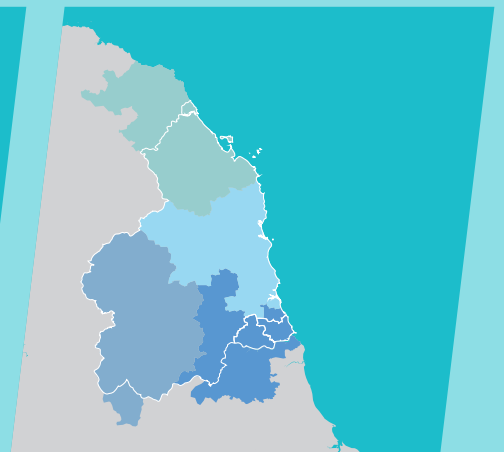
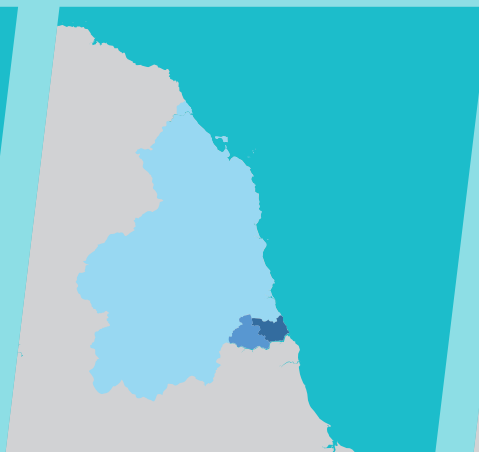


The North of Tyne Metro-Mayor: An Office Without Power?

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Established in 1977, the Centre for Urban and Regional Development Studies (CURDS) at Newcastle University is a research centre internationally renowned for its academic excellence and policy relevance.

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1 Introduction

On 2 May 2019, an election for a new metro-mayor for the North of Tyne area will take place. This report aims to contribute to the debate leading up to the election. It sets out some of the critical issues facing the North East of England and assesses the potential and problems for the new metro-mayor and North of Tyne Combined Authority in addressing them. It is not a comprehensive analysis of the state of the North of Tyne area. Instead, the aim is to highlight some key concerns for the debate in a context where public awareness of the election and such issues is very low.

The creation of the mayoralty has been accompanied by many assertions about its ability to shape the economic prospects of the North of Tyne area. Mayoral candidates have begun to make claims about the changes they will make if they are elected.

This report attempts to offer insights into the North East of England's problems and the likelihood that a metro-mayor could address these.

Main messages:

- The North of Tyne faces a set of deep social and economic challenges that it shares with the rest of the North East region. The challenges go beyond the well-documented measures of relatively weak economic performance and include pressing problems in relation to inequality and well-being. For many people in the region, life is a struggle to make ends meet. The regional economy is exceptionally vulnerable to external shocks. The scale and persistence of these problems suggests that traditional remedies such as more infrastructure and inward investment are likely to be necessary but not sufficient to address them.
- The metro-mayor and North of Tyne Combined Authority have only limited powers and resources to tackle the critical issues facing the region.
- This situation is made more challenging by the geography of the North of Tyne area which was created by a political and administrative fix between national and local government. The area is too small and not a meaningful economic geography for public policy-making and has weak identification amongst the wider public.
- The North of Tyne will have only a 'mini-metro-mayor' with less powers, fewer resources and a weaker political voice compared to the other six metro-mayors and combined authorities in England.
- It might be argued that even limited decentralisation of powers and resources is welcome because it can be built upon and represents the beginnings of a challenge to the highly-centralised governance system in England. In this vein, the metro-mayor and North of Tyne Combined Authority can attempt to make a difference by identifying signal issues around which business, public and civic actors can mobilise and progress (e.g. reducing inequality, improving wellbeing, tackling poor health, Living Wage agreements) and effectively using its new institutions (Inclusive Growth Board, Housing and Land Board, Mayoral Development Corporations) and initiatives (Education Improvement Challenge). More likely though is that a metro-mayor with weak powers and limited resources governing a small area that lacks a meaningful economic geography and is characterised by low public awareness, fails to make an impact upon the large-scale and persistent problems facing the North East. As the new political leader and institution struggle to make an appreciable difference, the danger is that the case for more meaningful devolution of powers and resources is undermined.
- In the longer-term, what is needed is a focus on a more meaningful geography encompassing the whole North East region, a radical devolution of substantive powers and resources and fresh thinking about how to tackle the region's long-standing economic, social and environmental problems.

The remainder of this report outlines the range of challenges which the region faces and the ability of a metro-mayor to tackle these.

2 Health and Wellbeing²

Table 1

Life expectancy for females and males by area, 2018³

	FEMALES	MALES
EAST	83.7	80.4
EAST MIDLANDS	82.9	79.4
LONDON	84.3	80.5
NORTHERN IRELAND	82.3	78.5
NORTH EAST	81.6	77.9
NORTH WEST	81.8	78.2
SCOTLAND	81.1	77.0
SOUTH EAST	84.0	80.6
SOUTH WEST	83.7	80.2
YORKSHIRE & HUMBER	82.4	78.7
WALES	82.8	78.3
WEST MIDLANDS	82.7	78.3

- Health and wellbeing are integral to the quality of people's lives. For life expectancy, at 81.6 years for females and 77.9 years for males, the North East ranks second bottom out of the twelve areas in the UK. Both rates are one and a quarter years below the UK levels for females and males of 82.9 and 79.2 years respectively (Table 1).

Table 2

Average personal wellbeing ratings, North East and England, 2015⁴

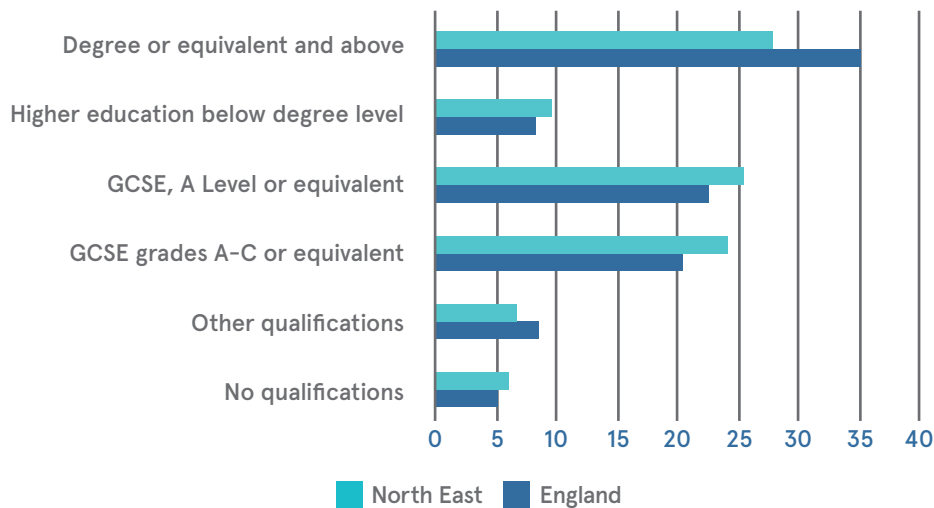
	HAPPINESS	ANXIETY	WORTHWHILE	LIFE SATISFACTION
ENGLAND:	7.37	2.93	7.75	7.52
NORTH EAST:	7.29	2.93	7.71	7.48

- In terms of wellbeing, compared to England, the North East has lower levels of happiness, feelings that what people do in their own lives is worthwhile and life satisfaction, and equal levels of anxiety (Table 2).
- Despite the North East's low ranking compared to other areas and the UK, the metro-mayor and North of Tyne Combined Authority will have only limited powers to influence health and wellbeing outcomes. They will seek to make a difference through employment and economic development activities and in co-ordinating and collaborating with existing health providers but radically new approaches are likely to be necessary to address the region's poor health and wellbeing record.

