Local Trust
trusting local people

3ni national network for neighbourhood improvement

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Everybody needs good
Neighbourhoods 2

A counterfactual analysis of the impact of resident-led neighbourhood-based initiatives in deprived communities

July 2025

Local Trust

About Local Trust

Local Trust is a national charity set up in 2011 to deliver the Big Local programme. We believe that trusting communities and giving them more power will enable local people to significantly improve their quality of life and the places in which they live.

We support Big Local partnerships by helping them to manage their grants, network with their peers and develop the skills they need to deliver lasting local change. Local Trust also provides specialist technical support to Big Local areas, as well as monitoring and evaluating the overall programme. Local Trust's work contributes to our wider aims of demonstrating the value of long term, resident-led funding. Using the learnings from the Big Local programme, we're working to bring about a wider transformation in the way policy makers, funders and other agencies engage with communities.

localtrust.org.uk

About 3ni

3ni is a social value partnership that brings together local government and the wider public sector to drive meaningful, lasting change in the neighbourhoods that need it most. It was incubated by Local Trust and is now hosted by Capacity CIC.

info@3ni.co.uk
3ni.co.uk

About OCSI

Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion (OCSI) works with public and community organisations to improve services. OCSI turns complex datasets into engaging stories, and makes data, information and analysis accessible for communities and decision makers. A spin-out from Oxford University, OCSI has helped hundreds of public and community sector organisations to make their services more efficient and effective.

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Shared Intelligence is a public policy research consultancy with UK-based clients in central, regional, and local government, as well as charities and non-profits. It undertakes strategy development, research, and evaluation with a focus on peer learning and stakeholder engagement.

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COMMUNITY FUND

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Foreword

With government embarking on what might be the biggest programme of neighbourhood regeneration since the turn of the century, this research is very timely. It suggests that building community capacity, seeding the development of new community groups and initiatives to help develop social capital, and providing the long-term support and resources needed to put local residents in the driving seat of neighbourhood renewal is a key ingredient in improving outcomes across some of the issues that matter most to local and central government, and to residents living in some of the most disadvantaged communities in the country.

Where we live our lives - the geographical communities and the neighbourhoods that we call home or where we are from - has a big impact on our health and wellbeing, and our prospects and prosperity. Whilst spatial inequalities are often discussed at a sub-national level, such as the north versus the south, or framed in terms of inter-regional disparities in outcomes or of local authorities' comparative levels of disadvantage, it is at the hyper-local neighbourhood level where real life outcomes are experienced by the people that live there. For example, the varying levels of healthy life expectancy experienced by people living just streets away from each other.

Both the research and lived experience of residents points to the important role played by civic associational life in contributing to these real life outcomes. Residents of neighbourhoods afflicted by social and economic deprivation and that lack the essential building blocks of social infrastructure that many of us take for granted have worse outcomes across a whole range of key indicators compared to equally deprived, but better resourced and connected communities. It's the presence of local social infrastructure that can be so important to those outcomes – ie the places and spaces for people to meet; the groups, networks and organisations that bring people together; and the connections to people and opportunities – and the role this plays in supporting the local stock of social capital.

At 3ni we are sharing the learning about what works when it comes to neighbourhood improvement initiatives and building social capital, as well as making the case for targeted investment and support in such doubly disadvantaged neighbourhoods. This is something that government is supportive of: the latest announcement by DCMS about the Community Wealth Fund in the Dormant Assets Scheme Strategy says that it "is intended to target doubly disadvantaged communities, experiencing high deprivation and low social capital."

We know that social capital is a key component to favourable social and economic conditions. As the government says referencing 3ni's recent research in its introduction to the Plan for Neighbourhoods prospectus: "The evidence is clear that those places with stronger social capital have higher educational attainment, lower crime and faster economic growth." The Big Local programme, the largest example of community-led place-based change the country has ever seen, has demonstrated the value of building community capacity and investing in local social infrastructure in 150 disadvantaged communities in England, whilst 3ni's work with local authorities has shown that there is an increasing interest in placing power, resources and decision-making into the hands of local communities.

This exciting and innovative research report is an important contribution to the evidence base as to the role played by hyper-local, resident-led working in improving neighbourhood outcomes, particularly when it comes to tackling two of the most pressing policy challenges we are grappling with today: reducing crime and anti-social behaviour and improving economic outcomes. The implications for policy and practice are simple but significant: neighbourhood working works. Investing in social infrastructure and building social capital creates community efficacy and impact. And supporting communities to take action to improve their local neighbourhood achieves tangible results.

Dan Crowe
Director, 3ni

Executive Summary

This report explores whether areas supported by hyper-local resident-led regeneration initiatives (Big Local/neighbourhood-based initiative areas) have experienced better socio-economic and community safety outcomes compared to comparable areas without such interventions (what we have termed benchmark areas).

To explore the impact of resident-led regeneration on socio-economic outcomes, we adopted a matched-area comparative design, selecting a sample of neighbourhoods with and without such neighbourhood-based initiatives (NBIs). The intervention group consists of areas participating in the Big Local programme or other NBIs, with a focus on areas facing significant deprivation. These areas represent the largest and most structured examples of resident-led neighbourhood working in England.

To create a robust counterfactual, a long-list of potential benchmark areas was generated using a combination of socio-demographic profiling and deprivation metrics. Specifically, candidate comparison areas were selected to closely match Big Local areas based on the 2019 Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) and the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Output Area Classification (OAC 2011), which groups areas with similar census-derived socio-economic characteristics.

This initial shortlist of potential benchmark areas was then subject to in-depth qualitative review, including desk research and interviews, to identify whether any form of NBI —resident or professionally led–was present. Areas with no evidence of such interventions were retained as valid benchmarks. After this rigorous filtering process, a final sample of Big Local/NBI areas and 29 matched benchmark areas was established. These formed the basis of our comparative analysis of socio-economic outcomes.

Seven socio-economic indicators were selected for the analysis – covering the themes of worklessness, poverty, crime, neighbourhood desirability and economic strength. Indicators were selected where they were available on a consistent basis over a 10-year period (with the majority of indicators collected between 2011 and 2021 – coinciding with the timeframe when the Big Local programme was in operation).

The table below summarises this analysis, showing the performance of the seven socio-economic indicators from 2011 to 2021 (or closest years available), focusing on both direction of change and statistical significance.

Table 1: Summary of analysis

Indicator	Positive Trend?	Better relative performance?	Performance difference statistically significant?	Better absolute outcome?	Outcome difference statistically significant?
Out-of-Work Benefits	✗	✓	✗	✓	✓
Children in Low-Income Households	✗	✓	✓	✗	✓
Overall Crime Rate	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Burglary Rate	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
Criminal Damage	✗	✓	✓	✓	✓
Average Property Price	✓	✓	✗	✓	✓
Business Activity	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓

Note: Positive trend refers to whether an area has seen absolute improvement over the time period, relative performance refers to improvement relative to the benchmark area and absolute outcome refers to the indicator score for the most recent timepoint.

Table 2: Summary of performance of NBI areas on the key socio-economic indicators:

1. Out-of-Work Benefits

Finding: Big Local/neighbourhood-based initiatives (NBI) had slightly smaller increases in benefit claimants than benchmark areas.

Direction of Travel: Slight increase in both areas.

Significance: Workless rates are now significantly lower in Big Local/NBI areas.

Conclusion: Positive relative outcome for Big Local/NBI, although the absolute trend was negative.

2. Children in Relative Low-Income Households

Finding: Both area types saw a rise in children living in low-income households, but the increase was significantly smaller in Big Local/NBI.

Significance: Statistically significant difference and relative improvement.

Conclusion: Positive relative outcome for Big Local/NBI, although the absolute trend was negative.

3. Overall Crime Rate

Finding: Crime rates fell in both area types, with a greater and statistically significant reduction in Big Local/NBI.

Conclusion: Clear improvement in both absolute and relative terms for Big Local/NBI.

