



Office of the
Deputy Prime Minister

Creating sustainable communities

English Regional Governance in 2004

Quantitative study of baseline data

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1. Benchmarking the English regions, pre-ERAs

Choosing indicators

- 1.1 The overall aims of the quantitative strand of the LTE work were to define an initial set of statistical measures – or indicators – on which data could be gathered through baseline activity and, as the study developed, were capable of being augmented or modified in order to align more directly with detailed ERA objectives as they emerged. In developing the initial list of indicators we recognised that, even assuming that one or more regions would move to the establishment of an ERA during the period relevant to the LTE study, it was always likely that others would not. For this reason, we felt it was important to focus primarily on indicators that would be relevant to the package of resources and responsibilities that would have been entrusted to ERAs, as set out in Chapter 4 of Your Region, Your Choice and the draft Regional Assemblies Bill, but to include others relating to the Government’s plans to strengthen regional governance in all regions, as described in Chapter 2 of the White Paper.
- 1.2 This approach had three main advantages. First, it provided a basis of comparison between regions that were running at different speeds in terms of regionalising processes. (We avoided assuming that ‘non-ERA regions’ would be effectively be ‘control areas’ for the study as it was clear that the fact of an ERA’s existence in one or more regions would inevitably have an affect within regions that lacked an ERA) Second, subject to appropriate indicators being available, it allowed a focus not only upon issues related to potential ERA activity but also upon some of the broader and less policy area-specific changes that an ERA might have been able to bring about (for example in terms of building public interest and support, improving engagement with stakeholders and establishing credibility with existing regional agencies). Third, it enabled the quantitative data gathering programme, at least in principle, to feed not just into the summative evaluation, which would have been primarily concerned with ERA impacts, but also into the formative evaluation, which would have focused more upon the processes of regional governance and the role of ERAs within them.
- 1.3 The quantitative strand of the evaluation framework that emerged from these requirements recognised explicitly that ERAs were set, at least in the short term, to be empowered with limited and, in many cases, somewhat indirect policy instruments with which to bring about change. The range of ‘influencing mechanisms’ promised to future ERAs that was set out in the White Paper are summarised in the table, below.

Functions and influencing mechanisms of ERAs	
Functions & sponsor Regional deliverer(s), key strategy document(s)	Mechanism for ERA influence
Economic development (DTI) RDAs Regional Economic Strategy	RDAs will retain operational independence and responsibility for RESs but ERAs will take over financial control of RDAs and have effective veto power over RESs. ERA will appoint the Chair and Board members of RDAs (subject to 50% of them having 'had experience of running a business').
Business support (DTI) SBS (national, regional teams) 45 Business Link contractors Training and skills (DfEE) LSC (national), LSCs (sub-regional) FRESAs (Frameworks for Regional Employment and Skills Action)	ERAs and RDAs to be consulted on SBS (nat.) 3-year strategy and annual Business Plan. SBS to have regard for RES. SBS to consult ERAs on the criteria to be used for new Business Link contracts and on the bids received. ERAs to play a role in monitoring the performance of Bus. Link contractors. ERA to work closely w/SBS , others on SME development. Govt to ensure ERAs are involved in devt. of bus. support policy (e.g. by being consulted on HEIF bids). ERAs to draw up FRESAs, setting out regional priorities. ERAs to appoint 2 members of each LSC board (but ensuring at least 1 has a business background) and to be consulted on other appointments. LSC nationally to consult ERAs on its guidance to local LSCs. Local LSCs to have regard for regional strategies and to consult the relevant ERA on its plans.
European programmes Regional Co-ordination Unit, GORs	ERAs to take over GOR roles on structural funds for any structural fund expenditure in future programming periods, e.g. to Chair the Monitoring Committee, play a key role in producing SPDs and lead in negotiations with the EC on SPDs.
Planning (ODPM) GORs (for Regional Planning Guidance) Regional Assemblies (for Regional Spatial Strategies)	ERAs to take over responsibility for preparing and issuing Regional Spatial Strategies and to be able to request the SoS use his/her call-in power to determine strategic planning applications.
Housing (ODPM) GORs/Housing Corp., now Regional Housing Boards	ERA to prepare and publish a regional housing strategy and to allocate housing capital funding to RSLs, LAs.
Transport (DTp) GORs, Highways Agency, Strategic Rail Authority	ERA to be responsible for a Regional Transport Strategy, to advise Govt. on local scheme funding and their consistency with regional strategies, to propose schemes of regional importance to the Highways Agency and the Strategic Rail Authority, to allocate Rail Passenger Partnership grants and be consulted by national transport infrastructure providers.

