



# Rural as a Region

22<sup>nd</sup> June 2022





# LEVELLING — UP —

Levelling Up the United Kingdom  
Executive Summary

Not everyone shares equally in the UK's success. While talent is spread equally across our country opportunity is not.

Levelling up is a mission to challenge, and change, that **unfairness**. Levelling up means giving everyone the opportunity to flourish. It means **people everywhere** living longer and more fulfilling lives, and benefitting from sustained rises in living standards and well-being

This requires us to **end the geographical inequality** which is such a striking feature of the UK.

For levelling up to mean something to people in their daily lives, we need to reach into **every** community in the country, from city centres to rural areas, in order to start to rebuild social capital and self-reliance in our most abandoned neighbourhoods.



Research  
carried out  
on behalf of  
Rural  
Services  
Network by  
Pragmatix  
Advisory

## Rural as a region: the hidden challenge for Levelling Up

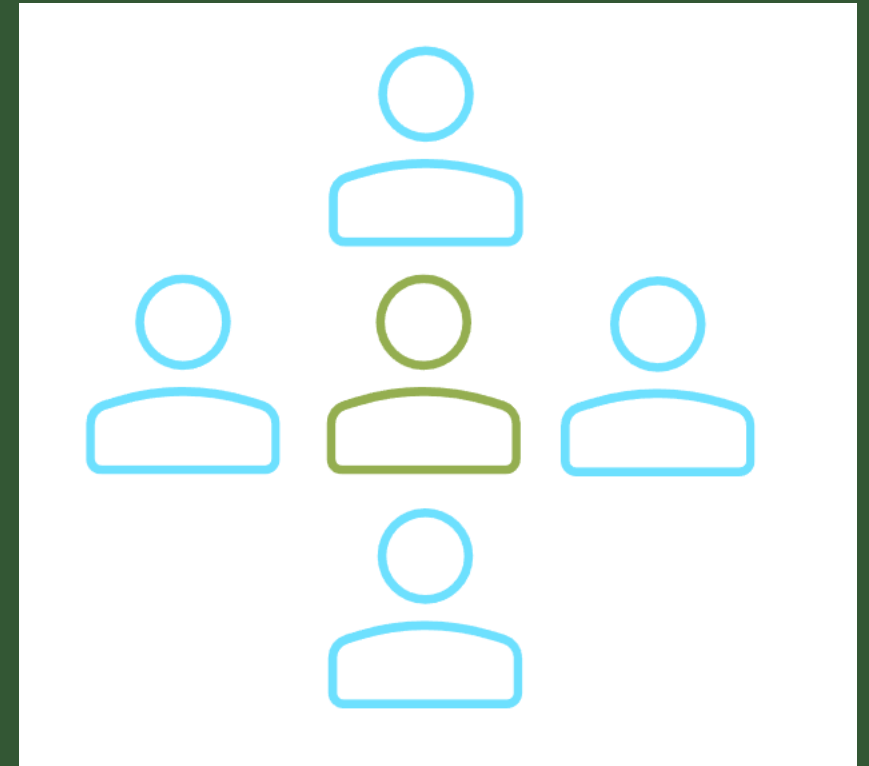
Assessing the scale of rural disadvantage using  
the White Paper's analytical framework

