

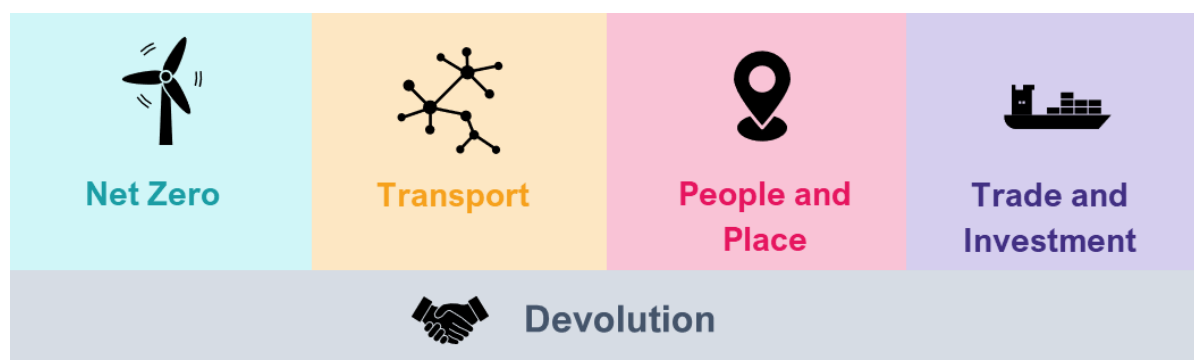


Convention Policy Brief: People and Place

This paper sets out a series of policy propositions in the field of People and Place, for discussion at the 2024 Convention of the North. It has been drafted by a group of policy officers from across the North of England, drawing on the expertise of local authorities, combined authorities, and place-based partnerships.

With a General Election confirmed for 2024, the Convention is an opportunity to showcase the **ambitions of the North** on the national stage, with propositions that are in the North’s particular opportunities and challenges. This year, there will be a focus on four policy areas: **Net Zero, Transport, People and Place and Trade and Investment**, underpinned by an enabling theme of greater **Devolution** to the North:

Figure 1. The four policy themes for Convention 2024



During the workshops as part of the 2024 Convention, we are looking to debate and iterate our draft policy propositions for People and Place, while collectively shaping a shared ambition for the North.

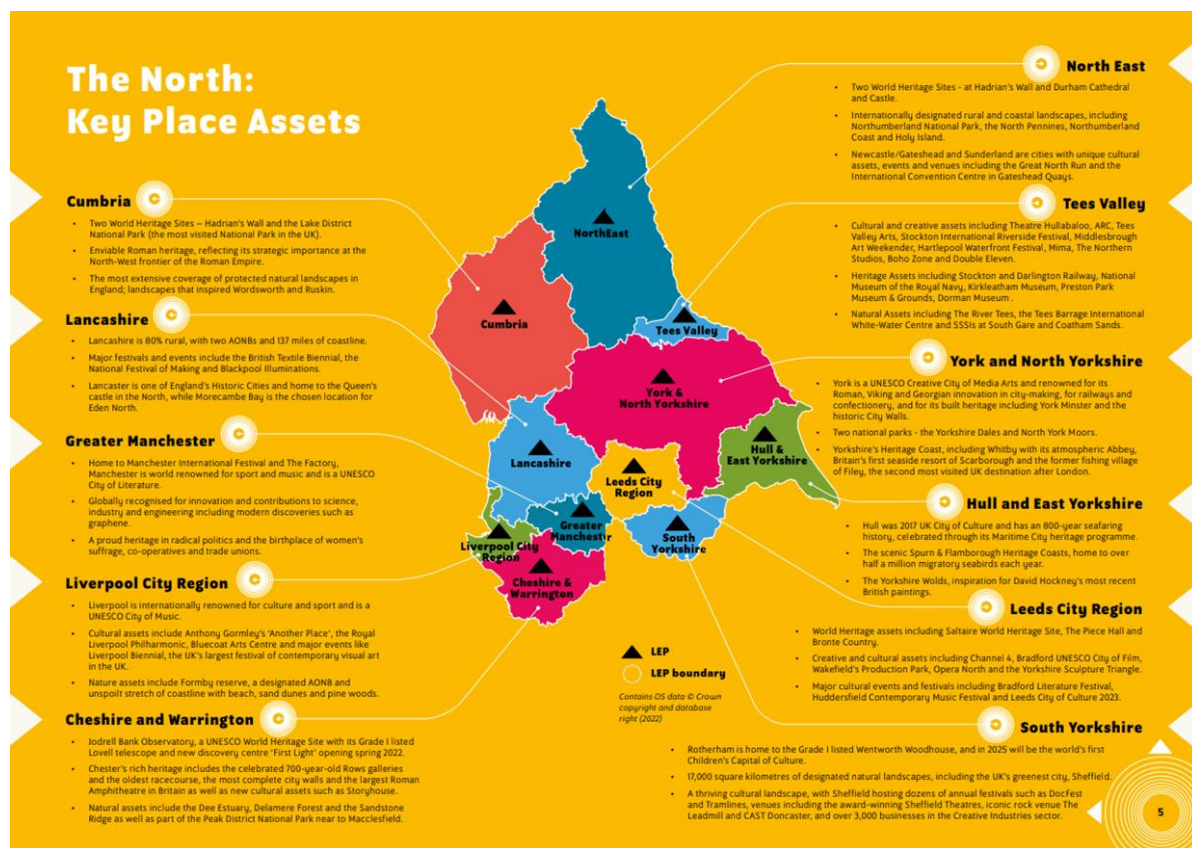
| 1: Building a Northern Cultural and Creative Corridor. | 2: Piloting a Place-based Visitor Economy. | 3: Collaborating on Health Inequalities across the North. |
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| Building Northern partnership propositions to support the development, resourcing and alignment of our key creative strengths and assets. | Boost the Northern green Visitor Economy, by maximising the potential of existing and new visitor attractions in piloting new connected delivery bodies across the North. | A Northern focus on understanding the causes of poor health, and what can be done to help including improved housing quality, an enhanced natural environment, more good work, and greater community safety. |
| <p>Co-creating the Manifesto: <i>What are the barriers to achieving against our potential in this policy area? What will help accelerate delivery? What could the North’s overarching ambition be for our People and Places?</i></p> | | |



