area, compared to just 69% that wish to see improved physical economic infrastructure - new transport infrastructure, new employers offering good jobs and better broadband.

To ensure this is reflected in the government's approach to levelling up we recommend that:

• Success metrics for levelling up should span social and economic dimensions.

Furthermore, in the eyes of the public, well-paid jobs are only good for a local area if they are taken by local people:

• Half of the general public (50%) believe higher paying jobs in their local area are a good thing only if they are taken by people who already live in their local area, compared to 31% who believe higher paid jobs are a good thing even if some of them are taken by people who do not currently live in their local area.

For a higher proportion of new jobs in a place to go to local people, the labour force in that area must be upskilled. To help achieve this we recommend that:

• Powers are devolved to local government so they can take a more proactive role to commission skills from educational institutions which match those demanded by local employers.

Finally, the public is more concerned with levelling up helping their town or city than their region. We find that:

• 41% and 37% of respondents wish the government to focus on helping their town and city respectively, compared to 26% that wish the government to focus on helping their region.

To ensure this wish is reflected we recommend that:

• Any success metrics developed for levelling up must measure change at a sub-regional level, preferably focusing on villages, towns and cities as opposed to regions.

<sup>2</sup> LIPSIT. Achieving Levelling Up. LIPSIT, November 2020. Available at: <u>https://demos.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Achieving-Levelling-Up-Report.pdf</u> [last accessed 15 October 2021].

# INTRODUCTION

The morning after the last general election, Boris Johnson set out his government's mission: "to unite and level up".<sup>3</sup> Yet relatively little detail has been added to that vision since, resulting in a flurry of interested parties seeking to define what levelling up should be.

It's no surprise that every interested party has sought to claim that their particular issue is core to levelling up. But it shouldn't be policy makers in Westminster and Whitehall, industry groups or national charities who define what success looks like. The interested parties should be the citizens of those places targeted by levelling up.

Ahead of the publication of the Levelling Up White Paper, we went back to the people that triggered the agenda in the first place: those living in former red wall constituencies that switched their allegiance from Labour to the Conservatives in the last general election, often for the first time in generations. We started there because unless people feel they are being listened to, levelling up will fail.

This is because the desire to 'level up' is primarily a response to a feeling: a sense of being left-behind and ignored. Yes, poor health outcomes or low GVA may contribute to a sense of left-behindness, but 'fixing' them alone won't address the original problem levelling up was - rightly - trying to address. People must feel they are being listened to and this report is an attempt to do just that. This report is structured around three important questions relating to levelling up:

- Who should levelling up be led by?
  - For example, to what extent should levelling up be led by local government as opposed to Whitehall? How should we balance the views of government - whether central or local - with those of citizens?
- What should levelling up be trying to achieve?
  - For example, should levelling up be trying to improve social or economic outcomes (or indeed both)? Should it be about connecting lagging places to thriving hubs or spreading prosperity across the country?
- Where should levelling up be focused on?
  - Is levelling up primarily about boosting the North of England and Midlands, or should it be about helping struggling places across the UK? Relatedly, should the focus be on regions, cities, towns or neighbourhoods?

This report draws on two original polls conducted for this project in August 2021: a nationally representative survey of 1,000 UK adults and 1,000 adults resident in former red wall constituencies.

Following the Resolution Foundation's definition used in earlier research, we define the former red wall as those fifty constituencies Labour lost across the North of England, the Midlands and Wales to the Conservatives at the 2019 General Election, plus Hartlepool which Labour lost to the Conservatives in a 2021 by-election.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> PM statement in Downing Street, 13 December 2019. Available at: <u>https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pm-statement-in-downing-street-13-december-2019</u> [accessed 15 October 2021].

<sup>4</sup> McCurdy, C. Ageing, fast and slow. Resolution Foundation, 28 October 2019. Available at: <u>https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/</u> publications/ageing-fast-and-slow/ [accessed 15 October 2021]

# **CHAPTER 1** WHO?

The government's current approach to levelling up is characterised by a high degree of centralisation: local areas competing against each other for Whitehall-run funding pots.

Yet this may change. Neil O'Brien MP, parliamentary undersecretary of state for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, has recently described how levelling up is about empowering "local leaders and communities".<sup>5</sup>

We find that the public doesn't trust Whitehall to lead levelling up. Fewer than a fifth of the general public (17%) think the UK government is best placed to make decisions about their local area, while six in ten (60%) think local actors (local businesses, councils, community groups or local residents) are best placed.