Functions and influencing mechanisms of ERAs	
Functions & sponsor Regional deliverer(s), key strategy document(s)	Mechanism for ERA influence
Arts, culture, tourism (DCMS) Arts Council, regional Arts Councils, Sport England, English Heritage, Lottery distribution co.)	ERAs to fund, sponsor and lead Regional Cultural Consortia which will draw up regional cultural strategies for agreement with and publication by the ERA. Govt. to devolve arts and sports functions which 'are regional in character' in a way that protects strategic national priorities. ERA to fund/sponsor regional tourism programmes, non-national museums, single regional agencies for museums, libraries and archives, and upkeep of English Heritage sites. Subject to the agreement of the Lottery distribution company, ERAs to appoint members to lottery regional awards committees and be key consultees on the company's strategic plans.
Public health GORs/Regional Directors of Public Health	ERAs to have a duty to promote public health and, working with regional directors, to support the development and implementation of regional health improvement strategies. To appoint the RD of Public Health as the ERA's health adviser.
Rural policy (DEFRA) Rural Development Service, Countryside Commission	ERAs to be responsible for delivering rural regeneration programmes, to actively engage with regional Rural Affairs Forums, be a lead partner in implementing the regional elements of the England Rural Development Programme and to have responsibility for ensuring rural issues are addressed in regional strategies.
Environment (DEFRA)	ERAs to make appointments to the Environment Agency's regional committees, to prepare and implement a regional strategy for biodiversity, to prepare and oversee implementation of the waste element of regional spatial strategies and be consulted by/consult Environment Agency, Countryside Agency, English Nature on mutual strategy development.
Crime reduction (Home Office/ODPM)	ERAs to be consulted on local Crime and Disorder Partnership strategies.
Civil contingency planning GORs	ERA to co-ordinate , with GORs.

- 1.4 The implication, for the LTE study, of this complex set of often indirect mechanisms of influence that ERAs would have inherited is that it would not have been reasonable to expect that the creation of ERAs *per se* would necessarily have led to a rapid turnaround in entrenched problems such as population decline, low educational achievement, under-employment and associated evidence of deprivation. It is worth remembering that local authorities – which command far more expenditure per head than was envisaged for ERAs – are evaluated primarily in terms of their administrative *processes* rather than their impacts upon aspects of the well-being of their areas' residents and 'users'. Yet whilst it would have been implausible to attribute seminal changes occurring in regions to the activities of ERAs, major concerns such as economic growth still needed to be monitored as an essential part of the context which led to their development. Summative indicators would have needed to cover these critical contextual issues, but in so doing the evaluation would not have suggested that any ERAs that did do not reverse deep-seated problems were 'failing' in any simple sense.
- 1.5 Similarly, whilst it may have seemed self-evident that the quantitative evaluation would take whole regions as its primary objects of interest, this would not in fact always have been appropriate. For example, some rural issues were to be the responsibility of ERAs and so the most relevant evaluation indicators in these cases were likely to refer to what is happening in a region's rural areas only. Other indicators related to ERA performance would also have focused on only some parts of each region: in particular, a key measure of social exclusion such as the employment rate would need to be monitored by comparing the gap between a region's least well-off areas and the regional average.
- 1.6 In addition to key strategic issues such as these, more technical issues affected the quantitative strand of the evaluation. For example, it was clear that:
 - Data needed to be collected on each region individually so that the analyses would be robust to a region-by-region comparison. (This effectively ruled out data collected for and in some regions but not others).
 - The indicators could not *presume* that the region of interest is lagging behind the national average, otherwise they could not be validly used if an ERA was introduced in a more prosperous region, and
 - The emphasis on monitoring change in regions' prospects implied that most indicators would require a data source that was updated at least every one or two years *and* had been available for several years in the past, so that future trends could be bench-marked against recent experience.
- 1.7 As a result we avoided, wherever possible, recommending that additional, bespoke data collection was needed in order to generate indicators. In relation to the summative indicators, there was no shortage of existing indicators for monitoring trends in areas and the impact of policies upon them. The challenge, therefore, was to select indicators that collectively provided an 'overview' of progress in addressing quality of life difference between regions related to the aspirations for, and powers and resources due to be entrusted to, ERAs. The key policy domains, along with an indication of an ERAs particular concerns and

responsibilities, are summarised in the table below, along with an *other* category that includes the additional policy concerns mentioned in Chapter 4 of the White Paper.