3 Education and Qualifications

Figure 1

Economically active aged 16–64 by qualification (%), North East and UK, 2019⁵



- Qualifications are a guide to the knowledge and skills people have acquired and how productive they are at work. Compared to the UK the North East has higher levels of economically active people with no qualifications, GCSEs (grades A-C), GCSEs A-level or equivalent and higher education below degree level but lower levels of those with other and degree or equivalent qualifications (Figure 1).
- The metro-mayor and North of Tyne Combined Authority will introduce an Education Improvement Challenge but have limited powers over education and its funding. Training and skills policy is mainly centralised at the national level in England and not devolved. Although the delegation of control over the Adult Education budget to the new metro-mayor and combined authority and the new Inclusive Growth Board offers some potential in this area, innovative and new approaches will be required.

4 Social and Spatial Inequalities

Table 3

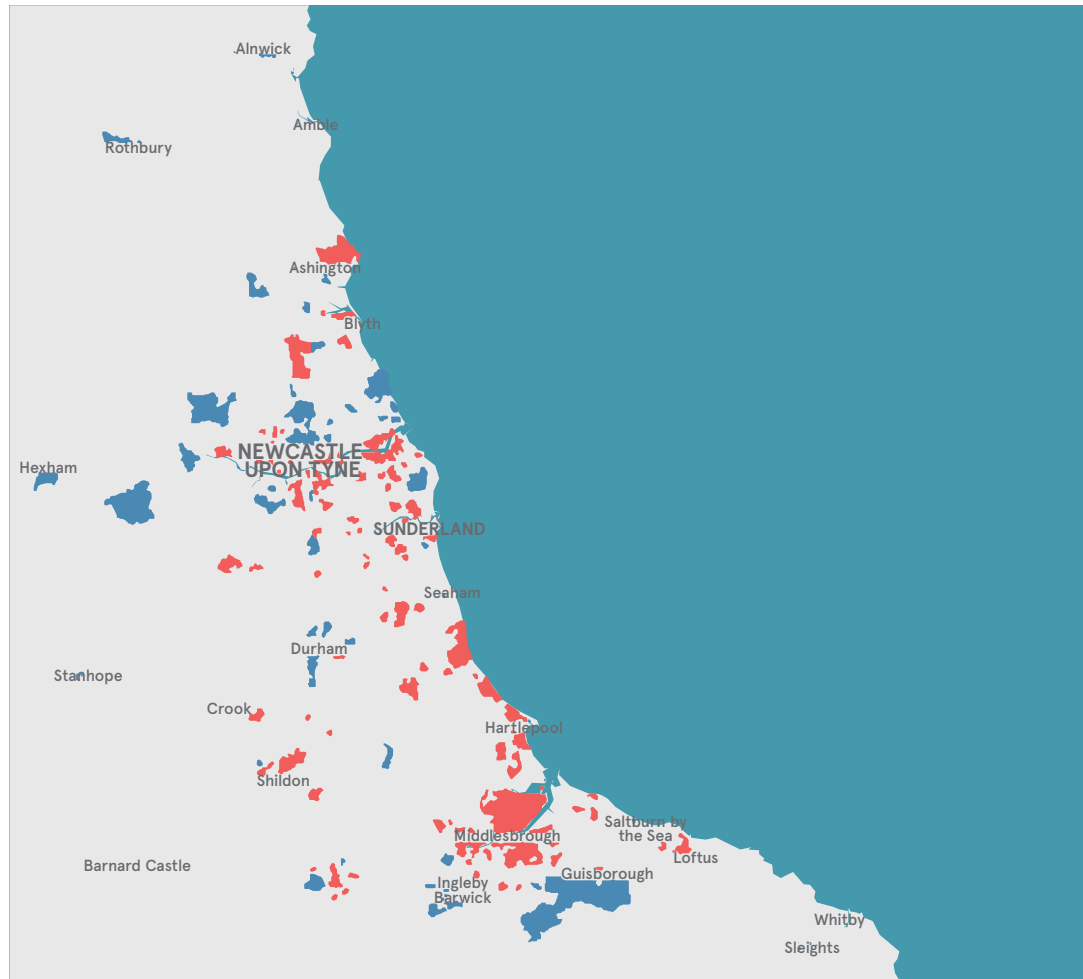
Regional GDP per capita by region, England (UK=100), 1871-2007⁶

	1871	1911	1981	2001	2007
LONDON	141.9	165.6	126	133.9	164.9
REST OF SOUTH OF ENGLAND	89.5	86.3	108.4	119	101.3
EAST ANGLIA	97	76.8	94.7	109.1	91.9
SOUTH WEST	88.6	85.7	91.8	88.4	89.3
EAST MIDLANDS	106.2	90.6	91.9	91	86.2
WEST MIDLANDS	84.8	78.4	95.6	89.7	83.4
NORTH WEST	106	97.2	89.1	89.3	83.9
NORTH EAST (& CUMBRIA)	94.1	89.5	92.9	85.5	75.2
YORKSHIRE & HUMBER	91.3	76.2	90.2	75.6	81.6
COEFFICIENT OF VARIANCE	10.8	15.8	11.4	16.9	17.7

- The UK has experienced historically persistent and growing geographical inequalities in economic conditions. The measure of difference between the most and least prosperous regions increased by nearly seven points between 1871 and 2007 (Table 3). The North East has seen its relative position worsen over this period. Tackling such deep rooted, long-term and structural trends is very difficult and would require large scale and sustained action and resources meaningfully to influence the enduring economic and social gaps.

