

PRESS RELEASE

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**Levelling Up Yorkshire and Humber:
health as the new wealth post-COVID**

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New report on 'health as the new wealth'

Health should be the new wealth, says a joint report from Yorkshire & Humber Academic Health Science Network (AHSN), the NHS Confederation and Yorkshire Universities launched today (Tuesday 14th July 2020).

The report's authors say bold actions are needed by local and national leadership to embed a renewed focus on health, tackle long-standing regional inequalities, and level up future investment in Yorkshire's health and life sciences assets as we begin living with and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

The report comes at a time when population health is at the forefront of many people's minds and economic investment is at a pivotal point.

Health inequalities undermine the region's economic potential and the North clearly lags behind the rest of the country - there is a two-year gap in life expectancy between the North and the South, with people in the North 20% more likely to die early¹.

Addressing health inequalities and focusing on health and wealth together is at the heart of the report. There is a tremendous opportunity in Yorkshire and the



Humber to use the area's unique assets as an economy to improve health and wellbeing, whilst contributing to inclusive economic growth: meaning a fairer society where everyone benefits. However, this hinges on greater regional investment from central government.

The potential for regional growth is matched by a clear need. The report highlights figures for regional infrastructure investment, regional growth of GVA (a measure which captures economic activity), and the region's health outcomes which fall far below the national averages:

- **The region's GVA per head lags behind the UK average by £6,129**
- **Life expectancy in Yorkshire and the Humber is 1 year 10 months lower than England's average**
- **Around 22% of Digital Health jobs in England and Wales are based in the Leeds City Region alone**
- **Yorkshire and the Humber is home to over 650 health companies compared to a total 350 in Oxford and Cambridge combined**

The report recognises the devastating impact the pandemic has had on the Northern economy, and says prompt action is even more urgent than ever if the population's mental health and wellbeing is to go unscathed, the economic aftershock of the pandemic is to be overcome, and the government is to deliver on its promise of 'levelling up' the North.

Exaggerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the economic output and employment in Yorkshire and the Humber is expected to decline by more than the UK average in 2020, and lag behind the UK average in 2021.

The report is also launched at a time when leaders across the NHS and social care are calling for a 'reset' to the way we plan, commission and deliver health and care, building on the rapid progress already made during the COVID-19 pandemic.

A key action for local leaders is how to 'level up' the North-South economic divide, alongside the stabilisation and reset of health and care as we live with and beyond



the COVID-19 pandemic. Last week, the IPPR called for life science investment to be prioritised in order to 'level-up' the country, and be better prepared for future pandemics and potential future spikes of COVID-19. This report only underlines and further supports these recommendations.

The launch of the report marks the start of a campaign to engage opinion formers and decision makers at all levels - local, regional and national – to raise awareness and develop prompt actions as set out in the report's recommendations.

Richard Stubbs, Chief Executive of the Yorkshire and Humber Academic Health Science Network (AHSN) said: "We have over 650 health and life sciences companies within Yorkshire and the Humber - more than Oxford and Cambridge combined. These institutions played a significant civic role before the pandemic, and COVID-19 has only accelerated this contribution. The regional joint working we have seen throughout the pandemic must continue as we begin to rebuild and recover. It means anchor institutions – hospitals, universities, local and combined authorities – all working together to engage communities and other partners, but also boosting the role they themselves play as large employers and significant contributors and influencers within the local economy."

The report's authors already work alongside other regional key players, such as the health and care partnerships (also known as Integrated Care Systems), universities and the Leeds Economic Regional Partnership. It includes several case studies on how these organisations have already begun working together and are aligning visions for the benefit of the region. This existing regional joint working and bringing together of unique perspectives by the organisations contributing to this report, demonstrates prime examples of the collaboration and partnership required to drive forward the report's recommendations.

Richard added: "Yorkshire and the Humber as a region does not punch its weight in terms of economic output and positive health outcomes. We have a real opportunity to utilise the region's assets and 'shake things up': creating a real difference across the region for the benefit of its population. We have already some made fantastic progress, however we desperately need additional



investment and support from central government to truly realise the region's potential."

