

# Growing Up North

Time to leave  
the North-South  
divide behind



# Northern

# Lights

I want all children in the North to have the best possible opportunities to look forward to happy, healthy and prosperous lives. Yet the statistics tell us that for too many of them, this will only ever be a dream. For reasons which are not fully understood, early promise – as evidenced for instance in great primary school results – doesn't translate into lifetime success. The North East has the best primary schools in the country, yet the region has the lowest adult employment rate. A higher proportion of children in the North West go to Russell Group universities than anywhere else in the country, yet household disposable income in the North West is lower than anywhere south of the M4.

Growing up North is a project which seeks to understand what happens in that gap, between childhood and adulthood – and what we can do to help bridge it. Put simply: I want to understand what makes an area a great place to grow up.

**“The North East has the best primary schools in the country, yet the region has the lowest adult employment rate.”**

This is an issue which ought to be at the heart of the devolution agenda, embedded in plans for new city regions and the 'Northern Powerhouse'. But too often the things that really affect children's life chances – the complex interplay of education, wealth, health, labour markets, family aspiration, even transport links – are

considered in isolation, without a thorough understanding of how they interact to create opportunity; or how they affect children's expectations and goals. From next year, many northern areas will have regional governments headed by directly elected mayors. I believe these regions have the opportunity to develop integrated industrial, educational and social mobility strategies, and I want to identify how this can best be done. I want to put children – the future economic and social prosperity of our communities – at the heart of regeneration.

**“I want to put children – the future economic and social prosperity of our communities – at the heart of regeneration.”**

This project will identify differences not just between but within regions, in children's progression and outcomes: at what age, and in which towns and cities, do outcomes diverge? Things may look very different for a child in Oldham and a child in Leeds. We will talk to children to understand how they see their prospects and opportunities, and how this reflects the availability and quality of local services. I want to develop a more nuanced appreciation than the headline statistics allow, of the interaction between social mobility and where you grow up; to really understand how growing up in a particular area impacts on a child's chances in life.

*Anne Longfield*

Anne Longfield, OBE  
Children's Commissioner for England

- > Regional variation in the development and progression of children
- > Children's outlook, aspirations and expectations and how these relate to place
- > The role of institutions in supporting children to develop their skills and raise their ambitions

**Growing  
Up North  
Themes:**

## Growing Up North will...

### ...look at the progression of children from early years to early adulthood across different areas

There is extensive data collected and published on children's outcomes. I will bring this together to chart the progress of children right through into adulthood to increase our understanding of regional differences and how this is manifested. This will enable me to identify where children are excelling and where they are being left behind.

### ...increase our understanding of children's attitudes, aspirations and expectations and how these relate to locality

Young peoples' decisions are influenced by their immediate environment and ambitions for the future. Through qualitative work with children, I will look at the ways in which children's ambitions are shaped by their experiences and try to appreciate the choices facing young people when they plan for their future, considering sometimes competing aspirations relating to career, well-being and family.

### ...assess the opportunities available to young people between and within different regions

Local areas can provide opportunities to children in a myriad of different ways: sports and hobbies allow children to develop their interests and confidence; economic and cultural access give children experience; and industrial and professional openings, as well as transport connections, enable young people to enter the workforce. I will look at how these vary across different areas.

### ...make clear recommendations to local, regional and national government

My ambition is to put opportunity for children at the heart of the development of local communities. This project will be identifying the opportunities presented by devolution to further children's interests and the challenges that need to be overcome if regeneration is to succeed. I will be making clear recommendations to all levels of policymakers.

**“The place we grow-up influences every aspect of our lives – it informs our view of the world around us; it influences the relationships we have, and ultimately, it impacts on our career choices and our wider life choices to.”**

**That's why I want children to be at the heart of the regeneration debates. I want every child to have the brightest future possible, wherever they live.”**

Anne Longfield, OBE  
Children's Commissioner for England



# Lights

## The North in numbers

### Growing Up North will be...

#### ...guided by existing research

This project builds-upon work by academics, public bodies, think tanks and businesses.

