



DARLINGTON
Borough Council



Levelling up Darlington Plan
Stronger Communities

Vision

Darlington is a place where residents, no matter where in the borough they live, have the same opportunity to make the best of their talents and live a healthy and happy life as any other part of the UK.



Background

The concept of 'levelling up' is high on the national policy agenda. Focussed on regional inequalities across the UK, the approach is intended to address relative economic underperformance, poor living standards and opportunities in areas that feel left behind. The Government published a White Paper, in March 2022 outlining a range of new central policy interventions which focuses on.

'While talent is spread equally across our country, opportunity is not. Levelling up is a mission to challenge, and change, that unfairness. Levelling up means giving everyone the opportunity to flourish. It means people everywhere living longer and more fulfilling lives, and benefiting from sustained rises in living standards and well-being.'

Levelling Up White paper March 2022

The levelling Up Programme will focus on interventions to:

- boost productivity, pay, jobs and living standards by growing the private sector, especially in those places where they are lagging;
- spread opportunities and improve public services, especially in those places where they are weakest;
- restore a sense of community, local pride and belonging, especially in those places where they have been lost; and
- empower local leaders and communities, especially in those places lacking local agency.

Levelling Up Darlington aims to ensure that this national programme provides opportunities for all our communities to flourish, addressing geographical inequality within Darlington.

Levelling Up Darlington supports the delivery of the Council Plan in its aims to maximise the potential of young people and to work with communities to maximise their potential.

Why a Local Levelling Up Plan?

Current Activity

The council is already working with partners to support deprived communities, for example:

- In March 2021 the council worked with locally companies, Cummins and Darlington Building Society to bring The Bread and Butter Thing charity to Darlington which helps hundreds of struggling families access affordable food every week.
- Public sector agencies in Darlington, led by the council, have come together to form an 'anchor network'. The purpose of the network is to maximise the added social value their suppliers commit to Darlington over and above goods or service being procured, with a particular emphasis on helping local residents in need of support.
- A pioneering multi-agency approach, 'The Northgate Initiative' has been established. Workstream groups, led by relevant professionals from partner agencies, direct action on particular domains which collectively deliver a holistic, systems approach to improving local residents' lives. These domains are brought together in one steering group and provide a template for how a Levelling Up Darlington programme could be delivered.

Outside of the Northgate Initiative, however, work focussing on addressing borough inequalities is often ad hoc and fragmented. A clear plan for Darlington, which focuses on just a few simple priorities aimed at redressing inequalities will act to drive and direct partnership action and ensure both ongoing and new activities can be clearly identified, monitored and shaped.

Impact of COVID on local inequalities

In addition to the effects of the pandemic on regional inequalities, Covid-19 has also highlighted and exacerbated significant inequalities *within* places. Whilst health and employment impacts have varied between regions, the starkest differences in measures such as unemployment, mental health and mortality rates have been recorded between the most and least deprived *within* areas, across the country. Analysis by the COVID Recovery Commission, an independent group of UK business leaders, on the impact of the pandemic has shown the most deprived neighbourhoods are found in every part of the country, including in some of the wealthiest areas, and that the pandemic has hit disadvantaged communities hardest¹; most starkly in the finding that mortality rates from the virus have been twice as high in poorer areas than the richest. The commission consequently concluded that 'a levelling up agenda which targets interventions at the local level will have the best chance of success in reducing long-running inequalities' and that 'to level up will require interventions at a national and local level'.

Consequently, a common theme of researchers analysing the impact of COVID-19 and suggesting how to effectively address these has been to conclude that there is a vital need for strategic, place-based cooperation between local partners, led by the public sector to collectively:

- Develop a shared long-term vision and approach to recovery, ensuring that this includes a focus on addressing health and income inequalities
- Inform how agencies deploy their resources and use any additional discretionary funding
- Action plan, based around best practice and led by evidence

¹<https://covidrecoverycommission.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Levelling-up-communities.pdf>

In addition, public sector agencies have long recognised the interconnected nature of the issues they face, and that inequality and deprivation are core drivers of demand and have joined the growing consensus that a place-based approach, bringing together local partners from the public sector, civil society and the private sector, is integral to deliver any meaningful measure of levelling up. One size policy will not fit all areas, and many of the levers to address inequalities and regenerate neighbourhoods rests with local institutions. Our proximity to and experience of working with local communities means we understand where investment is likely to be most impactful and what works to address our particular needs and priorities.

What is Levelling Up Darlington?

The Levelling Up Darlington Plan aims to clearly outline our collective approach to addressing local inequalities and how we will complement action being taken nationally to ensure that all local residents can benefit from it.

The Darlington Profile Report, published annually, provides a detailed snapshot of the borough and highlights social and economic inequalities. Often spatially concentrated in both rural and urban areas, inequalities are seen in education attainment, health, employment and income.

Whilst inequality expresses itself in many ways which are interlinked, Levelling Up Darlington aims to focus on the root causes of inequality.

Aims/Principles

The Levelling Up Darlington Strategy will seek to:

- bring partners, stakeholders and the voluntary sector together around a shared long-term vision and approach to recovery, reflecting and building on the national focus on inequalities in health, opportunities and income
- direct local agencies' action planning and resource deployment, based around best practice and led by evidence (Appendix 1)
- ensure Darlington residents, already facing inequality, will be actively considered at the heart of this strategy and all actions taken as a result of this plan will assess the impact on those protected by the Equality Duty
- take a preventative approach: rather than waiting for residents to fall into crisis before partners intervene, the strategy will seek to minimise the likelihood of residents falling into needing emergency support by acting upstream to address the underlying causes of poor outcomes and crises and improve households' resilience to manage.

