



A Future Generations Deal

Avoiding the Ticking Time Bomb of Youth Unemployment in the West Midlands

Foreword

I am profoundly concerned about the potentially devastating effect that the current Covid-19 crisis could have on younger people in the West Midlands.

Most leading economic commentators are predicting a huge rise in unemployment; a hardship that our young people may have to endure for an unspecified period of time. The correlation between unemployment and criminality is well known, and as the region's Police & Crime Commissioner, I feel it is my duty to push this impending problem high up on the agenda.

Recently, I published an emergency chapter to my Police and Crime Plan which sets out the expectations from the police in the current crisis as well as how I will be commissioning other services to meet the challenges of Covid-19.

Before the outbreak of the Corona Virus, my Violence Reduction Unit was already focussing attention on the causes and solutions to existing violence. That work has gained additional urgency and relevance.

As the year progresses, we could see large numbers of young people find that there is no job for them and they may have very limited opportunity for paid employment once the lockdown is lifted. In my view, this is a 'ticking time bomb'. Many of these young people, particularly young men, could well be drawn into antisocial behaviour, which in some cases will graduate into serious violence and crime.

I am also deeply anxious about girls and boys of school age, all of whom are missing a substantial part of their education due to the lockdown. There is one subset of school children who are of particular concern – there is no plan for children in years 7, 8 and 9 (11-14yrs) to return to school until September 2020 at the earliest. Tragically, this means that some children will be missing at least 6 months of their schooling. Many, particularly pupils already struggling with academic expectations and/or those from disadvantaged families, may find it extremely difficult to return to their studies with the rhythm and work discipline that the school environment brings. (In France, where children have returned to school, they are already experiencing this trend.)

Again, the concern is that some of these children will drift into the hands of organised criminals, into gangs or 'County Lines' operations, as we have seen so starkly with children who were excluded from school prior to lockdown. Right now, the closures are effectively 'excluding' hundreds of thousands of children from their school. There is an urgent need to address the potential consequences, and this is why I am bringing ideas to the table for urgent consideration by the government, the police, the West



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Midlands Mayor and Combined Authority, local authorities, trade unions, the third sector and the business community.

The social and economic cost of inaction at the current time could be considerable. After the furlough scheme ends, we will be paying vast amounts in unemployment benefits as well as potentially facing a substantial bill for the cost of increased crime. We need to use our limited public resources to best effect. This is why I believe we should ensure funding is shifted to encouraging employment, skills and knowledge development and economic activity, rather than funding the consequences of economic collapse.

Ignoring the urgency of this problem would leave lasting damage for the young people themselves, and for our wider society.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David Jamieson".

David Jamieson
West Midlands Police & Crime Commissioner

A Future Generations Deal

The West Midlands Police & Crime Commissioner, David Jamieson has commissioned an analysis into the risk of youth unemployment and crime in light of Covid-19. As a result of this analysis, the Commissioner is now calling upon the police, West Midlands Mayor/Combined Authority, local authorities, the government, trade unions and other organisations to work together with the PCC to act quickly to prevent the serious social challenges facing young people in our region. This short report sets out the Commissioner's ambitious proposals for a **Future Generations Deal**, to move beyond highlighting problems, and quickly bring forward real solutions.

This report does not challenge the need for the lockdown; recognising these measures are imperative for restricting the spread of this disease which has tragically already taken too many lives. Decisions regarding lockdown, including patterns of school attendance, are for others to make using the best advice and evidence available to them.

Clearly there is a continued threat to health, particularly for thousands of older people, others with underlying health conditions or those who are simply unlucky; necessitating a combination of lockdown, testing and other safety measures. Notwithstanding that, this report details the serious implications of failing to offer a strategy for handling the potential fallout for our younger generations.

Public commentary and suggested solutions have been more focussed on young men, particularly 18-25-year-olds, due to their much greater representation in crime figures. There is however a full recognition that girls and young women are adversely affected as well, not least due to the rise in domestic abuse and the impact on mental health and access to employment and education for women. Many of the proposed 'solutions' below will bring benefit to both men and women.

As the analysis undertaken by the University of Birmingham's [West Midlands Regional Economic Development Unit](#) shows, our local economy is being hit hard by the Corona Virus. The social and economic strain affecting the UK and West Midlands caused by Covid-19, presents major challenges for a large number of our young people. Widely reported research by the [Resolution Foundation](#) and supported by the Nuffield Foundation, suggests youth unemployment could now skyrocket to an additional 640,000 18-24-year-olds in the UK this year alone; leaving a long-lasting legacy for these young people and the British economy. If this goes ignored by those responsible for youth skills and employment and those with the purse strings, it represents a 'ticking time bomb' that risks harming young people, our communities, our businesses and our country.

As highlighted in a report prepared for the Commissioner by the West Midlands Violence Reduction Unit shown in the Annex, the West Midlands is home to some of the UK's poorest communities, and many people work in low paid and insecure jobs. The economic downturn we are now seeing has meant many of these jobs are disappearing first, with the West Midlands disproportionality affected and at risk of mass unemployment; impacting on our young people the most.

Evidence shows us that there are extremely vulnerable groups of young people; our region and country needs urgent leadership to protect them from losing their education and employment. These vulnerabilities present a significant range of complex problems; different age groups are the subject of different threats. Young adults may find themselves unemployed imminently or find it even harder to gain work. Some children will suffer in the longer-term (such as long-term employment prospects from missed education, or emotional damage). Other challenges will present themselves much sooner (such as young men and girls being pulled into crime and exploitation today). While this report does not seek to discuss all of these eventualities and possibilities, it does highlight some key emergent risks.

First, as a result of the lockdown, major organisations such as [The Children's Society](#) are sounding alarm bells that vulnerable children out of school risk being exploited by organised criminals. This includes those who use children to deal drugs by travelling to other parts of the country (so called 'County Lines') which law enforcement agencies including the [National Crime Agency and British Transport Police](#) say is still a major problem during lockdown. A proportion of young people in the West Midlands were already enduring pre-existing problems such as school exclusions as a result of other life challenges. There is an established link between serious crime and school exclusions (see for instance the evidence in the [All-Party Parliamentary Group on Knife Crime Report](#)). As such, leaders must take urgent note of the real risk of increased numbers of vulnerable children being exposed to criminal exploitation.

Secondly, not only will lots of young adults be stranded, but we have a large number of young people who are missing out on education and training due to school and college closures caused by the pandemic. For instance, the [BBC](#) has reported on the concerns of around 35 councils in England and Wales over safety measures for the opening of primary schools for certain age groups, meaning a number of young boys and girls will continue to miss out on education, which could damage long-term prospects. Perhaps more worryingly in the context of vulnerability to crime, the [Department for Education](#) sets out that, currently, there is no plan for children in years 7, 8 and 9 (11-14yrs) to return to school until September 2020 at the earliest. Missing out on vital education and the structure schools provide, means these young people are more vulnerable to long-term social exclusion and unemployment.

Likewise research has, perhaps unsurprisingly, shown an established link between unemployment and an enhanced risk of being pulled into crime.¹ [Charlie Taylor's influential Ministry of Justice report](#) into the youth justice system strongly advocates for employment, education and training as a way of preventing youth crime. Most young people will never get caught up in crime, but some will be more vulnerable due to their difficult circumstances, and the huge expected rise in youth unemployment presents a very real dilemma. The line between a young person becoming a

¹ For example see Wu, D. and Wu, Z. (2012) Crime, inequality and unemployment England and Wales, *Applied Economics*, 44:29, 3765-3775, or Carmichael, F. and Ward, R. (2000) Youth unemployment and crime in the English regions and Wales, *Applied Economics*, 32, 559-71.

productive member of society as opposed to sinking into criminality, is often thinner than we imagine.

Many of these same children and young people already face a number of serious social hurdles due to significant levels of poverty, insecure work with low pay and difficulties accessing the jobs market. Again, some relevant statistics on these trends are set out in the Annex.

A significant body of evidence also shows there is a high prevalence of mental health problems in many young people (see research discussed by [Young Minds](#)), potentially made worse due to the social restrictions caused by the lockdown as highlighted in the [Lancet Psychiatry](#). The [Victims Commissioner](#) has presented evidence on the established link between experiencing domestic violence in childhood and later offending. The rise in domestic abuse over this period has been widely reported such as the concerns raised by domestic abuse charity [Refuge](#); elevating the urgency of our action.

This is coupled with additional problems experienced in many households and intensified over this period due to the pandemic, such as neglect, substance misuse, housing problems, debt issues and family unemployment and poverty. The range of risks facing children and young people has in the last few weeks been highlighted as an ongoing and major concern by the [Children's Commissioner](#).

The West Midlands Police & Crime Commissioner has reacted quickly to the multitude of challenges brought about by Covid-19 through the release of an [emergency chapter to the Police & Crime Plan](#), a range of actions around [domestic abuse campaigns](#), [maintained funding for commissioned](#) services including support for victims and a continued commitment to [proper drug treatment solutions](#) to reduce substance misuse and associated crime in young people and adults alike; not to mention the significant programme of ongoing work of the Violence Reduction Unit focussed on working with a range of statutory and third sector partners on the prevention of youth violence, for which the Commissioner is accountable. Notwithstanding these ongoing efforts, preventing the problems outlined within this report requires additional action and support from non-policing partners.

Unemployment, the other social problems outlined here and crime, costs the UK economy billions of pounds annually. For example, see research and reporting by experts from the [Institute for Fiscal Studies](#), the [Home Office](#) and the [Centre for Mental Health](#). Costs are not just limited to one point in time. Left unchecked, these problems can mean the costs are repeated for many years to come resulting in lost economic opportunities to prevent these spiralling national expenses. At the same time, costs are not limited to unemployment benefits, policing, courts, prisons, victim services, substance misuse treatment, mental health support and health services. They also include lost economic productivity from young talent that could be starting and succeeding in their careers if those responsible for skills and education act quickly. High crime also puts businesses off investing in the region, or people from moving to our towns and cities. The great news is that through proper investment in our young people, these costs and the ticking time bomb are avoidable. Vitally then, this is not

simply a call for more funding, but a call for forward thinking investment that helps prevent the costs of failure while achieving social and economic returns. That is why there is not the time to stand by and watch the crisis unfold – we all need to act now and make the smart social investment our region is calling for.

