Introduction

The Thames Estuary Growth Board exists to increase the pace and scale of growth in the Thames Estuary by driving the pan-estuary opportunities identified by the Thames Estuary Growth Commission, so that by 2050 an additional 1.3million jobs, £190bn GVA, and 1 million more homes are delivered for local communities and the nation.

Our mission has a direct relationship with the Government's 'Levelling Up' and post pandemic recovery agendas. To help inform the focus of our work but also to act as a baseline for our collective endeavours, we have commissioned and produced the Thames Estuary Levelling Up Data Atlas.

Social inequality and polarisation are major areas of challenge across and within the Estuary. The challenge is as severe as anywhere within the UK, a point highlighted by the fact that seven of the twenty local authority areas across the Estuary have been identified by the government as 'priority one' locations for levelling up investment. Challenges are deep rooted, and concerted, long-term action is needed to help the Estuary grow and evolve in a way which strengthens prosperity and wellbeing across diverse communities.

The Thames Estuary Growth Board recognises the need for future growth to be inclusive in its approach, and for investment to be targeted at creating jobs and enhancing prosperity in the parts of the Estuary that need it most. Reflecting this, the Thames Estuary Growth Board has commissioned research to establish the current picture and define what levelling up means for the Thames Estuary. The findings from the research will inform the refreshed Thames Estuary Growth Board strategy, activities and investments going forward so growth benefits reach across our communities.
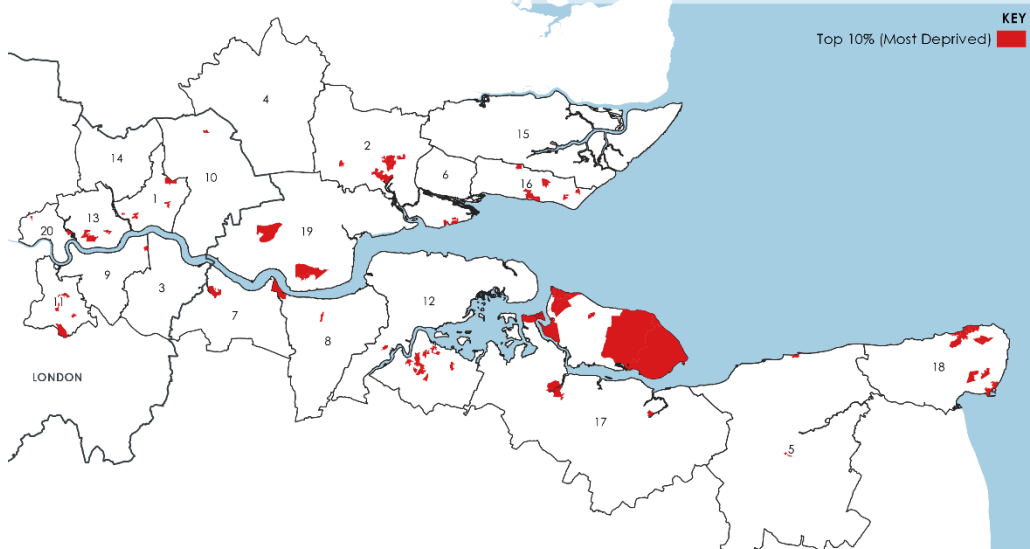
This note provides a short summary of the headline findings from the research; further information can be found in the full Thames Estuary Levelling Up Data Atlas.

The Geography of Inequality in the Thames Estuary

The research has highlighted the significant variations in inequality which exist in different parts of the Thames Estuary (TE):

1. **There are significant 'pan-Estuary' challenges:** the data highlights a number of issues where the Estuary performs worse than the England average. Across the Estuary there is a higher percentage of working age people without any qualifications and a higher percentage claiming government support. Relatively, more children are in poverty than across England and more of the population have common mental health disorders. House prices relative to resident earnings are also much less affordable.

2. **Variation between challenges in London and Kent/Essex:** social challenges are quite different in the TE London boroughs vs TE Kent and Essex areas, highlighting the importance of local responses to these issues. In London there are lower levels of life satisfaction, significant mental health challenges and the pandemic has had a greater impact on economic hardship. Outside London, key challenges include low productivity, weaknesses in civic participation and weaker pathways for young people after school into university.

3. **The varying profiles of deprivation:** deprivation across the Estuary also looks very different. In TE London, deprivation is widespread across the population with large proportions of people living in the top 30% most deprived areas nationally. Outside London, deprivation is much more concentrated in pockets of more severe deprivation (10 areas are within the top 2% nationally); these pockets typically neighbour more prosperous locations. The table and maps on the following page show this difference in more detail.
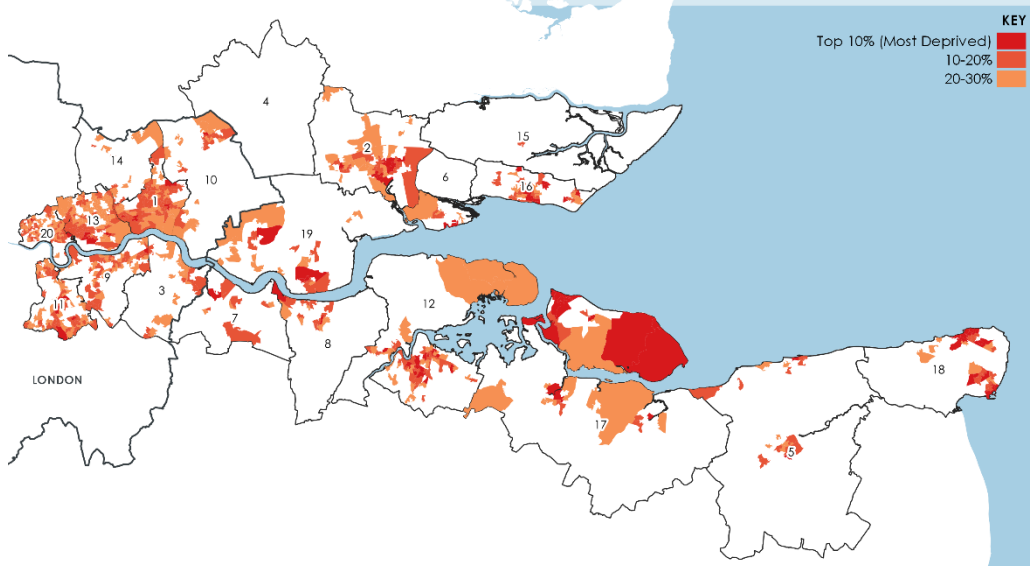
Thames Estuary