#### WHO DO YOU THINK IS BEST PLACED TO MAKE DECISIONS ABOUT HOW GOVERNMENT MONEY IS SPENT IN YOUR LOCAL AREA?

	NAT REP	FORMER RED WALL
Local residents	17%	20%
Local community groups	8%	7%
Local businesses	3%	4%
Local authority/council	32%	34%
Scottish Government, Welsh Government or Northern Ireland Executive <sup>6</sup>	5%	2%
UK Government	17%	15%
None of the above	6%	5%
Don't know	13%	12%

Note: respondents could only choose one option

In addition, the public wants to be put in the driving seat for decisions about levelling up. The public are twice as likely to want less money for their local area and more say for local people over how it is spent (55% of respondents), compared to more money and less say (just 21% of respondents). This result holds nationally and across the former Red Wall.

### WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING WOULD YOU PREFER?

	NAT REP	FORMER RED WALL
A lot more money is spent by central and local government in your local area, but local people have little say in how the money is spent	21%	23%
A little more money is spent by central and local government in your local area, but local people have a lot more say in how the money is spent	55%	53%
Neither	12%	12%
Don't know	12%	12%

Furthermore, nearly eight in ten agree with the statement 'local people should be involved in decisions about how government money is used in my local area'. These findings suggest that unless the public are sufficiently involved in decisions about levelling up in their area, the enterprise could be deemed illegitimate by voters.

<sup>5</sup> O'Brien, N. Levelling up isn't about north or south, or city or town. It's about restoring local pride. Guardian, 6 October 2021. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/oct/06/levelling-up-restoring-local-pride [accessed 15 October 2021]

<sup>6</sup> The proportion selecting this option was higher in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, albeit based on relatively small sample sizes.

### HOW FAR DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS?

	AGREE (COMB.) - NAT REP	AGREE (COMB.) - FORMER RED WALL	DISAGREE (COMB.) - NAT REP	DISAGREE (COMB.) - FORMER RED WALL
Local people should be involved in decisions about how government money is used in my local area	77%	79%	5%	5%

Our findings also have implications for the relationship between levelling up and the politics of the Union. Thus far, levelling up has primarily been focused on England, but the UK government has said that it sees the agenda as a way of demonstrating the benefits of the Union to people living in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. However, the strong preference for local control which we have found suggests that these efforts may backfire if there is insufficient engagement with local people, and their representatives in local and devolved governments.

# CHAPTER 2 WHAT?

### SOCIAL VS ECONOMIC

There is an ongoing debate over whether levelling up should focus on improving social or economic outcomes. Our research finds support for the belief that levelling up must be about targeting both, which is sensible given that the two are of course interrelated. However, we do find that the public has a slight but notable preference for spending on social objectives. 'Physical social infrastructure' - e.g. high streets, parks and public services - is by some margin the most popular type of spending we polled. Yet this is not what current spending has focused on. Pro Bono Economics has found that the vast majority of current levelling up spending is focused on physical economic infrastructure - the least important priority for the public in our analysis.<sup>7</sup>

### WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING WOULD YOU MOST LIKE TO SEE IN YOUR LOCAL AREA?<sup>8</sup>

	NAT REP	FORMER RED WALL
<b>Physical social infrastructure:</b> better public services in my local area such as schools, doctors, hospitals and social care; new and improved parks, green spaces and community spaces (e.g. sport and leisure facilities, youth clubs, libraries) in my local area; improved high street and new shops in my local area.	88%	92%
Human social capital: People in my local area are healthier and live longer in good health; people in my local area know each other better and get on well with each other; people feel safer in my local area, and there is less crime.	74%	77%
Human economic capital: Higher average incomes and reduced poverty for people who live in my local area; more people in work and fewer people unemployed in my local area; people are improving their skills through better access to training in my local area.	72%	81%
<b>Physical economic infrastructure:</b> New and improved roads, buses and trains in my local area; higher quality broadband access at home in my local area; new employers offering new, well-paid jobs in my local area.	69%	75%

<sup>7</sup> Pro Bono Economics. Levelling Up: On the right track? 7 April 2021. Available at: <u>https://www.probonoeconomics.com/levelling-up-on-the-right-track</u> [accessed 15 October 2021]

<sup>8</sup> Respondents were able to select from a long list of options, of which they could choose up to four. In this table we have grouped those options into four categories, with the options that the respondents could choose shown next to the category name (e.g. 'better public services in my local area...').