Figure 2

Index of multiple deprivation, most deprived 10% (red) and least deprived (blue), North East England, 2015⁷

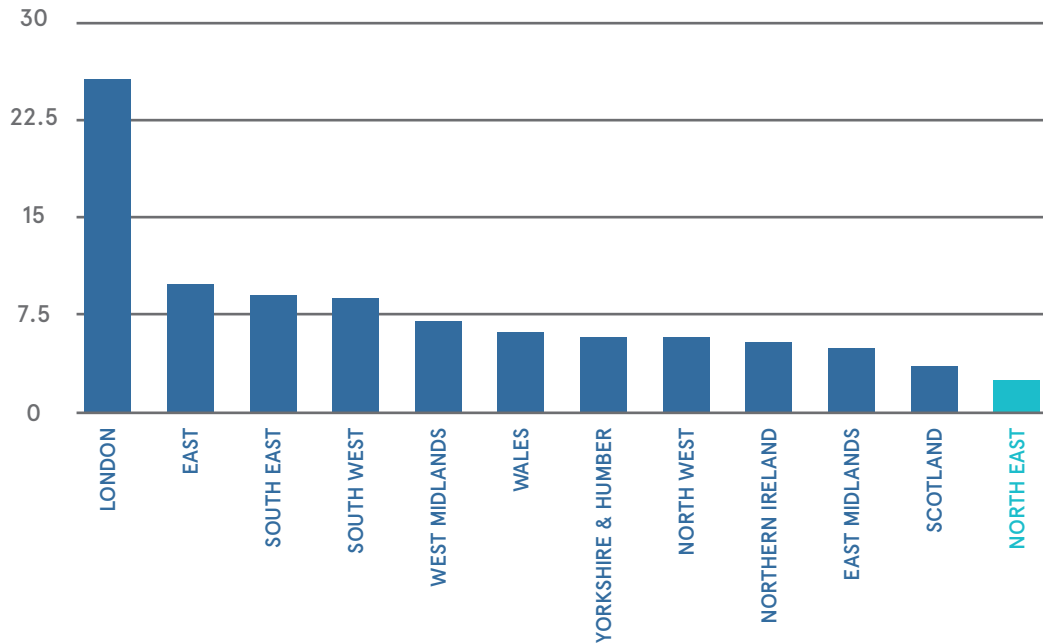


- Social and spatial inequalities *within* the North East are marked and localised (Figure 2). Areas that score highest on the index of multiple deprivation in the 10% of the most deprived across the UK are spread across the North East in urban and rural areas and towns. At the other end of the spectrum are fewer areas in the North East that are in 10% of least deprived places nationally.
- Given its limited powers and resources and geography, the metro-mayor and North of Tyne Combined Authority will struggle meaningfully to shape the long-run economic trajectory of the region and the longstanding social and spatial inequalities between the North East and other regions and within the North East. Working with local partners to encourage the development of new economic pathways will be important in working towards future prosperity. In addition, the new Inclusive Growth Board will be vital in this area in formulating fresh approaches to connect and remove barriers to employment and training initiatives for people in the region and stimulating demand for labour and the creation of decent jobs.⁸

5 Jobs

Figure 3

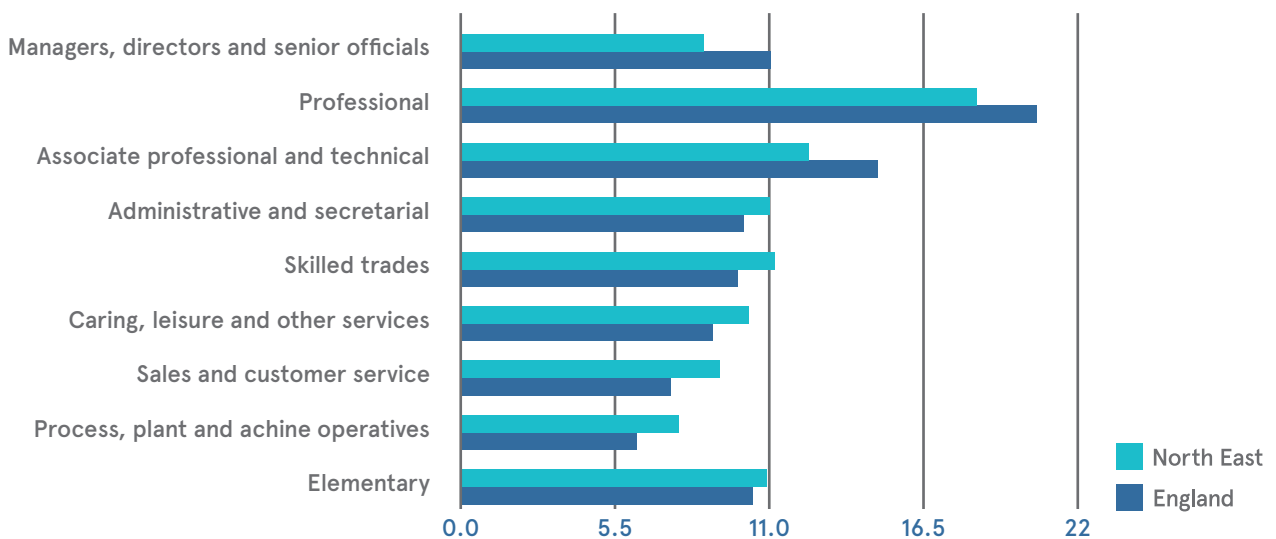
Change in the average number in employment (%), 2007-17⁹



- Employment and work are central to prosperity and people’s wellbeing. The economic recovery following the economic crisis in 2008 has been experienced unevenly across the UK. While all areas have seen a growth in average numbers in employment, the North East has lagged well behind other areas and has the weakest performance nationally (Figure 3).

Figure 4

Employment by occupation (%), North East and England, 2017-18¹⁰



- The kinds of jobs created in the North East are generated by the sorts of economic activities in the regional economy. In terms of occupations, the North East lacks roles in higher level occupations compared with England. The North East has higher proportions of jobs in administrative and secretarial, skilled trades, caring, leisure and other services, sales and customer service, process, plant and machine operatives and elementary occupations, and lower proportions of managers, directors and senior officials, professionals and associate professional and technical roles (Figure 4).

Table 4

Estimates of jobs paid below the National Minimum Wage/National Living Wage by region (number and %), 2018¹¹