June 2022



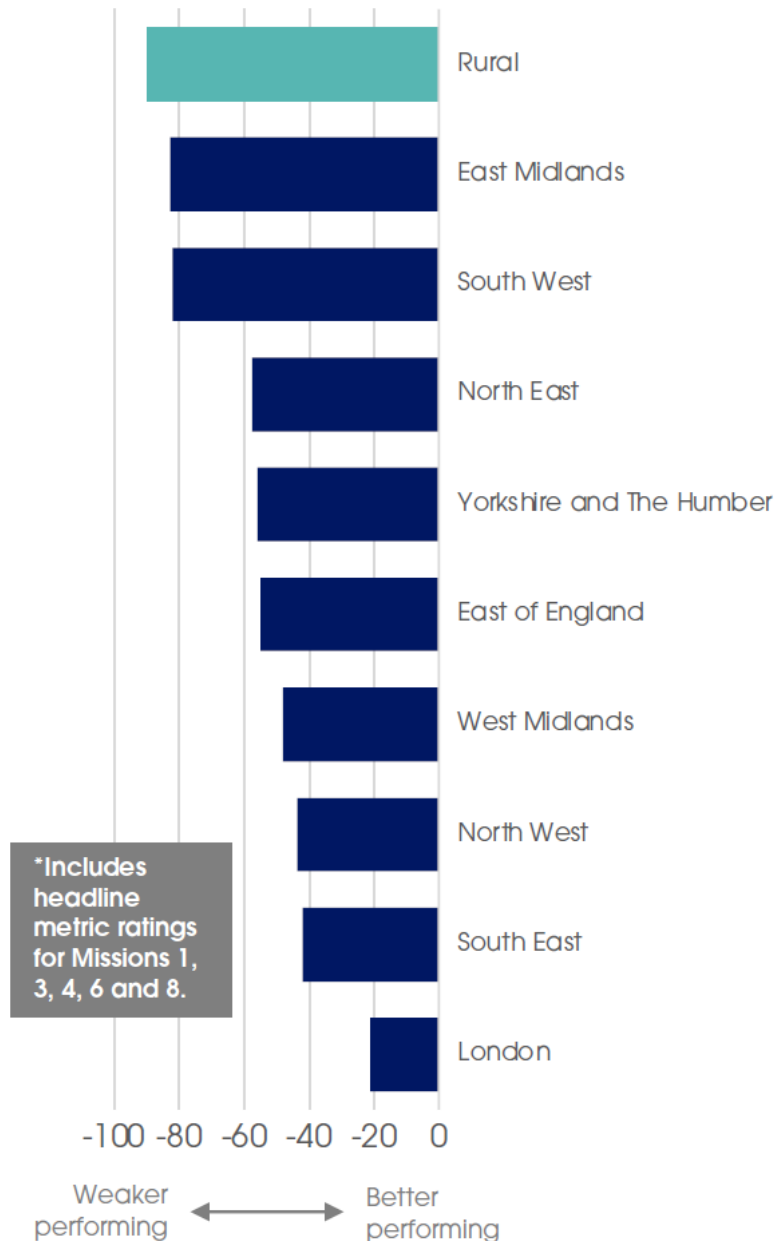
# Headline Findings:

- Rural as a Region
- Missing metrics
- Mission Metrics



Rural is missing from the levelling up agenda

Average rating of all mission headline metrics for which local authority data is available\*  
Regions, England