4. Burglary Rate

Finding: Significant drop in burglary in both area types, with Big Local/NBI performing better.

Significance: Improvement is significant in both areas, but no statistically significant difference in relative change.

Conclusion: Strong performance, though relative gains are not clearly attributable.

5. Criminal Damage

Finding: Both areas experienced an increase in criminal damage, but Big Local/NBI had a significantly smaller rise.

Significance: Statistically significant positive relative performance.

Conclusion: Big Local/NBI have seen a relative improvement, despite the overall worsening trend; suggesting these initiatives are having a positive impact on neighbourhood cohesion in the context of a deterioration in overall outcomes.

6. Average Property Price

Finding: Property values rose in both groups, with Big Local/NBI areas now showing higher property prices.

Significance: Property prices are now significantly higher in Big Local/NBI areas than benchmark areas – this was not previously the case – however, the overall number of transactions is too small to demonstrate conclusively whether the relative trend is statistically significant.

Conclusion: Positive trend, and some evidence of distinctive improvement due to regeneration efforts.

7. Local Business Activity

Finding: Both areas saw business growth, but Big Local/NBI started from a lower base and made larger absolute gains.

Significance: Statistically significant improvement in both absolute terms and relative to benchmark areas.

Conclusion: Encouraging sign of regeneration contributing to local economic vibrancy.

The findings show that Big Local/NBI areas perform better overall than benchmark areas across all the indicators, particularly in crime reduction, business growth, and relative child poverty outcomes, with four of the seven indicators showing statistically significant improvements. Moreover in a further two indicators, Big Local/NBI areas showed statistically significantly better outcomes than across benchmark areas in more recent time periods (whereas for the base time point, the differences were not statistically significant). Whilst the results vary by outcome, these are promising signs that resident-led neighbourhood-based initiatives may be contributing to the improvement of a local area.

Introduction

This paper explores the extent to which resident-led neighbourhood-based locality working is leading to improved socio-economic outcomes in deprived areas. It follows our earlier experimental research report, 'Everybody needs good neighbourhoods', which attempted to do robust statistical analysis using bespoke 'counterfactuals' as benchmark areas and comparing them to typologically-similar hyper-local areas that were home to examples of neighbourhood-based initiatives (NBIs). This sequel to the 2023 paper uses a much larger sample size of NBI and counterfactual benchmark areas, with 29 of each, allowing for the testing of statistical significance.

The approach that we have taken is to compare the performance of a sample of highly deprived wards, where Big Local or some other form of NBI is present, on key socio-economic indicators, and to benchmark their performance against a set of similarly deprived wards where no such neighbourhood-based working is present.

Using a a difference-in-differences (DiD) approach, these two areas are compared across seven socio-economic indicators covering the themes of worklessness, poverty, crime, neighbourhood desirability and economic strength. Indicators were selected where they were available on a consistent basis at a sub-Local Authority neighbourhood level over a 10-year period (with the majority of indicators collected between 2011 and 2021 – coinciding with a timeframe when the Big Local programme was in operation). A more detailed explanation of the area matching, indicator selection, and methodological choices is available in Appendix A, alongside a full list of areas.

Neighbourhoods represent a critical scale for policy intervention as deprivation and needs tend to cluster at this level rather than being evenly distributed across larger local authority areas (Frontier Economics, 2025). This clustering effect means that neighbourhoods with greater need are unlikely to benefit from regeneration or growth occurring in nearby areas, especially where transport and social infrastructure is weak (CPP, 2024; All-Party Parliamentary Group for 'Left Behind' Neighbourhoods, 2023).

The characteristics of neighbourhoods - including access to social infrastructure, public services, and community networks - also have strong effects on resident outcomes (Frontier Economics, 2025).

Places with strong social fabric tend to experience lower levels of crime (Gulma, 2018; Frontier Economics, 2021; Albertson, 2021), while social infrastructure helps build stronger community connections ('social capital') that support upward mobility and economic opportunity (The British Academy, 2023; Chetty et al., 2022). These social ties and spaces also support health prevention by reducing isolation and enabling preventative services that reduce clinical demand (NHS Confederation, 2024).

Many prior neighbourhood-based initiatives like the Big Local programme have focused on building up this community capacity and strengthening local social networks to build sustainable, long-term change. Others, such as the New Deal for Communities (NDC), focused on more specific outcomes like crime and poverty but tended to emphasise agency for local residents in shaping programmes. NDC areas saw improvements on 32 of 36 core indicators across measures of health, education, and crime (Crisp et al., 2023). For 26 out of the 27 indicators where significance testing was possible, this change was statistically significant.

Research spanning over 40 years of place-based programmes found they were most effective when focused on small geographic areas (8,000-10,000 people), emphasised building community capacity, and provided long-term funding (Tyler et al., 2019). This report analyses the differential outcomes between neighbourhoods that have had NBIs and those that have not, contributing to the evidence base on whether targeted interventions in neighbourhoods can address the concentrated disadvantage that characterises many of England's most deprived communities. The findings show that, across all indicators, outcomes were better in neighbourhoods with resident-led initiatives, and that in four of the seven cases these differences were statistically significant.

Table 4. Indicators included in the analysis.

Indicator	Source	Time period coverage	Lowest geographic level
People claiming out of work benefits (%)	Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)	2011 to 2021	Lower-layer Super Output Area (LSOA)
Children aged 0-19 in relative low-income families (%)	DWP	2014 to 2021	Lower-layer Super Output Area (LSOA)
Overall Crime, rate per 1,000 population	Police UK	2010/11 to 2020/21	Lower-layer Super Output Area (LSOA)
Burglaries, rate per 1,000 households	Police UK	2010/11 to 2020/21	Lower-layer Super Output Area (LSOA)
Criminal damage, rate per 1,000 population	Police UK	2010/11 to 2020/21	Lower-layer Super Output Area (LSOA)
Overall property price	Land Registry	Dec-2010 to Nov-2013 and Dec-2019 to Nov-2022	Output Area (OA)
VAT registered local business units (rate per 10,000 population)	Office for National Statistics (ONS)	2011 to 2021	Middle-layer Super Output Area (MSOA)

Claiming Out-of-Work Benefits

Definition: The out-of-work benefits indicator shows the proportion of the working-age population who were receiving either Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), Incapacity Benefit (IB), Severe Disablement Allowance (SDA), Income Support (IS), Carers Allowance (CA) or Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) in 2011 compared against the proportion of the working age population who were receiving either Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), Incapacity Benefit (IB), Severe Disablement Allowance (SDA), Income Support (IS), Carers Allowance (CA), Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) or Universal Credit (UC) where conditionality regime is either Searching for Work, Preparing for Work, Planning for Work or No Work Requirements in 2021.

Claiming out-of-work benefits is a core indicator of economic exclusion and local employment challenges. It reflects residents' ability to engage in the labour market and is often used as a proxy for economic disadvantage.

The tables and chart below summarise the performance of *Big Local/NBI Areas* and on this indicator between 2011 and 2021.