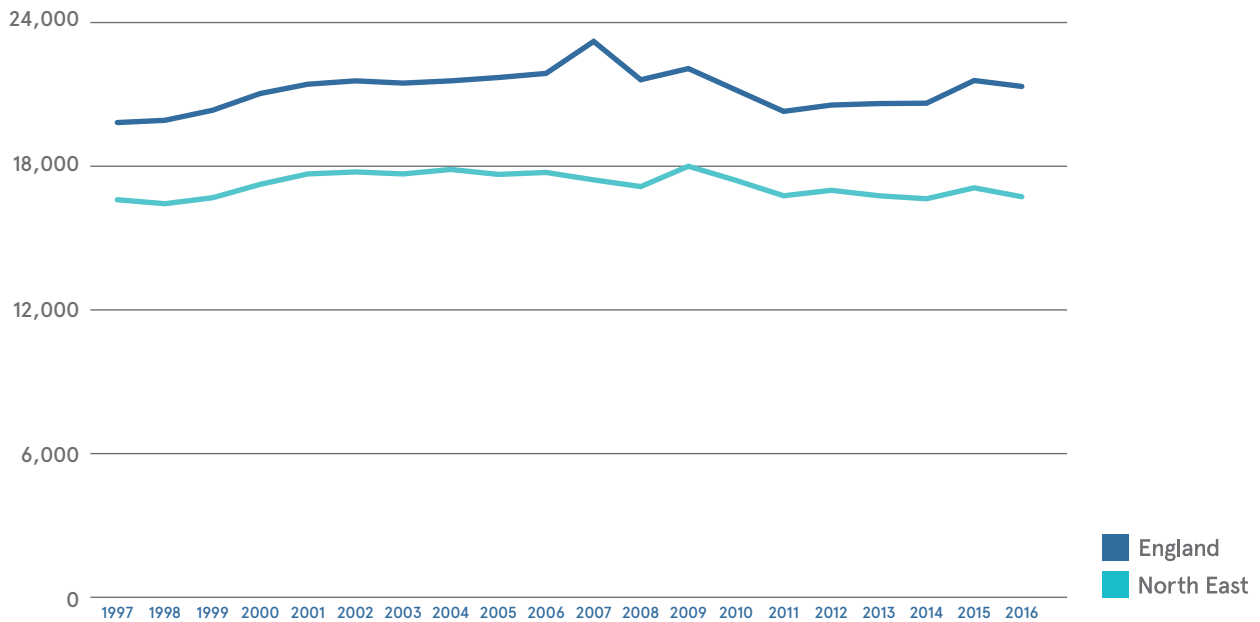
	Number x1000's	%
NORTH EAST	22	2.0
NORTH WEST	51	1.7
YORKSHIRE & HUMBER	40	1.8
EAST MIDLANDS	38	1.9
WEST MIDLANDS	46	1.9
EAST	42	1.7
LONDON	47	1.1
SOUTH EAST	58	1.5
SOUTH WEST	39	1.7
WALES	19	1.6
SCOTLAND	33	1.3
NORTHERN IRELAND	7	0.8

- The wider economic trends show that more jobs are being created in the North East but often in middle and lower level occupations and many lack quality in terms of pay levels, terms and conditions and opportunities for progression. The North East has the highest estimated proportion of jobs paid below the National Minimum Wage/National Living Wage (Table 4).
- To address these issues about the number, type and quality of jobs, the metro-mayor and North of Tyne Combined Authority will work with its partners including the North East Local Enterprise Partnership covering the wider region and further and higher education institutions to deliver a Local Industrial Strategy that is seeking to create 'more and better jobs'. This is a positive aim but with its limited powers and resources it is a major and long-term challenge for the new political leader and institution significantly to improve the kinds of economic activities and types of jobs created in the area.

6 Income and Wealth

Figure 5

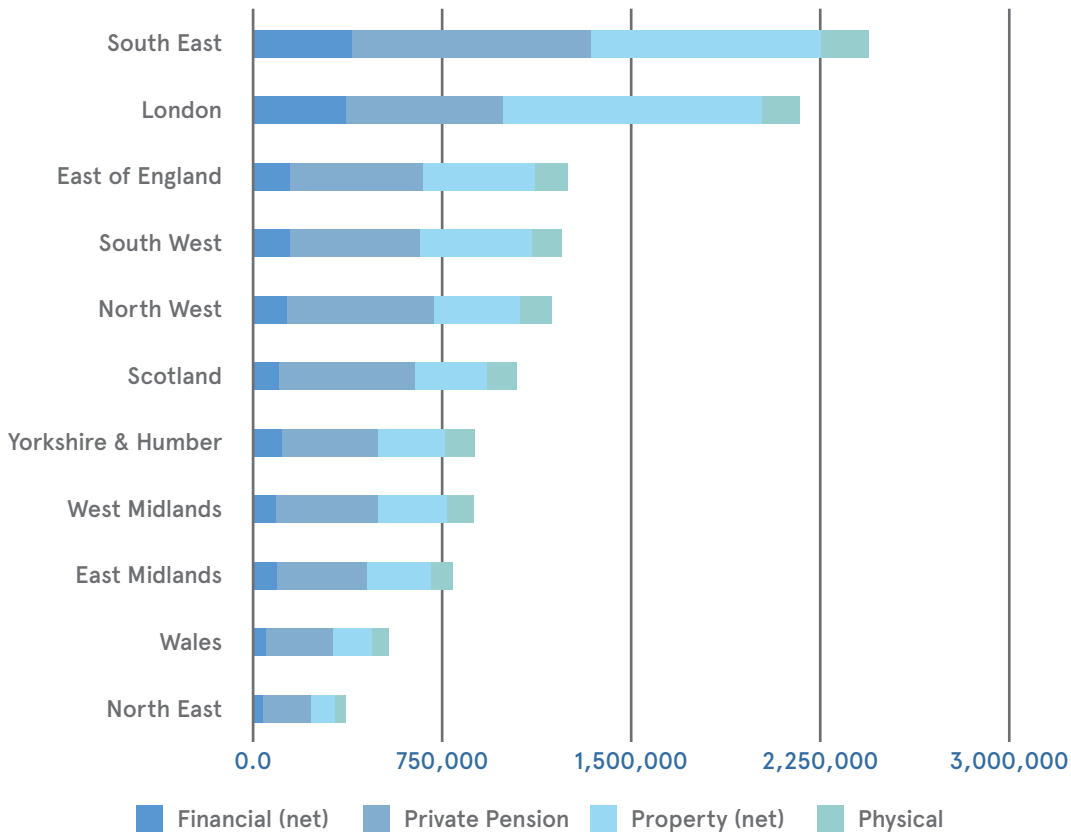
Gross disposable household income per head (£), North East and England, 1997-2016¹²



- Income and wealth are integral to people's quality of life. For gross disposable income per head, the North East has consistently lagged behind the level for England as a whole (Figure 5). This income gap has widened in the economic recovery since the early 2010s. Amidst continued inflation in prices, significant groups are experiencing a deteriorating standard of living.
- There is some potential for the metro-mayor to try to make a difference in this area. While not within their powers, city mayors in other countries have sought to work with local partners in business and the public sector to introduce Living Wage agreements in attempts to raise local pay levels and household incomes.¹³

Figure 6

Aggregate household total wealth by region and components (£m), Great Britain, 2014-16¹⁴