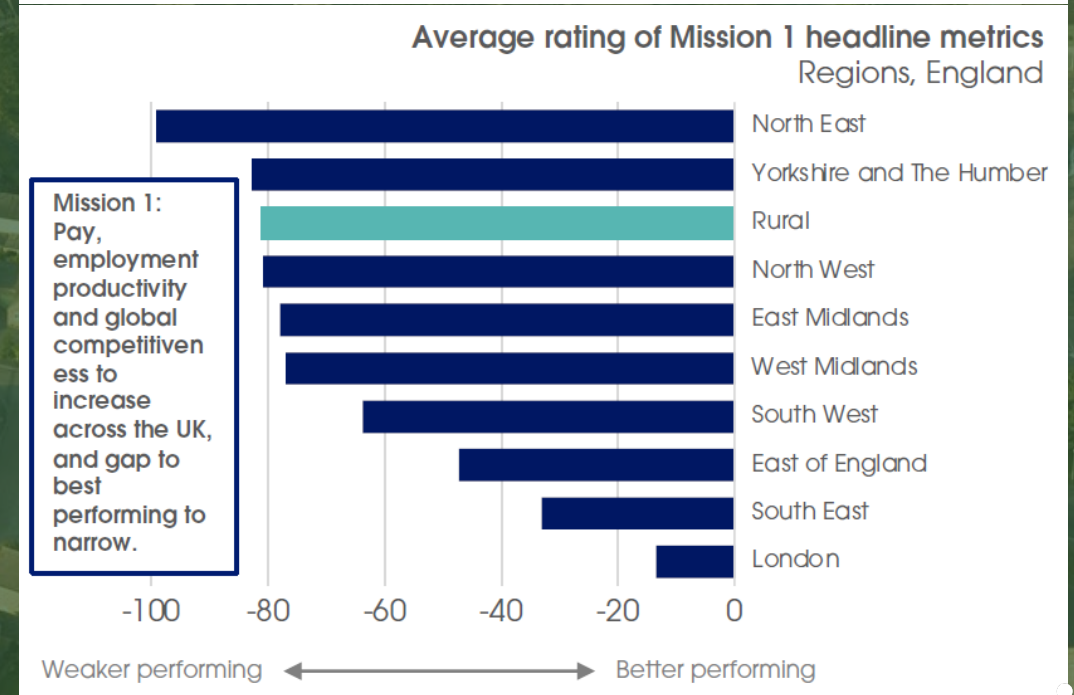
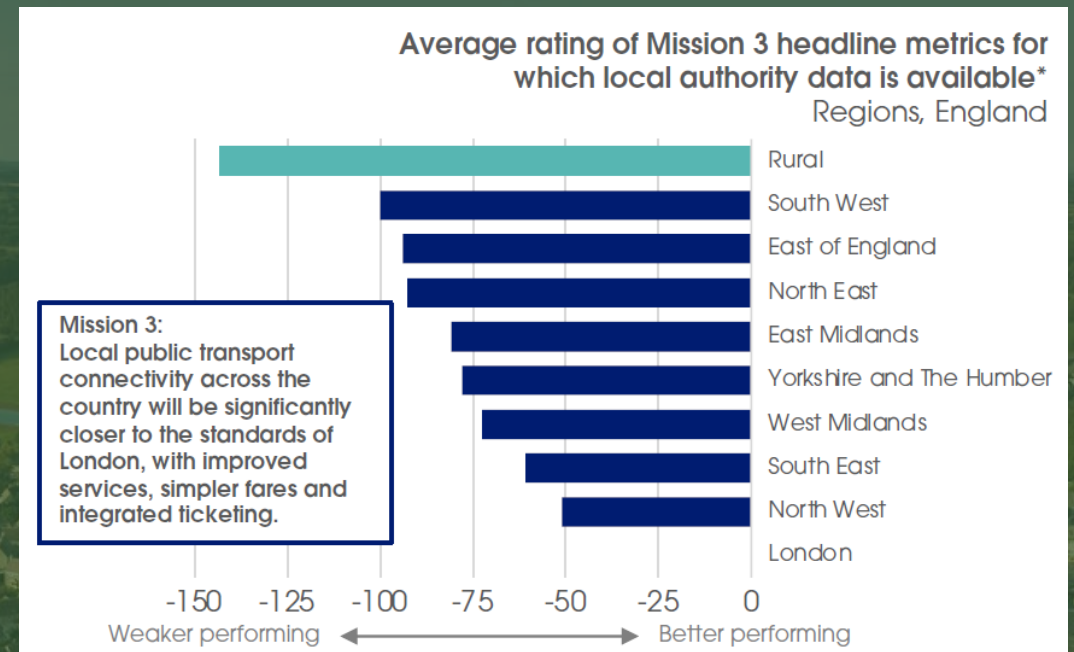