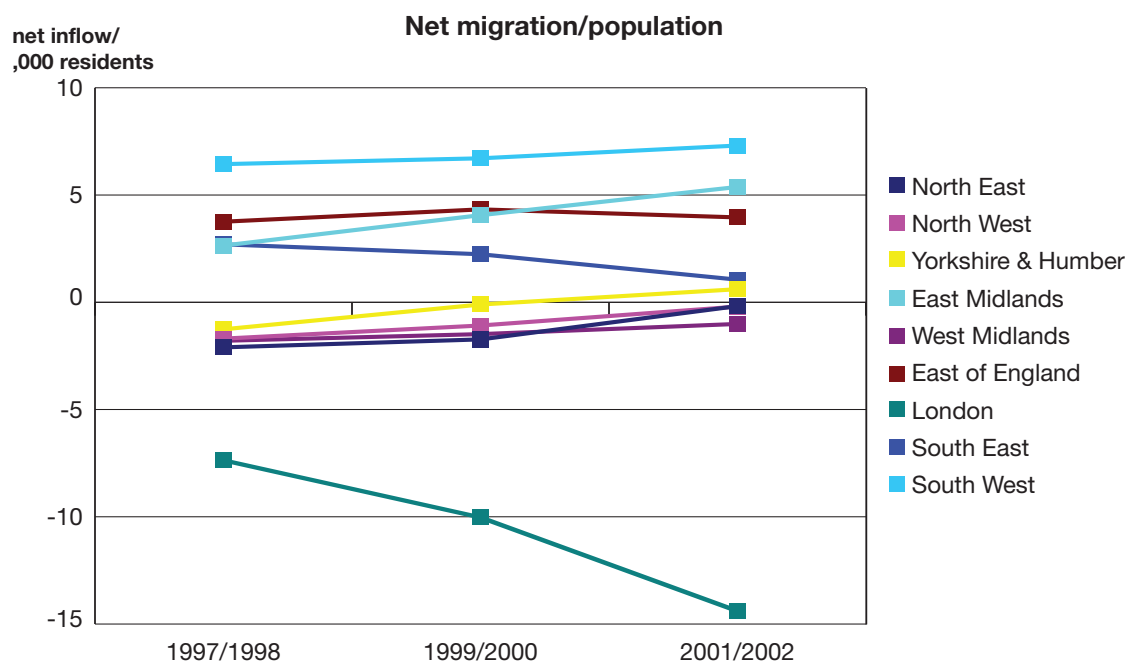
Regional Strategies and ERA Policy Concerns		
Regional Strategy domains	ERA concerns	Policy responsibilities
Economic development	Inward investment Productivity Enterprise	RDA EU structural funds
Skills & employment	Access to job opportunities Skills	
Spatial planning	Regeneration Land use	Market Towns initiative Rural proofing
Transport	Congestion Public transport	
Housing	Housing market Social housing	Housing capital investment
Health improvement	Public health Health improvement	
Culture	Access to cultural facilities Access to sporting facilities Tourist industry	
Sustainable development	Biodiversity Waste management	(Possibly) flood defence
Other *	Crime reduction Drugs Community cohesion Civil contingency planning	

1.8 By comparison, quantitative indicators for the formative element of the evaluation were less easy to define, beyond some self-evident data on the level of turnout for ERA referenda and in subsequent ERA elections, had there been any. We considered indirect evidence of civic engagement in the political process through, for example, turnout in local authority elections and the proportion of adults registered to vote in them but rejected them on the basis that datasets were not reliable or consistent over time and would in any case be difficult to link to the activities and perceived successes of ERAs.

2. Analysis

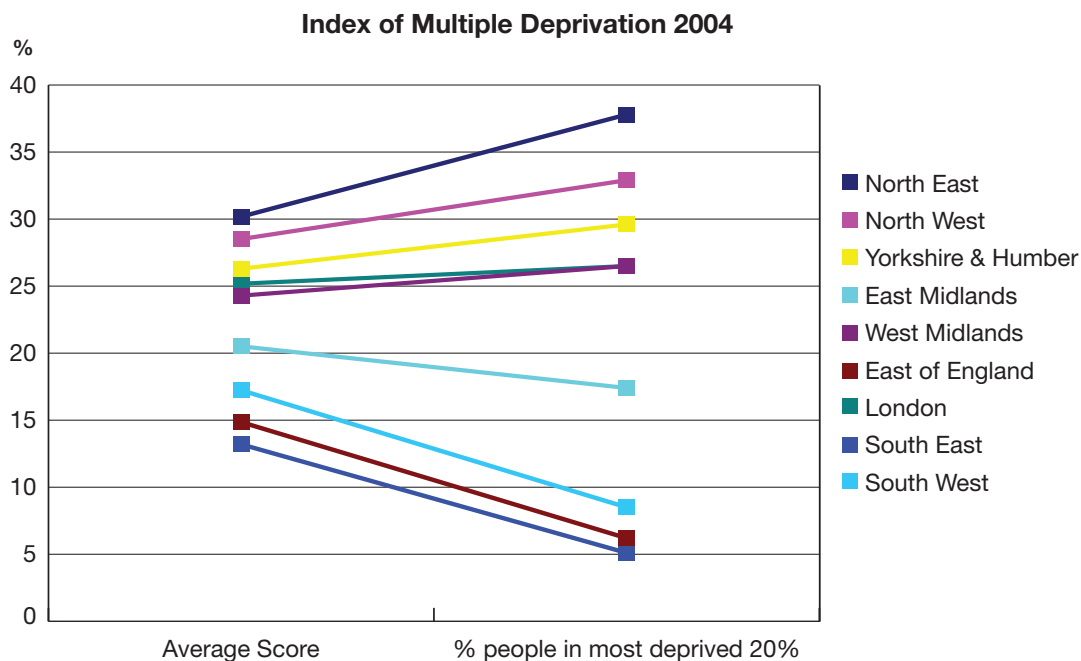
2.1 The initial quantitative data gathering exercise resulted in the choice of a basket of indicators that were seen as the most robust, accessible and consistent measures available of (a) key contextual changes and (b) more specific variations in the broad environments in which ERAs were expected to be active. The results of our initial analysis are outlined below.