Why should the North act on People and Place?

The North lies at the heart of our national identity, with a distinct character that has been forged and shaped by its people and their lives and stories, layered over centuries. And our people are integral to the North’s diverse and distinctive communities of place. With six World Heritage Sites, five National Parks, seven National Landscapes (formerly termed Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty), four UNESCO Creative Cities, and 2025’s City of Culture and Children’s City of Culture (in Bradford and Rotherham respectively), the North’s enviable portfolio of cultural, heritage and environmental assets are of national and international significance and are a source of deeply held loyalties and shared civic pride.

Figure 2. Key place assets in the North by LEP/former LEP region



Northern Place Assets, NP11 Place Strategy (2023).

The North is uniquely positioned to respond to current national and global priorities, including Global Britain and the UK Plan for Growth. It is rich in natural, cultural and industrial heritage. The North’s wealth of green space and natural habitats, not only supports a thriving visitor economy and place for investment, but represents significant natural capital and underpins its leading contribution to sustainability, Clean Growth and Net Zero objectives; there are clear links between the Net Zero and People and Place policy propositions. Its cultural strength not only includes significant built heritage and renowned cultural venues, events, and festivals, but also a rich tapestry of identities, accents and traditions, creative,



musical and sporting talent, and a distinctive sense of place. 'Pride in Place', so often engrained in local culture and heritage, has been identified as a key pillar of Levelling Up.

'Place' is an idea whose time has come: it has been highlighted as a priority at the three previous Conventions of the North and sits as a key area of focus for our 2024 papers.

The North's opportunity in People and Place

Place plays an important role benefiting residents, visitors, businesses, and the wider economy. Those sectors that contribute to (and benefit directly from) the North's quality of place include the arts and cultural environment, the heritage environment and the natural environment. The benefits of place can be measured and valued through direct economic activity in the North, including:

- £5.8 billion direct contribution to the North's economy
- £10.4 billion direct/indirect contribution from the arts/cultural/heritage sectors
- 170,000 jobs across the creative sectors
- £850 million and £3.4 billion annual spend by international and domestic holiday makers across the North
- £2.3 billion direct GVA from the cultural sectors, £3 billion direct GVA from the heritage sectors and £11 billion direct GVA from the creative industries

There are also substantial wider benefits that are delivered by the North's wealth of natural, cultural and heritage assets across education, inclusivity, and connection through pride in place. In particular, health and wellbeing has huge potential to benefit from a place-based approach to creative and cultural activity. To define and grasp these opportunities, collaboration lies at the heart of our approach: across places, across sectors and across interests.