It is vital that civic leaders responsible for education, skills and training do not just point to the problem, but step up with solutions. There are already some fantastic initiatives aimed at supporting our young people delivered by charities, social enterprises, the public and socially conscious businesses. However, the size of this problem demands a new scale of response. This paper therefore sets out a number of options, calling on the West Midlands Mayor/Combined Authority, local authorities, trade unions and government to work with the Commissioner and other partners to take urgent action and offer our young people a **Future Generations Deal**. The Commissioner therefore sets out the following potential solutions.

Actions for Young People Out of Work	
<p>New Youth Deal - funding for employers to provide entry jobs and training for young people</p>	<p>To support the economic recovery as lockdown eases in the future, the government should look at a programme similar to, but building on, the successful New Deal in the late 1990s. This provided funding to employers and businesses to ensure they take young people on and provide meaningful jobs and training, while boosting organisations’ productivity and forming a long-term supply of great employees. The key development here could be to focus on the additional support for confidence building, providing meaningful mentoring and hope for young individuals’ long-term future and progression; ensuring young people feel valued, encouraged and positive about the programme.</p> <p>This will need to come with an excellent community outreach campaign, promoting the range of options available, and guidance into appropriate pathways for the individual.</p> <p>This package should also come with: fair pay meaning at least the real living wage as defined by the Living Wage Foundation; a clear offer for top quality training; opportunities for young people to feedback to their employer and government on the training and job quality; opportunities for employers to benefit from youth employment experts so they meet the needs of young people; and a package for employers to support young people with issues such as mental health challenges where they present themselves.</p> <p>During lockdown this should start with funding outreach to establish talent pipelines, accompanied by virtual training offers.</p>



Green Energy Youth Deal – invest in the UK’s future green revolution workers	<p>As part of the government’s funding for young people’s jobs with fair pay, there should be a specific funding stream to train a new generation of young people in renewable and green energy sectors, simultaneously providing great careers and tackling the climate crisis.</p> <p>During lockdown this should start with funding roles with renewable energy organisations to reach out to young people, start virtual training and then provide entry jobs or further education post-lockdown.</p>
Health & Social Care Youth Deal	<p>Covid-19 has shown how much pressure our NHS and social care services are under. The government needs to fund a new Health & Social Care Youth Deal that creates jobs for young people in these vital sectors, paying at least the real living wage. It is an opportunity to strengthen these fundamental services on which our economy and personal lives rely, while tapping into the great public spirit we know is held by so many of our young people.</p> <p>Again, the government should fund ways to create this pipeline of talent during lockdown, accompanied with virtual training offers.</p>
Post-apprenticeship Deal	<p>The Resolution Foundation flags the risk of apprentices being let go following their training. The government needs to provide a package to ensure the investment in these new skills is not lost and young people’s hard work is rewarded so they can continue long-term careers for the benefit of them and businesses.</p>
Young Entrepreneurs Deal	<p>There are some fantastic organisations and social enterprises out there who help young people generate their own business ideas or social enterprises. The government needs to act quickly to provide additional support so that these organisations can help inspire our future business and social enterprise leaders.</p>
Youth Community Deal – Young community project schemes	<p>In some cases, the government should provide funding to facilitate large community projects that provide opportunities for meaningful skills and training development, but also help young people showcase their talents for the community’s benefit, such as through public park, street and art projects – turning youth unemployment into a positive Youth Community Deal.</p>
Further Education Deal	<p>While lockdown continues, government should provide additional funding to our further education colleges to help them reach out to young people not in education and support them into new virtual courses focussed on skills; setting them up for the future.</p>



	<p>This funding should also help colleges after lockdown, so they can build relationships with young people who did not think college was for them, and help them build the confidence to learn more and get ready for their careers.</p>
New Study Deal	<p>For some young people, the best option will be for them to build on their knowledge and skills through education at further or higher education level. The government should fund a new grant programme to provide more opportunities for virtual and post-lockdown learning that helps keep young people on their track to success.</p>
Actions for Vulnerable Children & Young People	
Youth Virtual World Deal	<p>We know, such as from reports from the Office for National Statistics, that many young people can't access virtual learning provided by schools or through other online resources as they don't have access to the internet or devices such as laptops or iPads.</p> <p>The government needs to provide a package to help those young people excluded from online resources, to help our young people access education. This should be accompanied with training for parents and guardians on safeguarding their children from online exploitation and scams.</p> <p>The government should also be working with our schools to provide a funding package to help them make more virtual learning available, including those with learning needs or other challenges such as disabilities.</p>
Youth Mental Health Deal	<p>The government needs to look urgently at funding for mental health support services for young people, such as through virtual counselling services or mentors with mental health expertise attached to schools or further education.</p> <p>This should recognise that good quality mental health support needs to be intensive enough and provided for long enough to improve the chance of a lasting benefit. Helping young people now will provide them and society long lasting benefits.</p>
Happy Schools Deal	<p>There is some great practice in schools and further education around supporting young people (and their families) to stay engaged in education and training despite their social challenges. However, with the combination of the lockdown and economic and social impact of Covid-19, more investment is needed so schools and colleges can maintain close relationships with young people and their families to</p>

	prevent problems and provide long-term support in education and employment.
Community Teams Deal	Simply providing a job will not always be enough for some young people who come from seriously challenging circumstances such as being at risk of homelessness, having problems with caring for people with ill health or disabilities or debt problems. The government should therefore look to provide more support to the many community hubs that have sprung up across the West Midlands and the UK to help local people in this time of crisis. This will help these hubs of expertise solve problems before they get so bad that some young people living in these conditions, fall into sustained unemployment and crime.

Author: Tom McNeil, Strategic Adviser to the PCC

Annex – West Midlands Violence Reduction Unit – Analysis of youth cohort vulnerability

Introduction

The West Midlands is a geographically small, but densely populated region, home to three million people. It has a young and ethnically diverse population. 25% of Birmingham's resident population are under 16. 47% are non-White British.

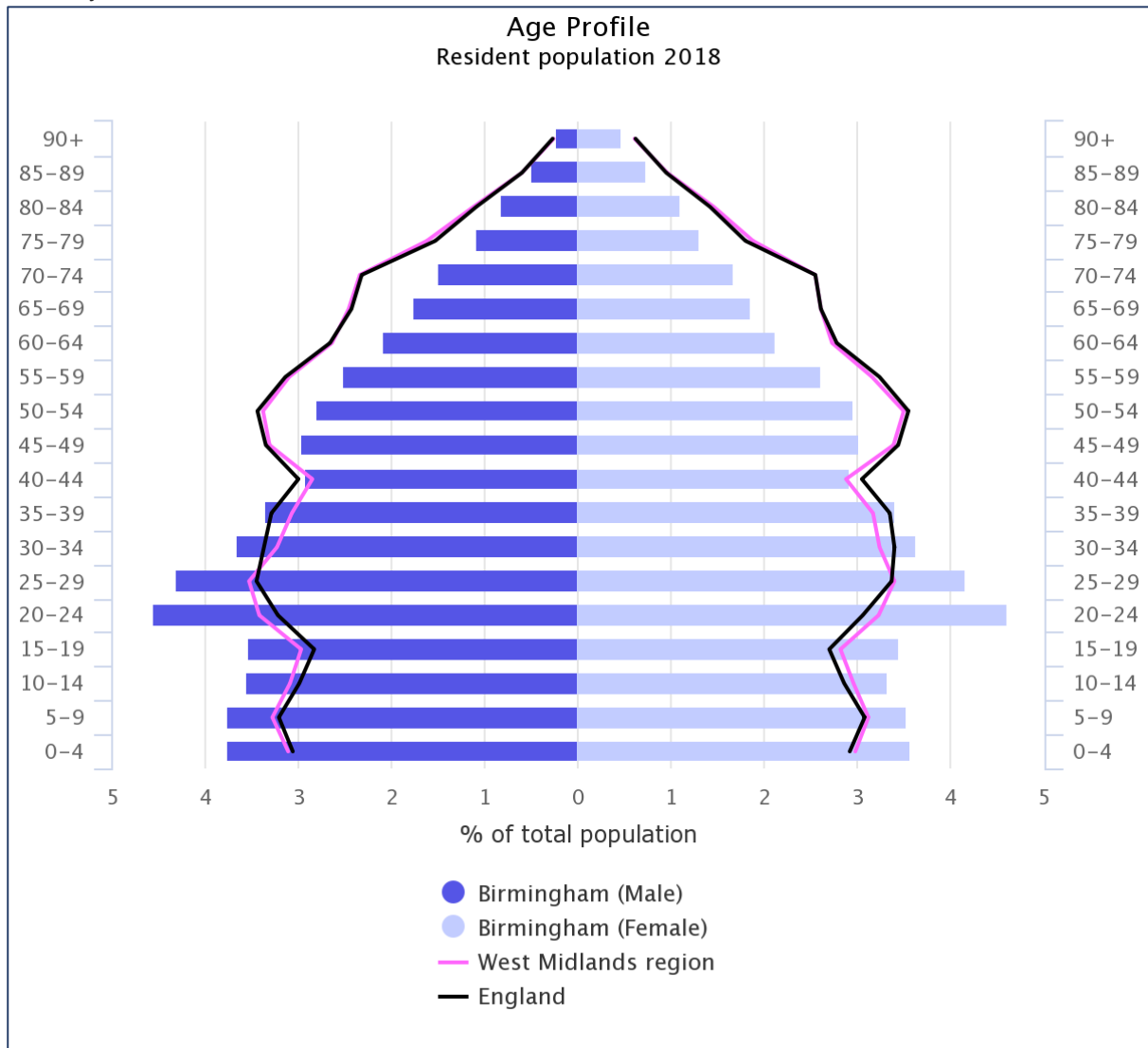
It is a region with deep pockets of deprivation and poverty, which overlap strongly with areas of high ethnic diversity. Three of its seven local authorities - Birmingham, Sandwell and Wolverhampton - are in the top 20 most deprived in the country. All three are more deprived in 2019 than they were in 2004.

Young People and Age Profiles

The blue bars - dark blue for male, light blue for female - show the different age bands as a proportion of the population. The bars towards the bottom represent younger people. They show that Birmingham has a higher proportion of young people than average.