2.2 The most basic contextual indicator, we felt, was that a region should not be losing a large proportion of its population through migration. There is certainly much evidence that sustained net out-migration is usually part of a downward spiral which sees a region's relative unattractiveness reinforced by the loss of people who might have helped it to thrive in future. Hence the indicator here was ***the net inflow of migrants per thousand of the resident population***. As can be seen from the chart below, the three regions that were originally scheduled to stage ERA referendums have tended to experience the highest levels of net out-migration even though in more recent years this has moderated. The picture is probably less positive than this implies, because the chart also shows that the most significant recent change has been the accelerating net out-migration from London: most of the changes to northern regions' migration patterns is due to the increasing difficulty of moving south due to high house prices (and competition for jobs from international migrants who are not included in this dataset), and so the slightly improving trend shown here probably does not reflect major improvements in northern regions' relative attractiveness in recent years.



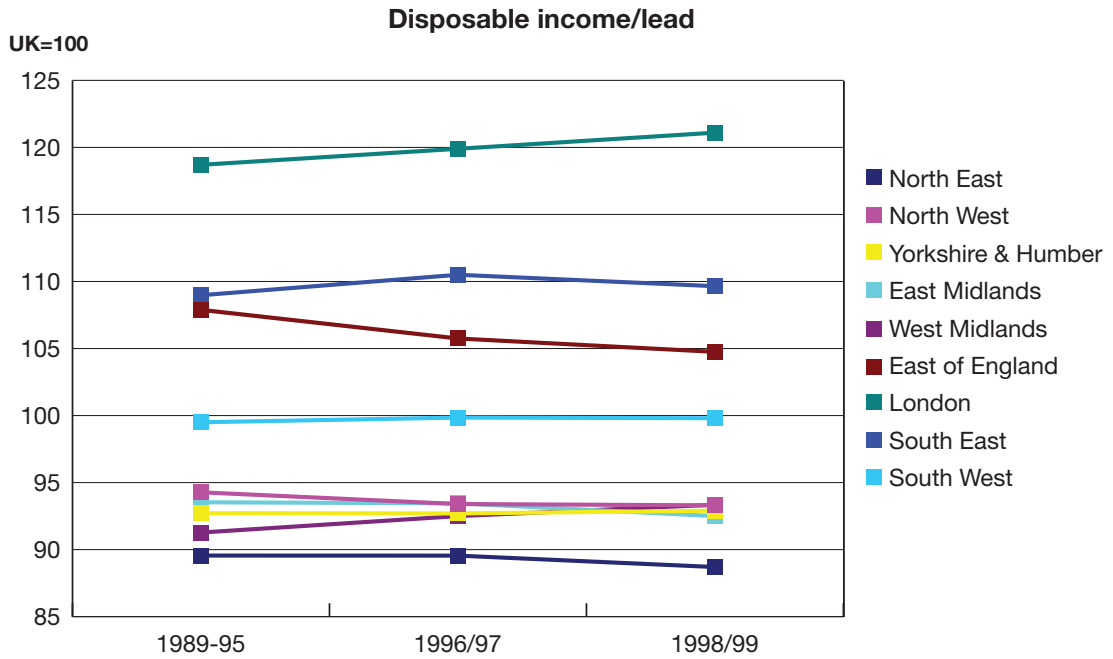
Source: Office for National Statistics (Population Trends: internal migration); CURDS calculation

2.3 Reinforcing the picture painted by migration trends is evidence on deprivation levels which remain a very basic quality of life concern within the northern regions. In the design of the recent revision of the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), one aim was that updating of the IMD would take place within a few tiers that would be comparable across a number of scales (including regions). Whilst it is relatively simple to calculate average IMD scores for each region, however, this gives as much weight to the difference between slightly and very affluent areas as it does to the difference between slightly and very deprived areas. The indicator we chose here, therefore, was ***the % of the population living in the most deprived 20% of areas in England*** which provided a sharper focus upon the least well-off communities. The chart below shows that this measure does not materially alter the relative positions of regions, but does change the scale of difference between their values. In particular, the region with the highest levels of deprivation (North East) has an average IMD score which is just over twice that of the least deprived (South East), whereas there is a sevenfold difference between the two regions' values on the indicator we used. Once again, the data show increasing divergence between the northern regions and their more affluent southern counterparts.