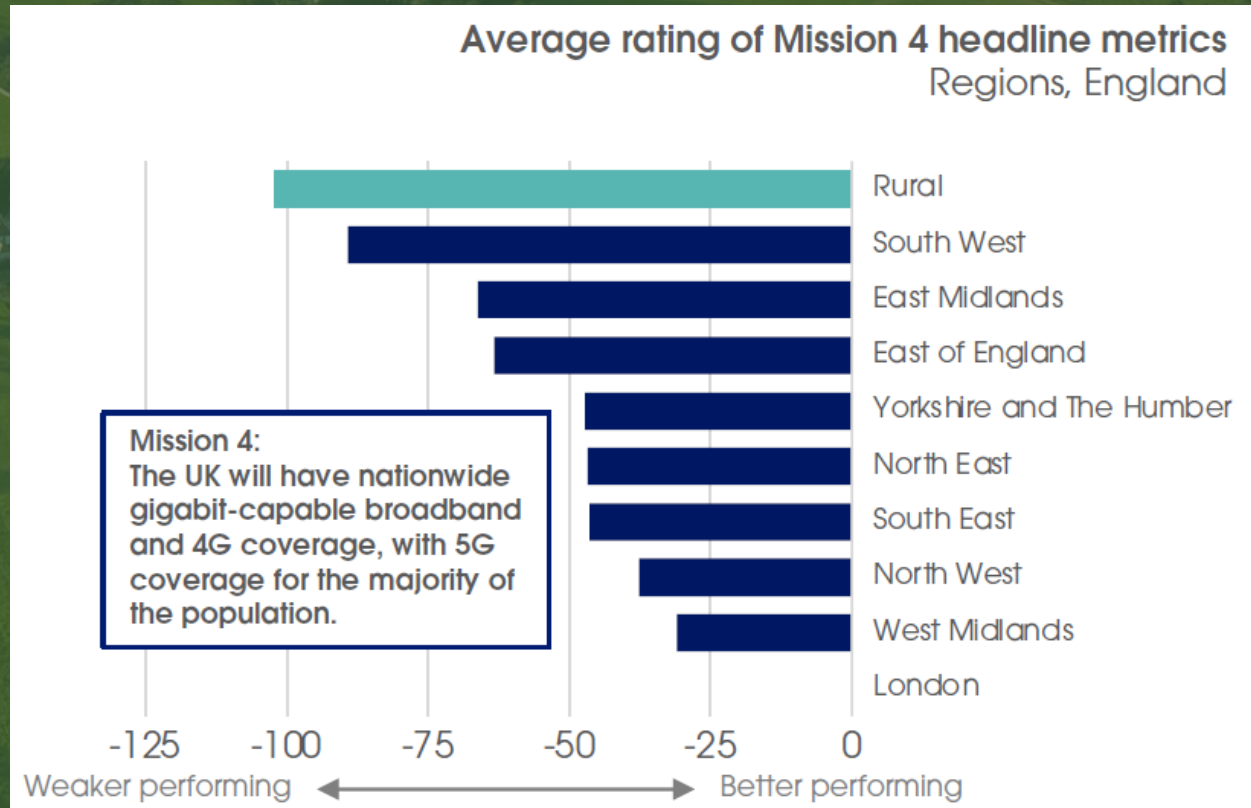
# Rural As a Region