Priorities for Action

1. The vision for Levelling Up Darlington is ‘Darlington is a place where residents, no matter where in the borough they live, have the same opportunity to make the best of their talents and live a healthy and happy life as any other part of the UK.’
2. To achieve this vision, it is proposed that a programme of action would be developed with partners prioritising the following:
 - (a) Quality Jobs: attracting more quality jobs of all skill levels to Darlington and assisting people from more deprived communities to access them.*
 - (i) DBC Inward Investment Team is successfully attracting employers to Darlington bringing a greater volume of quality jobs.
 - (ii) The deficit is in supporting people to develop their employability skills to access these jobs. Analysis before the pandemic in 2019 indicated that a significant issue in Darlington was under-employment rather than unemployment, i.e. people (particularly young families) in low-paid insecure employment with fluctuating income. Unsurprisingly, there are high numbers of these families in the less affluent areas of town.

Proposed Action:

- (iii) An Adult learning facility is proposed as part of the Towns Fund initiative. The focus of this facility could be career development. The Adult Learning Budget could be used to provide tailored pre-employment courses which included input from local employers who were recruiting, ideally with guaranteed interviews on completion of the course.
 - (iv) Indicator: reduction in number of in-work Universal Credit claimants. (Appendix 2 Heatmap 1)
- (b) Access to Opportunities for Young People:
- (i) Whilst overall levels of unemployment have recovered since the pandemic, analysis commissioned by the group (see attached) illustrates a dramatic increase in 16 to 24 year old unemployed Universal Credit claimants which are highly spatial concentrated. There have been particularly dramatic increases in Skerne Park, Albert Hill and Firthmoor, as well as Branksome and areas of Stephenson and North Road Wards.

Proposed Action:

- (ii) A Youth Employment Task Group has endorsed this as a priority and has commissioned Youth Employment UK, to work with local partners to develop a bespoke approach for Darlington.
 - (iii) Indicator: reduction in unemployed and in work Universal Credit claims for 16 to 24 year olds from deprived communities. (Appendix 2 Heatmap 2)
- c) Reducing Health Inequalities:
- (i) Health care inequalities are systematic, avoidable and unfair differences in the health care.
 - (ii) These health inequalities are underpinned by inequalities in the broad social and economic circumstances which influence health
 - (iii) There is a social gradient across many of these determinants that contribute to health with poorer individuals experiencing worse health outcomes than people who are better off.

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- (iv) Pre-Covid, there continued to be a high correlation between deprived Wards and higher incidences of poor health behaviours and outcomes. (Appendix 2 Heatmap 3)
 - (v) Health conditions such as cardiovascular disease, cancer and mental health problems follow the same pattern of concentration as other measures of inequality. (Appendix 2 Heatmaps 4,5,6,7)
 - (vi) Social factors are not the only causes of ill health, but also include other factors such as health seeking behaviours and health care access and provision.
 - (vii) The approach proposed is to focus on the determinants of health. These broad social and economic circumstances that together influence health throughout the life course building on the work of Professor Marmot, Director of the Institute of Health Equity at University College London where he concluded:
 - People living in the poorest neighbourhoods in England will on average die seven years earlier than people living in the richest neighbourhoods
 - People living in poorer areas not only die sooner, but spend more of their lives with disability - an average total difference of 17 years
 - There is social gradient of health inequalities - put simply, the lower one's social and economic status, the poorer one's health is likely to be
 - Health inequalities arise from a complex interaction of many factors - housing, income, education, social isolation, disability - all of which are strongly affected by one's economic and social status

Proposed Action:

- (viii) Therefore in tackling health inequalities action will focus on population preventive approaches to a disease focussing on:
 - A good job
 - A good home and
 - A good friend (social connection)
- (ix) **A good job:** both priority 1 and 2 are aimed at supporting people into quality employment.
- (x) **A good home:** most of Darlington's poorest neighbourhoods are predominantly constituted of Council housing with the Council adhering to decency standards for its property. Areas where there is a high proportion of private rented housing have the poorest quality living standards. People living in the poorest neighbourhoods in England will on average die seven years earlier than people living in the richest neighbourhoods (Appendix 2 Heatmap 8)
- (xi) The first aim of Darlington Borough Council's Private Sector Housing Strategy is for Decent Quality homes in the Private Rented Sector. The government has recently published 'A fairer private rented sector' white paper which sets out the government's long-term vision for a private rented sector that is fit for the 21st century and delivers a better deal for tenants. This includes plans to:
 - abolish Section 21 'no-fault' evictions and introduce a simpler tenancy structure
 - apply the Decent Homes Standard to the PRS for the first time

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- introduce a new Property Portal to help landlords understand their obligations
 - introduce a housing ombudsman covering all PRS landlords and providing redress for tenants

Once passed into law, the Council will make landlords aware of their responsibilities under the act and work to further its implementation.

(xii) **A good friend:** Darlington Primary Care Network is committed to tackling neighbourhood inequalities. They will lead discussions with local system partners based on data and local knowledge to identify cohorts experiencing health inequalities in Darlington. This will inform their investment of £1.7 million in creating a 'Living Well' outreach team. The Team will look to work with groups with particular conditions but also will focus work in deprived communities. It will incorporate their existing programme of social prescribing which helps people engage with services and their community building on social and work settings where relationships are formed.

(xiii) This approach to addressing health inequalities will be a core focus of the emerging integrated care strategy, being taken forward by the Health and Wellbeing Board and targeting the following groups:

- The most deprived 20% of our population
- People who are disadvantaged due to their socio-economic status, income, education and employment
- Minority ethnic communities, older people and those living in rural areas or are Travellers
- those whom by nature are vulnerable such as those who are homeless, have a learning disability, in contact with the justice system or dependent on drugs and alcohol

Where possible and appropriate people in these group will be supported to access employment or volunteering opportunities

(xiv) There will be a focus on improving outcomes and experiences in five clinical areas including:

- (a) maternity
- (b) severe mental illness
- (c) chronic respiratory disease
- (d) early diagnosis of cancers
- (e) early diagnosis of high blood pressure

(xiv) The local place based priorities of the Integrated Care Board are listed in Appendix 3.

