

Neighbourhood Working Evaluation Findings

Appendix A Introduction

In June 2016 the [City of Lincoln Council](#) appointed OpenPlan to prepare a [Place Shaping Framework](#) for the Sincil Bank area – defined by the railway to the north, Canwick Road to the east, South Park to the south, and High street to the west. The brief was to work with the local community and stakeholders to come up with recommendations to make the area a better place for the people who live and work here.

The Framework was published in April 2017. It described Sincil Bank as a *‘community of communities – a very diverse place shared by people from many different backgrounds’* – and contained 42 recommendations to make physical improvements to the area, as well as promote social and economic development and develop opportunity sites. While the Framework was being developed, City of Lincoln Council reviewed its neighbourhood working programme and decided to prioritise its resources in Sincil Bank. Since then, the Council has been running a Neighbourhood Working pilot to implement as many of the 42 Place Shaping Framework recommendations as possible alongside local residents, Community Partners and stakeholders.

In March 2024 Rose Regeneration was commissioned by the City of Lincoln Council to undertake an external evaluation of Neighbourhood Working in Sincil Bank. The evaluation has followed HM Treasury guidance and covered 3 main areas:

1. How was the Neighbourhood Working pilot designed – and how it is being implemented?
2. What difference is the pilot making to residents, Community Partners and stakeholders?
3. Is the pilot offering value-for-money?

This report summarises the key findings and insights from the evaluation.

What was the Neighbourhood Working pilot set up to do?

Central government publishes local measures of deprivation in England. The last Statistical Release was published in September 2019. It is based on seven domains of deprivation which draw on 39 separate indicators. These are then weighted to give an overall measure of multiple deprivation experienced by people living in a neighbourhood [known as a Lower-layer Super Output Area, LSOA]. Each neighbourhood, or LSOA, is ranked from most deprived (1st) to least deprived (32,844th). Rose Regeneration compared the 2019 data for Sincil Street area, where the Neighbourhood Working pilot is taking place, with the data releases from 2015 and 2010. These results are shown in the chart overleaf.

English Indices of Deprivation (2010-2019)