The work around 'Place' across the North has been steered and supported by a strategic partnership of key nature and culture partners, convened by the NP11, and it builds on a broad scope programme of stakeholder engagement without which the policy is merely words. The Northern Place and Culture Partnership leads on pan-Northern Place policy but works closely with other innovative partnerships including Nature North, the Northern Creative Corridor initiative, the Northern Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEPs) with Visit England and Screen Alliance North. There is an enduring, shared recognition that the North – as a place - is 'stronger together'.

The Northern population is diverse and multi-cultural, encompassing 15.4m residents (as of 2022). They represent boundless human potential with diversity as a key strength. Our People are linked by (and are the continuing source of) our shared Northern heritage and culture. As important as the economic potential of the North's residents, their creative, cultural and artistic potential will be intrinsic to developing the northern economy and to supporting economic recovery and growth. The UK cannot have a truly successful economy without a strong cultural sector, and a 'levelled-up', enhanced North will not be achieved without strategic investment in and commitment to its cultural assets and its people, which in turn play a vital role in regenerating places, and providing a voice and identity to its cities, towns, and villages.



Barriers to achieving our potential

However, the North faces some barriers in making the most of our opportunity with regard to People and Place.

- **Scarce resources and investment:** In the creative sector, access to finance, attention and retaining talent holds back our potential; this is evidenced by the fact that the North's creative industries are only a third of the size of share of the economy of the Greater South East.
- **A low profile relative to the potential of our assets:** Our visitor economy in particular is held back by an overcrowded and fragmented landscape, reducing our ability to make an internationally compelling pitch rooted in our Northern assets.
- **Ensuring equal access to opportunity for our People:** Making sure that all the North's residents are able to access the opportunities, health and wellbeing benefits provided by our institutions, cultural establishments and economic assets, and have the right skills to engage with these opportunities on a level playing field.

People and Place: Violence against women and girls

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) has been described as a 'national epidemic'. A woman is killed by a man every three days in the UK. Domestic abuse makes up 18 percent of all recorded crime in England and Wales. Recorded sexual offences have seen a marked increase; in the year ending March 2022, there were 194,683 sexual offences, of which 70,330 were rape. And an economic downturn, such as the cost-of-living crisis, will increase the likelihood of unemployment, particularly for women, where financial independence can be a critical factor in a decision to leave a relationship. We should not build barriers for women from moving forward from traumatic situations or block women and girls who are at the very beginning of their journey, or even at rehabilitation.

Northern places have been prioritising action on violence against women and girls. For example, in West Yorkshire, local partners have developed the Safety of Women and Girls Strategy, intended to complement and build upon existing partnership work to deliver long-term societal change, alongside the establishment of a dedicated unit within the West Yorkshire police force to deliver against those goals. Further work through our partnerships within and across the North, including alongside businesses – supporting gender inclusion within industries and improving financial security, a major stress in individual and familial life and a contributor to the likelihood of someone engaging in abusive behaviour towards a partner or family member – will be required to make the necessary progress on this issue.



One area, in particular, that is holding back the potential of our People to engage and contribute to the cultural, creative and community life of the North is poor health outcomes, particularly for children.

Recent research by Health Equity North has shown that productivity is lower in the North; a key reason is that health is also worse in the North and long-term health conditions lead to economic inactivity. Spells of ill health increase the risk of job loss and lead to lower wages when people return to work. Improving health would reduce the £4 gap in productivity per person per hour between the Northern Powerhouse and the rest of England by 30% or £1.20 per person per hour, generating an additional £13.2 billion in UK GVA.

Poverty is the lead driver of inequalities between children in the North and the rest of England, and Health Equity North's research has shown this leads to worse physical and mental health, poorer educational attainment and life chances and alarming 20-year gaps in life expectancy at birth between the most and least deprived areas of the North and South.

There is extensive evidence about the pervasive, harmful impact of fuel poverty on infants, children and young people. Impacts include harm to physical health, mental health, and increased social exclusion across a range of measures, and reduced life changes. Recent research indicates that living in a cold, damp, draughty home can increase the risk of developing respiratory diseases (such as asthma) amongst children, and also suggests higher hospital admissions and poor weight gain amongst infants. Ensuring the health, safety and wellbeing of all our people, but in particular our children, is essential to fulfil the North's potential.