- English rural local authorities are home to one fifth of the population, 4.8 million workers, and half a million businesses.
- Based on the government's own white paper headline metrics, **rural's need for levelling up would be greater than any other.**
- When all the headline metrics across which rural performance can be measured are considered and compared against other nine geographies, England's hidden region has on average further to level up than any other.
- But, despite its scale and need, the needs of this 'region' are poorly reflected in the government's levelling up framework.



Based on the government's own white paper headline metrics:

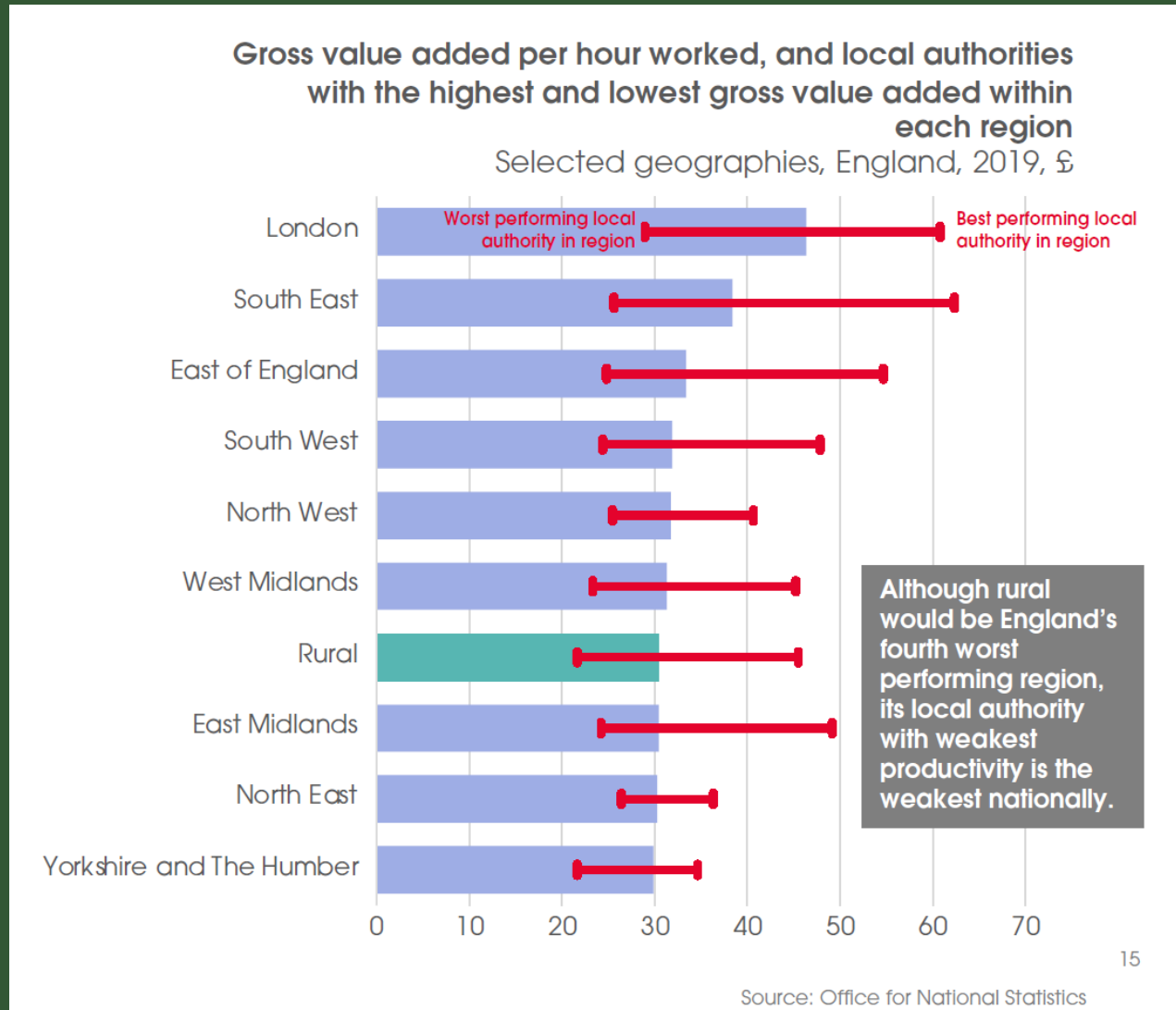
## Rural's need for levelling up would be greater than any other



# Mission Metrics

- Differences within regions are greater than the differences between regions, and targeting improvement at a regional level risks leaving communities behind
- Government should use the most granular data available to identify disadvantaged areas
- Levelling up should take place at a community level

# Regional focus misses the target



- Focusing on targets at a regional level fails to address the inequalities within regions
- Consistent use of data at a more granular level would better identify the communities with the greatest need, and target levelling up funds more accurately.
- Reducing the gap between regions will not lead to true levelling up if it further increases the gap between areas within the region.



