Report

English Indices of Deprivation 2025

Spatial Inequality, Placemaking, and Policy Implications

Written by Liam Young, Senior Consultant | November 2025

TILE HILL

About the Author

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Liam specialises in the appointment of senior leaders across placemaking. His work spans councils, development corporations, and place-based partnerships, helping organisations to identify and attract the people capable of shaping the future of towns, cities, and regions.

Over his career, Liam has advised local authorities and their partners on leadership strategies to deliver complex regeneration programmes, housing growth, and major capital investment. His experience has given him a distinctive insight into how leadership, governance, and local identity intersect to determine the success of place-based transformation.

Driven by a deep belief in the public value of good leadership, Liam's work sits at the intersection of people and place. He is particularly interested in how visionary, collaborative leaders can navigate the challenges of economic uncertainty, climate transition, and social inequality while keeping community purpose at the heart of decision-making.

Alongside his search work, Liam writes extensively on leadership, culture, and the future of place. His thought leadership explores how place-making has evolved beyond physical regeneration to become a holistic practice rooted in community, identity, and long-term stewardship.

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Introduction

When the government released the English Indices of Deprivation 2025, it did more than update a set of statistics. It offered a mirror, and what that mirror shows is both familiar and uncomfortable.

Once again, the data reveals an England divided by income and geography, by circumstance and by place. It shows that deprivation in this country is not the result of sudden events or recent policy failures, but something much deeper and longer-lasting. Inequality has become part of the landscape, shaped over generations and across regions. The same postcodes, estates and towns appear at the bottom of the list time and again.

The 2025 release ranks 33,755 neighbourhoods from most to least deprived across seven areas: income, employment, education, health, crime, barriers to housing and services, and the living environment. Together they form the Index of Multiple Deprivation, the closest thing England has to a national picture of disadvantage. Policymakers use it to target funding, councils to plan interventions, and researchers to track how inequality shifts over time. Yet beyond the numbers lies a much simpler truth. These figures represent people, communities and everyday lives.

This latest update comes at a significant moment. Fifteen years after austerity reshaped local government, and six years after the promise of "Levelling Up", the pressures on housing, health and public services continue to mount. The IoD 2025 reads less like an administrative exercise and more like a national report card.

Despite all the plans, funds and regeneration programmes that have come and gone, the hard truth is that deprivation has barely shifted. The landscape of inequality mapped in 2019 looks much the same today. In many places, hardship has become normal. What we are seeing is not temporary strain, but a kind of standstill, or what some economists and policy experts now describe as structural immobility.

In practice, deprivation in England is about much more than a lack of income. It is a poverty of place. It is the feeling of being left behind while the rest of the country moves on. It's the boarded-up high street and the bus that never arrives. It's the patch of damp on the ceiling that stays year after year because the landlord is absent and the council no longer has the means to act. It is, in the end, the daily reality of inequality.

The IoD 2025 shows that deprivation remains both deeply rooted and widely spread. The areas that were worst off a decade ago still sit at the bottom of the table, but they are no longer isolated. Almost every local authority now contains some pocket of hardship, from rural villages to coastal towns, from London boroughs to post-industrial cities. The geography of deprivation has become broader as well as deeper, a patchwork of exclusion running through England's social fabric.

For policymakers, this represents both a warning and a chance. The warning is that deprivation cannot be explained away as part of an economic cycle. It is the result of long-term structural imbalance: decades of uneven investment, fragmented decision-making and regional neglect. The chance lies in changing how policy is designed and delivered, shifting from short-term projects to sustained, place-led renewal.

This report looks at what the 2025 data tells us about the condition of England's places: how inequality persists, how patterns are shifting, and what this means for local leadership and placemaking. To bridge the gap between thriving and struggling communities, we need to see deprivation not as an abstract measure but as a spatial reality and one that demands long-term commitment, creativity and collaboration to address.

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Around 600

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1 in 5

neighbourhoods fall within the most deprived ten per cent nationally.

We're Stuck!

The 2025 results make for a sobering read. More than four in five neighbourhoods that were among the most deprived in 2019 are still there today. The same streets, the same estates, the same coastal towns continue to carry the weight of hardship, year after year.

At the other end of the scale, 72 per cent of the least deprived places have stayed at the top. England's social geography appears fixed. Despite well-meaning regeneration projects and the rhetoric of "levelling up", the postcode lottery endures.

Deprivation is not confined to a handful of inner-city areas. Almost two-thirds of local authorities across England now contain at least one neighbourhood in the worst ten per cent nationally. Poverty has become a national condition, stretching from inner-city estates to seaside towns and rural fringes alike.