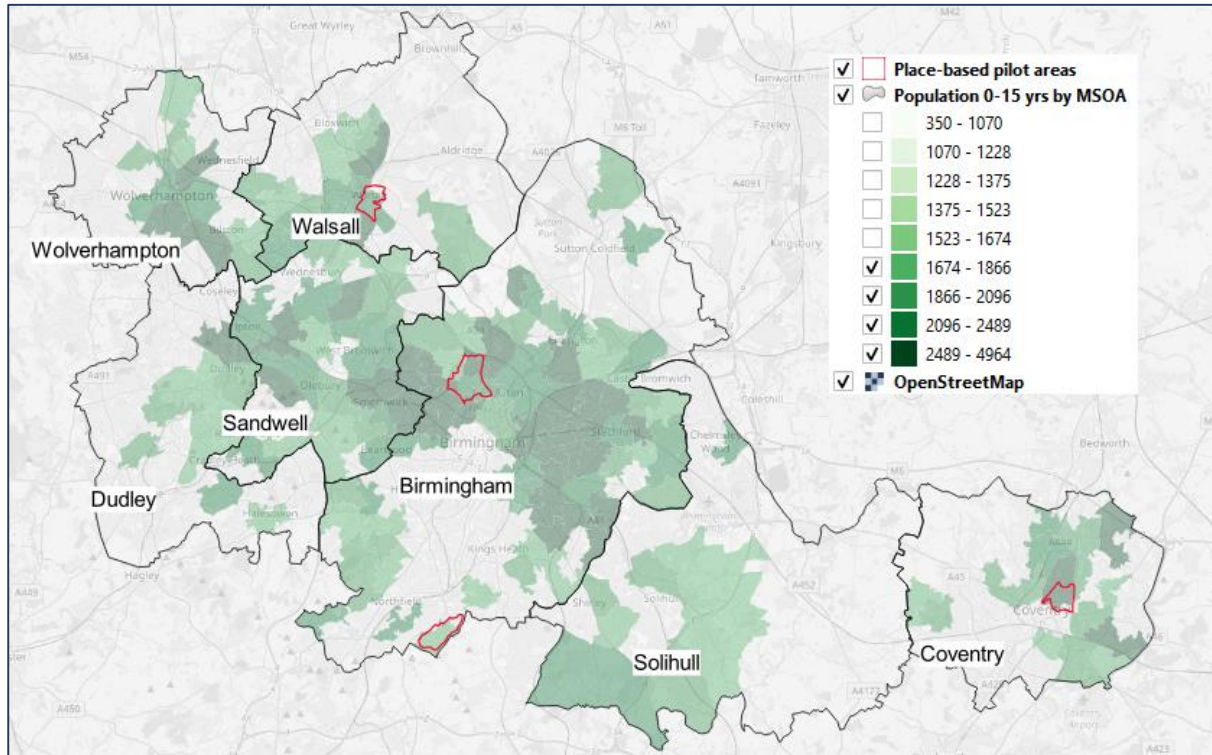


25% of Birmingham's population is under 16. More than half are under 33. In the Black Country, 20% of residents are under 16.

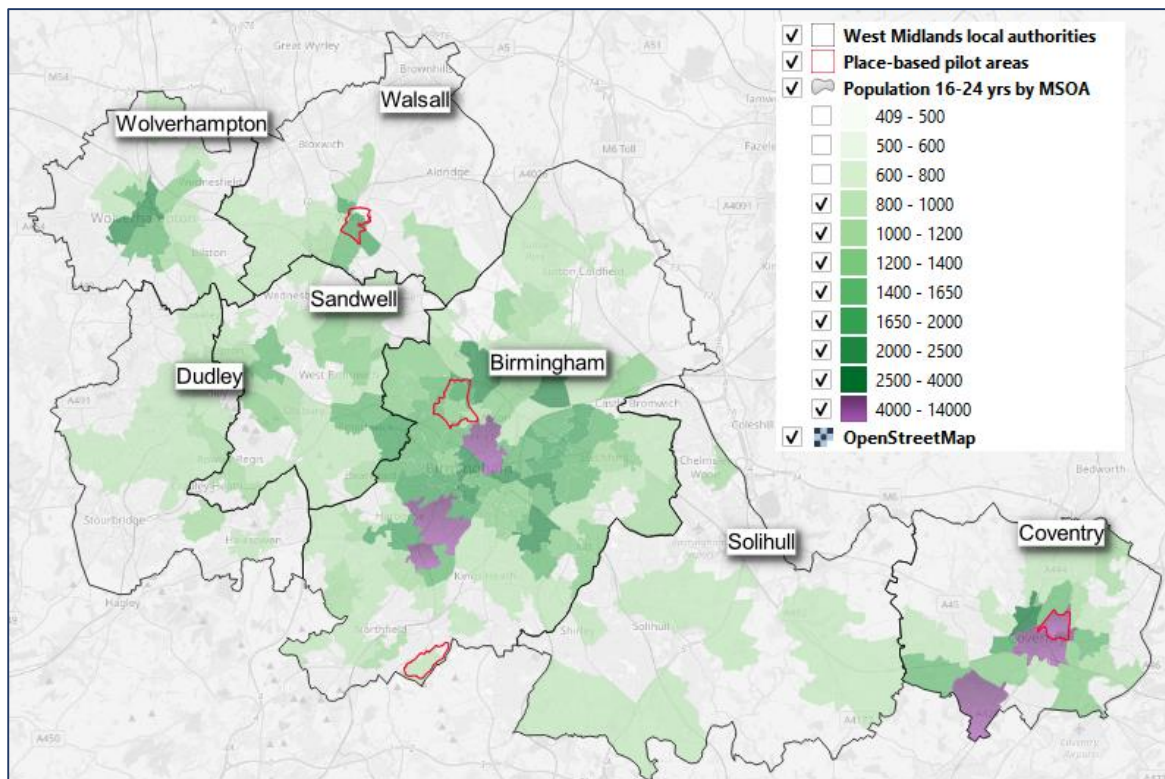


Where do young people live?

Distribution of young people (aged 0-15) in the West Midlands



Distribution of young people (aged 16-24) in the West Midlands



The highest concentrations of young people are in urban areas: Birmingham, Coventry and Wolverhampton, but also in Sandwell and parts of Walsall - less so in Dudley and Solihull.

Purple shading indicates areas with very high student populations.

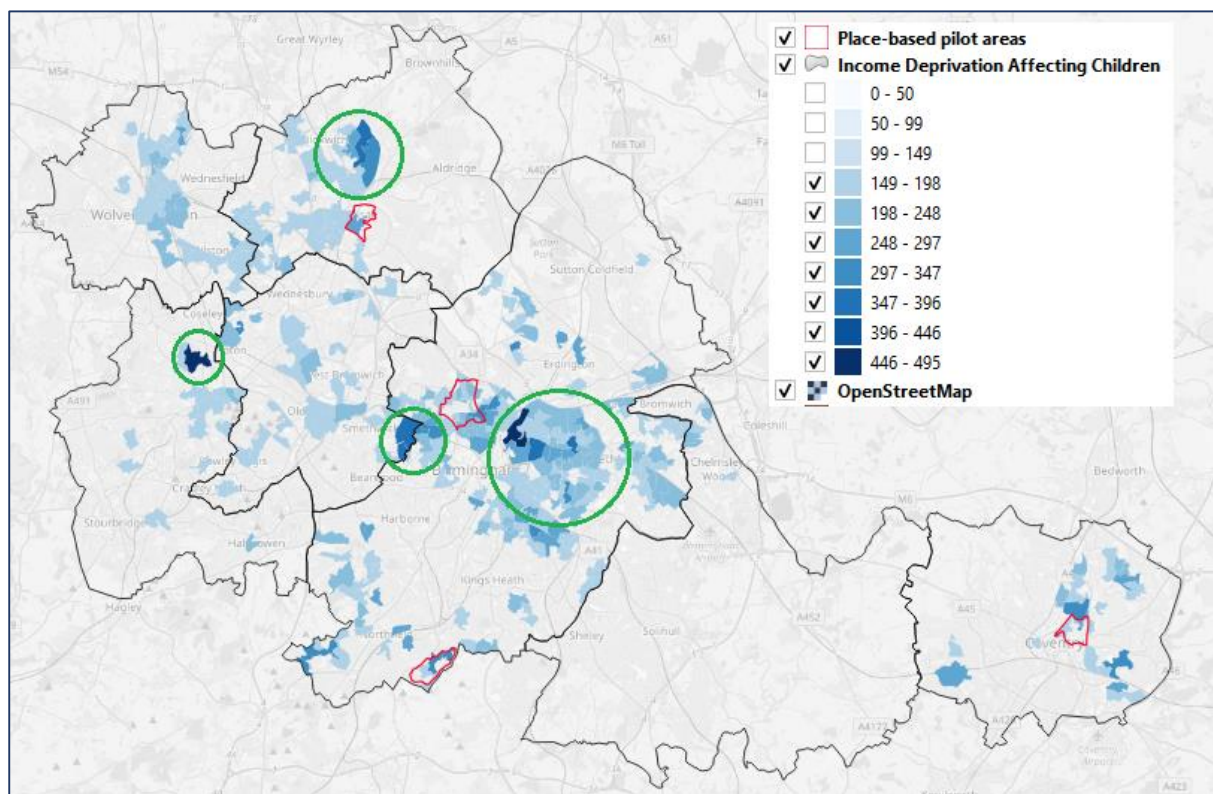
There is some correlation with areas of deprivation, particularly the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index - a subset of the Index of Multiple Deprivation.

Deprivation affecting younger people

The small red boundaries show the locations for the place-based pilot programmes, delivered by the West Midlands Violence Reduction Unit (VRU).