Regionally, the authors say greater joint working is key to economic recovery, detailing a series of regional recommendations:

- Development bodies and large regional 'anchor' institutions should work together and align strategies to deliver inclusive growth
- Strengthen local supply chains for key health and public services
- Support jointly-funded posts, secondments or exchanges between sectors
- Establish observatories capable of sharing local data and cross-sector evidence to better inform public policy and interventions
- Anchor institutions should collaborate to coordinate and align their roles in transformative place-wide change

Prof Sir Chris Husbands, Vice-Chancellor of Sheffield Hallam University and Chair of Yorkshire Universities said: "Universities have the potential to play a major part within the levelling up agenda in the Yorkshire and Humber region. Across our university base we have a wealth of fantastic assets including teaching and research facilities, research and innovation activity, and have a wide range of diversity with international staff and students.

"Our universities are increasingly recognised as 'anchor institutions' and continually contribute to national and local industrial policies and strategies. We believe our regional universities need to play a key role in acting upon the recommendations within this report, ensuring we drive forward the much-needed transformative changes".

On a national level, the report recommends central Government should focus on five key steps as part of a sustained focus on health within its policy and decision making structure:

- Increase health research and development spending in Yorkshire and the Humber
- Empower local leaders with the tools to improve health outcomes and deliver inclusive growth and wider prosperity
- Give greater priority to wellbeing in investment decisions.
- Ensure health is included as an outcome in all economic development policies.
- Embed health as a priority for all government departments.



Niall Dickson, chief executive of the NHS Confederation, which represents organisations across the healthcare sector, said: “We believe there is a vital role for the health and care sector to play within the wider economic and social recovery of local places. Nationally, there is a need for government to adopt a health-in-all-policies approach and to see health and public services as an investment. Locally, we are supporting our leaders to understand that the impact, value and responsibility of their anchor organisations goes well beyond traditional NHS boundaries.

“We believe cross-sector collaboration and place-based partnerships - including between Integrated Care Systems, Local Enterprise Partnerships and Combined Authorities – will play a key role in realising the potential of our regions, such as Yorkshire and Humber, and in achieving improved population health and inclusive growth more generally.”

The ‘Levelling Up Yorkshire and Humber’ report builds on a major conference hosted by the partnership in late 2019. The conference started a dialogue on the role of health in inclusive economic growth, and this report marks the next step in that ongoing conversation.

The recommendations and findings of this report offer a real opportunity to contribute to, and shape, the ongoing debate and future economic decision-making process.

The region has already demonstrated its ability to align visions and work together throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, and the region’s partners are determined to make sure this continues as they rebuild and recover. However, greater support and investment from central government is key to maximising the region’s potential.

Editor’s notes

1. The full report ‘Levelling Up Yorkshire and Humber: health as the new wealth post-COVID’, can be read at <http://www.yhealth4growth.info/>
2. It underlines the message of the February 2020 Marmot report which said: ‘Health, as measured by life expectancy, has stopped improving, and health





inequalities are growing wider. Improvement in life expectancy, from the end of the 19th century on, started slowing dramatically in 2011. Now in parts of England, particularly among women in deprived communities and the north, life expectancy has fallen, and the years people spend in poor health might even be increasing—a shocking development.’

3. The 2019 conference report can be read here <https://www.yhahsn.org.uk/news/exploring-the-role-of-health-in-economic-and-inclusive-growth/>
4. Yorkshire & Humber Academic Health Science Network is one of 15 AHSNs set up by NHS England as its key innovation arm and acts as a bridge between health care providers, commissioners, academia and industry. By connecting these sectors, we help to build a pipeline of solutions for the NHS from research and product development through to implementation and commercialisation.
www.yhahsn.org.uk/
5. The NHS Confederation is the membership body that brings together and speaks on behalf of organisations that plan, commission and provide NHS services in England, Northern Ireland and Wales. We represent hospitals, community and mental health providers, ambulance trusts, primary care networks, clinical commissioning groups and integrated care systems.
www.nhsconfed.org
6. Yorkshire Universities is a partnership of 12 higher education institutions in Yorkshire and the Humber. They have a shared commitment to improve the economic and social prosperity and wellbeing of people and places in the region.
www.yorkshireuniversities.ac.uk

References

1. NHSA, 2018, The Northern Powerhouse in Health Research: A Science and Innovation Audit (<http://www.thenhsa.co.uk/2019/03/northern-powerhouse-in-health-science-research-science-and-innovation-audit-published/>).