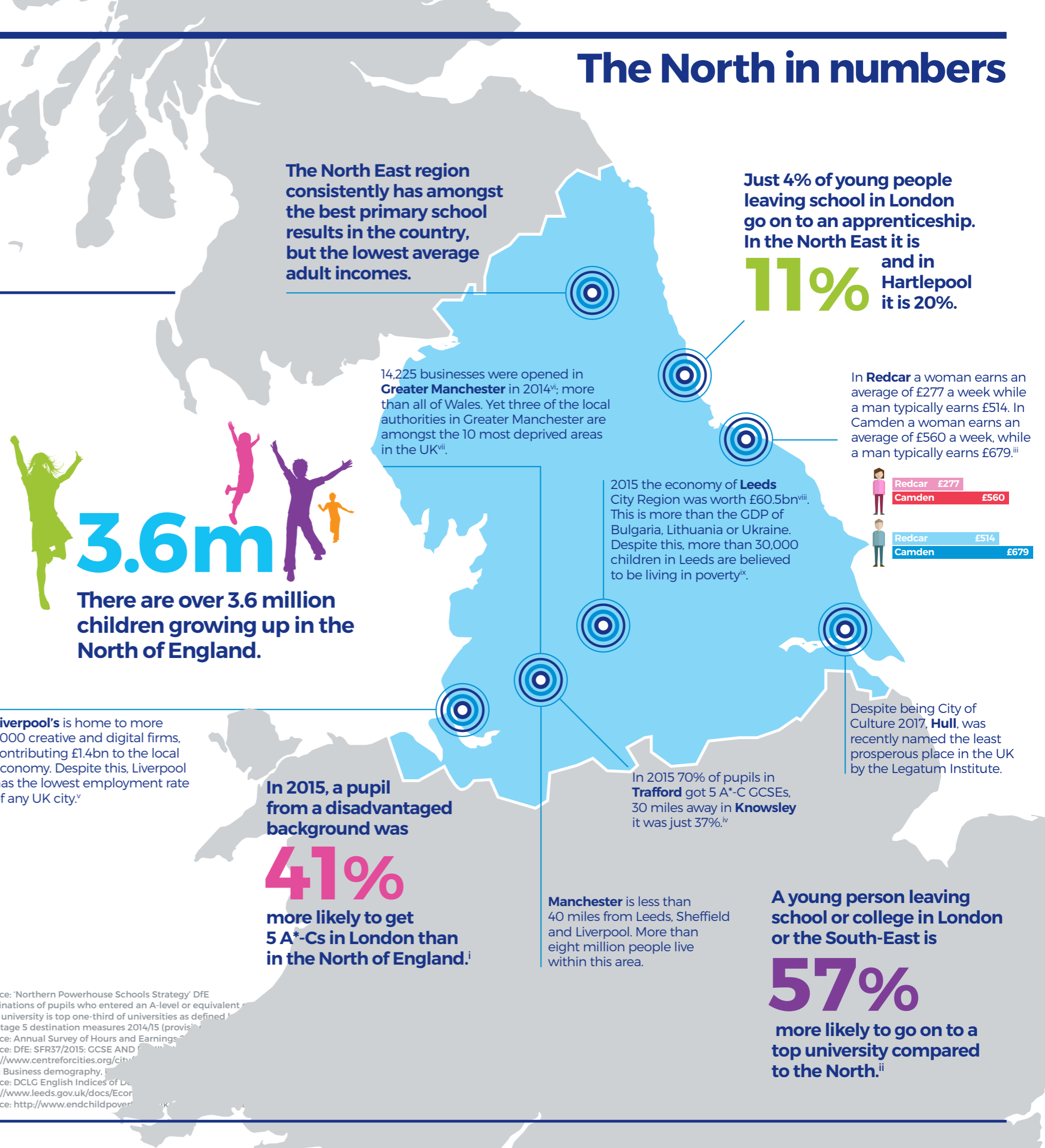
#### ...supported by evidence

Where necessary, I will look to add to existing research by commissioning analysis of data and cohort studies to increase our understanding of children's progress and the regional differences.

#### ...illuminated by regional discussions and visits

I will undertake regional visits to meet with policy-makers and practitioners; systematically gathering information and examining regional plans for children. I will also visit projects and institutions which are making a real difference to the lives of young people; and hearing directly from the young people involved.

#### ...informed by the experiences and ambitions of young people throughout.



i Source: 'Northern Powerhouse Schools Strategy' DfE  
 ii Destinations of pupils who entered an A-level or equivalent  
 'Top' university is top one-third of universities as defined by  
 key stage 5 destination measures 2014/15 (provisional)  
 iii Source: Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings  
 iv Source: DfE: SFR37/2015: GCSE AND A-LEVEL RESULTS  
 v <http://www.centreforcities.org/city/>  
 vi ONS: Business demography, 1995-2014  
 vii Source: DCLG English Indices of Deprivation 2015  
 viii <http://www.leeds.gov.uk/docs/Econ>  
 ix Source: <http://www.endchildpoverty.org/>