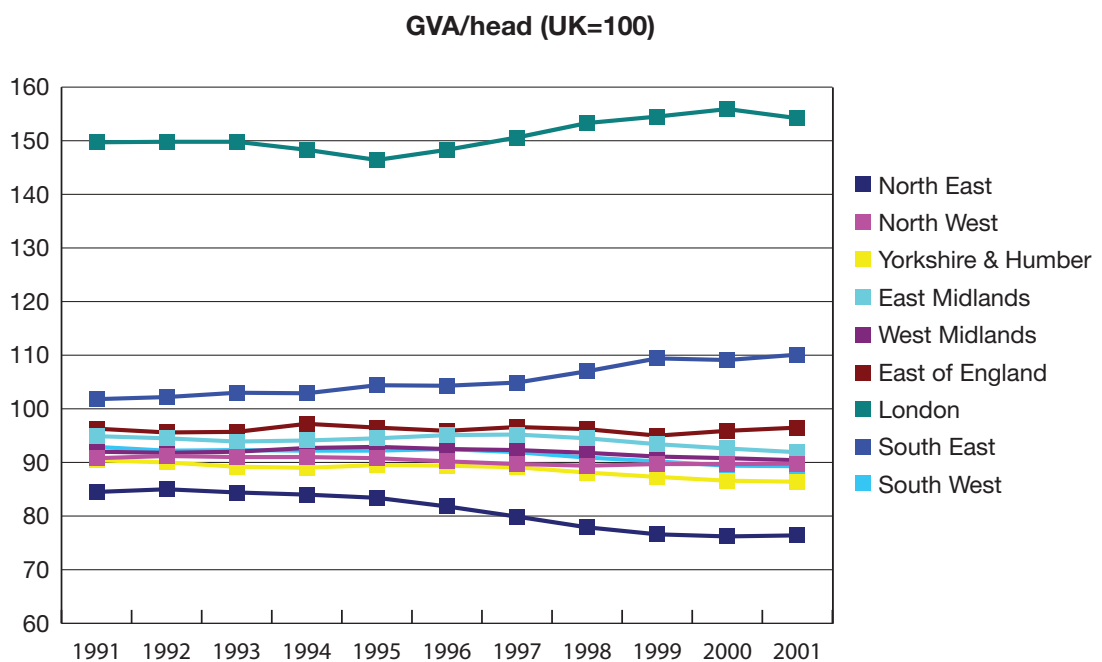
Source: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (Indices of Deprivation 2004)

2.4 A third ‘overview’ indicator does seek to reflect the broader picture of the whole region’s population and its circumstances. This is the ***average disposable income per head***, a statistic cited by HM Treasury as a measure which, for the household sector, complements its focus on the value added in the economy. The chart below reveals that on this indicator the performance of the three northern regions is closely matched by the two midlands regions and that all five trail substantially behind the national average and the performance of southern regions.



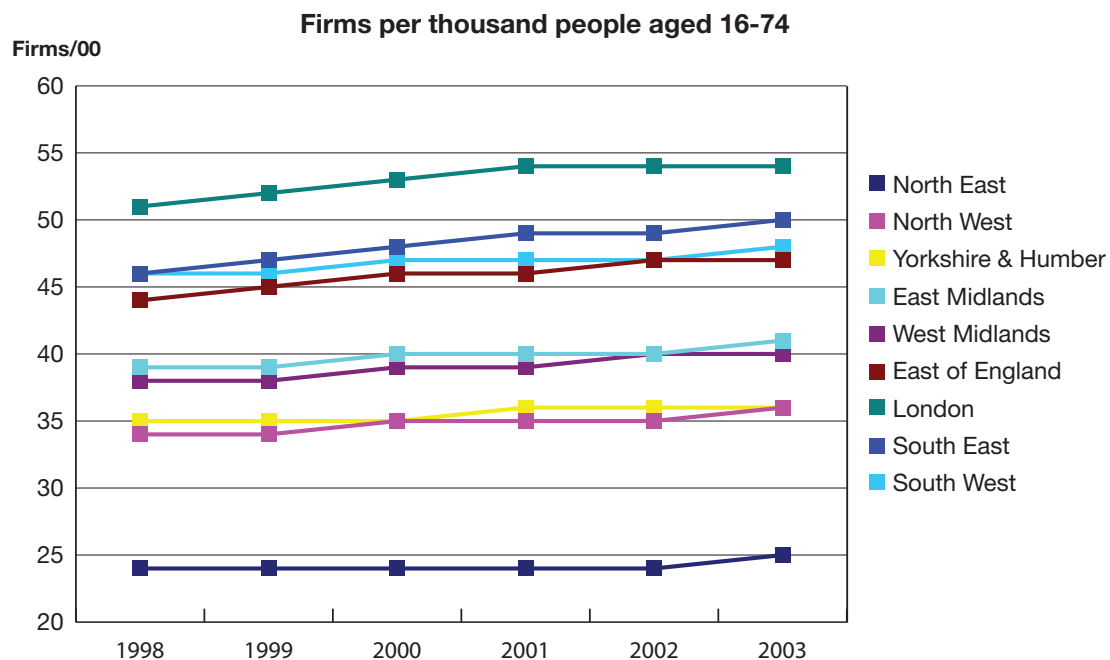
Source: Office for National Statistics (Estimated Household Income)

2.5 It is not necessary to shift attention away from basic economic issues as attention turns to indicators that focus more specifically upon themes in which ERAs would have had distinct policy concerns. This is because the White Paper and the draft Regional Assemblies Bill gave particular prominence to disparities in regional economic growth. Productivity measures are also emphasised by government as a key PSA target in this regard. Although there are considerable debates over the best way of measuring productivity, the core indicator chosen here was *productivity measured in terms of relative GVA per head*, not least because this is a statistic frequently cited in official statistical analyses. The chart below shows that the relative position of the three northern regions worsened during the latter part of the 1990s, with subsequent values showing a levelling off but no significant narrowing of this north-south divide in relative terms.