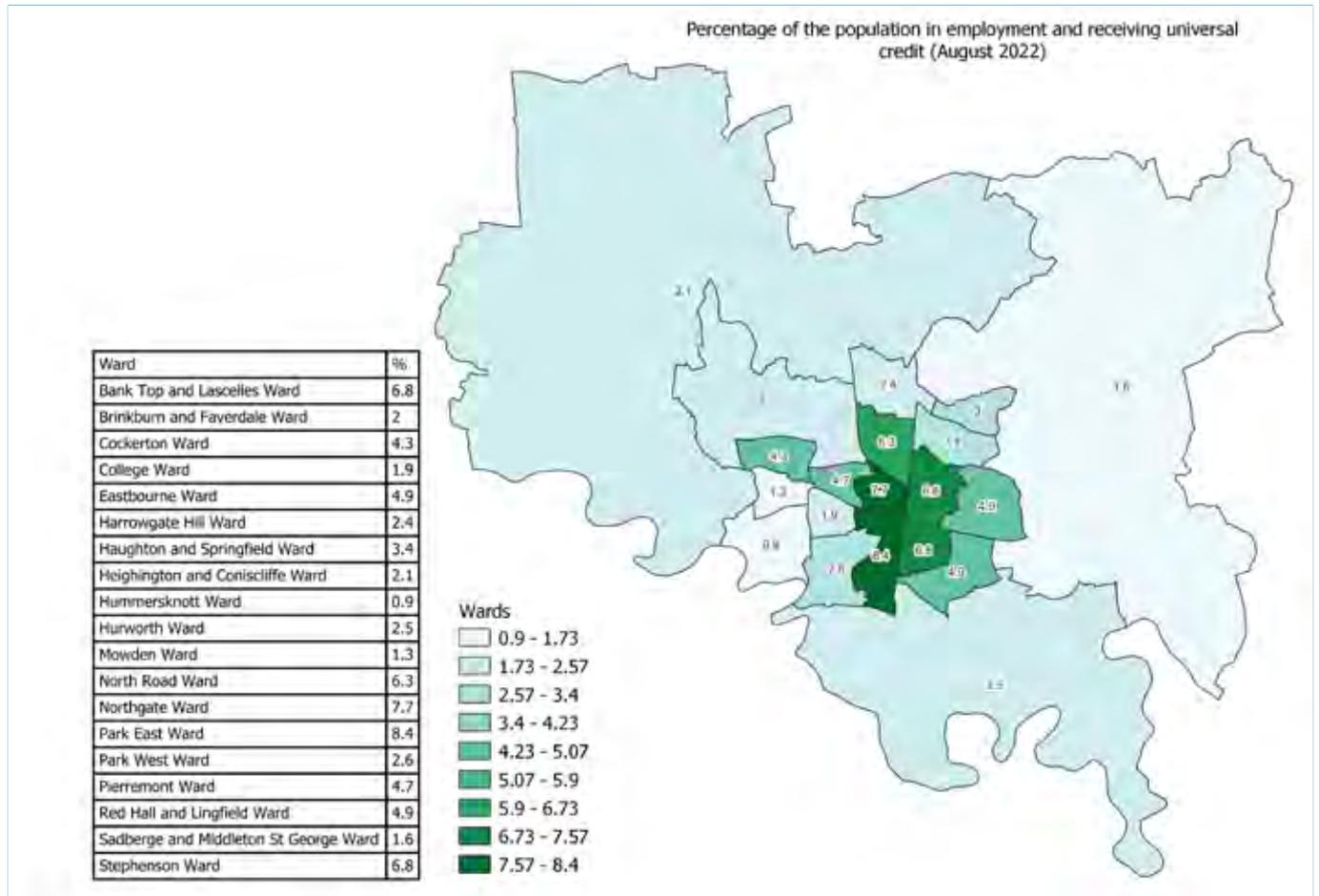
*a quality job is one which is secure, paid fairly and with good terms and conditions

Appendix 1 - Action Plan

| Priority | Area for Action | Actions | Lead | Outcomes |
|--|--|---|---|---|
| Quality Jobs | Attract employers to Darlington bringing a greater volume of quality jobs. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DBC Inward Investment Team is successfully attracting employers to Darlington bringing a greater volume of quality jobs. | Darlington Borough Council, Economic Growth | Increase in number of employers and better jobs available to residents. |
| | Supporting people to develop their employability skills to access jobs | <p>Provision of an adult learning facility</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An Adult learning facility is proposed as part of the Towns Fund initiative. The focus of this facility could be career development. The Adult Learning Budget could be used to provide tailored pre-employment courses which included input from local employers who were recruiting, ideally with guaranteed interviews on completion of the course. | Darlington Borough Council Darlington College | <p>Understanding of skill required for jobs</p> <p>Training providers provide the necessary courses to upskill residents.</p> <p>reduction in number of in work UC claimants.</p> |
| Access to opportunities for young people | 16-24 year old unemployed universal credit claimants | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a Youth Advisory Group – representative of the young people of Darlington Creation of a Youth Digital Hub – online support for young people: education, training, apprenticeships, employment opportunities, information, advice & guidance covering a variety of issues from mental health to debt management. Launch Youth Friendly Darlington Employer Charter - providing a framework to support, inspire and recognise organisations who are committed to providing quality opportunities to young people. | Youth Employment Task Group Youth Employment UK | Reduction in unemployed and in work Universal Credit claims for 16 to 24 year olds from deprived communities. |
| | Youth Friendly Darlington Contract | | | |
| Addressing Health Inequality | A good job | Roll out actions under priority <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Quality Jobs and Priority Access to opportunities for young people | | |
| | A good home | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Deliver Darlington Borough Council's Private Sector Housing Strategy Deliver the Government's A Fairer Private Rented Sector' | Darlington Borough Council, Private Sector Housing Team | Decent Homes Standard in the Private Rented Sector |
| | A good friend | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 'Living Well Programme' | Primary Care Network | TBC |
| | Integrated Care Strategy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addressing health in equalities at the heart of the Integrated Care Strategy | Health and Wellbeing Board | TBC |

