



Left
Behind
Neighbourhoods

The Rt.Hon. Oliver Dowden MP
Secretary of State Digital, Culture, Media and Sport
100 Parliament Street
London
SW1A 2BQ

Dear Oliver,

RE: New research identifies the communities most lacking community assets and civil society funding

We are writing as the co-chairs of the APPG for 'left behind' neighbourhoods to request a meeting to discuss new research that highlights the lack of charitable grant funding and community assets in the neighbourhoods that we represent. These neighbourhoods have fewer charities than the English average and have received less than half the charitable funding per head when compared to other areas.

The APPG for 'left behind' neighbourhoods was set up to advocate for improvements in the 225 council wards that are the most 'left behind' in England. These neighbourhoods are both in the top 10% most deprived on the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) and also significantly lack social infrastructure – defined as the places and spaces for people to meet, community activity and physical and digital connectivity. These neighbourhoods are home to 2.4 million people across England and are predominantly located in coastal areas and on the outskirts of post-industrial towns and cities in the North and Midlands.

These wards have worse socio-economic outcomes than other areas across all metrics: worse educational attainment; lower participation in higher education; fewer job opportunities, and significantly worse health outcomes. This new research also finds that they severely lack community spaces and have missed out on their fair share of funding for over a decade.

Residents in 'left behind' neighbourhoods received on average £7.77 in national charitable grant funding per head from 2004 to May 2021, less than half the amount received in other equally economically deprived areas (£19.31) and below the average across England as a whole (£12.23). In addition:

- organisations in 'left behind' neighbourhoods have received approximately half the number of COVID-specific grants from charitable foundations since the start of the pandemic than those received by other deprived areas ranking high on the IMD;
- 'left behind' neighbourhoods were less than half as likely to have a registered charity in their local area than the England average;
- over 70% of the 225 areas had less dedicated community space than the England average;
- 'left behind' neighbourhoods are less likely to have heritage assets within their Local Authorities than in other deprived areas as well as having lower levels of heritage assets than the national average.

Residents in these communities are aware of these issues. Polling undertaken in 'left behind' neighbourhoods found that 43% of residents believed they weren't receiving their fair share compared to other areas. Of those, over half (57% and 55% respectively) believe that their community most lacks places to meet and community and leisure facilities.

These problems are not due to a lack of care from the charitable sector. Where they exist, civil society organisations have been working tirelessly to support residents in 'left behind' neighbourhoods, particularly during the pandemic. The problems identified in this research are often the result of a fraying of civil society within these places coupled with lack of civic capacity more generally, which makes it more difficult for residents to successfully bid for grant funding.

Therefore, whilst we appreciate the work you have done to support the charity sector and civil society during the pandemic, we urgently need direct government interventions to tackle these issues. We need to strengthen civil society in 'left behind' areas, provide more community assets and build the civic capacity of residents, to ensure that these places get their fair share and can level up alongside the rest of the country over the next few years.

We would really appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss our plans to improve prospects in these areas and how we might work together to make them a reality. Perhaps someone in your office could let us know when a meeting might be most convenient for you?

Yours sincerely,

Paul Howell MP
MP for Sedgfield
Co-chair, APPG for 'left behind' neighbourhoods

The Rt.Hon. Dame Diana Johnson DBE MP
MP for Kingston-Upon-Hull North
Co-chair, APPG for 'left behind' neighbourhoods