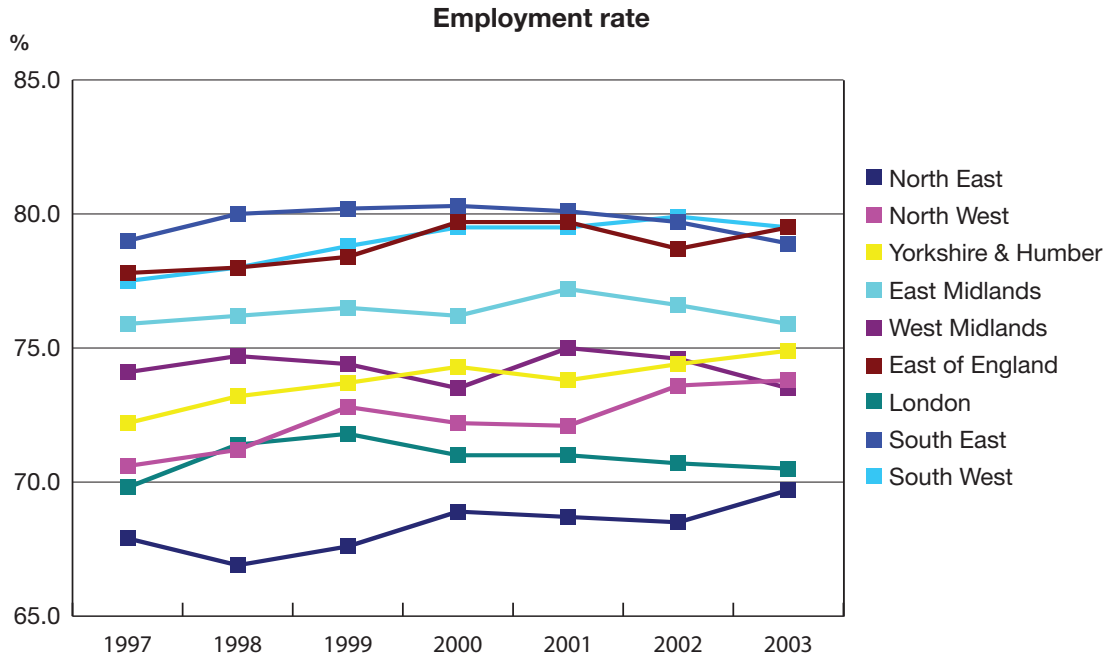
Source: Office for National Statistics (Regional GVA Estimates)

2.6 Annex D of the White Paper summarised target regimes for existing Regional Strategies and showed that Regional Economic Strategies call for region-specific targets. In principle this approach was very amenable to a future regime in which ERAs may have been able to 'bend' policies and programmes to better meet regions' differing needs, but it clearly did not help with selecting standard indicators for comparative evaluation. For the present, the Treasury continues to see the level of enterprise as critical to regional disparities and so any ERA, particularly in northern regions, would certainly have sought to increase firm formation and/or survival rates in its region as a key part of its strategy for economic growth. Hence a vital indicator here must be ***the number of registered businesses per thousand people or working age*** and this is a measure which builds directly on current targets set for RDAs. The chart below reveals that this indicator suggests that the three referendum regions are lagging behind other parts of the country in their enterprise growth although, of course, it makes no allowance for the factors which make successful enterprise more difficult in relatively deprived regions.



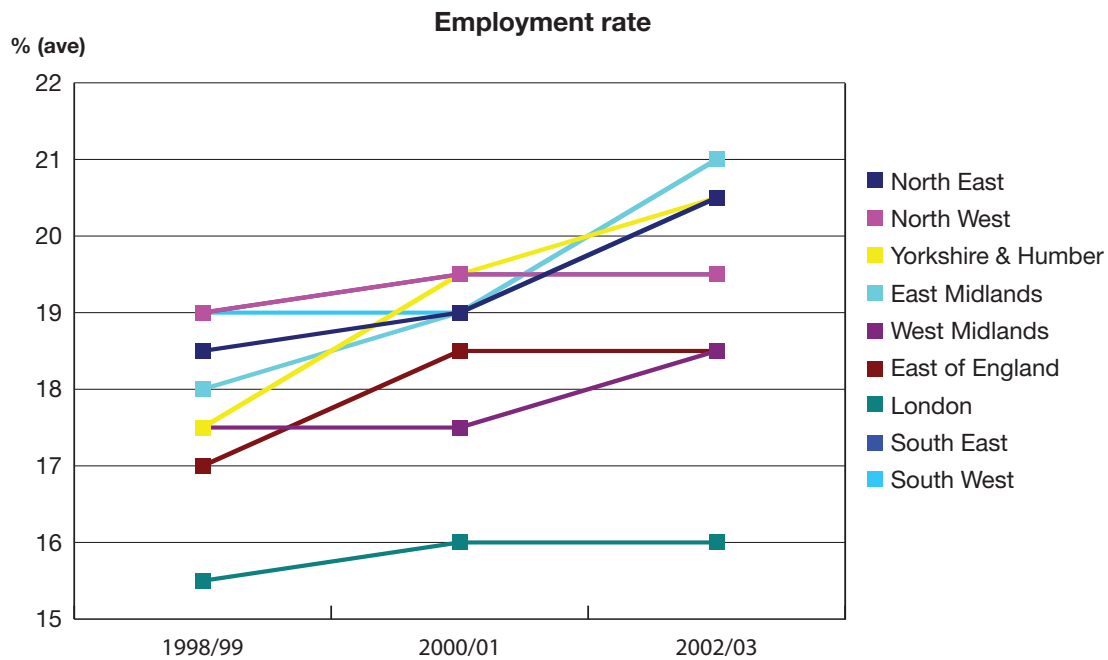
Source: Small Business Service (VAT Statistics); CURDS calculations