2019 2015 2010 England Mid Point

Index of Multiple Deprivation

Income Rank

Employment Rank

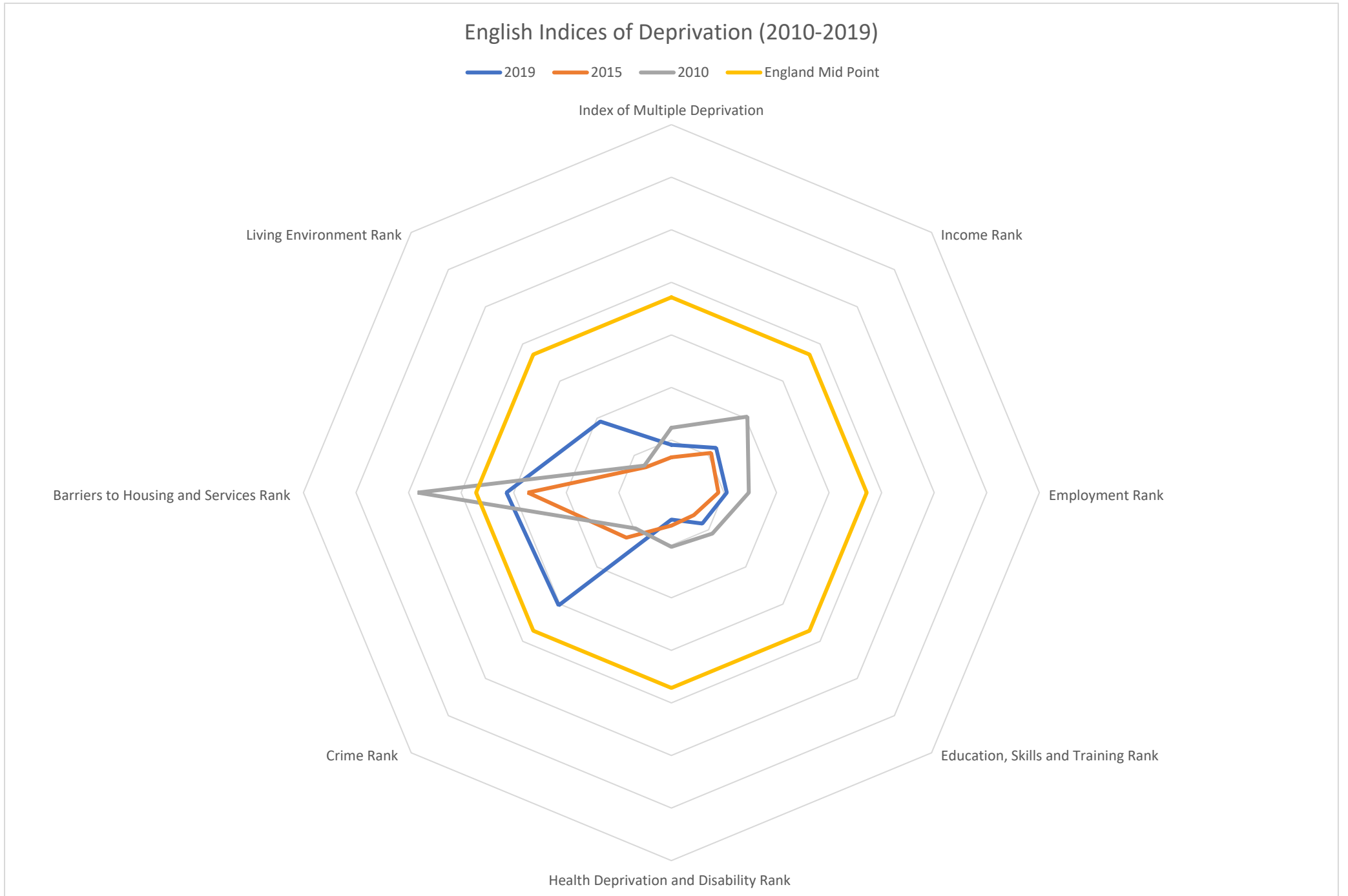
Education, Skills and Training Rank

Health Deprivation and Disability Rank

Crime Rank

Barriers to Housing and Services Rank

Living Environment Rank



The chart shows considerable deterioration in levels of deprivation between 2010 and 2015, with only a modest bounce back in 2019. Overall, the neighbourhood was ranked 4,011 in 2010; 5,504 in 2015; and 2,387 [placing it in the 7% most deprived neighbourhoods in England].

Community consultations for the Place Shaping Framework also highlighted:

- Streets marred by littering and fly-tipping.
- People commuting to Lincoln for work treating the area as a free car park or as a rat run.
- Energy-inefficient homes, including a high proportion of housing stock rented as Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs).
- A number of high profile crimes increasing residents' fear of crime.

Between December 2018 and March 2025, a small, dedicated Neighbourhood Working team (mainly 2 staff) are based at the [Community Hub](#) on Portland Street. As well as having a physical base, they are delivering a programme of key projects and activities with residents and organisations. Between 2018 and 2020 this included:

- Introducing and monitoring a ban on the display of to-let boards on certain streets.
- Installing CCTV at suitable locations.
- The development of open spaces, including St Andrew's Garden (where a neglected open space has been transformed into a pocket park for the local community).
- Delivering a series of community events and activities.

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the neighbourhood team refocused their priorities to include:

- Hermit Street redevelopment (building 11 new affordable homes on a site previously occupied by garages).
- Implementing residents parking (to increase the availability of parking for local residents and reduce commuter parking).
- Highways redesign (e.g. one-way traffic system, a green corridor for cyclists and pedestrians).
- Creating and enhancing open spaces.
- Cleaner and safer streets.

"COVID-19 both lost and gained them [Neighbourhood Working team] something during and after this time. During the pandemic they had to work City wide and sometimes even county wide. A lot of specific Sincil Bank community support then fell to other groups. After COVID they refocused their priorities but I would like to think the team has thought continually about the legacy of their time here and built sustainability into the organisations and projects they've funded", Community Partner.

The external environment during which the pilot is being delivered has changed significantly – from welfare reforms and Brexit through to the COVID-19 pandemic and cost-of-living pressures.

What impact is the pilot having on local communities?

On average, 20-30 people a week visit the Community Hub to access information, advice and services (from the City of Lincoln Council and from Community Partners). Analysis of the visit log over a 12-month period found the top 3 presenting issues were around general advice, access to space or services from another organisation at the Community Hub, and residents parking.

Resident surveys carried out in 2019, 2020 and 2023 show an increase in people reporting that they know what to do and where to go if they have a problem. Comparing survey data between 2019 and 2023 reveals:

- 20% more residents reported knowing which organisation to contact if they have a problem.
- 11% more residents knowing where to go for help with a housing issue, and 9% more residents knowing where to go for help if they have a problem with fly tipping or litter.
- A 5% increase in the number of residents reporting Sincil Bank is getting better and improving as a place to live.

“Residents work hard to do their bit to keep the area clean and tidy and a number of projects have been delivered to brighten up the area”, local resident.