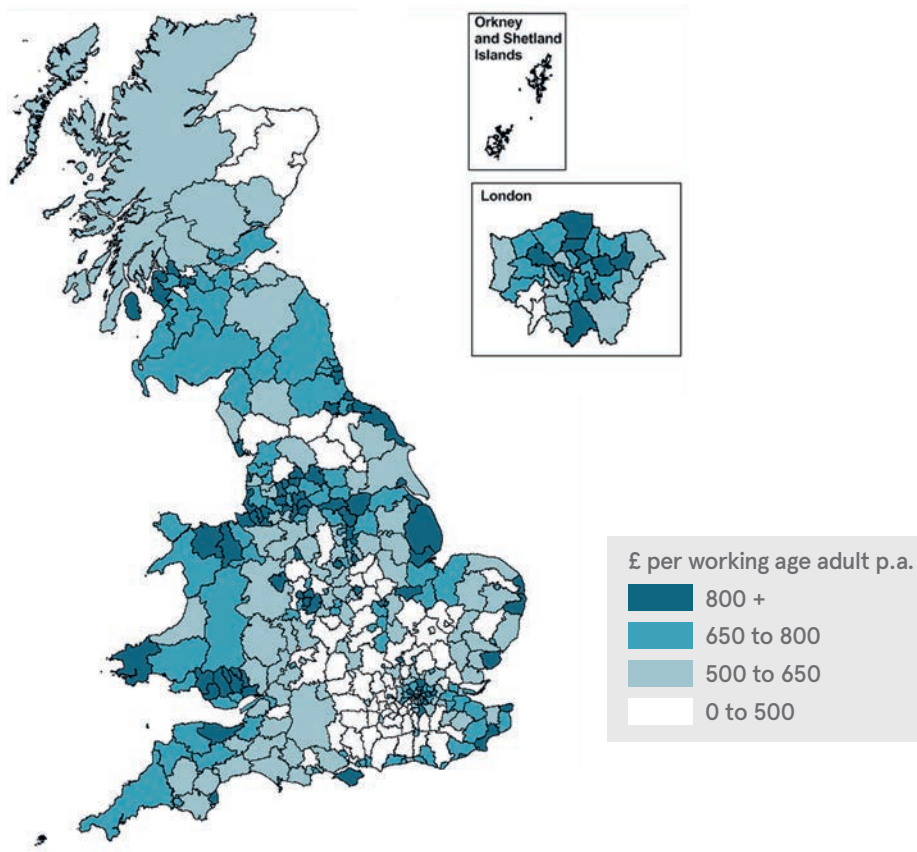


- Households in the North East have the lowest levels of physical, (net) property, private pension and (net) financial wealth in the UK (Figure 6). This means people in the region have less of a financial safety net of rainy-day money to draw upon or assets for investment for them and their family’s future and they have less collateral to support enterprise. The metro-mayor and North of Tyne Combined Authority have few policy levers to help household wealth-building in the North East and close the wealth gap with other parts of the UK.

7 Welfare

Figure 7

Estimated loss arising from welfare reform by district (£), 2016¹⁵

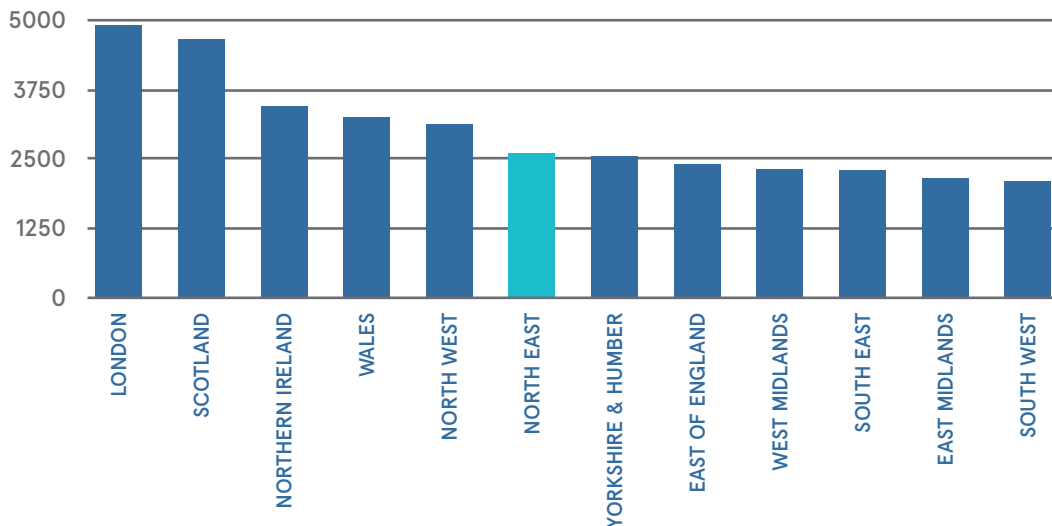


- The welfare system is a key means through which national government redistributes resources between richer and poorer areas across the UK. Given the longstanding and persistent inequalities in economic and social conditions in the region, households in the North East are disproportionately dependent upon the benefit system. The North East is therefore one of the regions of the UK most negatively affected by welfare reforms. The financial loss per working age adult per year is estimated in the range of £425+ in South Tyneside and Sunderland, £350-425 in Durham, Gateshead, Newcastle and North Tyneside and £275-350 in Northumberland (Figure 7).
- Welfare service provision is highly centralised in England. The metro-mayor and North of Tyne Combined Authority have no powers or resources to effect change in this area yet it is crucial to the life chances of many households.

8 Economic and Social Infrastructure

Figure 8

Public spending per head on infrastructure by country and region, 2011/12 - 2015/16¹⁶



- Investment in infrastructure is vital to society and economy, providing the systems and services we all rely upon for our everyday lives. It is especially important in kick-starting sustainable economic growth and development in regions lagging-behind economically like the North East of England. In recent years, public expenditure on infrastructure per head has been higher than the North East in five of the twelve areas of the UK, especially in London and Scotland (Figure 8).
- With relatively limited resources, the metro-mayor and North of Tyne Combined Authority will struggle to obtain the finance required to redress the long-term under-investment in the region's infrastructure. The lack of powers over transport is a major shortcoming and arises from the difference in the geography between the North of Tyne and the Tyne and Wear transport authority. The new Housing and Land Board and potential Mayoral Development Corporations may offer some potential in this area but their powers and resources have yet to be determined. Improving transport is critical both to economic development and the wellbeing of communities.