Table 5A: Change in the proportion of people claiming out-of-work benefits (%) in *Big Local/NBI and Benchmark Areas.*

	2011		2021		Percentage Point Change
	Value	95% CI	Value	95% CI	
Big Local/NBI	30.4%	+-0.2%	31.1%	+-0.2%	0.7%
Benchmark Areas	30.3%	+-0.2%	31.6%	+-0.2%	1.3%

Table 5B: Summary of performance of Big Local/NBI Areas based on the change in the proportion of people claiming out-of-work benefits between 2011 and 2021 – compared with *Benchmark Areas.*

Do *Big Local/NBI Areas* have better outcomes on this measure?	Yes
Is the difference statistically significant?	Yes
Have *Big Local/NBI Areas* seen a positive direction of travel on this measure (seeing improvement)?	No
Is the trend statistically significant?	No
Are *Big Local/NBI Areas* performing better than *Benchmark Areas* on this measure?	Yes
Is the change in relative performance statistically significant?	No

Chart 1. Proportion of people claiming out-of-work benefits (%) in 2011 and 2021 in *Big Local/NBI* and *Benchmark Areas* (the error bars show 95% confidence intervals).
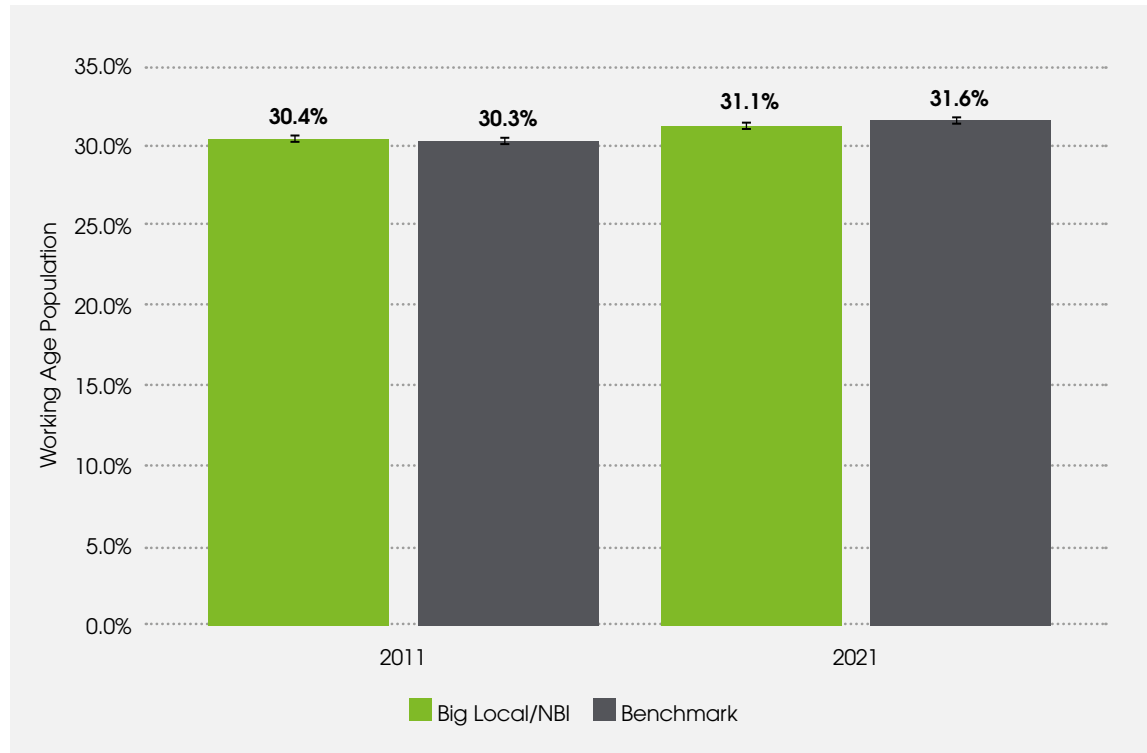
Between 2011 and 2021, the proportion of working-age adults claiming out-of-work benefits increased slightly in both *Big Local/NBI Areas* and their matched *Benchmark Areas. Big Local/NBI Area*s rose from 30.4% to 31.1% (a 0.7 percentage point increase), while *Benchmark Areas* rose from 30.3% to 31.6%, a slightly larger 1.3 point increase (Table 5A). While there was no significant difference in overall workless rates in the earlier time period,

Big Local/NBI Areas now have a statistically significantly lower proportion people receiving out of work benefits than across *Benchmark Areas.* This suggests that worklessness has increased in *Big Local/NBI Area*s alike, *Big Local/NBI Areas* have not been impacted to the same extent as across *Benchmark areas* (albeit the difference in the margin of increase is not statistically significant).

Children in Relative Low-Income Households

Definition: Shows the proportion of children aged 0-19 in relative low-income families. Relative low income is defined as a family in low income Before Housing Costs (BHC) in the reference year. A family must have claimed one or more of Universal Credit, Tax Credits or Housing Benefit at any point in the financial year to be classed as low income in these statistics. Children are dependent individuals aged under 16; or aged 16 to 19 in full-time non-advanced education. These new statistics complement and should be viewed as a companion release to the Households Below Average Income (HBAI) survey on children in low-income households which provides National and Regional estimates but not local area estimates. These local area statistics are calibrated to, and thus match, the 3-year average HBAI survey estimates at Region and Country level for Great Britain. These statistics have replaced DWPs Children in out-of-work benefit households and HMRCs Personal Tax Credits: Children in low-income families local measure. Rate calculated as = (Children aged 0-19 in relative low-income families)/(Total children aged 0-19 years)*100.

The proportion of children living in relative low-income households is a vital measure of family-level poverty and long-term disadvantage. It reflects both parental earnings and broader structural inequalities.

The tables and chart below summarise the performance of *Big Local/NBI Areas* and on this indicator between 2014 and 2021.

Table 6A: Change in the proportion of children aged 0-19 in relative low-income families (%) in *Big Local/NBI and Benchmark Areas.*

	2014		2021		Percentage Point Change
	Value	95% CI	Value	95% CI	
Big Local/NBI	28.7%	+-0.3%	34.2%	+-0.3%	5.5%
Benchmark Areas	25.2%	+-0.3%	33.2%	+-0.3%	8.0%

Table 6B: Summary of performance of *Big Local/NBI* Areas based on the change in the proportion of children aged 0-19 in relative low-income families between 2014 and 2021 – compared with *Benchmark Areas.*

Do *Big Local/NBI Areas* have better outcomes on this measure?	No
Is the difference statistically significant?	Yes
Have *Big Local/NBI Areas* seen a positive direction of travel on this measure (seeing improvement)?	No
Is the trend statistically significant?	Yes
Are *Big Local/NBI Areas* performing better than *Benchmark Areas* on this measure?	Yes
Is the change in relative performance statistically significant?	Yes

Chart 2. Proportion of children aged 0-19 in relative low-income families (%) in 2014 and 2021 in *Big Local/NBI* and *Benchmark Areas* (the error bars show 95% confidence intervals).
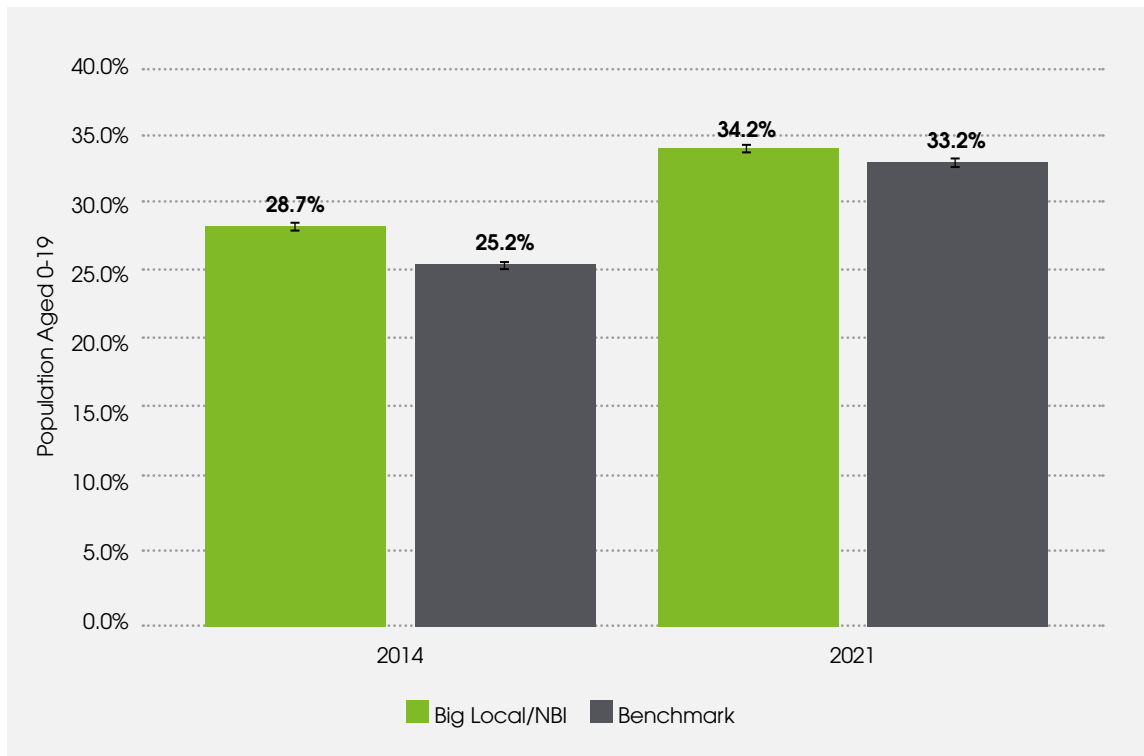
From 2014 to 2021, the percentage of children in low-income households increased in both areas. However, the increase was significantly smaller in *Big Local/NBI Areas* (rising from 28.7% to 34.2%, a 5.5 point increase) compared to Benchmark Areas (from 25.2% to 33.2%, a 8 point increase) (Table 6A). While both groups worsened, *Big Local/NBI Areas* performed relatively better, and this difference was statistically significant (Table 6B). Although the overall trend is negative, the data suggest that *Big Local/NBI Areas* may have experienced a mitigating effect.