# MISSING METRICS

- The current white paper metrics are predominantly urban focused, and do not capture disadvantage in rural economies
- The inclusion of additional metrics would help to identify those areas most in need of levelling up at a local level



On some metrics, rural authorities appear to be performing well compared to urban, but this is because metrics chosen fail to capture realities of rural disadvantage.

Employment rate, for example, tends to show higher levels of employment in rural areas, suggesting a healthier jobs market however many rural labour markets are dependent on seasonal or part time employment, and it doesn't explain the dependency of some workers relying on multiple jobs.





**Looking at Gross Disposable Household Income ignores differing costs of living in rural areas including:**

- Higher Fuel Costs
- Need for car ownership to get around with poor public transport links
- High Cost of Housing compared to local earnings

**Relying on metrics that only tell part of the story, without also understanding additional contributing factors, risks leaving rural England behind**

Adding in metrics, measured at the relevant local level would enable a more accurate assessment of rural needs

### Spreading opportunity and improving public services

- Percentage of young people achieving GCSEs in English and maths who then go on to Further Education/ Level 3+ qualification
- **Average distance to nearest Further Education provider, and range of courses available**
- Apprenticeship achievements by SIC code
- **Referral to treatment wait times**
- Percentage of patients being treated for cancer within 62 days
- Average wait time for elective treatment
- Number of people on hospital wait lists
- Average distance to accident and emergency
- Average wait for an ambulance for Category 1 and 2 calls
- **Rates of delayed discharged from hospital**
- **Rates of self harm amongst younger people**
- Levels of drug and alcohol abuse
- Diagnosed depression in the adult population
- Suicide rates

Skills and educational attainment

Health service performance

Mental health and well-being

### Empowering local leaders and communities

- Percentage of the population in favour of greater devolution



## Boosting productivity, pay, jobs and living standards by growing the private sector

- Cost of living
- Average local earnings for those in the lowest income decile
- **Percentage of households in fuel poverty**
- **Workplace based incomes**
- **House price to local earnings ratio, and rent to local earning ratio**
- **Percentage of working age population in seasonal employment**
- Percentage of economically active that have more than one job
- Percentage of people in employment that are working part-time
- Rates of under- and over-employment in the economically active
- Employment in R&D, and size and location of R&D enterprises
- **Percentage of households within walking distance of a public transport route, and frequency of public transport service to access key services**
- Car ownership by income decile
- Percentage of 4G (and 5G) coverage by at least two mobile network providers
- **Percentage of premises with super-fast broadband**

Real pay and living standards

Local labour market

Physical connectivity

Digital connectivity

## Restoring a sense of community, local pride and belonging

- Net additions to the housing stock which are for social rent
- Rent in relation to public sector wages
- As 'neighbourhood crime' is yet to be determined, it should include theft of machinery, fly tipping, theft of diesel/ fuel, wildlife crime and theft of livestock
- Town/ village/ city centre footfall

Local housing

Community

Without taking into account these supplementary metrics, levelling up support may end up **widening the gap** between rural communities and their town and city counterparts.

Sign in  
Twitter  
LinkedIn

Home News Opinion Analysis Best Practice Jobs Events Awards Supplements

# Levelling up 'biased towards larger towns and cities'

By Chris Mahony | 20 June 2022

Rural areas risk losing out on the Government's levelling up initiative because the programme's metrics are biased towards larger towns and cities, a report based on council-commissioned research has claimed.

The report, written by Pragmatix Advisory on behalf of the Rural Services Network and published today, suggested a notional geographical entity made up of England's rural areas would be the region most in need of the Government's levelling up policy.