9 Sustainability

Table 5

Estimated carbon dioxide emissions (kt CO₂) per capita by region, 2005-2016¹⁷

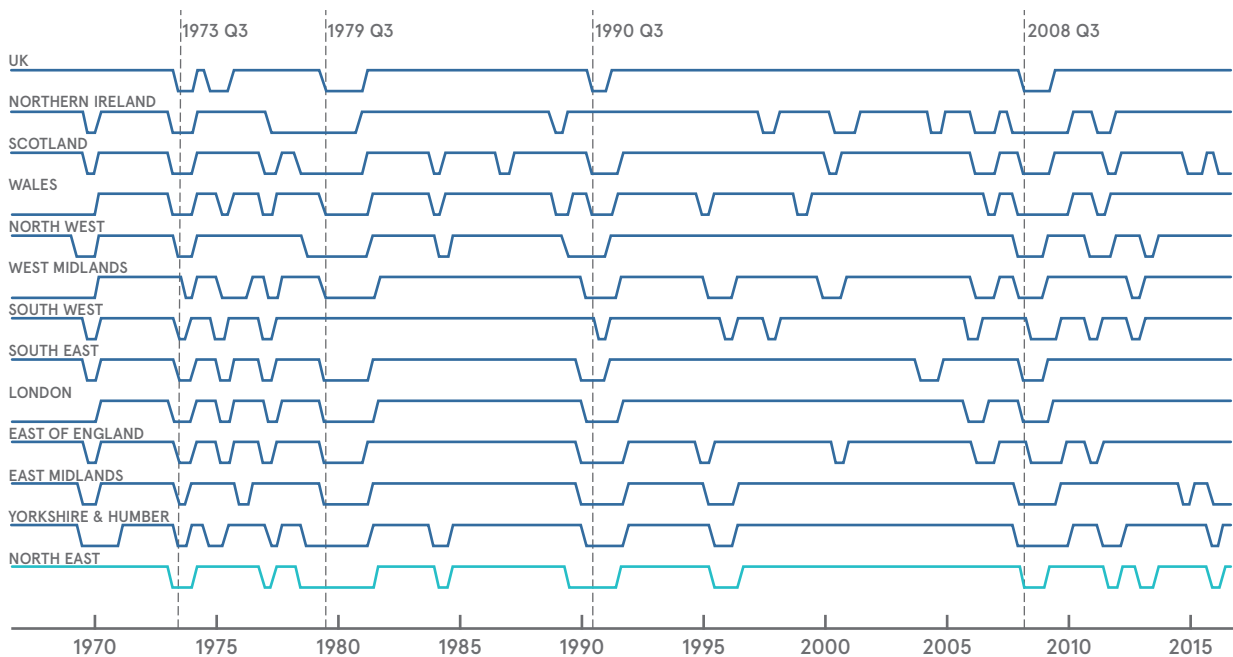
	CO ₂ emissions per capita (kt CO ₂)
WALES	8.0
YORKSHIRE & HUMBER	6.9
NORTHERN IRELAND	6.7
EAST MIDLANDS	6.3
NORTH EAST	5.9
NORTH WEST	5.6
WEST MIDLANDS	5.5
EAST OF ENGLAND	5.4
ENGLAND	5.3
SOUTH EAST	5.0
SOUTH WEST	5.0
SCOTLAND	4.7
LONDON	3.6

- Sustainability and addressing the challenges of climate change are central to the region's future prosperity and the health and wellbeing of its population. Carbon dioxide (CO₂) is the main greenhouse gas contributing to climate change. CO₂ emissions have become an important indicator of how sustainably we are living. Between 2005 and 2016, the North East ranked the fifth highest for emissions out of thirteen areas in the UK (Table 5).
- While initiatives are being discussed for congestion charging and limiting vehicle usage in specific local authorities, the metro-mayor and North of Tyne Combined Authority have limited powers and resources to make a difference in this area and will require the co-operation of other local authorities. Over the longer-term, plans for transition to low carbon and more efficient energy systems and renewable energy production may make contributions to improving sustainability within the region.

10 Economic Vulnerability

Figure 9

Start and end dates of regional and UK recessions using quarterly real GVA, 1970-2015¹⁸

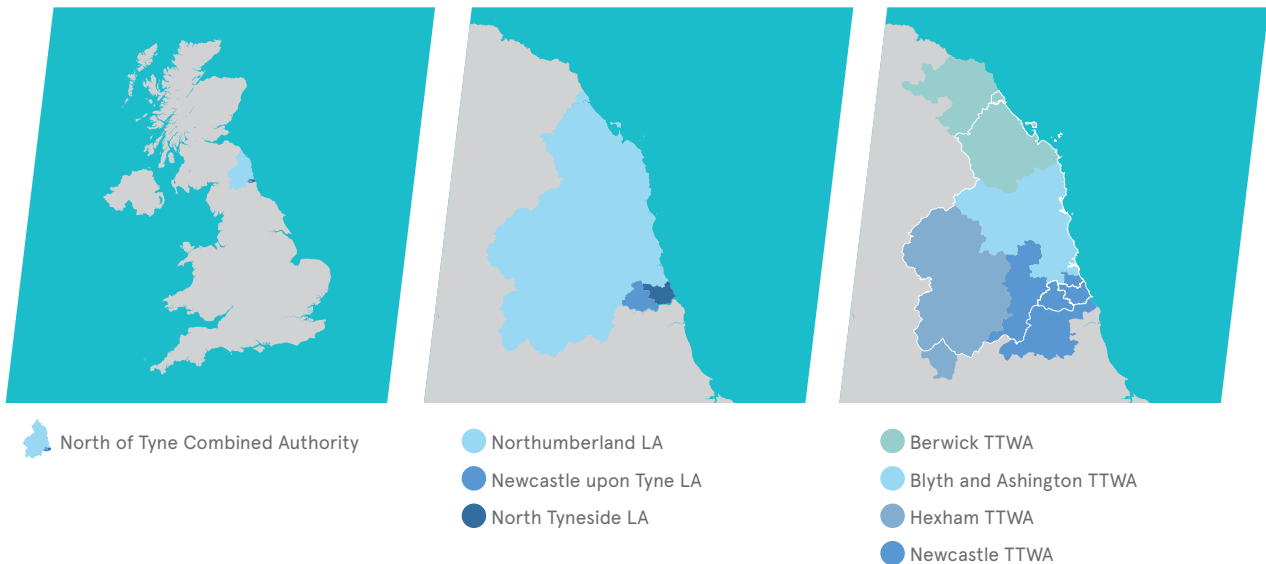


- How regions cope with shocks is central to their economic, social and environmental sustainability and wellbeing. Compared to the UK and other nations and regions, the North East has proven repeatedly vulnerable to more frequent and longer economic shocks from recessions since the early 1970s (Figure 9). In several cases, the recessions start earlier and last longer in the region. This demonstrates that the region's economy lacks the resilience readily to ride-out and bounce-back from disruptive economic change.
- Given their limited powers and resources, the metro-mayor and North of Tyne Combined Authority have a major task in trying to create and sustain the ability to adapt the economy needs to deal with disruptive change such as Brexit, new international trading relationships and technological shifts.

