



Department
for Education

Priority Education Investment Areas – selection methodology

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Introduction and non-technical summary

In the Levelling Up White Paper (February 2022), we announced plans to drive school improvement in England through 55 local authorities (LAs) selected as Education Investment Areas (EIAs). These cover the third of local authorities where educational outcomes are currently weakest and other local authorities containing existing place-based interventions.

We also stated our intention to make more intensive investment across some of these EIAs. As set out in the Schools White Paper, we have identified 24 Priority EIAs which will receive this additional focus.

This methodology note explains how we identified the following areas as Priority EIAs:

- Blackpool
- Bradford
- Derby
- Doncaster
- Fenlands and East Cambridgeshire
- Halton
- Hartlepool
- Hastings
- Ipswich
- Knowsley
- Liverpool
- Middlesbrough
- North Yorkshire Coast
- Norwich
- Nottingham
- Oldham
- Portsmouth
- Rochdale
- Salford
- Sandwell
- Stoke-on-Trent
- Tameside
- Walsall

- West Somerset

EIAs were selected by identifying areas where outcomes at the end of Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4 are lowest. The selection methodology for the 24 Priority EIAs follows this approach, considers the level of deprivation in the local authority and ensures the department's approach to levelling up is consistent with existing policies to improve outcomes in Opportunity Areas.

The rest of this document outlines the details for the selection methodology used for Priority EIAs. A map showing geographical coverage of Priority EIAs as well as EIAs is presented in Annex A.

Selection methodology for Education Investment Areas

EIAs have been selected as the third of local authorities in England where educational outcomes are currently weakest, plus other local authorities containing existing place-based interventions. Full details of the methodology that was used for the [selection of the EIAs](#) can be found on gov.uk.

In summary, the selection methodology was based on pupil outcomes at local authority level. Specifically, the approach selects areas where outcomes at the end of both Key Stage 2 (KS2) and Key Stage 4 (KS4) are lowest in order to target school improvement interventions in the parts of the country where performance at primary and secondary school is furthest behind. For KS2 performance, the selection methodology uses the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in all of reading, writing and maths in national curriculum assessments, while average Progress 8 score is the metric used for KS4 performance.

Pupil outcomes in any given local authority can change from year to year. To ensure that EIAs are focused in areas with sustained low performance over time, the selection approach uses average performance data from the most recent three years of complete data (2017–2019).

In order to ensure that the department's approach to levelling up is consistent with existing policies to improve outcomes in specific places, any local authority which contains an existing Opportunity Area or one of the four specific areas previously identified as having the highest potential for rapid improvement is also selected as an EIA.

This means areas selected as EIAs and from which Priority EIAs could be selected are local authorities which are either:

- (i) in the 50 bottom ranked local authorities based on the KS2 and KS4 composite measure
- or
- (ii) contain an Opportunity Area or areas previously identified for additional school improvement support.

Selection methodology for Priority EIAs

Outline of approach

Priority EIAs are areas selected from within the 55 EIAs. 24 areas have been selected.

To ensure that the department's approach to levelling up is consistent with existing policies to improve outcomes in specific areas with high levels of need, the 12 existing Opportunity Areas have been selected as Priority EIAs. The Opportunity Area programme, announced in 2016, focuses on improving educational attainment and social mobility.

The 12 local authorities (excluding Opportunity Areas) with the lowest ranking on the standardised KS2 and KS4 composite measure (used in selecting EIAs) that also meet a minimum level of deprivation, have then been selected as Priority EIAs.

Identifying EIAs with the lowest attainment

The three year composite measure of educational performance used in selecting EIAs has been used. This is a measure of relative performance calculated by combining two standardised three-year average scores for (1) KS2 outcomes (based on the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in all of reading, writing and maths in national curriculum assessments) and (2) KS4 outcomes (based on progress 8). The three years used are 2017 to 2019 which are the most recent complete three years of performance data. KS2 attainment data has not been collected since 2019 due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Using the same metric for both EIA and Priority EIA selection ensures a consistent approach and provides a clear, objective measure of educational performance. Priority EIAs are the lowest ranking local authorities on this measure that also meet a minimum level of deprivation.

Additional economic disadvantage criterion

The educational performance data outlined above alone would not reflect the geographical inequalities in the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on schooling.

Evidence suggests that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a disproportionate impact on pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds (see: [Pupils' progress in the 2020 to 2021 academic year - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/pupils-progress-in-the-2020-to-2021-academic-year)) and as such, local authorities with significant proportions of economically disadvantaged pupils may now be more likely to be among the worst areas for educational outcomes than 2017 to 2019 attainment data would suggest.