The single most deprived neighbourhood in England remains unchanged: Jaywick, near Clacton-on-Sea. For more than a decade this small coastal settlement has topped the list. Its challenges of poor housing, seasonal work and fragile infrastructure, tell a story of disadvantage passed down through generations. Elsewhere, Blackpool dominates the bottom of the rankings, with seven of the ten most deprived neighbourhoods in the country. Low pay, ill health and failing housing converge to create a cycle of decline that is hard to break.

These are not isolated cases. In many of the hardest-hit areas, deprivation overlaps across several fronts. Almost every neighbourhood in the most deprived decile also scores poorly on at least two other measures. Two communities – in Jaywick and Margate – sit in the bottom decile on all seven. This is more than poverty. It is structural exclusion, a form of social marginalisation that resists simple solutions.

There are some signs of progress. Around six hundred neighbourhoods have moved out of the bottom decile since 2019, though most have risen only slightly. So, change can happen, but it is slow, fragile and uneven.

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Regional Disparities

England's deprivation map remains uneven.

The North and the Midlands continue to carry a disproportionate share of hardship, while much of the South and East fare considerably better. In the North East and North West, around one in five neighbourhoods fall within the most deprived ten per cent nationally. In the South East, the figure is closer to one in thirty.

That gap has barely shifted since 2019. The industrial legacy of the past still shapes life today. At local level, Middlesbrough now ranks as the most deprived authority in England, with half of its neighbourhoods in the bottom decile. Birmingham, Hartlepool, Hull and Manchester follow closely behind, showing that deprivation cuts through large urban economies as well as smaller towns.

Along the coast, places like Blackpool, Hastings and Thanet continue to struggle with the combined effects of economic decline, poor housing and ill health. Former industrial towns such as Knowsley and Burnley face persistent unemployment and low pay.

Yet deprivation is not only a northern or urban phenomenon. The data show deep poverty within areas that otherwise appear prosperous: pockets of hardship in London, Kent, Essex and parts of the South West. Tower Hamlets and Hackney remain among the worst in the country for both child and older-people income deprivation. Even within the capital's wealth, some of England's poorest wards can be found.

Rural deprivation, though less visible, is also real. Weak transport links, limited access to services and ageing housing stock leave many rural residents isolated and underserved, even if their communities do not fall into the lowest deciles.

The wider picture is one of spread as much as persistence. In 2004, only half of England's local authorities contained any neighbourhoods in the most deprived ten per cent. Today, almost two-thirds do. Hardship is no longer confined to a few familiar places; it has become more dispersed, part of the fabric of the country itself.

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Demographic Divides

Urban deprivation is the most visible form of inequality, but within cities, the contrasts are often stark.

London captures this tension more vividly than anywhere else. Towering wealth stands beside entrenched poverty, sometimes separated by only a few streets. Tower Hamlets has the highest rate of child poverty in England, with more than seven in ten children living in income-deprived households. The same borough ranks first for older-people poverty as well. Hackney, Newham and Brent show similar patterns, where housing costs and insecure work compound the strain on already stretched communities.

Elsewhere, large northern cities such as Manchester and Liverpool sit alongside London in the top ranks for both child and elderly deprivation. Inequality in these places cuts across generations and has become part of the social landscape.

Every area tells a different story. In post-industrial towns, the picture is often dominated by poor health, unemployment and low pay. In inner-city districts, overcrowding and child poverty are more prevalent. In rural hamlets, it may be the slow erosion of services and the quiet persistence of housing disrepair.

Placemaking, in this context, must begin with understanding, not templates. Each community's deprivation profile reflects a particular mix of history, demography and local economy. What succeeds in a town shaped by industrial decline may fail entirely in a coastal settlement built around seasonal work, or in an inner-London borough under pressure from rising rents.

Meaningful regeneration depends on listening carefully to what makes a place itself, its people, its daily rhythms, its built environment and its sense of belonging. It requires local diagnosis before national prescription.

Deprivation is not a uniform condition that can be "solved" from above, but a layered experience that must be understood and addressed from within.

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Implications

For local government leaders, the IoD 2025 is not simply another dataset. It is a diagnostic tool and a call to act.

Tackling deprivation will not be achieved through short bursts of funding or narrowly focused projects. It requires patience, collaboration and a willingness to think across systems and silos.

The government's 2025/26 finance settlement has begun to acknowledge this reality. Councils in the most deprived decile will receive a 6.4 per cent uplift in core funding, compared with around 3 per cent for the least deprived. Alongside this, ministers have announced a £600 million Recovery Grant, £500 million for children's development programmes, and a £1 billion Crisis Support Fund to ease immediate hardship.