Case study: Communities mitigating the effects of poverty in Sidley

The village of Sidley near Bexhill-on-Sea faces stark deprivation that particularly impacts its children and young people. With unemployment double the regional average and nearly a quarter of residents holding no qualifications, many families struggle with the basics. Local sports facilities have closed, many community spaces have been repurposed, and accessible venues are hard to find. Against this backdrop, the resident-led Heart of Sidley Big Local partnership launched in 2012 to regenerate their neighborhood and create new opportunities, particularly for young people with few prospects.

Heart of Sidley's approach combines immediate support with long-term opportunity by investing in their people and places. The partnership distributed 45 small grants to the community totalling £95,000, funding everything from Scout group equipment to primary school refurbishments. Their most ambitious achievement – a Levelling Up-funded football pitch with a community hub and cafe – has created quality and health-supporting facilities for locals while generating crucial revenue for the wider community. This revenue can support many of the activities and services the partnership has funded in the past, from BMX lessons for kids to food vouchers and debt advice for struggling families.

The partnership has recently secured outside funding from the Government's Holiday Activities and Food programme, which provides children from low-income backgrounds with healthy and free meals, enriching activities, and free childcare places. Their programmes have also directly targeted the effects of local and child poverty, from food vouchers to small loans and debt advice for residents struggling financially. Now operating as a sustainable legacy organisation, Heart of Sidley recognises that tackling local deprivation and creating opportunities for young people requires both addressing immediate struggles and building the social infrastructure that creates pathways to better futures.

Overall Crime Rate

Definition: Shows the 12-month total of neighbourhood-level incidents of criminal offences, and as a rate per 1,000 residents. The incidents were located to the point at which they occurred and allocated to the appropriate Lower-layer Super Output Area (LSOA). Rate calculated as = (Total offences)/(Total population)*1000.

Crime levels are an important indicator of community safety, trust, and quality of life. The negative effects of crime are not just restricted to those individuals who are personally victimised, but also transfer to friends, family, neighbours and colleagues. If left unchecked, these problems may become self-reinforcing, as more and more people in an area experience victimisation, either personally or via someone they know. If such problems persist over time, a neighbourhood may gain a reputation as a dangerous place to live, resulting in population out-migration, which can further reinforce the cycle of decline.

The tables and chart below summarise the performance of *Big Local/NBI Areas* and on this indicator between 2011 and 2021.

Table 7A: Change in recorded crime offence rate (per 1,000 population) in *Big Local/NBI and Benchmark Areas.*

	2011		2021		Percentage Point Change
	Value	95% CI	Value	95% CI	
Big Local/NBI	143.4	+-1.2	124.3	+-1.1	-19.1
Benchmark Areas	171.9	+-1.3	161.4	+-1.2	-10.5

Table 7B: Summary of performance of *Big Local/NBI Areas* based on the change in recorded crime offence rate (per 1,000) between 2011 and 2021 – compared with *Benchmark Areas.*

Do *Big Local/NBI Areas* have better outcomes on this measure?	Yes
Is the difference statistically significant?	Yes
Have *Big Local/NBI Areas* seen a positive direction of travel on this measure (seeing improvement)?	Yes
Is the trend statistically significant?	Yes
Are *Big Local/NBI Areas* performing better than *Benchmark Areas* on this measure?	Yes
Is the change in relative performance statistically significant?	Yes

Chart 3. Overall recorded crime offences (per 1,000 population) in 2011 and 2021 in _Big Local/NBI_ and _Benchmark Areas_ (the error bars show 95% confidence intervals).
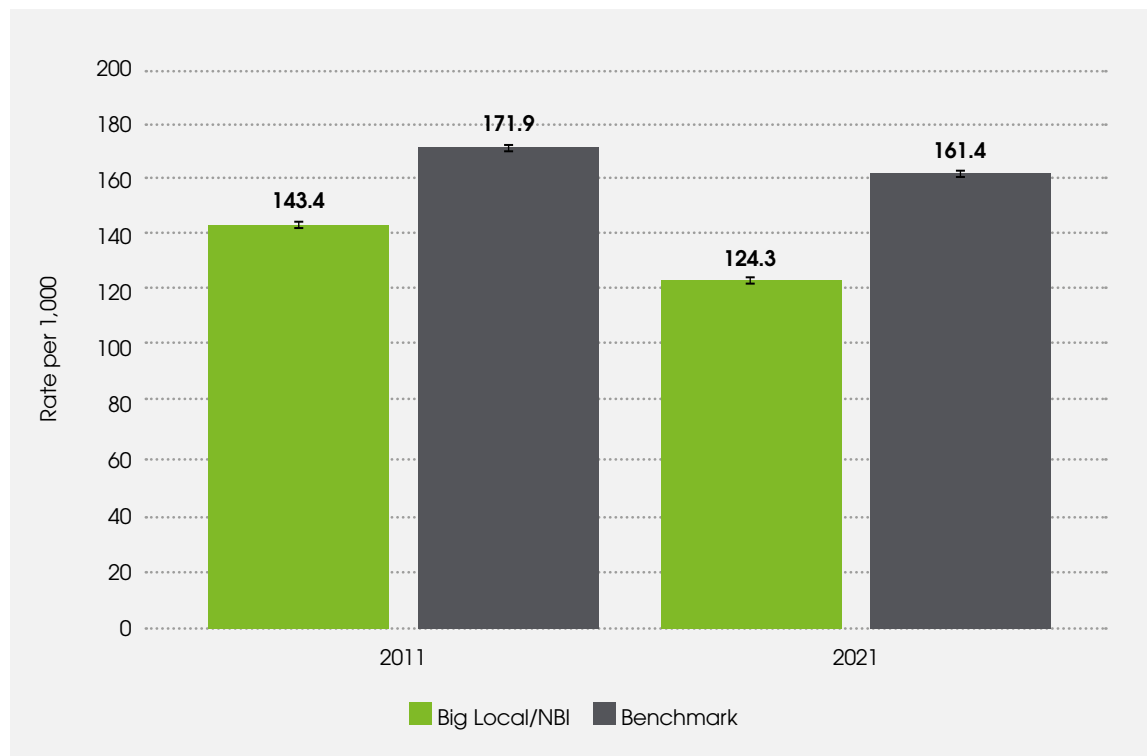
Between 2011 and 2021, overall crime rates fell significantly across both areas, but the reduction was greater in _Big Local/ NBI Areas._ Crime in _Big Local/NBI Areas_ dropped from 143.4 to 124.3 incidents per 1,000 population (a fall of 19.1), whereas _Benchmark Areas_ saw a smaller reduction from 171.9 to 161.4 (a fall of 10.5) (Table 7A). The trend was statistically significant and suggests that _Big Local/NBI Areas_ not only improved but also outperformed similar non-intervention areas (Table 7B). This provides strong evidence that neighbourhood-level initiatives may have supported improved community safety outcomes.