To ensure Priority EIAs are targeted on areas with relatively high proportions of pupils that were disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, the selection criteria uses data on the proportion of pupils eligible for the deprivation pupil premium. This covers pupils known to have been eligible for Free Schools Meals (FSM) in the previous six years – the main group of pupils counted as pupil premium eligible - and includes No Recourse to Public Fund (NRPF) pupils.

Pupil premium data that determines pupil premium grant amounts for the financial year beginning 1 April 2021 is used. A full description of the different groups eligible for the [pupil premium in the calculation of the grant for the financial year beginning 1 April 2021](#) can be found on gov.uk.

The chosen criterion to account for levels of economic disadvantage is that at least 30% of pupils across primary and secondary year groups in state funded schools in the local authority must be eligible for the deprivation pupil premium. 30% is above the national rate of 25% and covers the top three deciles of local authorities. This ensures that areas selected are those with relatively high levels of economic disadvantage which are likely to have been disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Selecting existing Opportunity Areas

In addition to the areas listed above, the 12 existing Opportunity Areas have been selected to be Priority EIAs. This programme was announced in October 2016 and is a place-based initiative focused on improving educational attainment and social mobility. Originally targeted on six areas, it was expanded to include six more areas in January 2017.

Details of the [delivery plans that were announced in 2017 for the 12 Opportunity Areas, and the methodology and data used to select them](#), can be found on gov.uk.

Six of the Opportunity Areas when selected were local authority districts that sat within larger upper-tier local authorities. To ensure consistency with the original selection methodology for Opportunity Areas we have kept the focus on the Priority EIA on the local authority district. The wider local authority remains an EIA.

Final selection

Following this methodology has led to the selection of 24 areas as Priority EIAs, representing a combination of local authorities with the lowest attainment and highest rates of disadvantage and existing Opportunity Areas.

Formally this means all 24 Priority EIAs are either:

- i) A local authority which is low ranking on the standardised KS2 and KS4 composite measure and where more than 30% of pupils are eligible for deprivation pupil premium.

Or

- ii) An Opportunity Area, either operating at a local authority or sub local authority level.

Priority EIAs selected on low attainment and high rates of economic disadvantage

Local Authority	Standardised KS2 and KS4 composite measure – Rank (1 is lowest rank)	Percentage of pupils eligible for deprivation pupil premium
Knowsley	1	42.9%
Portsmouth	4	33.3%
Liverpool	7	37.8%
Rochdale	9	30.8%
Salford	14	35.6%
Walsall	16	36.9%
Halton	17	38.7%
Sandwell	18	33.6%
Nottingham	20	39.1%
Tameside	28	30.6%
Middlesbrough	31	42.3%
Hartlepool	36	39.9%

Table 1: List of Priority EIAs selected on attainment and economic disadvantage

Opportunity Areas selected as Priority EIAs (operating at LA level)

Opportunity Area/LA	Standardised KS2 and KS4 composite measure – Rank (1 is lowest rank)	Percentage of pupils eligible for deprivation pupil premium
Blackpool	5	42.4%
Stoke-on-Trent	10	37.0%
Derby	11	31.5%
Oldham	13	31.4%
Doncaster	15	30.0%
Bradford	45	30.0%

Table 2: List of Opportunity Areas selected as Priority EIAs, operating at LA level

Opportunity Areas selected as Priority EIAs (operating at a sub-LA level)

Associated Local Authority data is provided for these sub-LA level Priority EIAs for consistency, but these Priority EIAs have not been selected at LA level. As noted above selection of these Priority EIAs at sub-LA level is to ensure consistency with the original selection methodology for Opportunity Areas. This data is not necessarily representative of attainment or rates of economic disadvantage in the specific sub-LA area that will become a Priority EIA.

Opportunity Area	Local Authority	Standardised KS2 and KS4 composite measure (for Local Authority) – Rank (1 is lowest rank)	Percentage of pupils eligible for deprivation pupil premium (in Local Authority)
West Somerset*	Somerset	24	20.6%
Norwich	Norfolk	26	23.2%
Ipswich	Suffolk	49	22.3%
Hastings	East Sussex	57	23.6%
Fenlands and East Cambridgeshire	Cambridgeshire	91	19.8%
North Yorkshire Coast	North Yorkshire	94	16.6%

Table 3: List of Opportunity Areas selected as Priority EIAs, operating at a sub-LA level