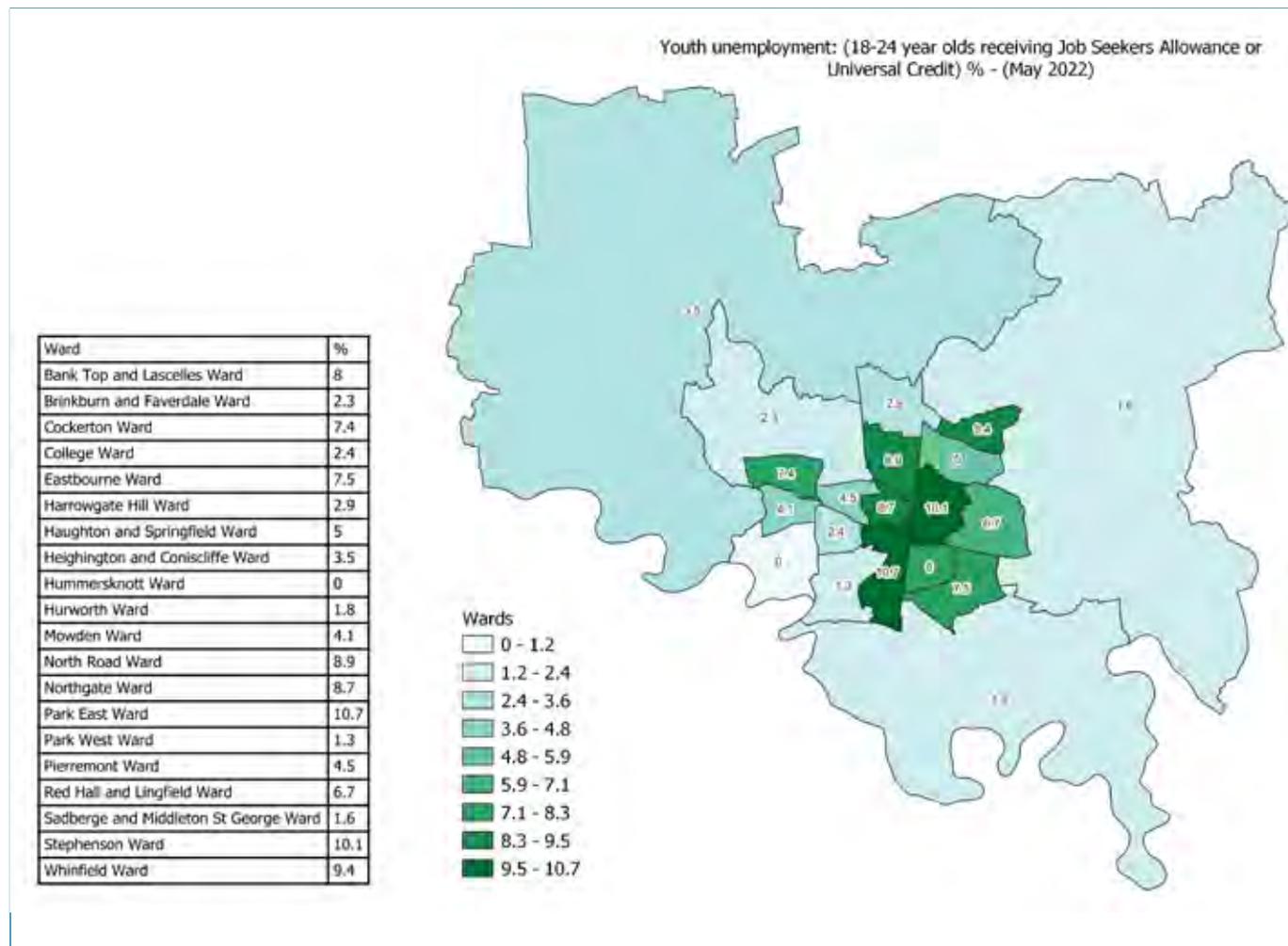
Appendix 2 - Heatmaps

Percentage of the population in employment & receiving universal credit (August 2022)