# Yorkshire Times

A VOICE OF THE FREE PRESS

[LIFESTYLE](#)
[FAMILY](#)
[TRAVEL](#)
[SPORTS](#)
[SCITECH](#)
[NATURE](#)
[FICTION](#)
[WHATSON](#)

No cookies. No tracking. No advertising.

Daily Times > News

## Rural Suffolk should be top of the list for levelling up cash, report says

Angus Williams

Published: 12:00 AM June 20, 2022

**EAST ANGLIAN**  
**Your Money Matters**

Rural parts of the country, such as most of Suffolk, should be first in line for levelling up funds, a new report has said. Pictured: Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak holding his ministerial 'Red Box'. - Credit: PA

Rural areas of Suffolk should be among those at the top of the list for levelling up cash, a new report says.

Research published today by the Rural Services Network, which represents local councils, says the measures the government uses to assign levelling up funds do not account for deprivation in rural areas.

The report's authors say that if all the rural parts of the country – including all of Suffolk bar Ipswich – are looked at as a whole they should be top of the list for the levelling up cash.

## 'A Region': Rural England in Government's Levelling Up Paper

Rural as a region: the hidden challenge for Levelling Up

Assessing the scale of rural disadvantage in the White Paper's analytical framework.

June 2022

pragmatix advisory

Were England's rural communities a distinct region, their need for levelling up would be greater than that of any other part of the country, according to a new report that finds the Government's metrics do not properly account for smaller towns and villages and as a result effectively side-line rural areas.

The report, *Rural as a region: the hidden challenge for Levelling Up*, assesses the scale of rural disadvantage in the Government's Levelling Up white paper metrics - used to identify regions most in need of levelling up - are too urban-focused, and do not account for different economies within regions, often linked to limited local employment opportunities, poor transport networks and weak connectivity. It calls for the Government to consider rural areas as a distinct region.

Local Government Chronicle (LGC)

LGC Awards 2022  
Wednesday 20 July • Governance House, London

Book your table

Search... LOGIN / REGISTER

[POLITICS](#)
[FINANCE](#)
[SERVICES](#)
[IDEA EXCHANGE](#)
[INVESTMENT](#)
[OPINION](#)
[PODCAST](#)
[EVENTS](#)
[JOBS](#)
[SUBSCRIBE](#)

## Warning current levelling up approach risks worsening rural-urban divides

20 JUNE 2022 | BY MEGAN KENYON

The levelling up white paper fails to capture rural disadvantage meaning the government needs to introduce new metrics, a new report by the Rural Services Network has said.

The report, put together in partnership with Pragmatix Advisory, states that if rural communities in England were to be their own distinct region, their need for levelling up would be greater than that of any other region in the country.

According to the report, the metrics set out by the government used as a means of identifying the regions most in need of levelling up do not account for the pressures currently facing rural areas.

This is due to the fact that, as the report states, differences within regions tend to be greater than differences between regions.

It also criticises the metrics laid out by the government as being too urban focused in their approach, and recommends the government also looks at measures such as the proportion of households in fuel poverty in a given area, workplace-based income, house price to local earnings ratios, and rates of seasonal employment.

**EDITOR'S PICKS**

- Don't miss your latest monthly issue of LGC
- Inflation leaves councils in 'different universe'
- Children's home providers accused of 'unacceptable' profiteering
- Rachel Wolf and Mike Crowhurst: Levelling up is not running out of steam
- Clean air zones analysed: 'we need the carrot to go with the stick'

**SPONSOR INSIGHT**

# In response to the launch of the research:

A Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities spokesperson said: “Rural areas are at the heart of our levelling up agenda. Our white paper is a plan for everyone, including rural communities, who rightly expect and deserve access to better services, quicker transport and quality education.

“We've designed our funds to ensure we reach places most in need and we continue to keep them under review as we develop each levelling up mission.”