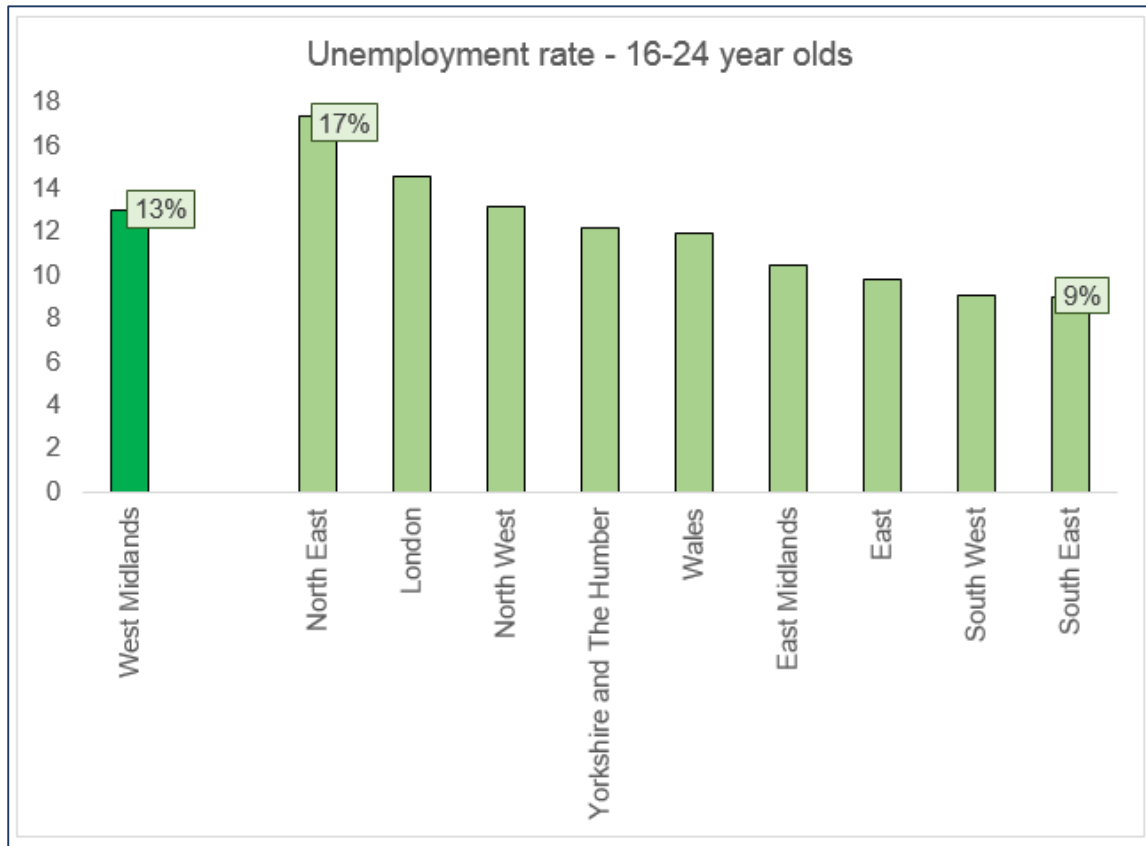
Green circles indicate pockets of deep deprivation affecting children, as well as being areas with high numbers of young people,

These are most pronounced in Sandwell, east Birmingham, Blakenall and Goscoat in Walsall. Dudley is also circled, in the area around the Wren's Nest estate.

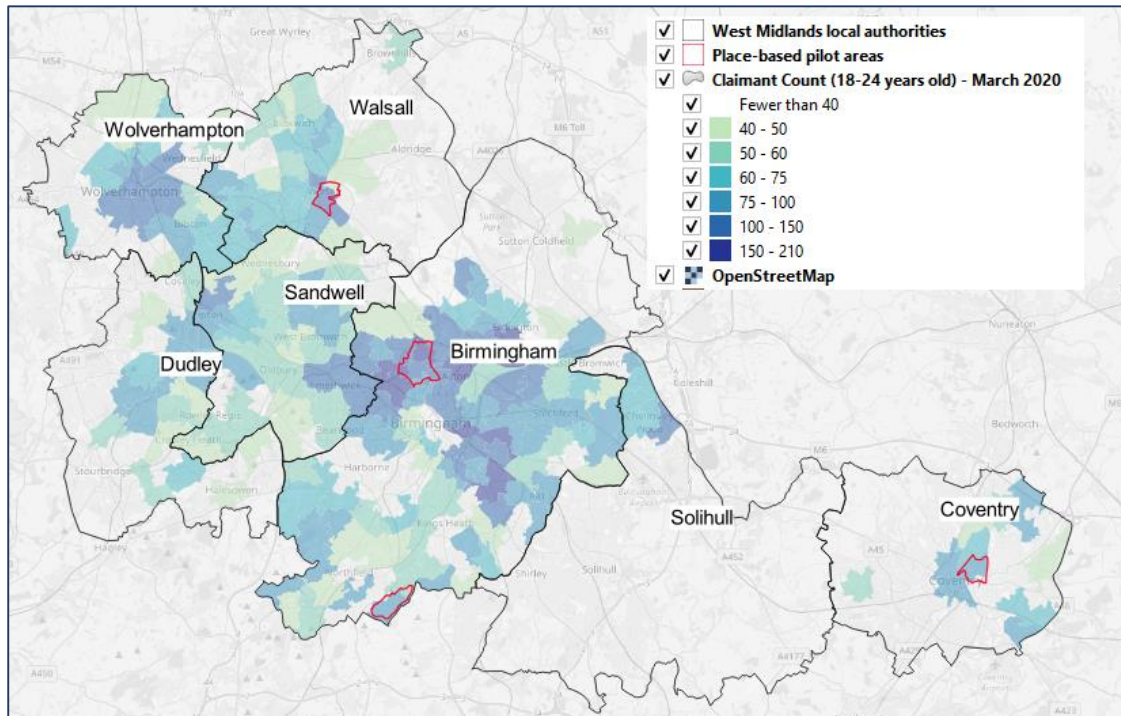


Youth unemployment (16 to 24 year olds)

The youth unemployment rate in the West Midlands region is 13%. Only London and the North East have higher unemployment rates for this age group.



The claimant count is a measure of the number of people claiming benefits, principally for the reason of being unemployed. The following map shows where the highest number of young people (aged 18–24) who are claiming benefits are concentrated.

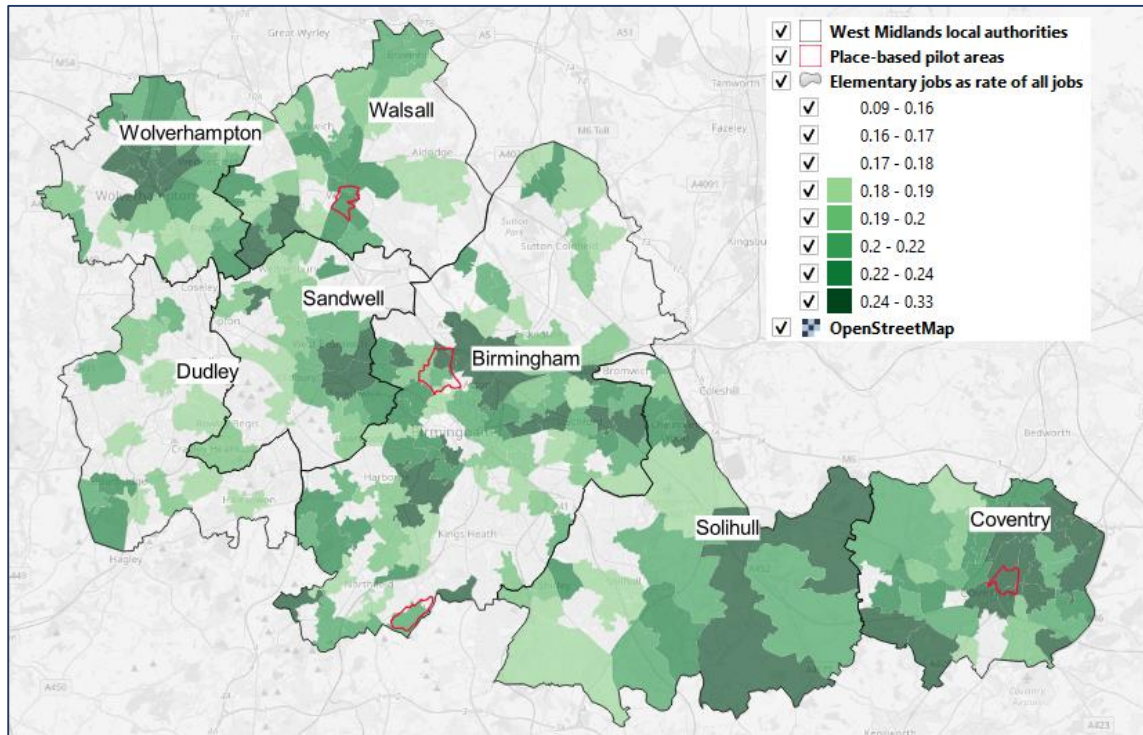


Employment Type

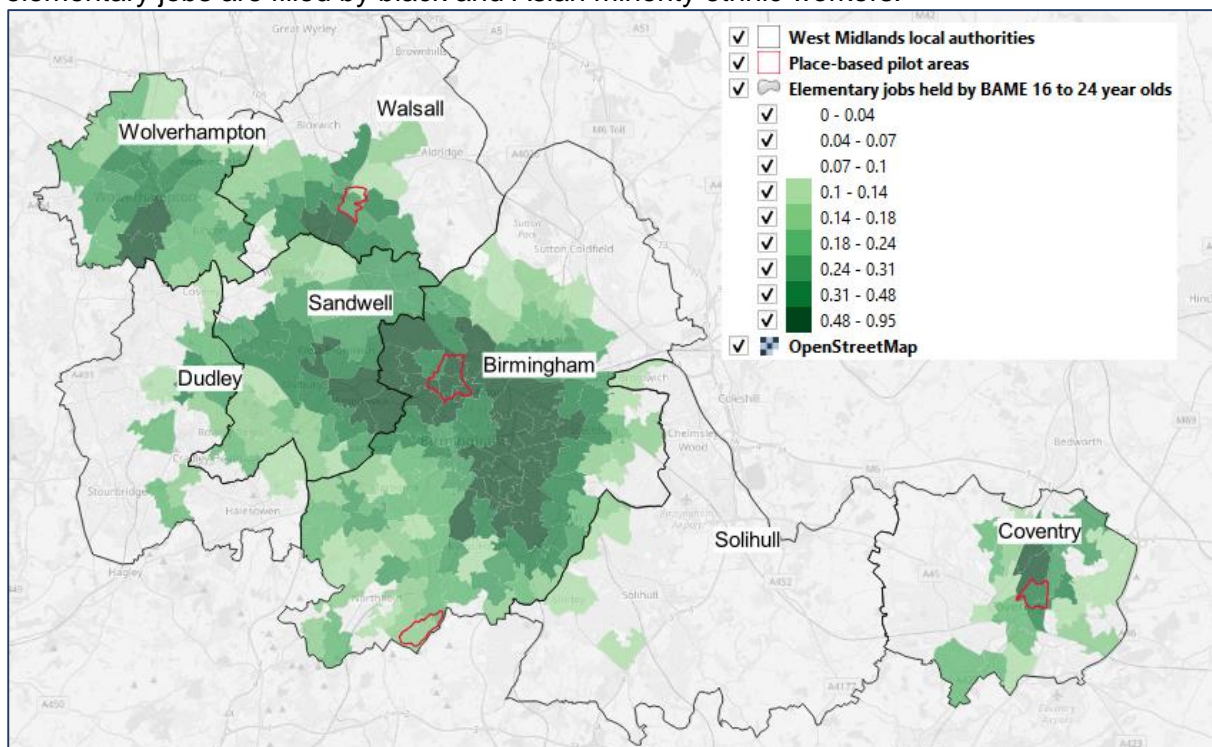
The International Standard Classification of Occupations is used by the United Nations and the Office of National Statistics. Group 9 - elementary occupations - includes jobs such as cleaners, kitchen assistants, waiters, bar staff, labourers and service workers.