NEIGHBOURHOODS IN THE TOP 10% MOST DEPRIVED NATIONALLY

NEIGHBOURHOODS IN THE TOP 30% MOST DEPRIVED NATIONALLY

Local Authority

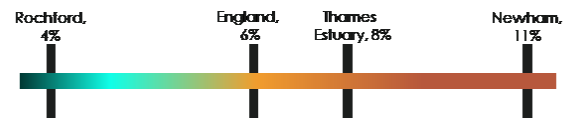|	
1	Barking & Dagenham
2	Basildon
3	Bexley
4	Brentwood
5	Canterbury
6	Castle Point
7	Dartford
8	Gravesham
9	Greenwich
10	Havering
11	Lewisham
12	Medway
13	Newham
14	Redbridge
15	Rochford
16	Southend
17	Swale
18	Thanet
19	Thurrock
20	Tower Hamlets

Thames Estuary Neighbourhoods with the Most Severe Deprivation

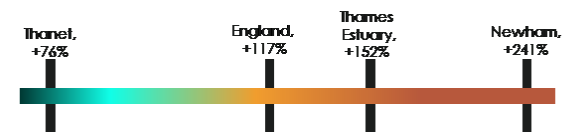| Neighbourhood	Local Authority	National Rank (out of 32,844)	
		Number (where 1 is the most deprived in the country)	%
Sheerness, Isle of Sheppey	Swale	48	0.14%
Margate Town Centre	Thanet	67	0.20%
Cliftonville, Margate	Thanet	117	0.36%
Southchurch, Southend	Southend-on-Sea	136	0.41%
Chatham	Medway	144	0.44%
Newington, Ramsgate	Thanet	284	0.86%
Leysdown-on-Sea, Isle of Sheppey	Swale	322	0.98%
Sittingbourne	Swale	337	1.02%
Dane Valley, Margate	Thanet	423	1.29%
East Church, Isle of Sheppey	Swale	591	1.80%

Understanding the Nature of Inequality in the Thames Estuary

The research focuses on ten different thematic areas to understand the nature of inequality across the Thames Estuary. Headline areas of challenges which have emerged include:
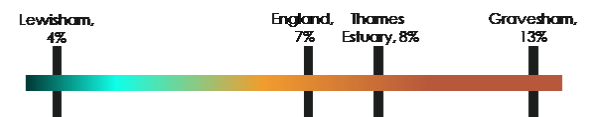
1. **Economic participation:** the Thames Estuary has a notably higher claimant rate (8% of working age) than the England average (6%). Over 36,600 people in the Thames Estuary would need to stop claiming to reach the England average.

   The pandemic has had a significant impact on claimant count across the country. There has been a larger percentage increase across the Thames Estuary (+152%, an additional 128,000 people) between March 2020 and Feb 2021 than the England average (+117%). Newham has had the 11th highest % increase in the country.
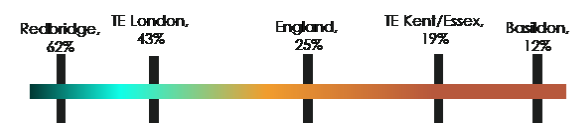

2. **Qualifications:** 8% of the working age population in the Thames Estuary have no qualifications. This means over 29,000 people would need to gain qualifications in the Thames Estuary to reach the England average (7%). Gravesham is the 14th lowest performing local authority in the country, with a higher % than other priority 1 places like Liverpool and Newcastle.

3. **Child poverty:** a higher proportion of children live in low-income households in the Thames Estuary (20%) than England average (18%). Almost 12,700 children would need to be lifted out of poverty across the Estuary to meet the England average.

4. **Pathways after school:** the proportion of school leavers going to university is a significant challenge outside London. Disadvantaged school leavers in TE Kent and Essex (19%) are much less likely to go to university than the TE London (43%) or England (25%) averages. Basildon is in the top 10% worst performing local authorities nationally and performs much worse than other priority 1 places like Dudley, Middlesbrough and Blackpool.

5. **Health outcomes:** a higher proportion of the 16+ population have common mental health disorders in the Thames Estuary (19%) than the England average (17%). To reach the England average, over 57,000 people in the Thames Estuary would need to be supported to overcome mental health disorders. Newham, Tower Hamlets and Barking & Dagenham are some of the worst performing nationally (2nd, 3rd and 6th highest in England, respectively).