

Levelling Up in Yorkshire and the Humber

A Position Statement by Yorkshire Universities and Yorkshire & Humber Councils

September 2021

The government is committed to levelling up growth and opportunity, and to ensure that no region is left behind. Yorkshire and the Humber enjoys significant strengths and advantages. But the region also faces fundamental challenges. Targeted, long-term investment would deliver real improvements in productivity, education and skills, employment participation and population health.

This position statement is timed to coincide with the launch of a new partnership between Yorkshire Universities and Yorkshire & Humber Councils. The report has been prepared following a comprehensive review of research, evidence and proposals relating to the government's plan to level up. It identifies what levelling up means to Yorkshire and the Humber, and what higher education institutions and local government can achieve together through analysis, ideas, convening power and practical delivery on the ground.

We embrace a definition of levelling up that is based on **tackling long-standing local and regional inequalities and in particular addressing the challenges faced by 'left behind' places**. Our aim is that no person or place in the region should be left behind due to structural inequalities. The report illustrates the contributions our members make as anchor institutions, and the benefits of partnership with each other and with government. Our proposals reflect the distinct nature of Yorkshire and the Humber; a shared commitment to collaboration, and to achieving real change.

Our analysis leads us to suggest that levelling up in Yorkshire and the Humber would benefit from higher education, local agencies, government and others working together to deliver a range of actions in the following areas: skills, employment and economic growth; education; climate change and environment; health and well-being; economic, social and digital infrastructure; and housing. These policies are instrumental to the creation of a **more prosperous, greener, healthier and inclusive region**.

Levelling up also means empowering people and local communities to participate in decision making, and to instill a renewed sense of belonging and pride. Local government and higher education are actively engaged with local communities to enhance citizen involvement in renewing social and civic capital. In addition, the devolved institutions in South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire have agreed long-term deals with government to deliver specific interventions designed to drive growth and development.

We believe that government (and its agencies) could take forward steps to support increased and more effective funding and financing in Yorkshire and the Humber. We would encourage more place-based investment underpinned by greater regional and local design, ownership, integration and strategic fit between various funding mechanisms.

The scale of the opportunity requires new and innovative thinking and action. A systems perspective would allow us to consider the impact of policies, and in cases where dual (or several) policies are implemented simultaneously it would enable us to identify interactions and outcomes. We would encourage the government to work with us to explore how a systems approach would operate within Yorkshire and the Humber. In addition, we plan to develop a Yorkshire Vitality Index to measure the impacts of the levelling up programme in the region.