These are typically low-skilled, low-paid jobs and do not require special qualifications. They are often filled by young people and, in some parts of the West Midlands, make up 25% to 33% of all young people's employment.

Proportion of elementary jobs filled by 18-24 year olds by MSOA



Elementary jobs are frequently occupied by women and ethnic minorities. The dark green areas on the following map show where more than half – in some cases up to 90% - of elementary jobs are filled by black and Asian minority ethnic workers.



What's more, these elementary jobs are most at risk as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

A report by McKinsey on May 11th 2020 found that 7.6 million jobs are at risk as a result of Covid-19 and that the risks are highly skewed.

“People and places with the lowest incomes are the most vulnerable to job loss. Nearly 50% of all the jobs at risk are in occupations earning less than £10 per hour.”

“The proportion of jobs at risk in elementary occupations - which employed 3.3 million people in 2019 - is around 44%.”

The report writers make an important link between jobs at risk and education.

“Not surprisingly, jobs at risk and pay are both correlated with levels of education. Only around 24% of employees in the hospitality, retail and construction sectors have a higher-education qualification; more than 50% of workers in each of these sectors do not have qualifications beyond General Certificates of Secondary Education (GCSEs).”

Additional risk to part-time workers and younger people

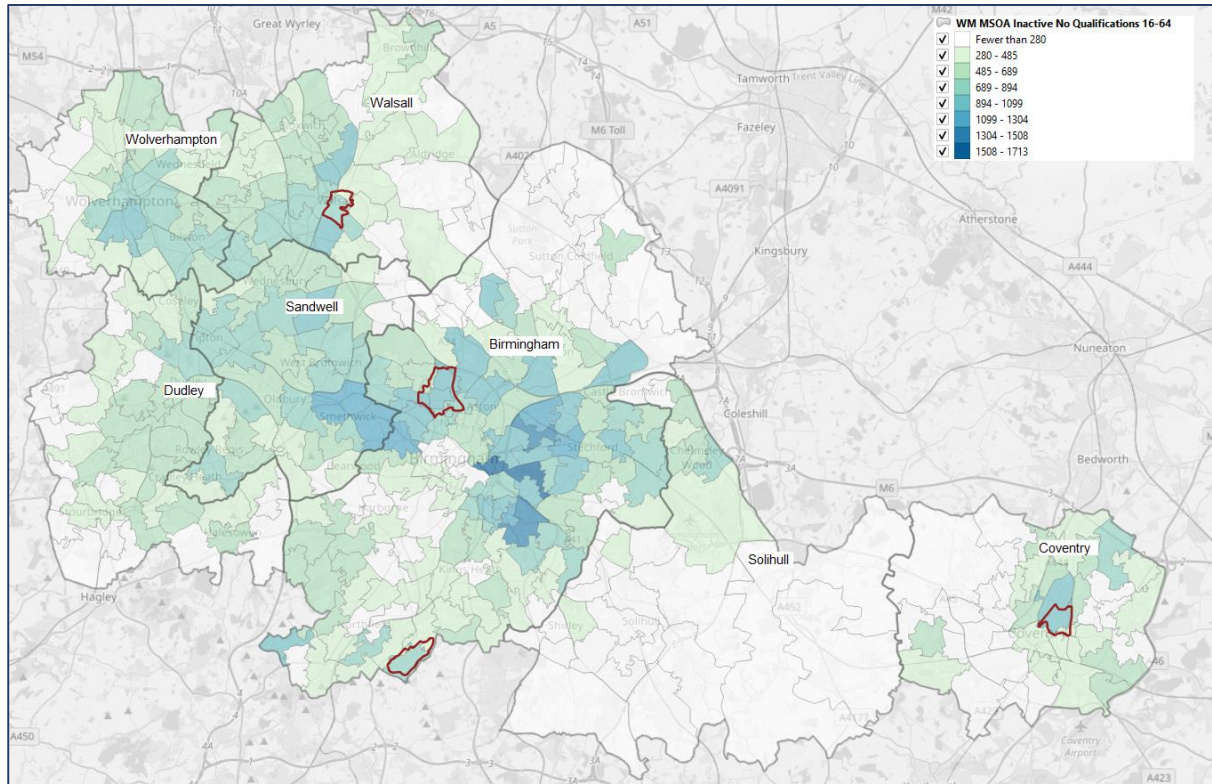
“Part-time workers, who make up 24% of the UK workforce, account for 35% of jobs at risk. In terms of age, around 45% of the more vulnerable jobs are held by younger people aged 35 years or less.”

Additional risk to BAME communities

“Certain at-risk occupations tend to be disproportionately filled by BAME workers. Examples include taxi drivers and chauffeurs, where BAME groups make up 13%, 5% and 4% of employment, respectively. People of Asian ethnicity, who account for 7% of the UK workforce, make up 13% of cooks, chefs, catering, bar managers and driving instructors.”

Education – Qualifications and Training

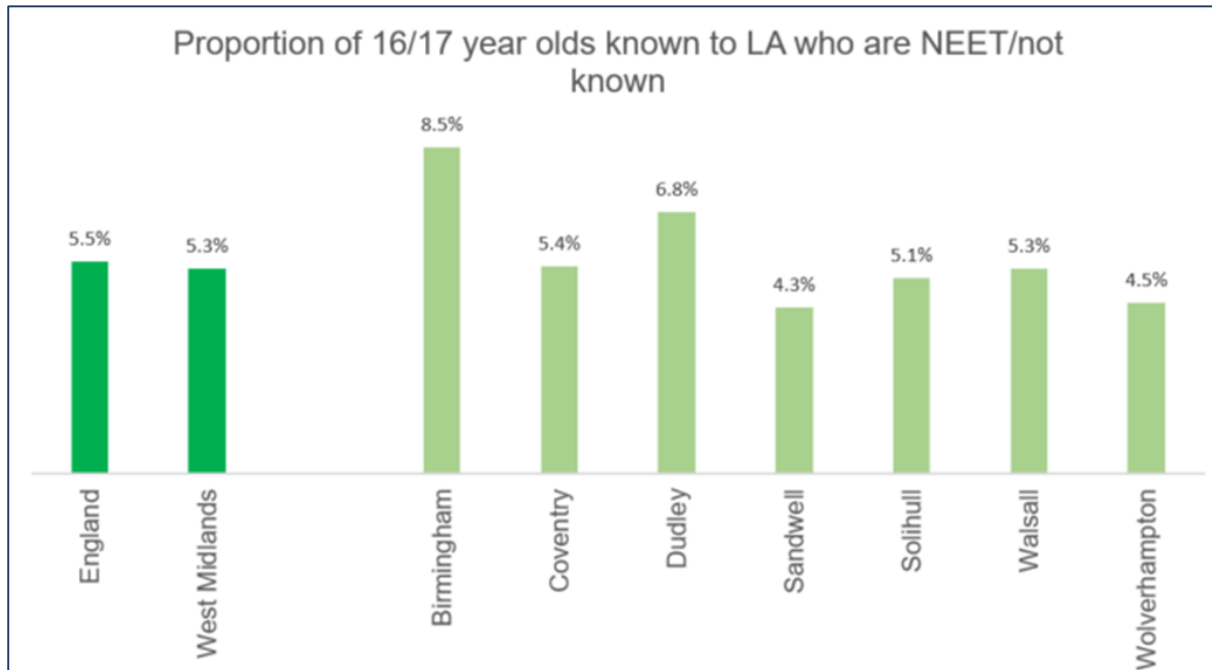
The darker blue areas on the map show higher numbers of people who are economically inactive and with no qualifications.





NEETs (Not in Education, Employment or Training)

Although the West Midlands has a similar proportion of 16-17 year olds not in education or training to the national average, there is a clear discrepancy across local authority areas.

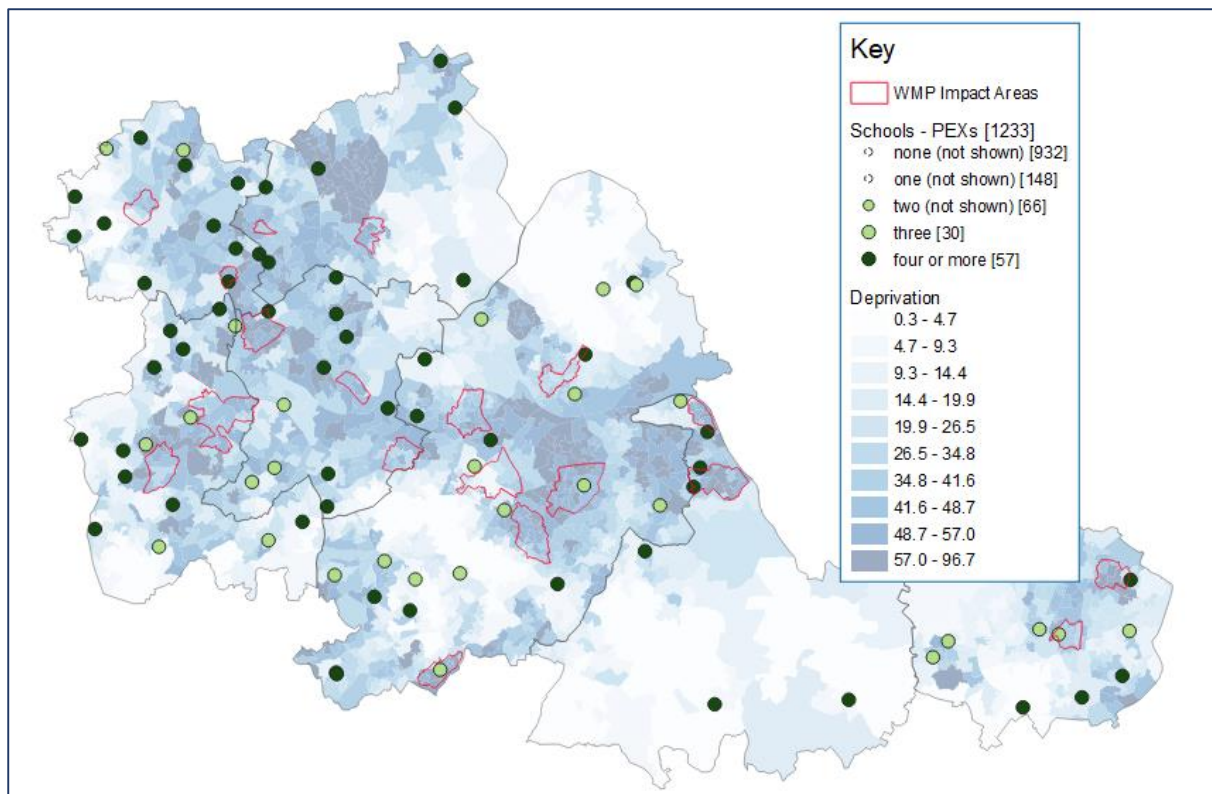


Education – School exclusions

There is an increased risk that children who are permanently excluded from school are drawn into crime, both as victims and perpetrators.