“There has been a definite change in perception about the Portland Street area and that things can be achieved here”, local resident.

For the evaluation residents and local organisations were asked to use one (or two!) words to describe the Neighbourhood Working pilot. Their responses are shown in the word cloud overleaf:



Back in 2019, the City of Lincoln Council and Investors in Lincoln introduced a 'Community Chest' to kickstart activity in the area. During the pilot, £50,073.09 has been awarded to 31 local projects – from street play, holiday clubs and family fun days through to archaeological digs and setting up community gardening and growing clubs.

The Neighbourhood Working team has encouraged residents to come forward with ideas, and they have embedded community ownership in the initiatives they have funded. A short survey was circulated to all groups and organisations that had received funding from the Community Chest. Representatives from 22 organisations completed the survey.

- 50% of respondents said they would not have done their project without support from Neighbourhood Working – and 68% went on to apply to other funders to continue their existing project, or to start new work.
- 68% of respondents delivered their project or activity with the support of another local organisation – with 16 different voluntary & community sector organisations, charities and statutory sector bodies listed by respondents.
- 75% rated their overall experience of delivering an activity funded by the Community Chest as 'very positive', 5% as 'positive' and 20% as 'neutral'.
- 77% rated the impact of Neighbourhood Working on building the capacity of local groups and residents to run projects and activities as being 'very strong' or 'strong'.

"The [name of project] is important to the local community and sets an example about the future of the Sincil area...the project has encouraged people to volunteer, to learn and share practical skills as well as providing good visual and actual space for wildlife and making the area more attractive".

"[Name of project] wouldn't happen without the Neighbourhood Working team – they get it, they see the need, and they invest in looking at good practice outside of Lincoln and how to make it happen in Sincil Bank...they play the long game".

"Residents are willing to help with maintenance and ongoing works and that community ownership will bring sustainability".

The Neighbourhood Working team has monitored the implementation of the 42 Place Shaping Framework recommendations, carrying out annual reviews. In 2021, six recommendations were implemented, in 2022 twenty-nine recommendations, and in 2023 three recommendations. For four recommendations no work is planned to take place before 2025.

A range of stakeholders offered external perspectives on Neighbourhood Working. They highlighted the new and different ways of working it has provided to organisations (e.g. greater partnership working and collaboration) and to residents (e.g. reducing dependency and recognising the skills, knowledge and

experience that they bring). Some stakeholders want Neighbourhood Working to focus on small, hyperlocal, street-based work; while other stakeholders had a preference for larger projects and tackling broader, systemic issues.

Social Return on Investment (SROI) is a way of developing a value for the less tangible outcomes delivered through Neighbourhood Working. The evaluation has looked at how the Community Hub and Programme have increased access to services and improved the appearance of streets and green spaces. The analysis shows for every £1.00 invested in Neighbourhood Working, £3.20 of social value has been generated. HM Treasury ranks anything over £2.00 as delivering a 'good' level of social value.

Is the pilot offering value-for-money?

For the Community Chest, volunteer contributions to projects, as well as items or resources being offered in-kind (e.g. training, marketing and promotion, computers, sports equipment, gardening tools), provided match funding worth £72,887.

The Neighbourhood Working team has played a key role in working with external organisations to harness other investment for the local area that would not have happened without the pilot. For example, City of Lincoln Council secured £235,000 from the Government's Controlling Migration Fund to tackle rogue landlords; and Lincoln City Foundation successfully bid to deliver a 5-year Place Based Social Action (PBSA) community activities programme.

A Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) analysis was undertaken to assess the value-for-money being delivered. The analysis reveals that Neighbourhood Working has a BCR of £2.48/£1. The Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) ranks BCR; with anything above 2 as offering 'high' value for money.

Where next?

Residents, Community Partners and stakeholders have expressed some concern about the gaps that will be left when the pilot ends – particularly around providing residents with a drop-in, and a safe space for organisational information sharing. Some stakeholders also queried whether Community Partners and residents will be able to step-up and scale-up what they do to fill these gaps. Planning the legacy, and what local communities want to see happen beyond March 2025, was highlighted as important.

The external evaluation is intended to inform wider Neighbourhood Working discussions across the city. Future delivery of Neighbourhood Working by City of Lincoln Council will need to take account of the resources that can be made available. It has become clear that there is considerable merit in exploring how multi-agency working can be scaled up across the city. Initial discussions with Lincolnshire County Council and Lincolnshire Integrated Care Board have

highlighted scope for a pilot to enable all three bodies to work together with Community Partners and residents to deliver preventative impacts at the neighbourhood level.