### THE CONNECTIVITY THESIS

Some argue levelling up should support people over places and that the focus should be on connecting lagging places to thriving hubs. Our findings show that the public appears unsupportive of this view.

The public want to be able to stay in their local area: almost half of the public and former red wall residents (46% and 52% respectively) in towns or rural areas would like to be able to work and live within their locality, without visiting a city.

There is also much greater demand for improving transport links within local areas than between different places. Again, around half of respondents across the UK and in former red wall constituencies want transport links improved within their local area, compared to only a quarter that want transport links between places improved.

People in the 'former red wall' are notably less willing to travel long distances to work, in comparison to the general public. This suggests that merely improving connections between less productive and more productive places is not necessarily what people want, especially in former red wall areas.

### WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING COMES CLOSEST TO YOUR VIEWS?

	NAT REP	FORMER RED WALL
Improving public transport to places outside my local area is more important than improving public transport within my local area	26%	24%
Improving public transport within my local area is more important than improving public transport to places outside my local area	45%	50%
Neither	18%	16%
Don't Know	11%	11%

### HOW FAR DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS?

(BASE: RESPONDENTS WHO ARE IN WORK)

	AGREE (COMB.) - NAT REP	AGREE (COMB.) - FORMER RED WALL	DISAGREE (COMB.) - NAT REP	DISAGREE (COMB.) - FORMER RED WALL
I want to work in my local area - I don't want to have to travel elsewhere for work	64%	66%	12%	10%
I want to work in my local area, even if the job isn't paid as much as a job in another location	57%	52%	16%	18%
I am willing to travel a short distance (about 1 hour total daily commute) to work in a nearby area	66%	62%	16%	21%
I am willing to travel a short distance (about 1 hour total daily commute) to work in a nearby area, if the job is better paid than jobs in my local area	64%	59%	17%	19%
I am willing to travel a long distance (2 hours total daily commute or more) to work	40%	24%	39%	59%
I am willing to travel a long distance (2 hours total daily commute or more) to work, if the job is better paid than jobs in my local area	42%	29%	38%	53%
I am willing to move to live somewhere else to work	48%	35%	29%	45%
I am willing to move to live somewhere else to work, if the job is better paid than jobs in my local area	50%	36%	27%	40%

### LOCAL JOBS FOR LOCAL PEOPLE

There is an extremely strong desire for local jobs to go to local people. The public only thinks new, higher paid jobs in their local area are a good thing if they go to local people by a significant margin.

This is a somewhat stark finding and particularly relevant to government plans to move the Civil Service out of London. Our research suggests such moves will only be deemed a success if new opportunities go to local people. This may help explain why in other polling moving civil servants out of London is not considered a priority for levelling up.<sup>9</sup>

### WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING COMES CLOSEST TO YOUR VIEW?

	NAT REP	FORMER RED WALL
Higher paying jobs in my local area would be a good thing, even if some of them are taken by people who do not currently live in the local area	31%	34%
Higher paying jobs in my local area would only be a good thing if they are taken by people who already live in the local area	50%	51%
Neither	9%	8%
Don't Know	10%	8%

### DIVISIONS

Notwithstanding the important areas of consensus detailed above, the public are sharply divided on some important aspects of levelling up. For example, they are largely split on whether they want new jobs if it means people moving to their local area. Given that new employment opportunities in a place could be expected to attract newcomers there, this presents a real dilemma for local policy makers.

9 Carter, A. What does the public think about levelling up? Centre for Cities, 24 September 2021. Available at: <u>https://</u> www.centreforcities.org/blog/what-does-the-public-think-aboutlevelling-up/ [accessed 15 October 2021]

### WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING COMES CLOSEST TO YOUR VIEW?

	NAT REP	FORMER RED WALL
I want lots of new jobs in my local area, even if this means that more people will move to live here	37%	44%
I want a few new jobs in my local area, but I don't want too many people to move to live here	42%	37%
Neither	12%	10%
Don't Know	10%	9%

In the short/medium term at least, local policy makers could face a trade off between getting lots of lower paid jobs, or targeting fewer but better paid jobs. For example, which should they pursue: a distribution warehouse quickly bringing lots of jobs, albeit low paid, or working to upskill local people and boosting the demand for higher skills through a local industrial strategy, likely to deliver higher wages but taking longer to appear?