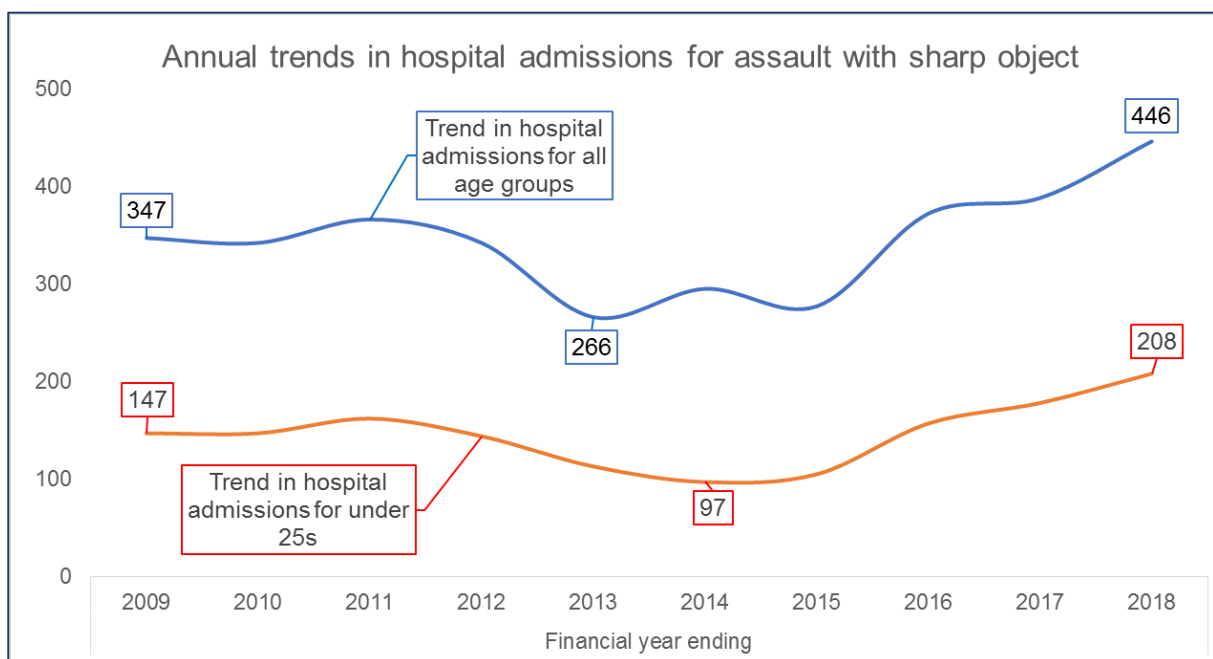
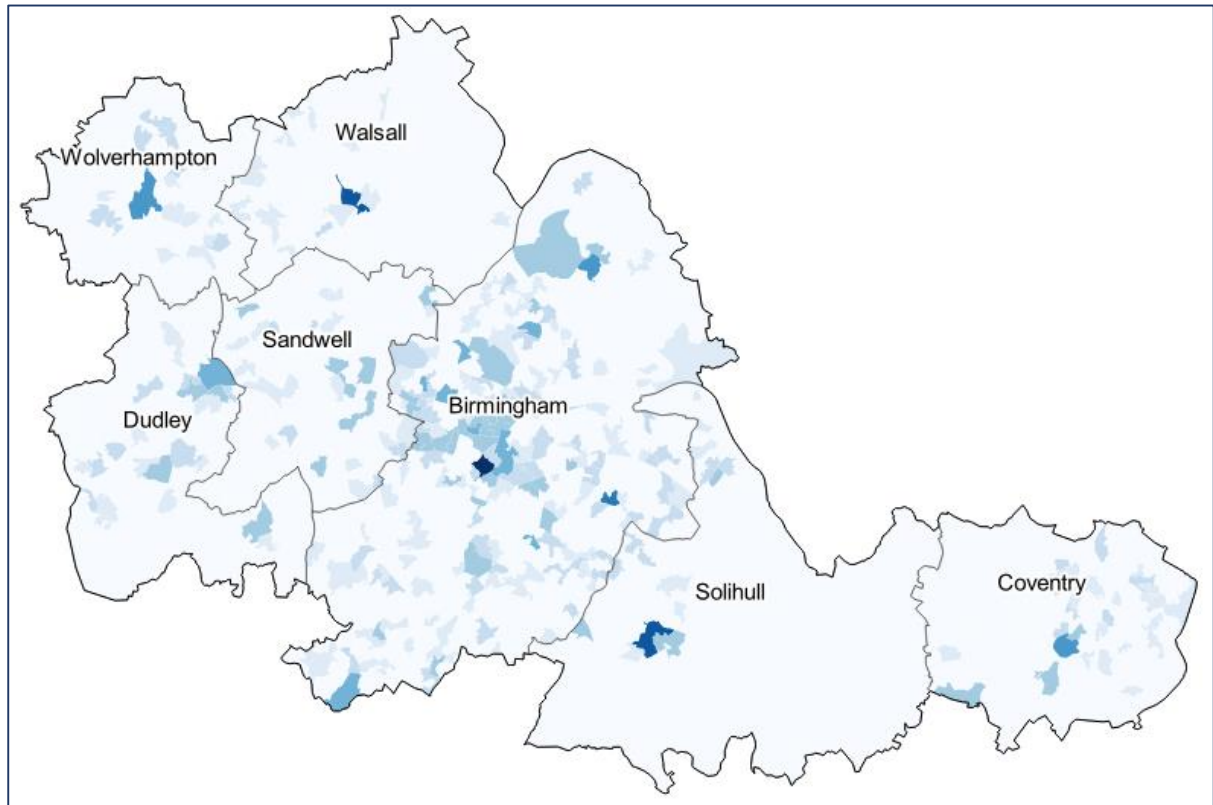
There is no clear link between individual schools with high permanent exclusion rates and areas of deprivation, but the exclusion rate in the West Midlands is 50% higher than the national average.

The next map shows the schools with the highest exclusion rates. The blue shading shows overall deprivation and the West Midlands Police Impact Areas with red outlines.



Knife crime and hospital admissions for violence

All recorded knife crime in the West Midlands where the victim was 16 years old or younger (2017 to 2019)



Under 25s make up about a third of hospital admissions for assault with a sharp object in the West Midlands. Sandwell and Wolverhampton have higher rates for under 25s

Wolverhampton has the highest proportion at about 60%.

Summary and Conclusions

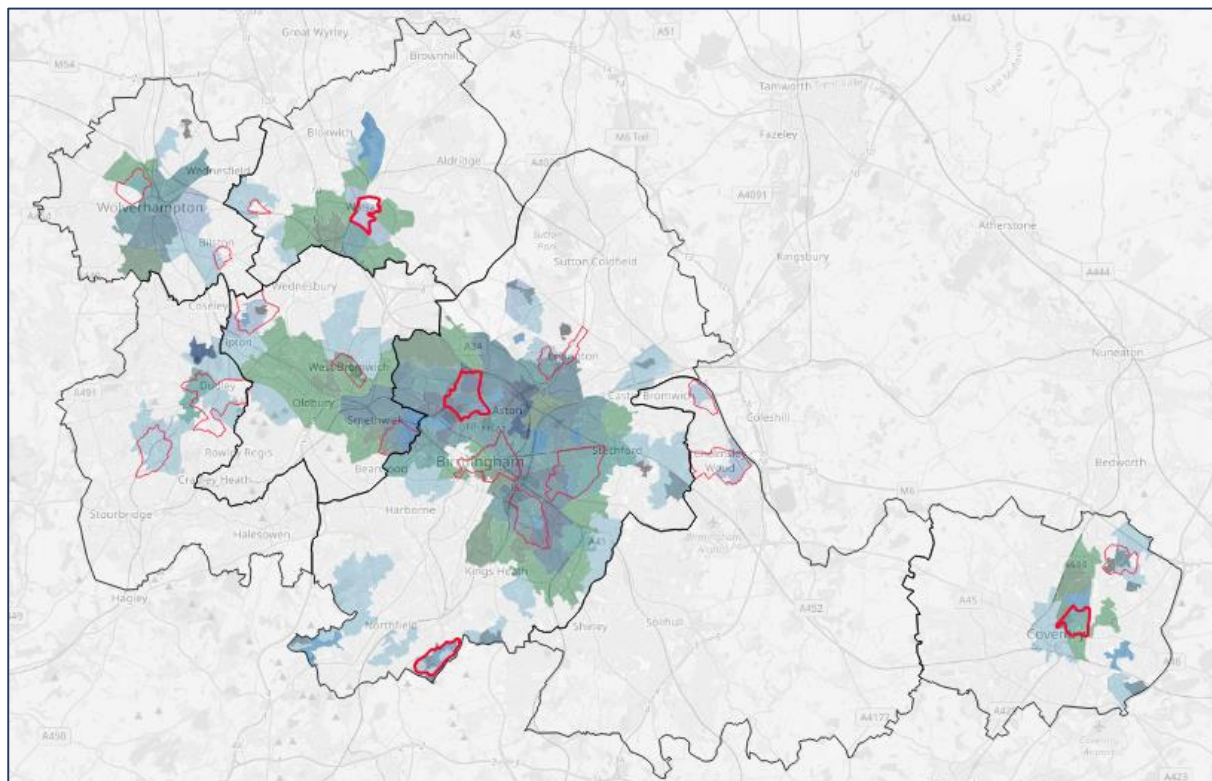
The West Midlands is a vibrant, young region with great diversity, but also areas of deep deprivation and poverty. Educational outcomes, school exclusions, qualification levels, youth unemployment and violent youth crime are all higher than the national average.