2.7 Beyond productivity and enterprise indicators, the measure of underlying economic conditions which the government places most emphasis upon is the employment rate, or ***the % of working age people who are in work***. (This has recently supplanted unemployment rates as the default measure of labour market conditions). Recent regional employment rates (shown below) suggest that this is one indicator on which the northern regions, whilst still exhibiting lower values than the southern regions (bar London) are at least showing signs of converging on the higher values in the south, whilst London is the 'region' with the least positive trend.



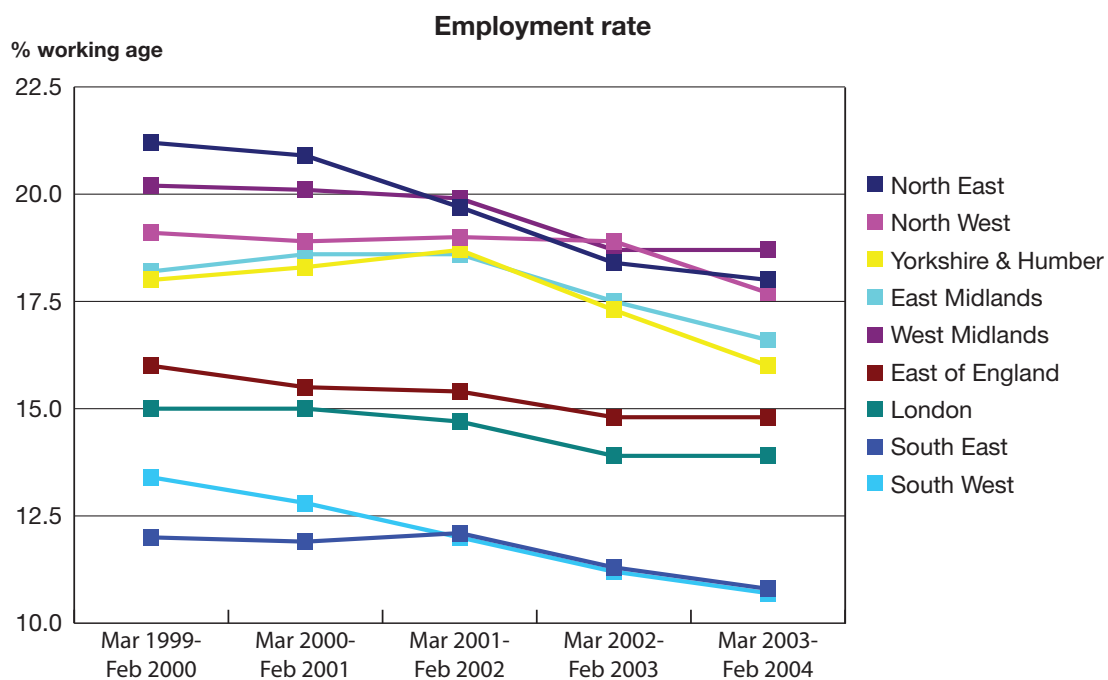
Source: Regional Co-ordination Unit (Regional Outcome Indicators; Labour Force Survey)

2.8 Although the Government specifically excluded education from within ERAs' remits, the skills agenda remains a very important component of broader economic development strategies which were central to the LTE's main concerns. The leading measure here is the progress of regions towards National Learning targets, and the most robust statistics for year-on-year monitoring cover labour supply in general, rather than a narrow emphasis on skill shortages or recently gained qualifications. The indicator of *the % working age people qualifications at NVQ level 3* provides directly relevant information on progress towards 'learning region' targets (illustrated below). The evidence here of regional contrasts is not so clear-cut for two reasons. The technical reason is that the dataset is heavily rounded so, for example, the North West has exactly the same values as the South East and the result is that the two regions' trends cannot both be seen on the chart. This example also illustrates the more important feature of this dataset, which is that the northern regions do not perform particularly poorly on this indicator, thereby suggesting that labour demand, as opposed to labour supply, is a more important explanation for divergences in regional economic prospects and performance.