## The Growing Up North Advisory Group:

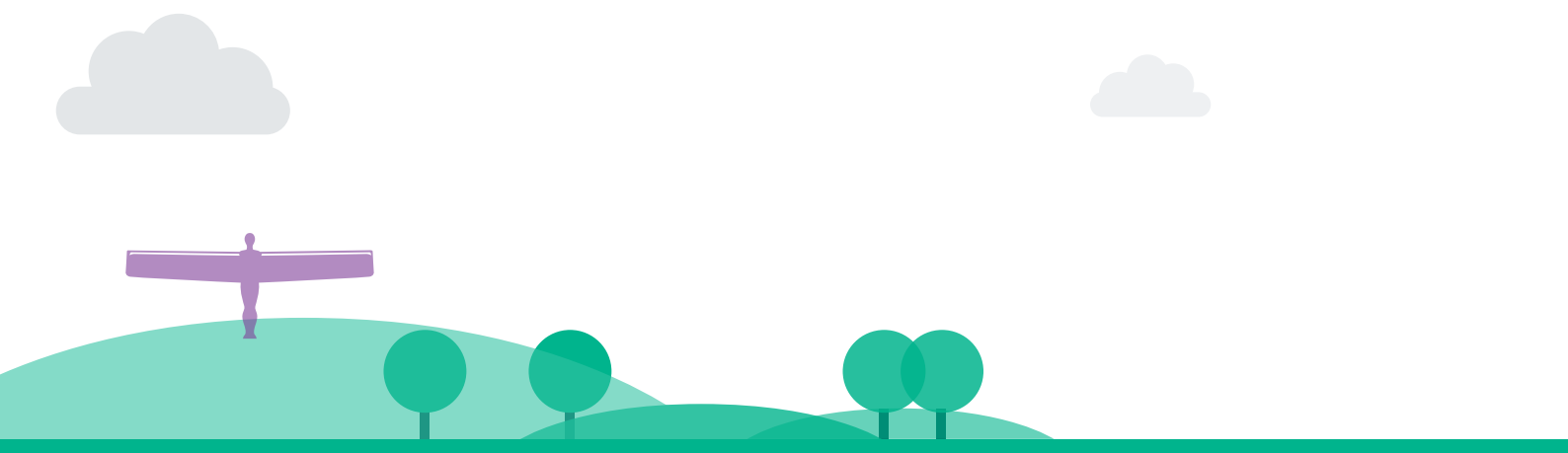
<b>Cllr Sean Anstee</b>	Leader, Trafford Council
<b>Prof Denise Barrett-Baxendale MBE</b>	Deputy CEO, Everton Football Club and Chief Executive, Everton in the Community; board member, UK Sport
<b>Brian Barwick</b>	Chair, Rugby Football League; previously Head of BBC Sport, Controller of ITV Sport and Chief Executive of the FA
<b>Lucy Beaumont</b>	Award-winning comedian and former teacher; writer, 'To Hull and Back'
<b>Luciana Berger MP</b>	MP for Liverpool Wavertree
<b>Cllr Judith Blake</b>	Leader, Leeds Council
<b>Ian Douthwaite</b>	CEO, Dubit
<b>Lord Haskins</b>	Chair, Humber LEP
<b>Bill Holroyd CBE DL</b>	Businessman; founder, 'On:side' youth zones
<b>Leanne Kirkham</b>	Director of Learning, Northern Ballet
<b>Heather Lauder</b>	Executive Director, Co-Op Bank; trustee National Museums Liverpool
<b>Dr Richard Mantle OBE</b>	Chief Executive, Opera North
<b>Rt. Hon Esther McVey</b>	Entrepreneur and broadcaster; former MP for the Wirral and Minister of State for Employment
<b>Isabelle Trowler</b>	Chief Social Worker for Children and Families
<b>Prof Emla Fitzsimons</b>	Director of the Millennium Cohort Study, Institute of Education, University College London
<b>Prof Ruth Lupton</b>	Head of the Inclusive Growth Unit, University of Manchester
<b>Prof Anna Vignoles</b>	Director, Institute of Education, University of Cambridge

“What we are seeing is nothing short of a divided nation after the age of 11. Children in the North and Midlands are much less likely to attend a good or outstanding school than those in the rest of the country.”

**Sir Michael Wilshaw,**  
Ofsted Annual Report 2015.

“There is a new geography of disadvantage in Britain - where the chances of a child doing well in life depends massively on where they come from, rather than where they aspire to get to.”

**Rt. Hon Alan Milburn,**  
Chair of the Social Mobility Commission.



### Children's Commissioner for England

Sanctuary Buildings  
20 Great Smith Street  
London  
SW1P 3BT

Tel: 020 7783 8330  
Email: [info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk)

Visit: [www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk](http://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk)  
Twitter: @ChildrensComm