Case study: A neighbourhood approach to tackling youth crime in Grange, London

The Grange is an estate in East Finchley, nestled between High Road and the North Circular in London. It has around 7,000 residents and severe pockets of deprivation - even though you can walk around 20 minutes from it and find yourself on Bishops Avenue, where the average house price is just under £7.5 million.

A big worry for residents is knife crime, and a lack of diversionary activities that keep young people connected and occupied. To fill this gap, the Grange Big Local partnership funded a local martial arts gym, and organised self-defence activities to reach and gain the trust of young people living locally at risk of knife crime and gang violence. Residents recognised that these are the types of recreational spaces and social connections that offer young people solidarity, diversion, and a way out.

The group was able to build on the success of this project by employing trusted youth workers to provide support to the most vulnerable young people, without them feeling judged or monitored. Two attendees had the scheme written into their youth offending orders, because - as one said - if he'd had it earlier, maybe he "wouldn't have got into trouble".

Burglary Rate

Definition: Shows the 12-month total of neighbourhood-level burglaries, and as a rate per 1,000 households. Burglary is defined using a series of National Crime Recording System codes covering different types of this crime. The incidents were located to the point at which they occurred and allocated to the appropriate Lower-layer Super Output Area (LSOA). Rate calculated as = (Burglary recorded offences)/(All households)*1000.

Burglary is a highly visible and distressing form of crime, often linked to perceptions of safety and social cohesion.

The tables and chart below summarise the performance of *Big Local/NBI Areas* and on this indicator between 2011 and 2021.

Table 8A: Change in recorded burglary rate (per 1,000 households) in Big Local/NBI and Benchmark Areas.

	2011		2021		Percentage Point Change
	Value	95% CI	Value	95% CI	
Big Local/NBI	24.9	+-0.8	11.6	+-0.6	-13.3
Benchmark Areas	28.4	+-0.9	15.9	+-0.6	-12.5

Table 8B: Summary of performance of *Big Local/NBI Areas* based on the change in recorded burglary rate (per 1,000 households) between 2011 and 2021 – compared with *Benchmark Areas*.

Do Big Local/NBI Areas have better outcomes on this measure?	Yes
Is the difference statistically significant?	Yes
Have Big Local/NBI Areas seen a positive direction of travel on this measure (seeing improvement)?	Yes
Is the trend statistically significant?	Yes
Are Big Local/NBI Areas performing better than Benchmark Areas on this measure?	Yes
Is the change in relative performance statistically significant?	No

Chart 4. Recorded burglary rate (per 1,000 households) in 2011 and 2021 in *Big Local/NBI* and *Benchmark Areas* (the error bars show 95% confidence intervals).
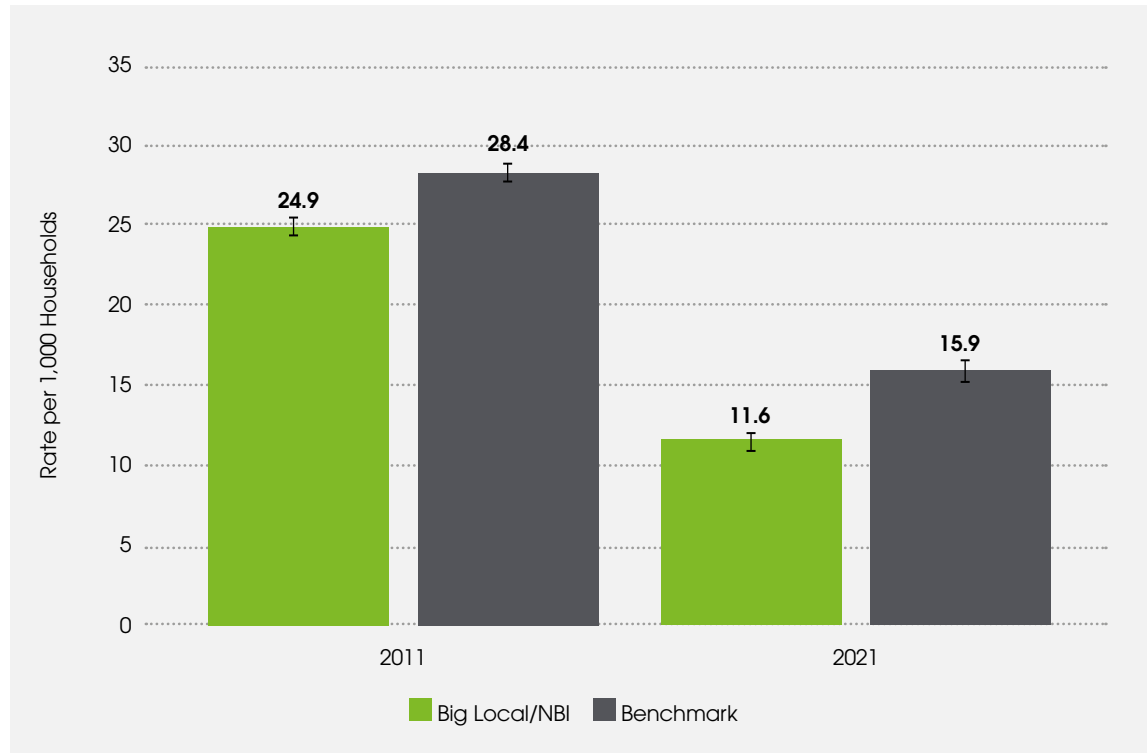
From 2011 to 2021, burglary rates halved in both *Big Local/NBI* and *Benchmark Areas,* with *Big Local/NBI* seeing a slightly larger drop of 13.3 per 1,000 households, compared with 12.5 in *Benchmark Areas* (Table 8A). Although Big Local/NBI Areas started with a slightly lower burglary rate and ended with a more favourable figure in 2021 (11.6 compared to 15.9), the difference in the change was not statistically significant (Table 8B). This suggests both area types experienced similarly positive trajectories, with Big Local/NBI Areas maintaining a slight edge.

Criminal Damage

Definition: Shows the 12-month total of neighbourhood-level incidents of criminal damage, and as a rate per 1,000 residents. Criminal damage is defined from the National Crime Recording System codes for this type of crime. The incidents were located to the point at which they occurred and allocated to the appropriate Lower-layer Super Output Area (LSOA). Rate calculated as = (Criminal damage and arson offences)/(Total population)*1000.

Incidents of criminal damage, including vandalism and arson, are an important indicator of neighbourhood perception and cohesion, which resident-led neighbourhood initiatives aim to address.

The tables and chart below summarise the performance of *Big Local/NBI Areas* and on this indicator between 2011 and 2021.

Table 9A: Change in recorded incidents of criminal damage (per 1,000 population) in *Big Local/NBI* and *Benchmark Areas*

	2011		2021		Percentage Point Change
	Value	95% CI	Value	95% CI	
Big Local/NBI	4.1	+-0.2	11.9	+-0.4	7.8
Benchmark Areas	4.7	+-0.2	15.3	+-0.4	10.6

Table 9B: Summary of performance of *Big Local/NBI Areas* based on the change in recorded incidents of criminal damage (per 1,000) between 2011 and 2021 – compared with *Benchmark Areas*.