All of these issues should not be viewed in isolation. Increasingly, evidence is emerging that engagement with creativity, culture and heritage has the potential to improve health and wellbeing outcomes, health equity and to help mitigate wider social determinants of ill-health. A [recent APPG](#) report dubbed this approach "Creative Health" and called for place-based approaches to facilitating access to creative and cultural opportunities to support individual and community health and wellbeing, with Northern places like [Greater Manchester](#) providing national policy leadership in this field with their recent Creative Health City Region Strategy. At the heart of the North's agenda for our People and Place should be an understanding of how health, wellbeing, culture and creativity all intersect and reinforce each other.

In the following sections, we review three draft policy propositions that have been developed by the Convention of the North Policy Officers Group. The goal of the Convention workshop process is to challenge, shape and inform these propositions as part of the wider process of co-creating a Manifesto for the North.



Proposition: Developing a Northern Creative Corridor

Together we can unlock finance, train and retain talent, and capture national attention to become a new supercluster: **One Creative North**. One Creative North would seek to unlock the potential of Northern creative industries through two initiatives:

1. **CreaTech North Investment Fund**
2. **CreaTalent North**

Alongside the targeted opportunity around the creative sectors, there is clear potential to connect cross-sector support, workforce and leadership development and investment-readiness support across the North's place-focused sectors.

The North of England is home to approximately half of the UK's creative clusters and centres of creative excellence. Yet as a share of the regional economy, the creative industries are only a third of the size London and the South-East, constrained by their access to finance, talent and attention. Worse still, clusters across the North are often forced to compete for these scarce resources, limiting their individual and collective potential.

Recommendation: The North and Government should work together to develop the Northern Creative Corridor proposition

The **Northern Creative Corridor (NCC)** is an ambitious proposal to free the creative industries from these constraints and replace competition with pan-regional collaboration. In this way, it aims to raise the annual GVA of the region by around £10 billion per year and create tens of thousands of extra jobs. More fundamentally, it aims to develop the pipeline of creative talent, technology and institutions to ensure this growth is self-reinforcing.

To achieve this, the NCC has convened a broad and diverse coalition of local and creative industry leaders to work in partnership. Working with creative practitioners, universities and local leaders, we set out a plan – One Creative North - for unlocking finance, training and retaining talent and capturing national and international attention, to stimulate a new creative supercluster for the North will emerge.

One Creative North will comprise two complementary initiatives aimed at building the foundations of this new creative supercluster and focussed on advancing the new frontier of technologies as they apply in the creative industries. A secretariat function will be critical to provide co-ordinated leadership across all strands of activity, align thinking and resources, design mechanisms for showcasing northern creative talent, and ultimately foster collaboration and partnership across One Creative North.

1. **CreaTech North Investment Fund:** Boosting growth and employment in the creative industries, in particular early-stage start-ups and spinouts focussed on developing innovation and IP.

The Fund will provide finance for Northern enterprises working at the intersection of the creative industries and technology - a growth sector where the North currently lags - and which actively fosters pan-regional collaboration. This would work with and build on existing regional creative industries investment programmes like Creative Growth



Finance, managed by Creative UK, the North of Tyne Combined Authority's Culture and Creativity Investment Funds and Greater Manchester Combined Authority's Inspire Fund. By operating at scale and across-regions, the aim is to help stimulate a strong pipeline of investable opportunities to improve the investability of the sector and the region(s), with risk-sharing from pooling public, private and third-sector funding, alongside building a network of VCs and angel investors.

This would represent a pan-regional fund of c.£50m funding thousands of small and medium sized enterprises, including university start-ups and spin-outs across the N8 (and beyond), growing GVA, jobs, IP and innovation, with anchor financing from public sources matched at a 4:1 ratio by private sector capital. In the first year, it would seek to map the variety of good work underway; work through the different products available and possible public/private financial models to be deployed; work through eligibility criteria and support offers to creative organisations and SMEs.

- 2. CreaTalent North:** A co-ordinated, pan regional and life-long approach to training and retaining creative talent in the North, from classroom to career.

CreaTalent will take a three-pronged approach, focusing on: careers pathways, qualifications and continuing professional and skills development. Starting at the secondary education level, a network of high-profile talent will inspire the next generation of creatives to consider the creative industries as a viable career pathway and work with teachers and families to reset narratives and norms around creative curriculums. OCN will also pioneer the use of modular learning and micro-credentials to develop a creative curriculum for the North that is closely tied to the needs and rhythms of the creative industries, as well as promoting creativity and innovation among other sectors and industries. Creative industries are dynamic, fast-moving, project-based and freelancer-staffed. Traditional qualifications, industry placements and apprenticeships do not meet their needs. Creative industry and arts employers need shorter engagements with students (and lifelong learners), providing learning opportunities and recognised credits that can accumulate to higher-level qualifications over a longer period of time.