These are positive signals, but they remain short-term measures. After a decade of austerity, local government spending power is still around 8 per cent lower than in 2010 in real terms.

Reversing deprivation will require leadership that thinks differently. The councils that will make real progress are those that see themselves not only as service providers, but as place shapers: conveners of partners, investors in local identity, and stewards of civic renewal.

Placemaking must return to the centre of both national and local policy. A deprived neighbourhood is rarely just poor. It is often physically degraded, socially fragmented and economically isolated. True renewal means treating place as a living system: improving homes and streets, strengthening health and opportunity, and rebuilding the civic fabric that holds communities together.

When done well, placemaking is not a cosmetic exercise but a transformation of how people live, work and belong. Achieving that kind of change depends not only on investment but on leadership and the capacity to bring partners together. The councils that make progress will be those led by people who can lead beyond organisational boundaries, turning limited resources into collective purpose. thriving and struggling communities, we need to see deprivation not as an abstract measure but as a spatial reality and one that demands long-term commitment, creativity and collaboration to address.

The IoD 2025 reveals the scale of leadership required to change the picture of deprivation. Behind every data point sits a deeper question: who is willing to lead in the places that need leadership most?

The map of inequality is also a map of where leadership must be at its boldest. The most deprived areas need more than capable administrators, they need people with conviction, creativity and resilience. People who can connect systems that rarely meet: housing and health, education and employment, economy and community. This is leadership as stewardship, not management; the ability to hold together the social, economic and human strands that make up a place.

For councils and partners working in these environments, the challenge is not simply about filling posts but attracting and keeping the right kind of people. Traditional incentives can only go so far. Increasingly, what draws talented leaders to these places is purpose and the chance to make visible, lasting difference where it matters most. As one local authority chief told us recently, "I was drawn to the most deprived urban places, not away from them." That sense of vocation is powerful, and it is often what sustains leaders through the toughest conditions.

The IoD 2025 also has clear implications for how we think about recruitment. Councils at the sharp end of deprivation may face tougher competition for senior talent, but they can stand out by being clear about what they stand for: regeneration, fairness and civic renewal.

In the end, the IoD 2025 reminds us that leadership is not a footnote to the story of deprivation; it is central to it. Tackling inequality is as much about people as policy. Real change will depend on the quality of that leadership and the courage with which it is exercised.

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Conclusion

Tackling deprivation in all its forms requires collaboration across sectors and institutions. Councils, NHS partners, schools, housing associations, the police and community organisations all have a part to play. Progress will depend on these partners working around shared priorities, not separate agendas. The growth of Integrated Care Systems and local place-based coalitions provides a solid foundation for this kind of joint approach. So too does the increasing use of shared data, such as the IoD and IMD maps, to coordinate interventions and track outcomes across agencies.

Just as important is community participation.

Deprived neighbourhoods cannot be transformed from the outside. Residents need genuine power over decisions, budgets and the design of local projects. The All-Party Parliamentary Group for 'left behind' neighbourhoods has shown that strengthening civic institutions (local charities, community centres, neighbourhood forums) is essential for building resilience that lasts. Real regeneration happens when people feel they have a stake in the future of their place.

The IoD's influence also extends beyond government. Charities, lotteries and social investors use the data to guide how they spend and where they focus. The 2025 figures will help reshape grant priorities, direct regeneration bids and steer private investment towards the communities that need it most.

The English Indices of Deprivation 2025 do more than measure poverty; they map the geography of opportunity, or the lack of it. They show how the past continues to shape the present, and how inequality has become embedded in England's physical and social fabric. But they also point clearly to where the work must begin.

For policymakers, planners and local leaders, these figures are not the end of the story. They are the start of a shared mission to turn data into action, rankings into regeneration, and deprivation into dignity.

Ultimately, the story the IoD tells is one of people as much as place. It will be the quality of local leadership that determines whether these patterns hold or finally begin to shift.

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Keep in Touch

At Tile Hill, we work with local authorities and place-based organisations across the UK to help them find, develop, and inspire the leaders who shape our communities.

From Chief Executives to Directors of Place, we partner with organisations driving regeneration, housing, infrastructure, and local growth. We work with and for the people making a tangible difference in the places we live and work.

Our approach is rooted in understanding place: its challenges, its ambitions, and its people. We believe that leadership recruitment should be more than a transaction. It is an act of placemaking in itself. By connecting purpose-driven leaders with transformative organisations, we help councils and their partners build fairer and more resilient communities.

If you'd like to discuss the findings of this report, explore how we can support your leadership recruitment, or collaborate on future thought leadership around place and inequality, we'd love to hear from you.

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