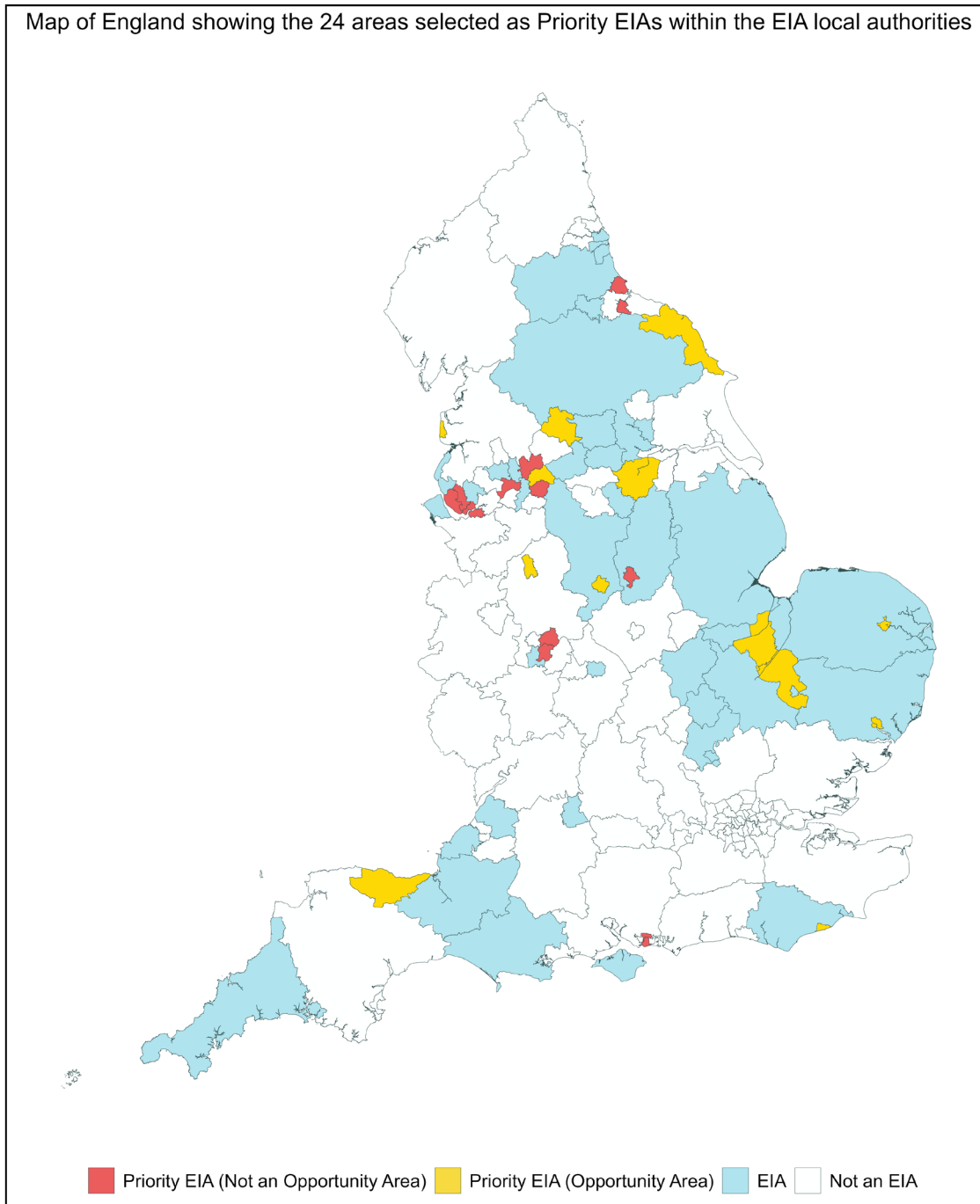
*West Somerset was subject to a district boundary change in 2019 and became a part of the local authority district of Somerset West and Taunton, within the upper-tier local authority of Somerset.

We have selected West Somerset as a Priority EIA, and not Somerset West and Taunton, as we expect the scope of interventions in this area to remain within geographic boundary of the West Somerset Opportunity Area, which has continued to operate without the addition of new territory.

Annex A: Map of Priority EIAs

The map provided below shows all local authorities in England, with those selected as Education Investment Areas highlighted. Within these areas, also highlighted are 1) Priority EIAs selected on the basis of low attainment and relatively high economic disadvantage; and 2) Priority EIAs which are existing Opportunity Areas.

The map uses 2021 local authority and district boundaries, with the exception of the West Somerset Priority EIA for which the 2018 district boundary is used (this being the existing Opportunity Area, selected prior to a boundary change in 2019).





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