11 Geography

Figure 10

The North of Tyne Combined Authority area and Travel to Work areas in North East England¹⁹

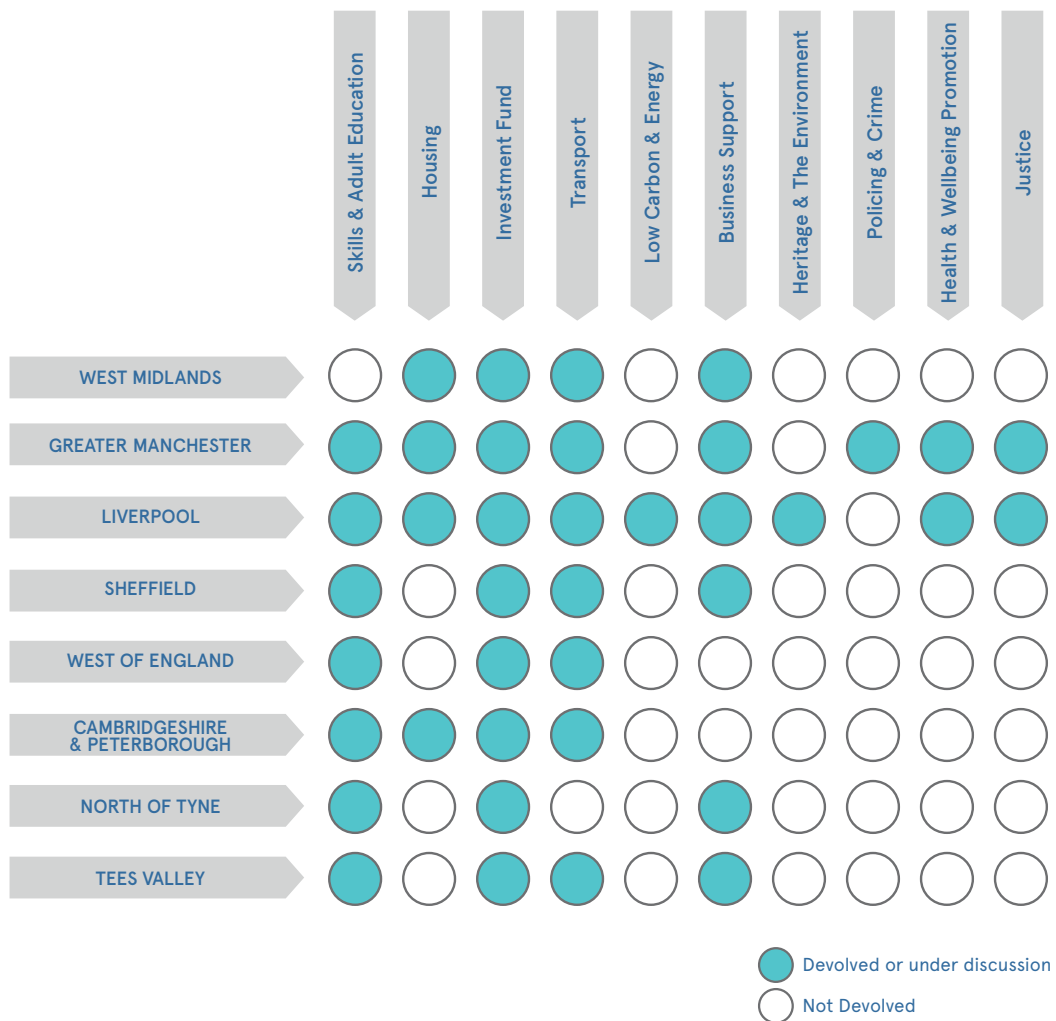


- International evidence demonstrates that decision-making and public policy is most effective when it works with the geography of how the economy operates and people live their lives – this is called a ‘functional economic area’.²⁰
- Contrary to claims that it represents a “coherent economic area”²¹, the North of Tyne geography was a political and administrative fix between national and local government and does not meet many of the basic requirements of a ‘functional economic area’. This is because it is too small and many of its economic relationships extend beyond its administrative boundaries, for example flows of commuters working in North of Tyne from areas south of the Tyne. The three local authority areas of Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland in North of Tyne overlap with four different travel to work areas in Berwick, Blyth and Ashington, Hexham and Newcastle (Figure 10).
- The lack of geographical alignment between public policy-making and delivery institutions in the North of Tyne and the wider North East will require much effort and time in co-ordinating and joint working. The metro-mayor risks becoming merely another actor in a congested political system. The need to establish a new statutory Joint Committee for transport on behalf of the North of Tyne and North East Combined Authorities demonstrates the difficulties and complexities involved and the need to establish new institutional arrangements arising from this political and administrative fix.

12 Powers and Resources

Figure 11

Powers by Combined Authority Area²²



- Central to what the metro-mayor and North of Tyne Combined Authority might achieve are their powers and resources. Compared to the other devolved areas within England, the main arrangements for the new North of Tyne institutions are much narrower and focused upon skills and adult education, investment fund and business support (Figure 11). But interventions in these fields need to be matched by actions in housing, transport and welfare.
- In terms of financial resources, each of the combined authorities has been allocated an investment fund by national government. In per head terms each year, North of Tyne has the second highest level of the six areas in England and this provides some scope for targeted investment in priority areas (Table 6).

Table 6

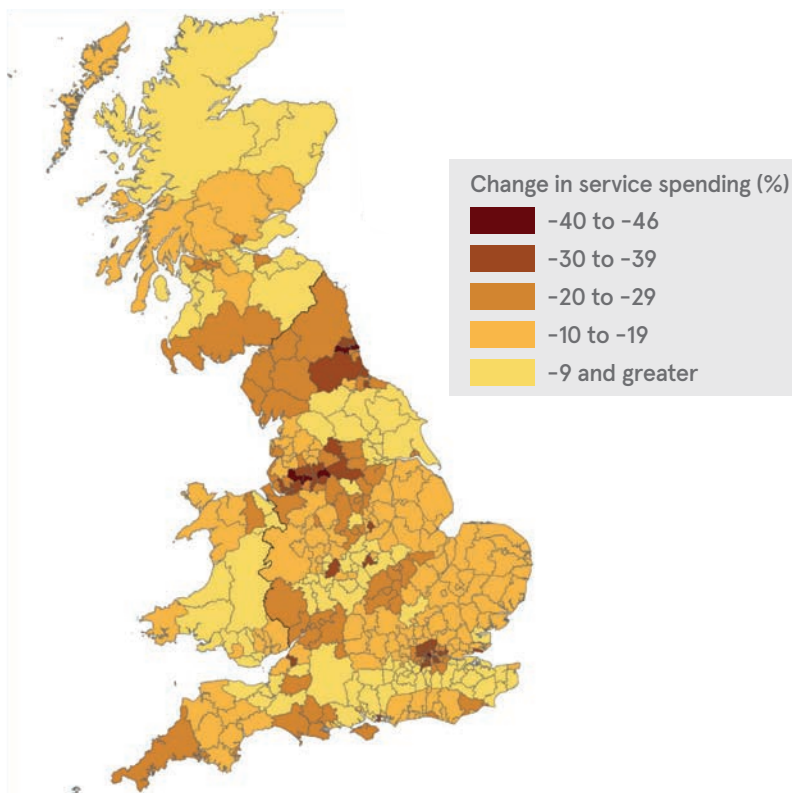
Investment fund per capita (£) by Combined Authority Area, 2019²³

	Investment per capita (£, annual)
WEST OF ENGLAND	32.86
NORTH OF TYNE	24.41
CAMBRIDGESHIRE & PETERBOROUGH	23.61
TEES VALLEY	22.30
SHEFFIELD	21.53
LIVERPOOL	19.42
WEST MIDLANDS	12.60
GREATER MANCHESTER	10.72

- While the new and additional funding is positive, the three constituent local authorities that make up the North of Tyne Combined Authority – Newcastle, Northumberland and North Tyneside – have experienced amongst the highest falls in service spending due to reductions in national government funding since 2010 (Figure 12). Constraints on resources will therefore place severe limits on what the new metro-mayor and North of Tyne Combined Authority will be able to do. The new resources offered by the devolution deal are trivial compared to these reductions in public expenditure.