Do Big Local/NBI Areas have better outcomes on this measure?	Yes
Is the difference statistically significant?	Yes
Have Big Local/NBI Areas seen a positive direction of travel on this measure (seeing improvement)?	No
Is the trend statistically significant?	Yes
Are Big Local/NBI Areas performing better than Benchmark Areas on this measure?	Yes
Is the change in relative performance statistically significant?	Yes

Chart 5. Overall recorded incidents of criminal damage (per 1,000 population) in 2011 and 2021 in *Big Local/NBI* and *Benchmark Areas* (the error bars show 95% confidence intervals).
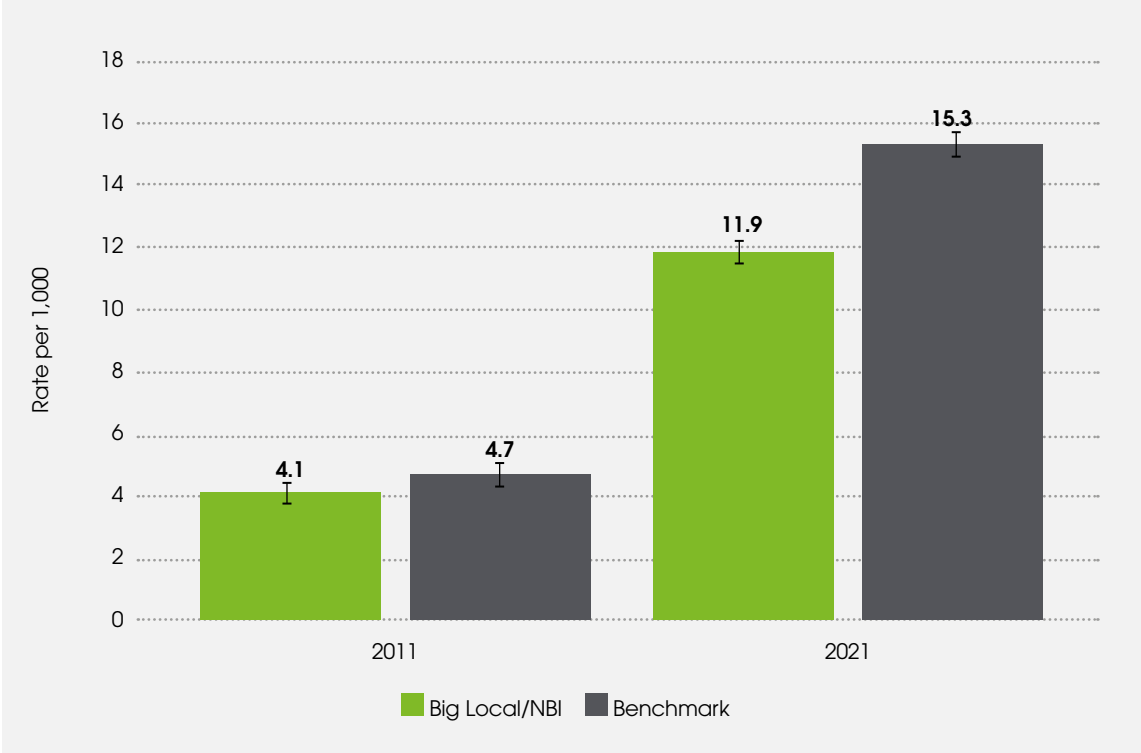
Both Big Local/NBI and Benchmark Areas experienced increases in this type of crime between 2011 and 2021. However, the rise was significantly smaller in Big Local/NBI Areas, where rates grew from 4.1 to 11.9 per 1,000 population (a 7.8 point rise), compared to Benchmark Areas which rose from 4.7 to 15.3 (a 10.6 point rise) (Table 9A). The difference is statistically significant, suggesting Big Local/NBI Areas performed relatively better in containing this type of crime, even though the overall direction of travel was negative (Table 9B).

Average Property Price

Definition: Shows the average house-price for all properties, over a six-year period. The Land Registry collect data on all housing transactions, published by individual property and date.

House prices offer a broad indication of neighbourhood desirability and potentially the effects of neighbourhood-led regeneration on improving the liveability of an area.

The tables and chart below summarise the performance of *Big Local/NBI Areas* and on this indicator.

The data is collected over two six-year periods between December 2007 and November 2013, and between December 2018 and November 2024 in order to cover a sufficient number of transactions to determine whether the observed relationships are statistically significant.

Table 10A: Change in average property price (£) in *Big Local/NBI* and *Benchmark Areas*.

	2007-2013		2018-2024		
	Value	95% CI	Value	95% CI	Change (£)
Big Local/NBI	£121,730	£5,056	£173,610	£5,690	£51,879
Benchmark Areas	£120,342	£4,880	£161,549	£5,270	£41,207

Table 10B: Summary of performance of *Big Local/NBI Areas* based on the change in recorded average property prices between 2007-2013 and 2018-2024 – compared with *Benchmark Areas*.

Do Big Local/NBI Areas have better outcomes on this measure?	Yes
Is the difference statistically significant?	Yes
Have Big Local/NBI Areas seen a positive direction of travel on this measure (seeing improvement)?	Yes
Is the trend statistically significant?	Yes
Are Big Local/NBI Areas performing better than Benchmark Areas on this measure?	Yes
Is the change in relative performance statistically significant?	No

Chart 6. Average property price (per 1,000 population) in 2007-2013 and 2018-2024 in *Big Local/NBI* and *Benchmark Areas* (the error bars show 95% confidence intervals).
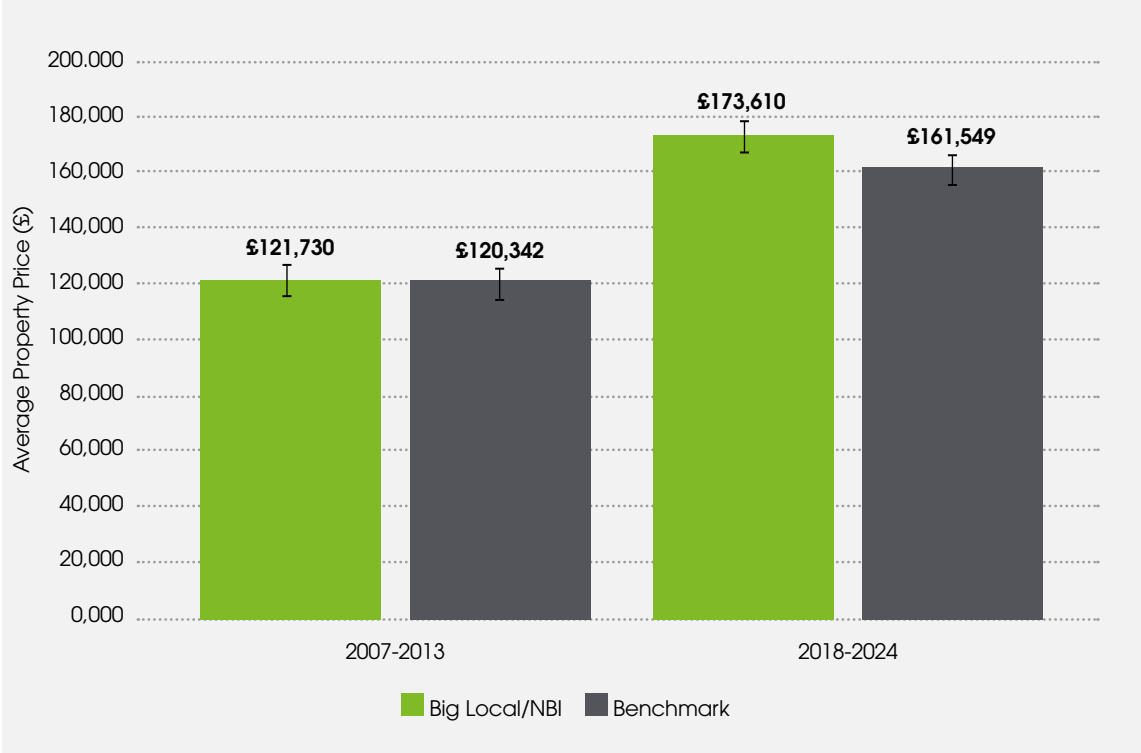
Between 2007/2013 and 2018/24, average property prices increased substantially in both *Big Local/NBI* and *Benchmark Areas. Big Local/NBI Areas* saw prices rise from £121,730 to £173,610 (an increase of £51,879), while *Benchmark Areas* rose from £120,342 to £161,549 (an increase of £41,207) (Table 10A). While there was no significant difference in house prices in the earlier time period, *Big Local/NBI Areas* now have statistically significantly higher property prices than across *Benchmark Areas*. This suggests that resident led-initiatives may have contributed towards general improvements to the neighbourhood, which are reflected in significantly higher property prices in areas that have benefited from those initiatives[1].