This will require universities to embrace transferrable and granular training and support that goes beyond the traditional degree, with modular courses that meet the opportunities of the Lifelong Loan Entitlement. MCAs across the region, in conjunction with employers and other relevant bodies, would devise and agree to a curriculum and credential regime. Validated credentials would start in school through cultural and creative learning with clear career pathways into employment, in line with the forthcoming Cultural Education Plan and Gatsby Framework.

In the first year, this initiative would seek to map existing local and regional creative skills strategies and join up with government policy direction; survey freelancers on key CPD skills requirements for creative workers to identify gaps and duplication in current skills landscape; and outline a pilot modular learning approach to test and learn in practice.



One Creative North Secretariat

Supporting staff and infrastructure will be critical to underpin these initiatives and so the secretariat will be a single point of contact for One Creative North co-ordination and leadership. This will include:

- High-level leadership and staffing.
- A network of Northern rooted, high-profile creative industry stars to champion and help deliver on the initiatives; a mechanism to identify, amplify and offer showcasing opportunities to existing Northern creative talent, possibly through an awards scheme;
- A joined-up programme of data, analytical and evaluation work on creative clusters across the North, to inform evidence-based policy making.

The Northern Creative Corridor is the 'jewel in the crown in pan-Northern efforts to **'link up, tool up and scale up the North's Place Sectors'**. Alongside the targeted opportunity around the creative sectors, there is clear potential to consider sector support, workforce and leadership development and investment-readiness support when working *across* sectors defined by place. These 'Place Sectors' include:

- Creative and cultural industries, focusing on content creation and presentation.
- Heritage, including conservation construction and traditional craft.
- Green, landscape and nature jobs.
- Visitor economy professions, including festivals and public events.
- Food and beverage growing and production.

There are synergies and similar characteristics across these sectors. Drawing on the NP11's February 2024 Innovation Clusters report, the North presents opportunities to build and support related variety clusters and career development, offering a new paradigm for economic development and supporting Place Sector businesses across urban, semi-rural and rural parts of the North.

Convening, connecting and pursuing funding for collaborative work across these Northern Place sectors – supporting focused groups such as the Northern Creative Corridor, Nature North, Screen Alliance North, etc. – is a core focus for the Northern Place and Culture Partnership with a delivery focus on clear public benefit, as well as inclusive growth aspirations.



Proposition: Piloting a Place-Based Visitor Economy

The North is the UK's most advanced area for LVEP coverage in the UK. Working across the Northern LVEPs, Nature North and the wider partnership, there is opportunity to:

- Create DDPs for full coverage across the North
- Develop the 'Northern Super-pitch' with the Northern Place and Culture Partnership NP11
- Develop a shared, three-year initiative around 'Regenerative Tourism North' in collaboration with Nature North and the pan-Northern partners

With an investment of £6.75 million for three-year pilot, we can triple international visits to the North by 2030.

The success of the visitor economy in the North is intrinsically linked to the place sectors of arts, culture, heritage and nature, and this relationship is mutually reinforcing. Since the pandemic, the policy and partnership landscape supporting the visitor economy has matured. In 2022, VisitEngland created a portfolio of nationally supported, strategic and high-performing Local Visitor Economy Partnerships (LVEPs). Now, the North is the UK's most advanced area for LVEP coverage in the UK.

As the lead and pilot, the North East's Destination Development Partnership (DDP) is the only entity to draw funding to support their connective work. Visit England is a member of the Northern Place and Culture Partnership and work across the Place sectors since the 2023 Convention have borne out clear opportunities for pan-Northern collaboration and impact.

Recommendation: Working across the Northern LVEPs, Nature North and the wider partnership, there is opportunity to:

3. Create DDPs for full coverage across the North, learning from the North East DDP as the pilot DDP and their wealth of experience, expertise and insight.
4. Developing the 'Northern Super-pitch' with the Northern Place and Culture Partnership NP11 with focus on international visits, trade and investment, and work with global ambassadors' offices.
5. Develop a shared, three-year initiative around 'Regenerative Tourism North' in collaboration with Nature North and the pan-Northern partners supporting green, clean and inclusive growth, a diverse cultural offer and data collection on social/environmental/educational/economic impacts, including the visitor economy.