Figure 12

Change in local authority spending power by local authority, 2009/10 – 2016/17²⁴



13 Political Voice, Leadership and Representation

Table 7

Population and economy by Combined Authority Area, 2016²⁵

	Population (number)	Economy (GVA, 2016, £m)
WEST MIDLANDS	2,897,303	61,012
GREATER MANCHESTER	2,798,799	63,673
LIVERPOOL	1,544,420	30,858
SHEFFIELD	1,393,445	24,775
WEST OF ENGLAND	926,957	28,390
CAMBRIDGESHIRE & PETERBOROUGH	847,151	23,743
NORTH OF TYNE	819,345	17,128
TEES VALLEY	672,497	12,803

- Much has been made of the so-called 'soft power' of metro-mayors to lead and have influence beyond their somewhat limited formal powers and responsibilities. The smaller population and economic size of the North of Tyne area mean the metro-mayor's voice will be weaker than larger areas elsewhere in England (Table 7). While this should matter less in working with local partners in the North East, in the competition for the limited attention and resources of national government it will put the North of Tyne area at a disadvantage.
- In terms of representation, the male-dominated list of candidates for the metro-mayoral election demonstrates the gender imbalanced character of politics in the North East. While none were eventual winners, women candidates were involved in all of the other metro-mayoral elections held to date in England: Cambridge and Peterborough (7 candidates, 1 woman [Green]), Greater Manchester (8, 1 [Lib Dem]), Liverpool (8, 2 [UKIP, Women's Equality]), Tees Valley (4, 1 [Labour]), West Midlands (6, 2 [Labour, Lib Dem]), West of England (6, 1 [Labour]) and Sheffield (7, 1 [Lib Dem]).

14 Democratic Engagement and Voter Interest

Table 8

Voter turnout in elections (%) and political party of elected metro-mayors in England, 2019²⁶

	Voter turnout (%)	Political Party
CAMBRIDGESHIRE & PETERBOROUGH	32.9	Conservative
WEST OF ENGLAND	29.3	Conservative
GREATER MANCHESTER	28.6	Labour
WEST MIDLANDS	26.3	Conservative
LIVERPOOL CITY REGION	25.8	Labour
TEES VALLEY	21.3	Conservative

- As new and more visible political leaders, metro-mayors are expected to be able to re-ignite interest in local decision-making and the democratic engagement of the wider population²⁷. In the first round of elections for metro-mayors in England in May 2017, average voter turnout was 27.4% and ranged from the highest proportion in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough and lowest in Tees Valley (Table 8). This means that more than two thirds of those able to vote for the metro-mayor for their area did not choose to vote. In Tees Valley, almost 80% of electors did not vote in the metro-mayor election.
- The relatively low turnout for metro-mayor elections reflects people's wider disinterest in politics and the ability of public institutions to make their lives better. But it also reflects the limited powers and resources of the new office of metro-mayor even in the larger areas with bigger populations and economies than the North of Tyne. Lack of public interest may be compounded in the North of Tyne case because its boundaries are artificial and the product of a political and administrative fix rather than reflecting local identities.

15 What Can Be Done?

- Raising these issues is not an argument against decentralising governance and devolving decision-making to accountable institutions across England: this remains a vitally important task given England's highly centralised governance system and persistent social and spatial inequalities.
- However, it is important to highlight the continued ad hoc and piecemeal nature of how England is governed that is creating a patchwork of political leaders and institutions with insufficient powers and resources to tackle the economic, social and environmental issues confronting their regions.
- There has been a lack of public engagement with the definition and development of these new political arrangements and this is reflected in the low public profile and interest in the current debate.
- The metro-mayor and North of Tyne Combined Authority have the potential to identify signature priorities and work with local partners to progress them (e.g. improving wellbeing, tackling poor health, Living Wage agreements) through using their modest investment fund, new institutions (Inclusive Growth Board, Housing and Land Board, Mayoral Development Corporations) and initiatives (Education Improvement Challenge). But there is a strong danger that this particularly weak mini metro-mayor model is being set up to fail.

References

- ¹ Thanks to Louise Kempton, David Marlow and Peter O'Brien for comments on an earlier version of this report and Alasdair Rae, Tina Beatty and Mia Gray for the maps.
- ² For the assessment of each issue, the North East of England has been used to situate the North of Tyne area within its wider context and institutional governance arrangements (e.g. the Local Enterprise Partnership area).
- ³ Office for National Statistics (2018) Life Expectancy at birth and at age 65 years by local areas, UK, www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandlifeexpectancies/datasets/lifeexpectancyatbirthandage65bylocalareasuk
- ⁴ Office for National Statistics (2016) Measuring National Well-being: Personal Well-being in the UK, 2014 to 2015, ONS: London, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/bulletins/measuringnationalwellbeing/2015-09-23>
- ⁵ Office for National Statistics (2019) Annual Population Survey via NOMIS, <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/articles/1083.aspx>
- ⁶ Estimates of regional GVA are on a workplace basis, where the income of commuters is allocated to their place of work. Following Crafts (2005, "Regional GDP in Britain, 1871-1911: Some estimates" *Scottish Journal of Political Economy*, 52, 1, 54-64), London and the Rest of the South East were combined into one observation for the purposes of calculating the coefficient of variance. The coefficient of variance is a measure of dispersion calculated as standard deviation/mean. Adapted from UK Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (2010, *Understanding Local Growth*, BIS Economics Paper 7, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS): London) calculations of ONS Regional Accounts.
- ⁷ Based upon the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2015. https://alasdair.carto.com/viz/9d46d8a2-f690-11e5-b0a2-0e31c9be1b51/embed_map?zoom=11¢er_lat=55.006737¢er_lon=-1.7008129
- ⁸ Pike, A., Lee, N., MacKinnon, D., Kempton, L. and Iddewala, Y. (2017) *Job Creation and Inclusive Growth in Cities*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation: York. <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/job-creation-inclusive-growth-cities>
- ⁹ Office for National Statistics. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket>

¹⁰ Employment by SOC2010 category. Annual Population Survey via Office for National Statistics.

¹¹ Office for National Statistics, Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings. From 2017, all NMW rates change on 1 April rather than 1 October, which means that low pay estimates are affected by any time lag between new rate introduction and employer implementation. Provisional data.

¹² Office for National Statistics. 2018 prices.

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