Some parts of the West Midlands are particularly adversely affected by combinations of all of these factors.

The darker green areas show deprivation, unemployment and high numbers of young people in elementary jobs.

Green also shows the areas where large proportions of elementary jobs are filled by BAME workers.

Blue areas show high claimant counts and income deprivation affecting children. The red borders show the WMP impact areas. Bold represents the VRU place-based pilots.

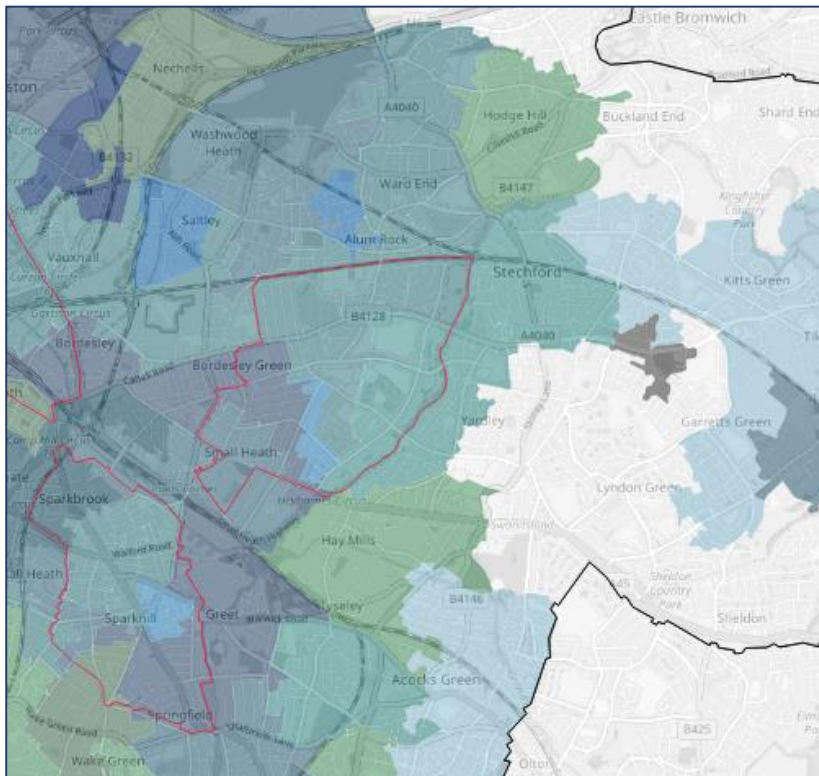


The forecasted economic effect of Covid-19 is very likely to hit these already disadvantaged communities extremely hard.

The areas with the greatest risk and need are listed and shown in sharper focus below.

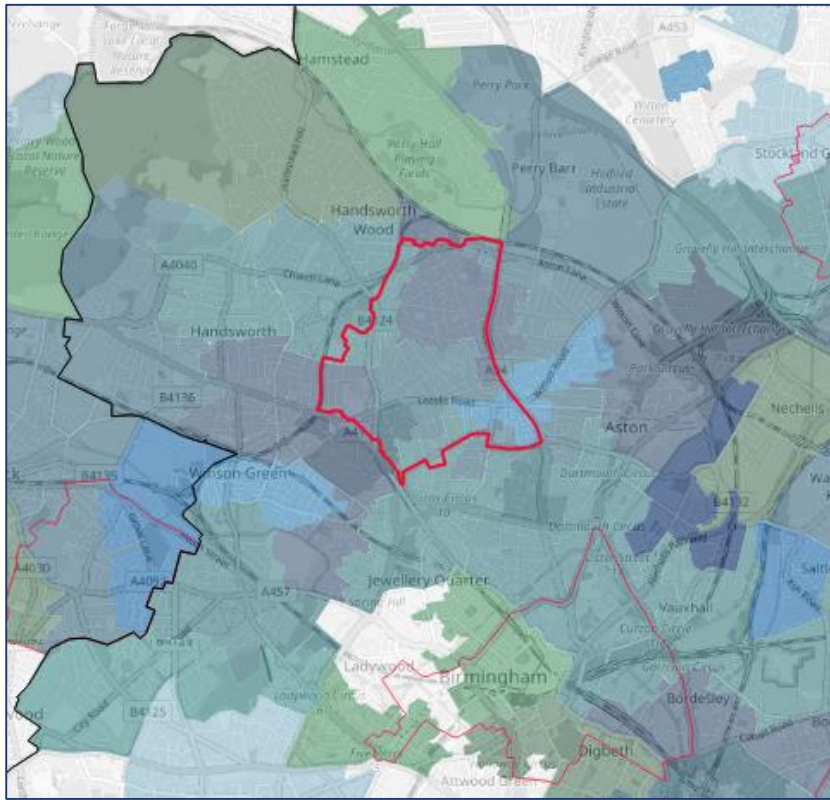
Birmingham

East Birmingham – Nechells, Washwood Heath, Bordesley Green, Small Heath, Sparkbrook