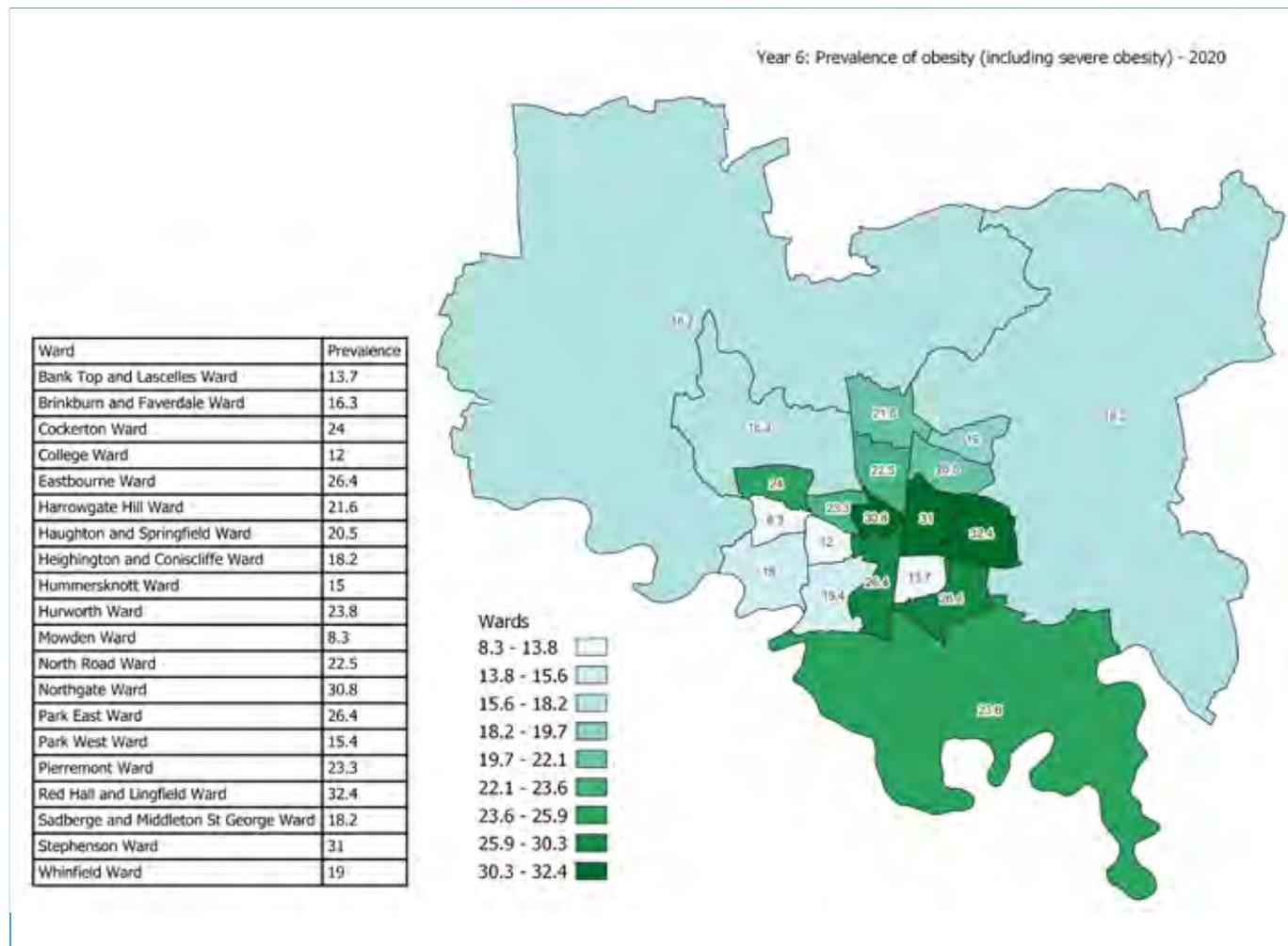
Appendix 2 - Heatmaps

Youth unemployment (May 2022)