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[1] However, it is worth noting that it was not possible to conclude that the higher overall increase in property prices was statistically significant. Property prices increased by between 41,000 and 63,000 in *Big Local/NBI Areas*, compared with an increase of between 32,000 and 42,000 in *Benchmark Areas* – highlighting a slight overlap. We would expect that with more transactions we would be able to demonstrate a statistically significant relationship – nevertheless, it is possible assert that property prices are statistically significantly higher in Big Local NBI's using the more recent timepoint (where this was not previously the case) suggesting that the initiatives have had an impact on the desirability of the neighbourhood.

Local Business Activity

Definition: Shows the number of VAT based local business units per 10,000 working age population. Local business units are a business enterprise or part of a business enterprise (e.g. a workshop, factory, warehouse, office, mine or depot) situated in a geographically identified place (e.g. where the business is located rather than the legal head office). The count of VAT registered local business units taken from the Inter-Departmental Business Register (IDBR). The IDBR, which is the comprehensive list of UK businesses that is used by government for statistical purposes is fully compliant with the European Union of Regulation on Harmonisation of Business Registers for Statistical purposes. It provides the main sampling frame for surveys of businesses carried out by the ONS and by other government departments. It is also a key data source for analyses of business activity. Rate calculated as = (All VAT based local units)/(Population aged 16-64)*10000. Note: Data is imported at MSOA level and apportioned down to LSOA and Output Area. This means Big Local/NBI and Benchmark data has been built from MSOA averages.

The density of local businesses is a useful proxy for economic vitality and entrepreneurial activity. It also reflects opportunities for local employment and services.

The tables and chart below summarise the performance of *Big Local/NBI Areas* and *Benchmark Areas.*

Table 11A: Change in VAT based local business units per 10,000 working age population in *Big Local/NBI* and *Benchmark Areas.*

	2011		2021		
	Value	**95% CI**	**Value**	**95% CI**	**Rate Change**
Big Local/NBI	337.6	+-2.0	478.5	+-2.0	140.9
Benchmark Areas	474.7	+-2.1	578.8	+-2.0	104.1

Table 10B: Summary of performance of *Big Local/NBI Areas* based on the change in business units between 2011 and 2021 – compared with *Benchmark Areas.*

Do Big Local/NBI Areas have better outcomes on this measure?	No
Is the difference statistically significant?	Yes
Have Big Local/NBI Areas seen a positive direction of travel on this measure (seeing improvement)?	Yes
Is the trend statistically significant?	Yes
Are Big Local/NBI Areas performing better than Benchmark Areas on this measure?	Yes
Is the change in relative performance statistically significant?	Yes

Chart 7. VAT based local business units per 10,000 working age population 2011 and 2021 in *Big Local/NBI* and *Benchmark Areas* (the error bars show 95% confidence intervals).
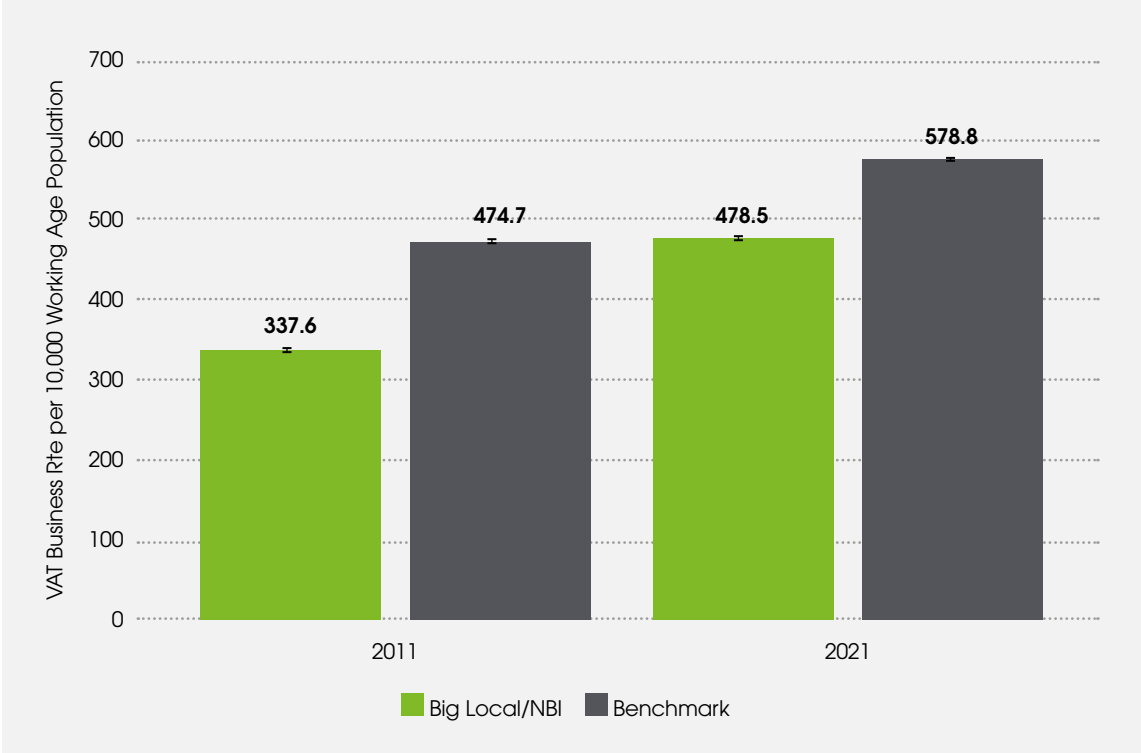
From 2011 to 2021, *Big Local/NBI Areas* experienced a significant increase in business units per 10,000 working-age residents–from 337.6 to 478.5 (a rise of 140.9), compared to an increase of 104.1 in Benchmark Areas (from 474.7 to 578.8) (Table 7A). Although *Benchmark Areas* started with more businesses, *Big Local/ NBI Areas* saw a larger and statistically significant gain, both in absolute and relative terms (Table 7B). This points to promising signs that regeneration may have supported local economic growth in these neighbourhoods.

Case study: Building community wealth in Lawrence Weston

Lawrence Weston is a post-war housing estate on the outskirts of Bristol with a population of around 7,000 people. Poor transport links have left the estate cut off socially and economically, with deprivation levels among the highest in the UK – particularly when it comes to skills, income and employment.

Ambition Lawrence Weston (ALW) was set up in 2012 to take action after a decline in services and closure of local facilities. Their goal is to oversee and deliver local regeneration on behalf of a resident led partnership. Supported by a £1.15 million grant under the Big Local programme, ALW has brought about significant positive change for the area.

ALW has created an employment and enterprise hub which helps residents find work, provides training courses and apprenticeships, and supports locals with financial advice. The partnership, after initially trialing a community bus service to help residents get to work in the city, developed a successful business case for a public transport provider which brought a local bus service back to the area. Similarly, one of their most impactful projects was commissioning research which helped attract a Lidl to the area, bringing new jobs to the estate and giving residents access to cheaper food.

