



Zero chance of ‘levelling-up’ working in the current system, says major new report

- A new report shows that significant changes are needed if the government’s flagship ‘levelling-up’ ambition is to have any chance of success.
- *Achieving Levelling-Up* finds that better national and local accountability, coordination and collaboration will be essential to tackling regional inequality.

New comprehensive research has found that there is zero chance of achieving ‘levelling-up’ without significant changes to the current system at a national and local level.

The research, conducted as part of the LIPSIT (Local Institutions, Productivity, Sustainability and Inclusivity Trade-offs) project by the cross-party think tank Demos and the Universities of Birmingham, Cardiff, Surrey and Warwick, identifies a number of problems with the current system for managing local economic policy, and suggests a new framework in which levelling-up should be possible.

The *Achieving Levelling-Up* report [published 18 November 2020] shows that there are a number of barriers to tackling regional inequality which urgently need to be tackled, including wasteful processes in local and national institutions, a lack of long-term strategy due to fragmented funding from central government, and an insufficient level of accountability of those who are currently responsible for delivering growth, such as Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and Combined Authorities (CAs).

In order to address these issues, the report recommends eight steps for central government to take. These steps would provide a more successful framework to implement the Government’s flagship levelling-up agenda:

1. State the intention to create strong local institutions over the next two to three years.
2. Set out a framework for who should be making which decisions, from a local or central level.
3. Identify which authorities should form the basis for these institutions. This would be Mayoral Combined Authorities where they exist, or alternatives where they do not.
4. Set shared national objectives with these authorities and, with a national budget, organise single pot funding to allow authorities to fulfil these objectives.
5. As part of this process, the centre should play an ongoing leadership role to coordinate and guide regional policy.
6. Work with these institutions to invest in capability development and in shared resources.

7. Put accountability systems and metrics in place through collaborating with the local institutions.
8. Together, create an overall brand for levelling up that creates expectations and support amongst the public.

The report concludes that levelling-up will be difficult but possible. Achieving it will require strong local institutions and strong leadership from central government.

Commenting on the findings, Charles Seaford, Senior Fellow at Demos and co-author of the report, said:

“The intention to level-up was at the heart of the Government’s policy agenda when they won the General Election in 2019. And we’ve been hearing even more about regional inequality since the regional responses to Covid-19 came into force recently. But the answer to the question of levelling-up is not a simple one. The answer is not simply more funding: it requires a shake-up to the current system, new structures to facilitate joint objective setting, more accountability, and changes to the way success is measured.

“Without a combination of these improvements, there is no clear path ahead for levelling-up. This has been a long-standing issue through successive governments, and we hope that central government will finally take leadership on this agenda, and make the true change which has been highly anticipated for too long.”

-ENDS-

NOTES TO EDITORS

Report - Seaford, Charles, et al. (2020) Achieving Levelling-Up: The Structures and Processes Needed, LIPSIT Report, November 2020.

[Find the full report here.](#)

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About LIPSIT

The LIPSIT project (Local Institutions, Productivity, Sustainability and Inclusivity Trade-offs) - undertaken by the Universities of Birmingham, Cardiff, Surrey and Warwick and think tank Demos and funded by the ESRC, Grant ES/T002468/1 - aims to identify institutional and organisational arrangements at the regional level that tend to lead to the ‘good’ management of policy trade-offs associated with increasing productivity, and to make recommendations based on this. For further details, visit: www.LIPSIT.ac.uk.