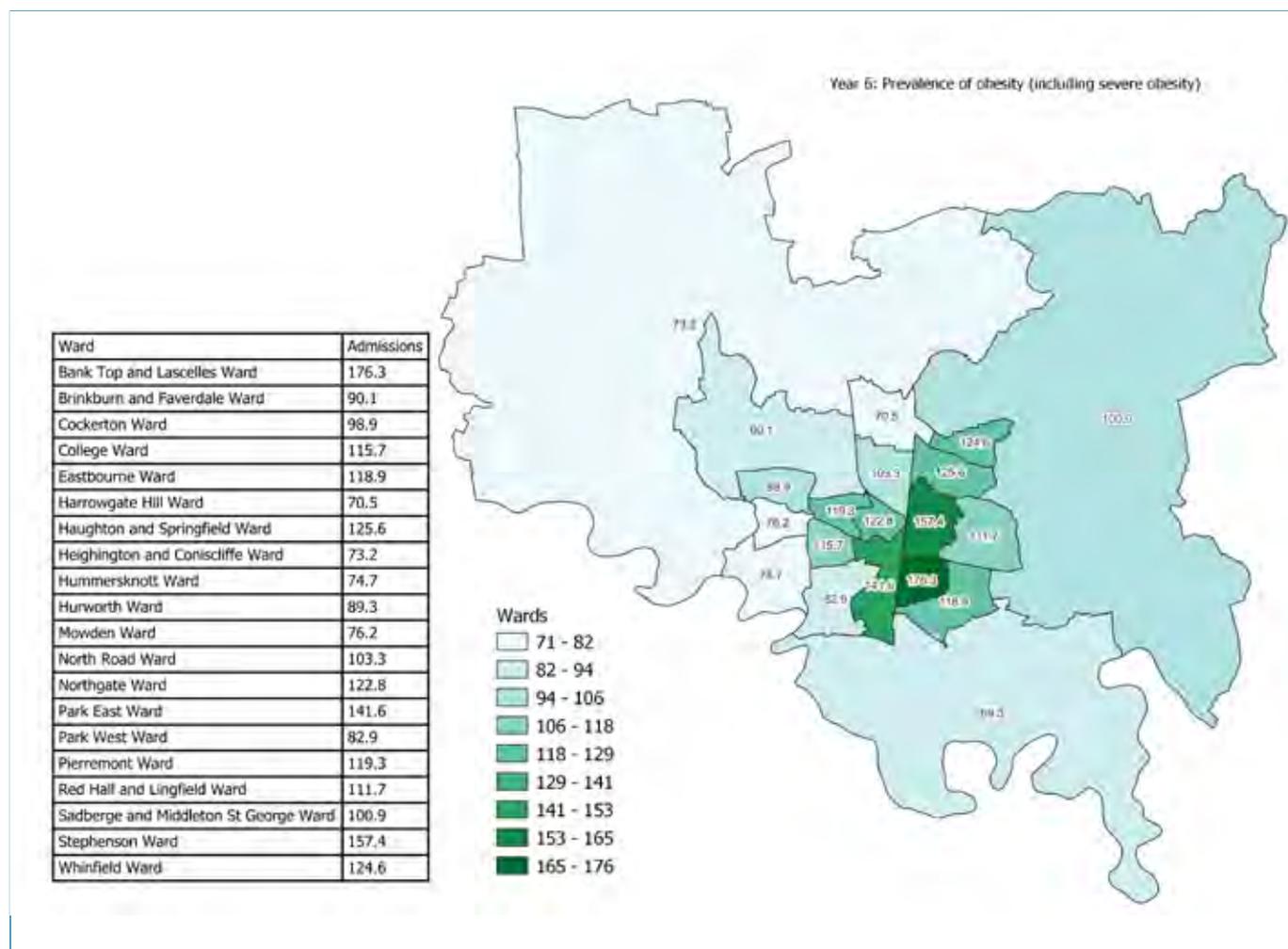
Appendix 2 - Heatmaps

Year 6 prevalence of obesity



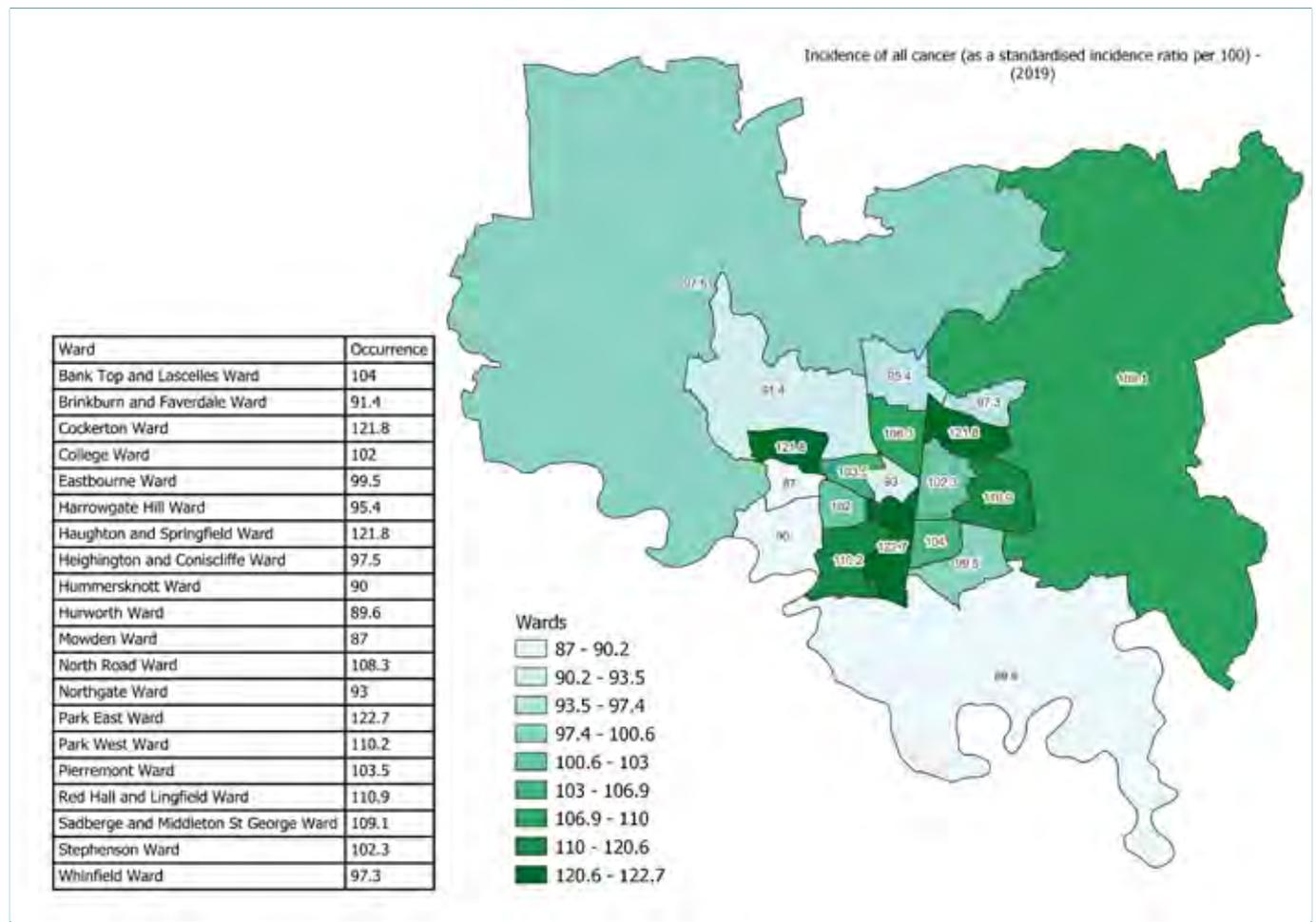
Appendix 2 - Heatmaps

Emergency hospital admissions for stroke 2019-2020



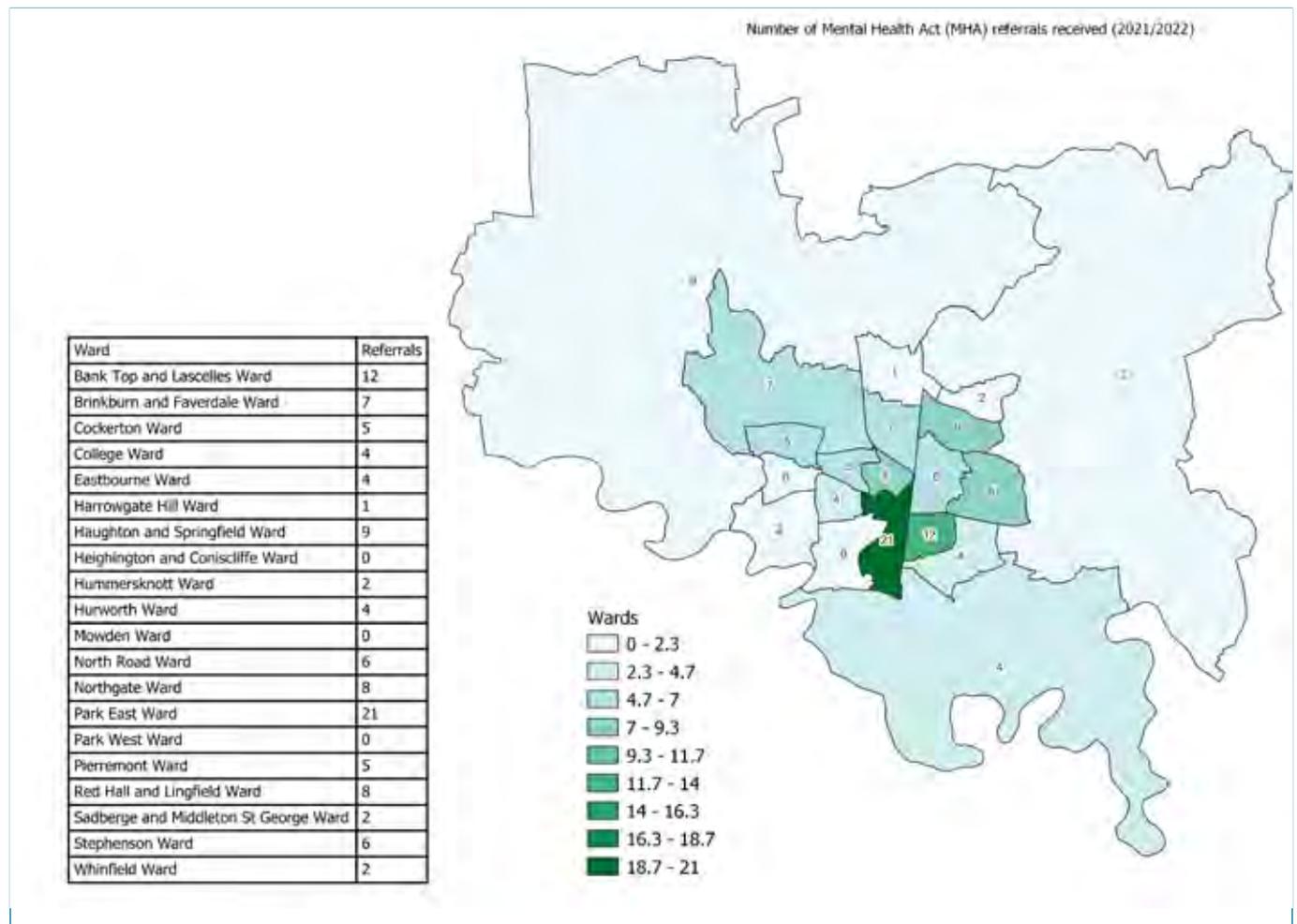
Appendix 2 - Heatmaps

Incidence of all cancer



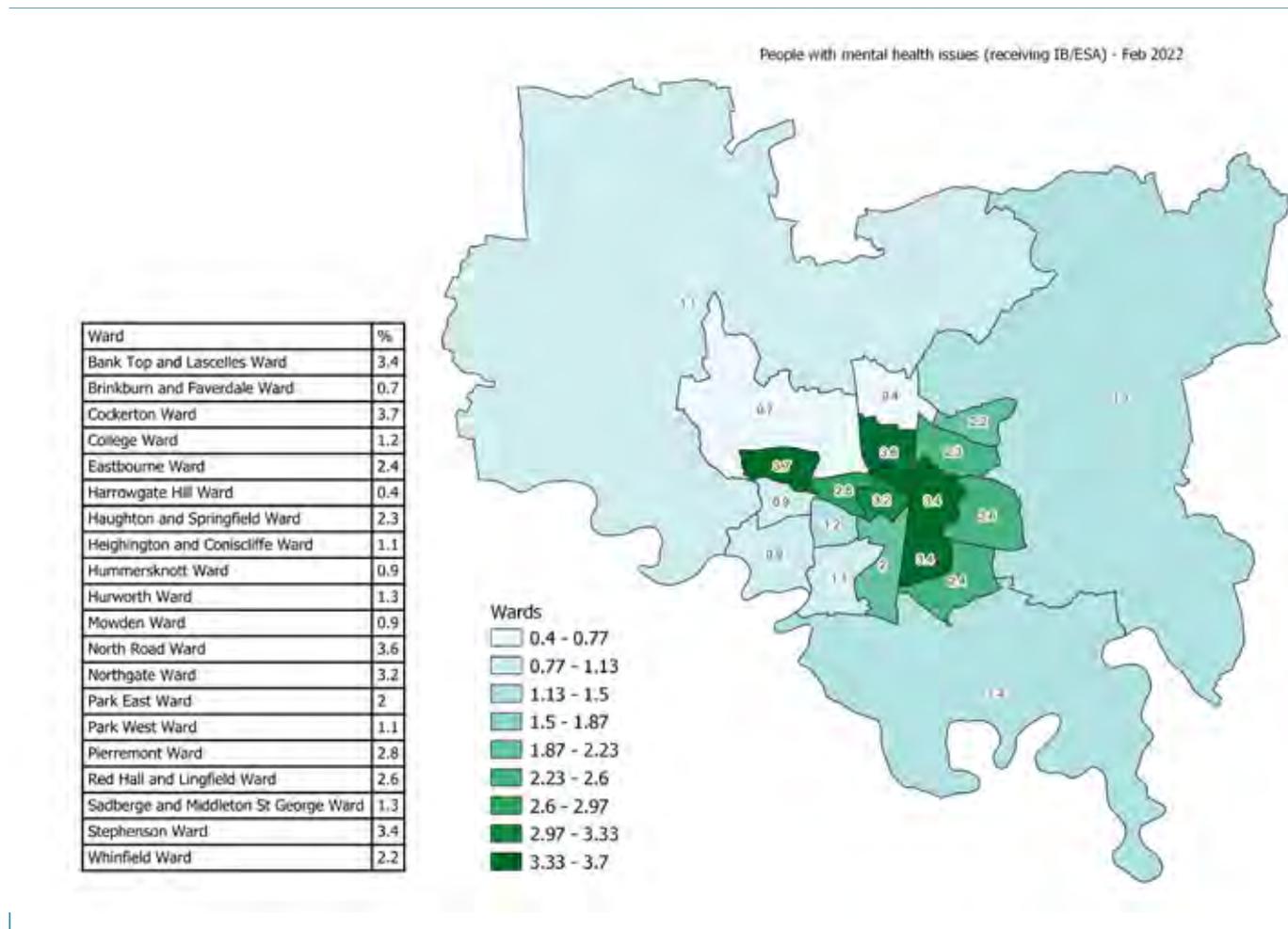
Appendix 2 - Heatmaps

Number of Mental Health Act MHA referrals received 2021-2022



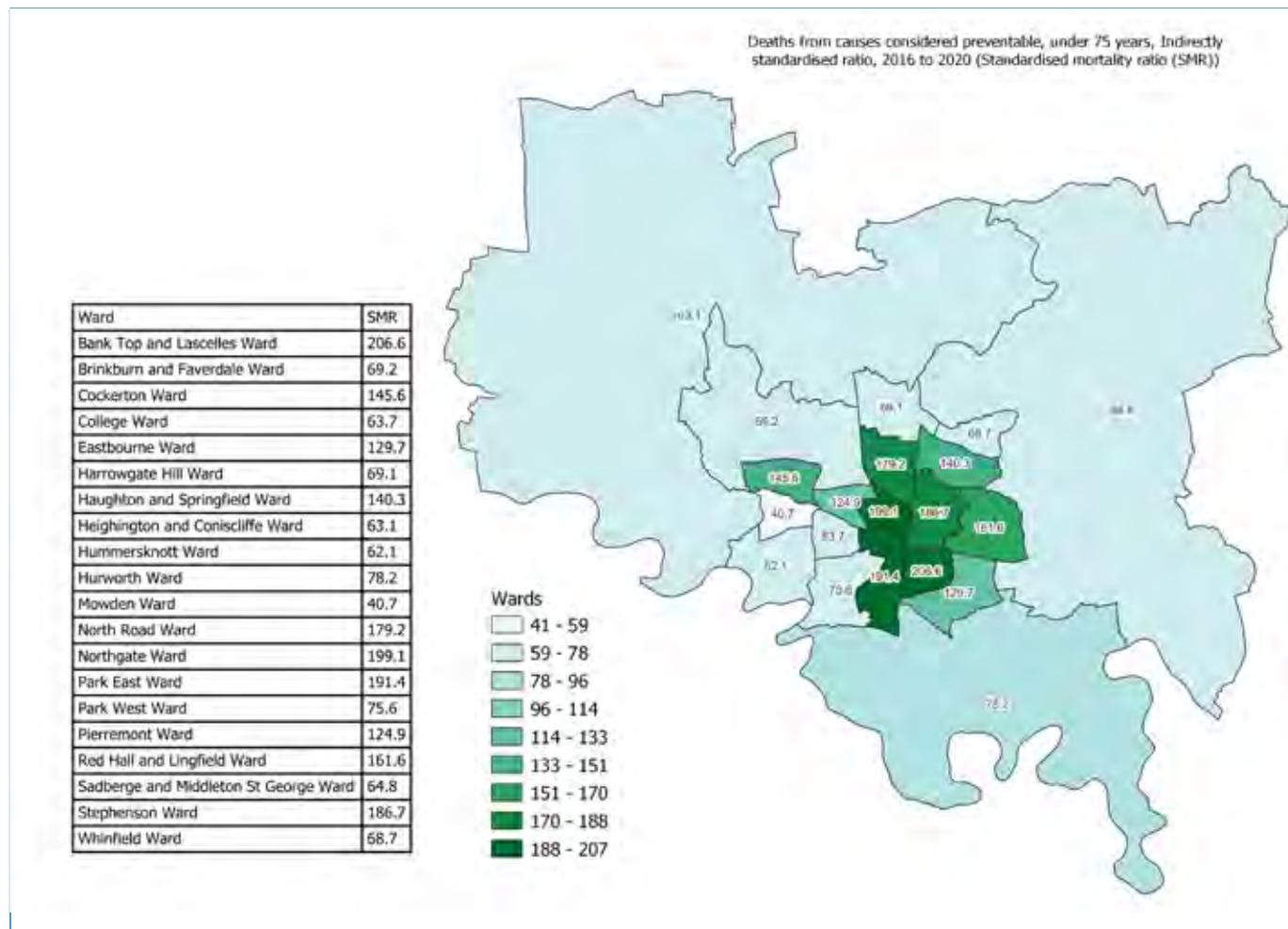
Appendix 2 - Heatmaps

People with Mental Health issues



Appendix 2 - Heatmaps

Deaths from causes considered preventable, under 75 years



Appendix 3 - Placed based Integrated Care Board Priorities

Place: Darlington Borough Council

Current Placed Based Priorities (top 10)

| | | | |
|---|---|----|---|
| 1 | Prevention – to enable people to flourish, with high levels of health and wellbeing and where possible to meet their own needs with support, using the assets and opportunities in the community. | 6 | Access mental health and wellbeing support where and when people of all ages need it, and ensure people can navigate through the system easily |
| 2 | Hospital Avoidance, Crisis Response and Timely Hospital Discharge support aligned with the Better Care Fund metrics, the Aging Well agenda and with a focus on Home First Services (capacity, demand and resource modelling – including Intermediate Care) | 7 | Health inequalities - enabling people to make healthier life choices including reducing obesity levels and diabetes prevention and reduced levels of smoking, alcohol and substance misuse |
| 3 | Enhanced Health in Care Homes – delivery of contractual requirements and priorities | 8 | Complex commissioning for Children and Young People |
| 4 | Carers support – aligned with Better Care Fund requirements and in partnership with Community and Voluntary Sector organisations | 9 | Good access to therapies for people of all ages, including SALT |
| 5 | A sustainable motivated and healthy workforce across care and support services | 10 | Further strengthen services for Children and Young People with SEND with a focus on Inclusion and Preparing for Adulthood |