Again, the public appears split here, with similar proportions opting for either strategy. Such divisions suggest the need for local policy makers to work to build consensus on levelling up - something we outline how to achieve in the final chapter of this report.

### WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING DO YOU PREFER?

	NAT REP	FORMER RED WALL
I want lots of well paid jobs in my local area which are accessible to local people - even if it takes two or three years for them to become available	42%	45%
I want lots of jobs in my local area which become available within the next 12 months and are accessible to local people - even if they are less well paid	39%	38%
Neither	9%	8%
Don't Know	10%	9%

In addition, we found some demographic divisions which also highlight the need to build consensus in local areas.

Age emerges as an important factor influencing people's preferences. Overall, younger people are more likely to prioritise change, in comparison to older people. They are more likely to want new jobs, even if this means that more people move to live in the area or the character of the area changes. They are also more likely to think higher paying jobs in their area would be a good thing even if some of them were taken by people moving to the area. Perhaps surprisingly, however, younger people also express greater willingness than older people to use some of their spare time to help make decisions about how money is spent in their local area. For some questions, gender also makes a difference to people's priorities. For example, women are more likely to prioritise spending on "new and improved parks, green spaces and community spaces" compared to men. Women also tend to have a stronger preference for working in their local area and are less willing to travel a long distance to work.

HOW FAR DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT? "I AM WILLING TO TRAVEL A LONG DISTANCE (2 HOURS TOTAL DAILY COMMUTE OR MORE) TO WORK". (BASE: RESPONDENTS WHO ARE IN WORK)

	FORMER RED WALL		NAT REP	
	MALE	FEMALE	MALE	FEMALE
Agree (comb.)	29%	19%	51%	29%
Disagree (comb.)	52%	66%	29%	51%

#### WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS COMES CLOSEST TO YOUR VIEW? FORMER RED WALL ONLY

	18-29	30-44	45-59	60+
Higher paying jobs in my local area would be a good thing, even if some of them are taken by people who do not currently live in the local area	45%	42%	27%	27%
Higher paying jobs in my local area would only be a good thing if they are taken by people who already live in the local area	39%	45%	56%	59%
Neither	7%	6%	8%	9%
Don't Know	9%	8%	9%	5%

# CHAPTER 3 WHERE?

Levelling up has sometimes been framed as a project to aid the North of England. Yet our research suggests the public - even in the former red wall have stronger sub-regional than regional identities and concerns.

54% of former red wall village residents say they care a 'great deal' about their village, 44% of red wall town residents say they care a 'great deal' about their town and 43% of former red wall city residents say they care a 'great deal' about their city. In comparison, just 33% of respondents in the former red wall say they care a 'great deal' about their region. Furthermore, we can see from the table that people are more concerned about the government helping their town or city than their region - by some margin.

This suggests that if levelling up is to aid the places that people care about the most, it should focus on smaller scale geographies than regions: left-behind villages, towns and cities instead. In turn, this means that levelling up shouldn't be a strategy focused on one particular region or indeed one particular place (e.g. towns versus cities). This aligns with recent remarks by Neil O'Brien MP that levelling up is not "about north v south, or city v town. There are poor places even in affluent regions like the south-east and London."<sup>10</sup>

#### THE GOVERNMENT IS COMMITTED TO SUPPORTING MORE DEPRIVED AREAS OF THE UK. WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING AREAS WOULD YOU LIKE THE GOVERNMENT TO FOCUS ON?

	NAT REP	FORMER RED WALL	
My local neighbourhood	24%	28%	
My village and/or the rural area I live in	25%	30%	
My town	41%	47%	
My city	37%	45%	
My county	24%	27%	
My region (e.g. North East England, South West England)	26%	36%	
The part of the UK I live in (England, Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland)	20%	23%	
None of these - the government should help everyone	22%	17%	
None of these - my area doesn't need support from the government	3%	1%	
Don't know	9%	6%	

Note: respondents could choose multiple options

10 O'Brien, N. Levelling up isn't about north or south, or city or town. It's about restoring local pride. Guardian, 6 October 2021. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/oct/06/levelling-up-restoring-local-pride [accessed 15 October 2021]

# **CHAPTER 4** WHEN?

It's also useful to understand when the public expects things to improve. Across a very wide number of indicators, less than a third of people in both the former red wall and nationally think any aspect of their local area will get better in the next five years. As shown in the table below, the public are most pessimistic about their high street, with around four in ten expecting it to decline in the coming years. This suggests that the public has little confidence that the government's current approach to levelling up will deliver. It also highlights another reason for the public to be properly involved in levelling up: to overcome the widespread scepticism that their local area can change.