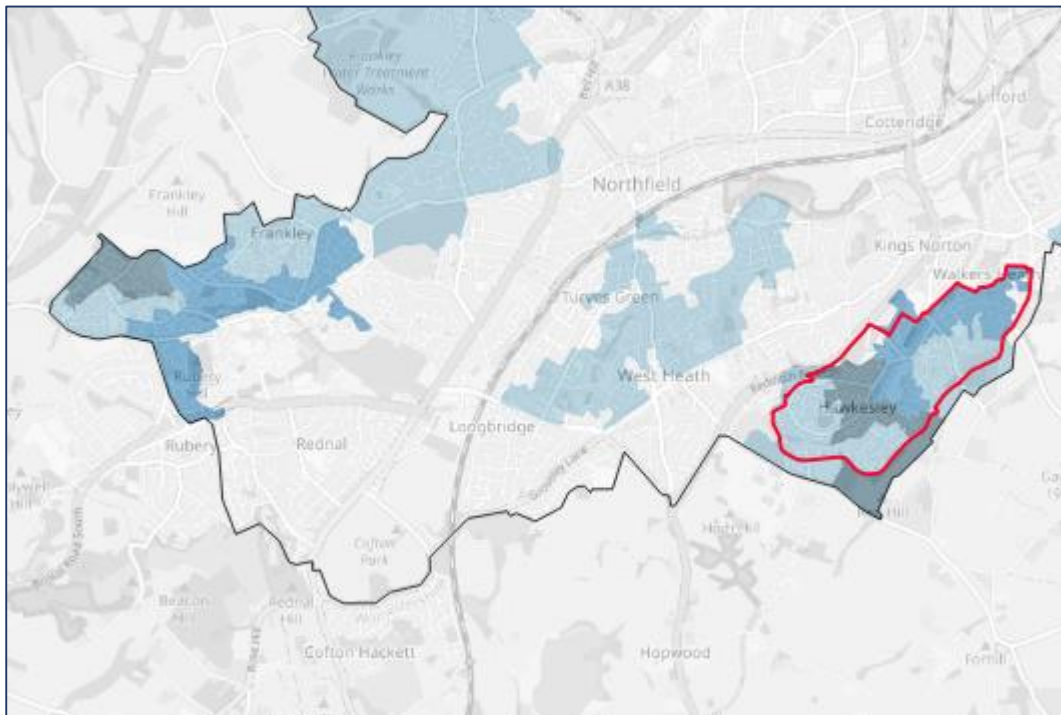




North Birmingham – Aston, Handsworth, Perry Barr

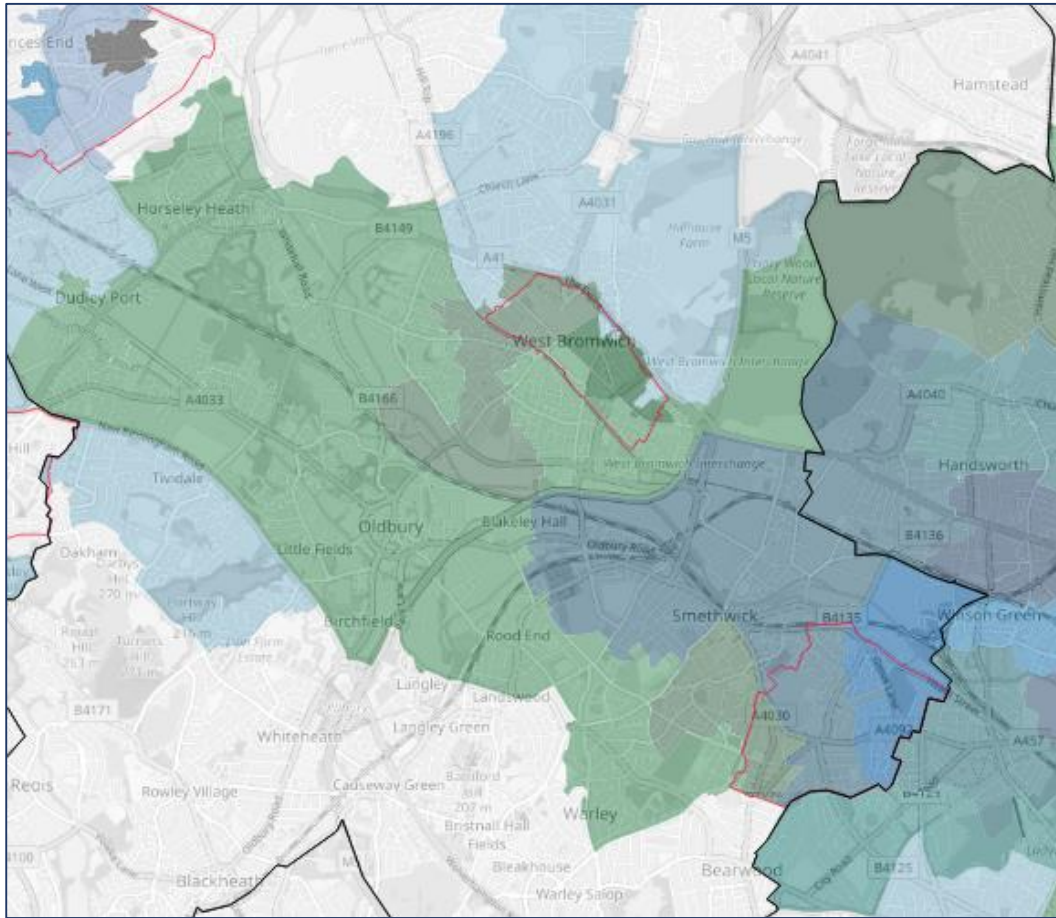


South Birmingham – Northfield, Frankley, Rubery





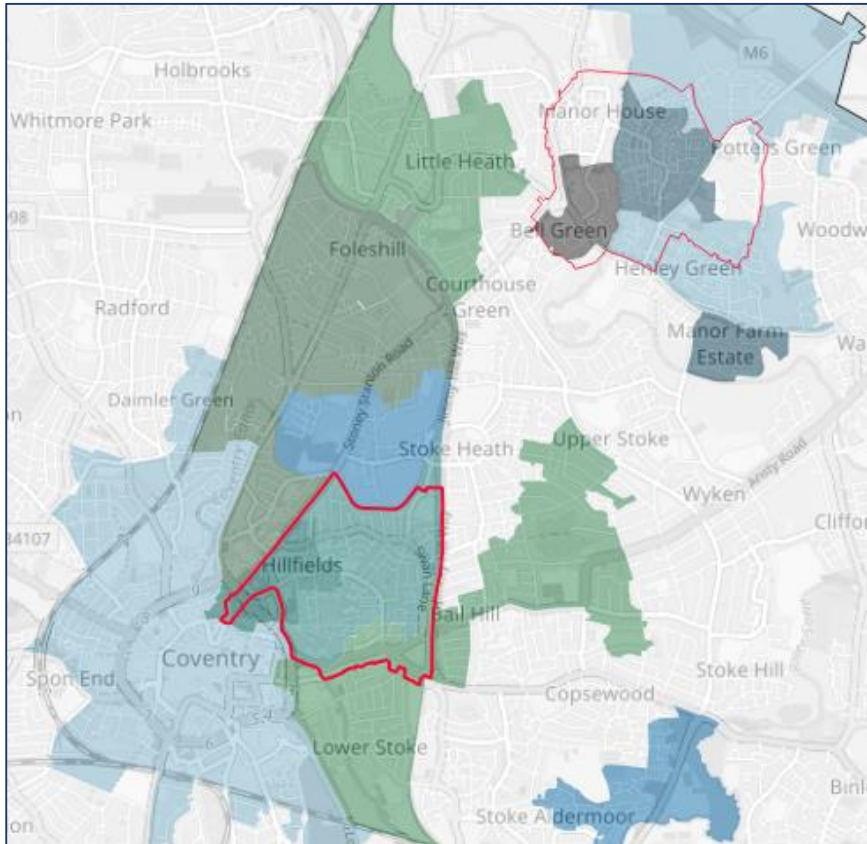
Sandwell – Smethwick, West Bromwich





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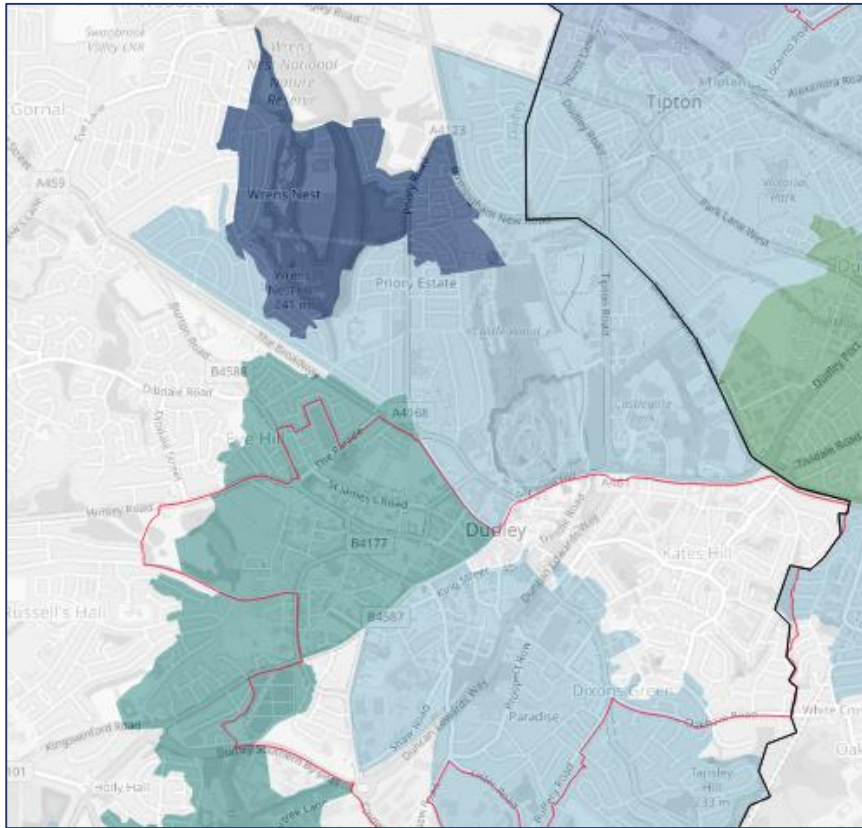
Coventry – Hillfields, Foleshill, Wood End





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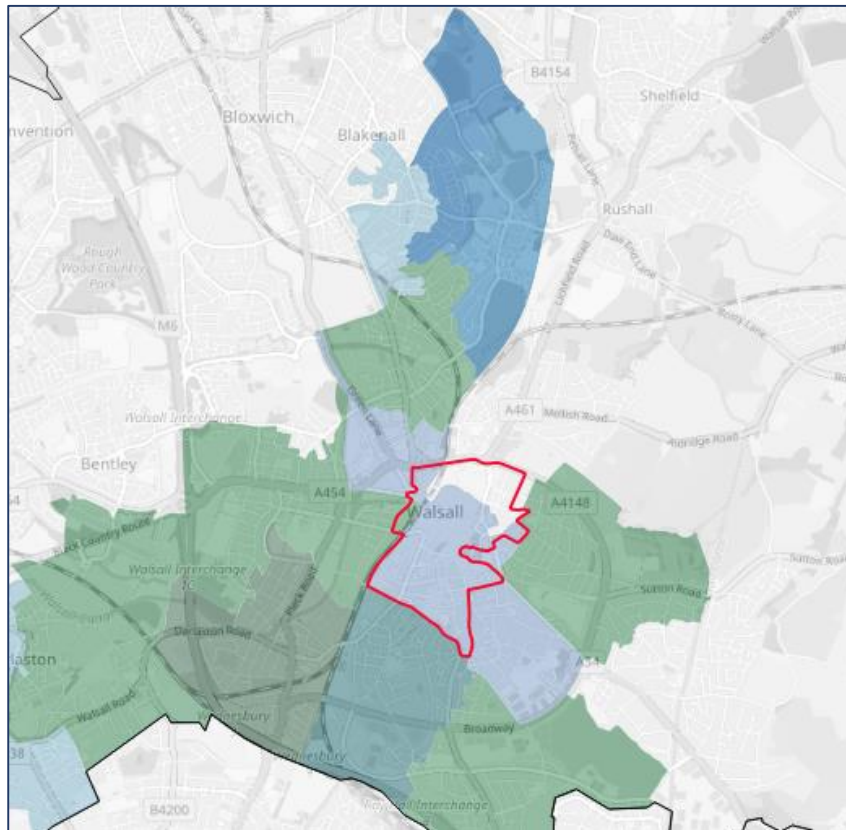
Dudley – Eve Hill, Wren’s Nest





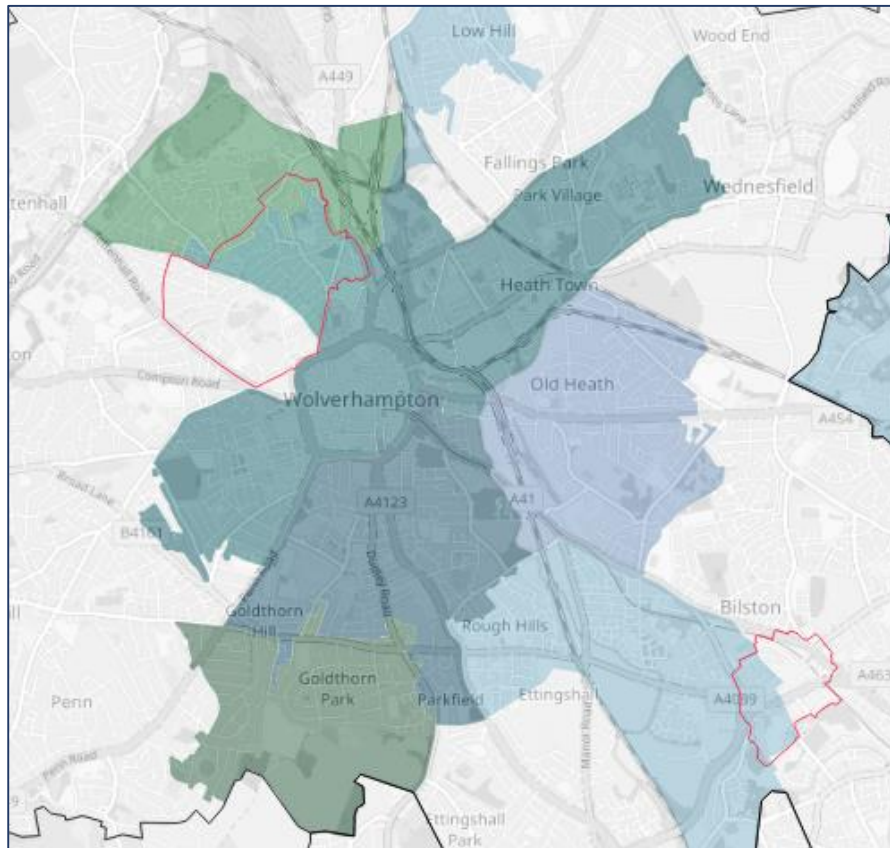
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Walsall – Darlaston, Blakenall, Goscote





Wolverhampton – Central, Goldthorn Hill, Heath Town



Sources:

Age profiles - Public Health England Fingertips population profiles

(<https://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/health-profiles/data#page/12/qid/1938132696/pat/6/par/E12000005/at/202/are/E08000025/cid/4/page-options/ovw-do-0>)

Young people populations by MSOA – Office for National Statistics Middle Super Output Area population estimates

(<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/middlesuperoutputareamidyearpopulationestimates>)

Youth deprivation – Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019>)

Unemployment and Claimant Counts – Nomis official labour market statistics

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16-24 year olds economically inactive (excluding students) - Census 2011 estimates
([DC6107EW - Economic Activity by sex by age](#))

Proportion of 16-17 year olds NEET or not known – 2019 ([NEET and participation: local authority figures](#))

School Exclusions data (2017/18) - Department for Education
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