With an investment of £6.75 million for three-year pilot to support comprehensive roll out of DDPs across the North and develop Regenerative Tourism North, we can:

- Triple international visits to the North by 2030
- Redefine the North's leisure and business visitor offer through a pan-regional regenerative tourism programme by 2027
- Transform the role and positive impact a connected Northern Visitor Economy can – and will – play within our wider Place ambitions.



Proposition: Collaborating on Health Inequalities across the North

A programme of place-based working to tackle ill health and benefit the economy, including collaboration and knowledge sharing between upper tier and regional authorities across the North on addressing health inequalities through the wider determinants of health, in particular housing, environment, and early years.

Tackling ill health will benefit the northern economy and addressing the wide determinants of our children's poor health is key to mitigating economic impacts - through early investment reduce inequalities, raise aspirations and attainment so everyone can fulfil their potential and lead a happy, healthy, and productive life.

Improving population health [is associated](#) with better economic outcomes in terms of higher employment rates, lower rates of economic inactivity, higher GVA per-head, and higher median weekly pay. Through collaboration and knowledge sharing between upper-tier and regional authorities in the North, we can address the stark health inequalities through the wider determinants of health. Based on research, we recommend

6. Wider determinants of health – Housing

There are significant risks to health from the impact of cold damp homes on families (children especially) as energy bills increase as living costs rise, and as households reduce heating and other forms of energy use to save energy.

Recommendations – Ensure children live in warm homes.

- 1) Prioritise action to improve the energy efficiency of homes, including social housing and the private rental sector.
- 2) Consider mechanisms financial support beyond the current social security system to groups most in need, especially carers, those dependent on essential powered medical equipment, and low income households not in receipt of means-tested benefits, and the introduction of specific financial support for families using prepayment meters

7. Wider determinants of health – Environment and tackling childhood obesity

Physically active play, sport and travel have considerable health, psychological and wellbeing benefits to both individuals and health care systems, [preventing](#) chronic disease such as obesity, heart disease, stroke, cancer, chronic respiratory disease and diabetes.

Environmental inequalities [reflect](#) childhood obesity trends; socioeconomically deprived and ethnically diverse areas have fewer safe or accessible green spaces for exercise. Socioeconomically deprived and ethnically diverse areas also have more takeaway outlets. [Between 2008 and 2012](#), 20% of children from a range of age and socioeconomic groups ate food from takeaway outlets, at home, once or more times per week.

A positive step towards improving environments for children's health to put park and green space improvements at the heart of 'place making', as supported by Nature North's recent research [on Urban Green Spaces](#). Some of the [UK's first public parks](#) opened in the North and a recent example of continued expansion here is the new Kashmir Park in Bradford,



which opened in June 2021. The NP11's *Place Strategy for the North* seeks to develop a pan-Northern demonstrator and Challenge Fund focused on 'green and creative care', which includes urban farms and nature reserves alongside parks and gardens. With strong pan-Northern partnerships to support policy and delivery, there is strong potential to lead and connect place-based innovation to support individual and population health across health, place, nature, creativity, and physical activity.

Recommendations:

- 1) Prioritise initiatives to increase green space use which tackles structural quality issues - working with Nature North and environmental partners to address fears about safety, encourage communities to reclaim their local green spaces, and champion local authorities to put park and green space improvements at the heart of 'place making'.
- 2) Support a three-year pan-Northern demonstrator on 'Green and Creative Care', including a challenge fund to spur innovation around financial sustainability, quality assurance, partnership delivery and quantifiable impact across place, nature, physical activity, culture and creative engagement to support health and wellbeing.
- 3) Consider and involve children and child health in planning and regeneration decisions.
- 4) Joined-up policy action across, and collaborative working with, neighbouring local government areas regarding planning policy on place-based food systems and takeaway food outlet regulation
- 5) Review and further develop the Government's policy on the development of place-based food systems to support regeneration and public health initiatives, alongside the advertising of foods and beverages.

8. Wider determinants of health – early years.

Cuts to local authority budgets have led to substantially reduced public expenditure on services for children, particularly early years expenditure, with the greatest cuts being in the most deprived areas with the greatest need. Between 2010 and 2018, local authority spending on Sure Start Children's Centres, per eligible child, was cut by 67% in the North, compared to 63% in the rest of England.

Recommendations:

- 1) Northern commissioners of maternity and early years services should work together and with Government to consider the impact of pandemic related service changes on inequalities in families and children's experiences and outcomes. This must shape service delivery during the recovery.
- 2) Tackle the negative impacts of the pandemic in the North through rapid, focussed investment in early years services, such as the Health Improvement Fund.