### THINKING ABOUT THE NEXT FEW YEARS, HOW QUICKLY, IF AT ALL, DO YOU EXPECT THE FOLLOWING TO GET BETTER OR WORSE IN YOUR LOCAL AREA?

	BETTER (FORMER RED WALL)	BETTER (NAT REP)	NO CHANGE (FORMER RED WALL)	NO CHANGE (NAT REP)	WORSE (FORMER RED WALL)	WORSE (NAT REP)
The number of good, well paid jobs	31%	28%	32%	33%	27%	28%
The quality of local transport (buses, trains, roads)	30%	27%	33%	37%	28%	27%
The state of your local high street	28%	29%	23%	24%	41%	38%
The state of parks, green spaces and community spaces	30%	29%	32%	34%	30%	27%
The quality of local schools and hospitals	29%	29%	34%	36%	29%	26%
Poverty in your local area	25%	25%	31%	35%	32%	29%
People's overall health	29%	27%	34%	34%	29%	28%
Sense of community and people getting on well with each other	28%	26%	41%	41%	24%	24%

Note: the following table combines all answers saying "better" and all answers saying "worse"<sup>11</sup>

11 Better = Better within the next year, 1-2 years, 3-5 years or in more than five years. Worse = worse within the next year, 1-2 years, 3-5 years or in more than five years.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

### PUTTING THE PUBLIC AT THE HEART OF LEVELLING UP

Throughout this report we have seen strong evidence that levelling up will fail unless the public are put at the heart of shaping the agenda.

The government's current approach to levelling up is characterised by a high degree of centralisation: local actors bidding for pots of Whitehall money. While this approach has many flaws, as we have set out separately, it is useful to ask how public participation can be maximised within the current system.<sup>12</sup> To that end, we recommend that:

 The assessment criteria for levelling up funding used by central government should be expanded to include considering whether bids have been designed with appropriate public participation.

However, the government's approach to levelling up could evolve to being less Whitehall-dominated and more locally-led - a highly desirable shift we have argued for elsewhere.<sup>13</sup> Yet if local government failed to properly engage local people, we could be replacing one system of top down leadership with another. To avoid this we recommend that:

 Central government grant funding is made available for local government to invest in their ability to actively involve the public in decision making about levelling up.

### SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC

There is an ongoing debate as to whether levelling up should be about improving social or economic outcomes. Our findings are clear: the public wishes levelling up to be about improving both. Given this we recommend that:

 Success metrics for levelling up should span social and economic dimensions.

In terms of what those social metrics could be, our polling shows the public cares most about physical social infrastructure: things like high streets and

public services. Many of these are covered by Demos's Place Satisfaction Index, launched earlier this year.<sup>14</sup> This measures the collective mismatch - if any - between the facilities, amenities, and services people want to have nearby and their perception of the actual provision that is on offer. The government may wish to consider whether this index could be useful in tracking the success or otherwise of levelling up.

### LOCAL JOBS FOR LOCAL PEOPLE

We found an extremely strong desire for local jobs to go to local people. By a significant margin the public only thinks new, higher paid jobs in their local area are a good thing if they go to local people.

This suggests local policy makers should consider how they can ensure a significant proportion of new jobs are available to local people. We consider how to achieve this in detail in our recent LIPSIT project.<sup>15</sup> Building on that work we recommend that:

 Powers should be devolved to local government so they can take a more proactive role to commission skills from educational institutions which match those demanded by local employers.

This could help ensure that local people are better equipped for the jobs in their area.

### NATIONWIDE LEVELLING UP

Finally, we have seen that the public is more concerned with levelling up helping their town or city than their region. This suggests that if levelling up is to aid the geographies that people care about the most, it should focus on smaller scale geographies than regions: left-behind villages, towns and cities instead. To ensure this is achieved we recommend that:

 Success metrics developed for levelling up must measure change at a sub-regional level, preferably focusing on villages, towns and cities as opposed to regions.

<sup>12</sup> LIPSIT. Achieving Levelling Up. LIPSIT, November 2020. Available at: https://demos.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Achieving-Levelling-Up-Report.pdf [last accessed 15 October 2021].

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## DEMOS

PUBLISHED BY DEMOS OCTOBER 2021
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