After discovering that 70 per cent of residents were struggling with energy bills, ALW partnered with Bristol Energy Co-operative to build a solar farm. It generates enough electricity to power 1,000 homes a year, with profits reinvested back into community projects. And in 2020, ALW secured planning permission and external funding to build a community-owned wind farm. The 4.2-megawatt turbine generates enough energy to power 3,000 homes and is expected to generate £300,000 a year for the community – driving local regeneration and attracting new business activity.

In total, ALW estimate that from the initial £1.15m in Big Local funding they have been able to leverage in a further £15m in external funding and investment.

Conclusion

This analysis set out to assess whether resident-led regeneration, as implemented through the Big Local programme and other NBIs, has contributed to improved socio-economic and community outcomes over a ten-year period. By comparing these areas with a carefully matched group of benchmark neighbourhoods–similar in deprivation levels and socio-demographic profile but without such interventions–we sought to isolate the potential added value of these initiatives.

The findings present a nuanced picture. *Big Local/NBI Areas* saw greater improvements in each of the seven indicators relative to *Benchmark Areas* over the period examined, and in four of these cases the differences were statistically significant. Encouraging results were observed particularly in relation to reductions in overall crime, slower growth in child poverty, and stronger local business growth–all outcomes with clear links to enhanced community wellbeing. In the case of crime, *Big Local/NBI Areas* showed a significantly greater reduction in both overall crime and criminal damage, suggesting that resident-led efforts may have contributed to improved safety and cohesion. Likewise, business density in *Big Local/NBI Areas* grew significantly faster than in *Benchmark Areas,* a promising sign of improved economic vitality from a lower base. Similarly, property prices increased more in *Big Local/NBI Areas* and are now significantly higher than in *Benchmark Areas.*

Overall, the balance of evidence points, we believe for the first time, to statistically significant differences in socio-economic outcomes in Big Local and similar neighbourhood-based initiatives, compared to counterfactual places that have not received neighbourhood-based intervention. These hyper-local initiatives, focused on disadvantaged neighbourhoods and overlooked communities, appear to have supported improvements that contribute directly to the national missions of economic growth, reducing barriers to opportunity, and safer streets — and help us see in practical terms where resident-led neighbourhood-level efforts can make the most difference.

Appendix: Identifying Areas to Use in the Study

This section summarises the methodology used to identify deprived areas with resident led neighbourhood-based initiatives (our treatment group) and those without such interventions (our benchmark group).

The approach we have taken is to compare the performance of a sample of highly deprived wards where Big Local or some other form of neighbourhood-based initiative is established, on key indicators of liveability and community need, benchmarked against similarly deprived wards which do not have such interventions.

The starting point was to identify a set of wards with deprivation challenges where the Big Local programme was in operation, as the Big Local programme is the largest resident-led neighbourhood initiative currently in operation[2] in England. Wards were selected if had a Big Local programme operating in all or part of the ward.

The next step was to identify a set of potential benchmark areas with which to compare these Big Local Areas. A long-list of potential benchmark areas was pulled together by identifying wards with similar socio-demographic characteristics and deprivation levels as the Big Local wards. An initial set of wards were identified, where they matched the deprivation levels of the Big Local wards (using the Indices of Deprivation 2019 to identify relative levels of deprivation).

The criteria used to categorise benchmark 'counterfactual' neighbourhoods where locality or neighbourhood working was absent are listed below:

- No groups with paid or unpaid staff undertaking activities which foster community development or advocate for community needs at the neighbourhood scale.

- Absence of organised community activity at the neighbourhood scale. Presence of smaller groups, or groups which are not specifically place-based (e.g. friends of the park, groups connected to a faith community) are included as counterfactual.

- Areas which have groups with a very specific purpose which is not relevant to all residents may be included as counterfactuals – tenants' groups for residents of just one street or block of flats, sports clubs.

- Areas which have had community initiatives may be included as counterfactuals – what's more important here is the degree to which they are organised and permanent. One-off or irregular activities are included as counterfactuals.

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[2] See https://localtrust.org.uk/big-local/about-big-local/ for more information.

- Areas which have organised activity can be counterfactuals if the activity is part of a wider geography – absence of activity led at the community level (1-2 ward focus or smaller).

Following the categorisation of benchmark areas by Shared Intelligence, Local Trust carried out a process of cross-checking a sample of benchmark areas to ensure correct categorisation – this process was done blind to the original categorisation.

However, we are aware that areas with similar levels of deprivation may be different in terms of demographic breakdowns and characteristics. To account for this, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Output Area Classification (OAC) 2011 was used to identify areas with shared characteristics. The OAC is a geo-demographic classification developed by the ONS to group Output Areas into one of 26 Typology Group categories based on their responses to multiple census 2011 questions on demographics, employment, health, housing, skills etc. Each of the selected Big Local wards was assigned a potential benchmark area which was matched as closely as possible in terms of IMD 2019 score and OAC composition.

The wards were selected in several waves. 5 Big Local areas (each with two potential benchmark areas) were selected in Wave 1 in 2021. These were supplemented with a further 11 Big Local areas and 11 benchmark areas in Wave 2, in order to boost the sample of areas used in the research. Finally in Wave 3, 80 Big Local Areas (each with a matching potential benchmark area) were selected.

Shared Intelligence then conducted extensive qualitative analysis of the 80 potential *Benchmark Areas* to determine the extent to which neighbourhood-based initiatives are in operation. The extent of neighbourhood level interventions varied considerably across these areas. However, it was possible to identify areas with some evidence of either resident or professionally led neighbourhood interventions as well as areas with no evidence of neighbourhood working.

Big Local areas with no matching counterfactual *Benchmark Areas* were subsequently removed from the analysis. Following these steps, 29 Big Local/ Neighbourhood Based Initiative and 29 Benchmark wards were used in the study – highlighted in the table below.

Big local and other neighbourhood-based initiatives	NBI Local Authority	Benchmark areas (with no neighbourhood-based initiatives)	Benchmark Area Local Authority
Lozells and East Handsworth	Birmingham	Picton	Liverpool
Elmton-with-Creswell	Bolsover	Dunston	Chesterfield
Gannow	Burnley	East Folkestone	Folkestone and Hythe
Woodhouse Close	County Durham	Shirebrook North West	Bolsover
St Radigunds	Dover	Darlaston South	Walsall
Coseley East	Dudley	Winsford Swanlow and Dene	Cheshire West and Chester
Dunston and Teams	Gateshead	Irwell	Rossendale
Windmill Hill	Halton	Berwick Hills & Pallister	Middlesbrough
Orchard Park and Greenwood	Kingston upon Hull, City of	County	Liverpool
Dewsbury West	Kirklees	Queensgate	Burnley
Northwood	Knowsley	Brambles & Thorntree	Middlesbrough
Harbour	Lancaster	Melcombe Regis	Weymouth and Portland
Wycliffe	Leicester	St Matthew's	Walsall
Clubmoor	Liverpool	Mill Hill	Blackburn with Darwen
Luton and Wayfield	Medway	Spencer	Northampton
Plaistow South	Newham	Dollis Hill	Brent
Budshead	Plymouth	St James's	Dudley
Fratton	Portsmouth	Stoke Park	Ipswich
St Matthew's	Preston	Nechells	Birmingham
Balderstone and Kirkholt	Rochdale	Middleton Park	Leeds
Sidley	Rother	Sandhill	Sunderland
Little Hulton	Salford	Blakenall	Walsall
Harefield	Southampton	Sherwood	Nottingham
Sheppey East	Swale	Sheerness	Swale
Stalybridge North	Tameside	Denton	Newcastle upon Tyne
Brookside	Telford and Wrekin	Moorside	West Lancashire
Palfrey	Walsall	Barton and Tredworth	Gloucester
Latchford East	Warrington	Frodingham	North Lincolnshire
Bidston and St James	Wirral	Page Moss	Knowsley

For the purposes of the primary analysis, the Big Local and other resident-led neighbourhood initiatives and professionally-led neighbourhood initiatives were combined together to produce an overall treatment group. These were then matched against the Benchmark wards in the analysis.

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