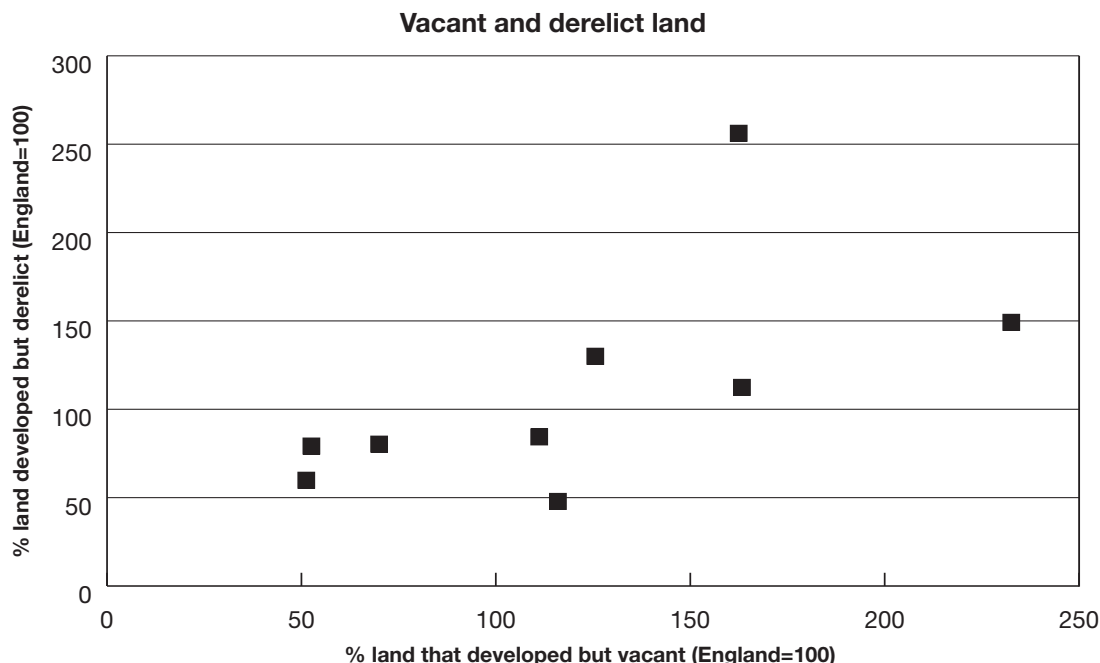
Source: Regional Co-ordination Unit (Regional Outcome Indicators; Labour Force Survey)

2.9 Whilst the ‘upper end’ of the labour force, reflected in higher NVQ level qualifications, shows less of a north-south regional divide, there remain policy concerns about the regional dimension to Britain’s relatively high proportion workers who have few if any formal qualifications. The indicator of *the % working age people with no qualifications* can thus be seen as complementary to the previous measure. The recent trends on this measure are shown in the chart below and a north-south divide is fairly evident with, once again, the midland regions more similar to the northern England than the south. There are some limited signs of convergence with some lagging regions showing more rapid progress but the remaining gulf provides plenty of justification for suggesting that this indicator reflects a key issue which any ERA in the north would have needed to address.



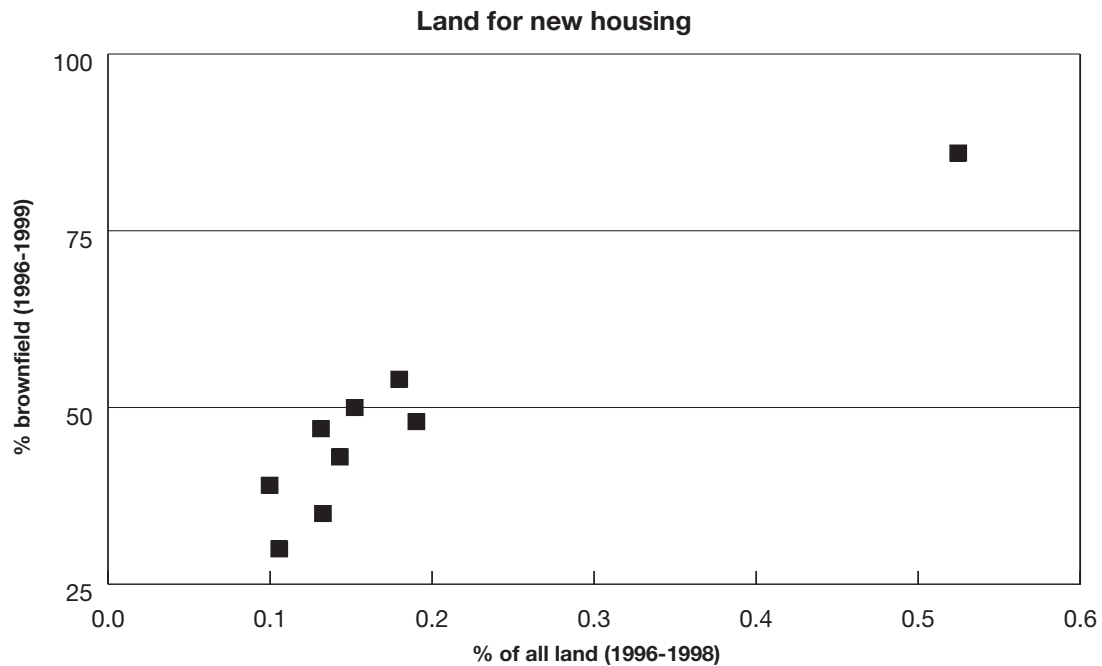
Source: Office for National Statistics (Nomis; Labour Force Survey)

2.10 The physical aspects of regeneration pose greater problems due to data limitations. Regional editions of the Quality of Life Counts collate a number of indicators, of which *the extent of derelict land* relates directly to concerns that ERAs would have had. Vacant land is another indicator of a lack of effective demand, and the chart below shows that the two measures find the same regions with high values: London joins the three referendum regions in having values above the national average (100) on both these measures.



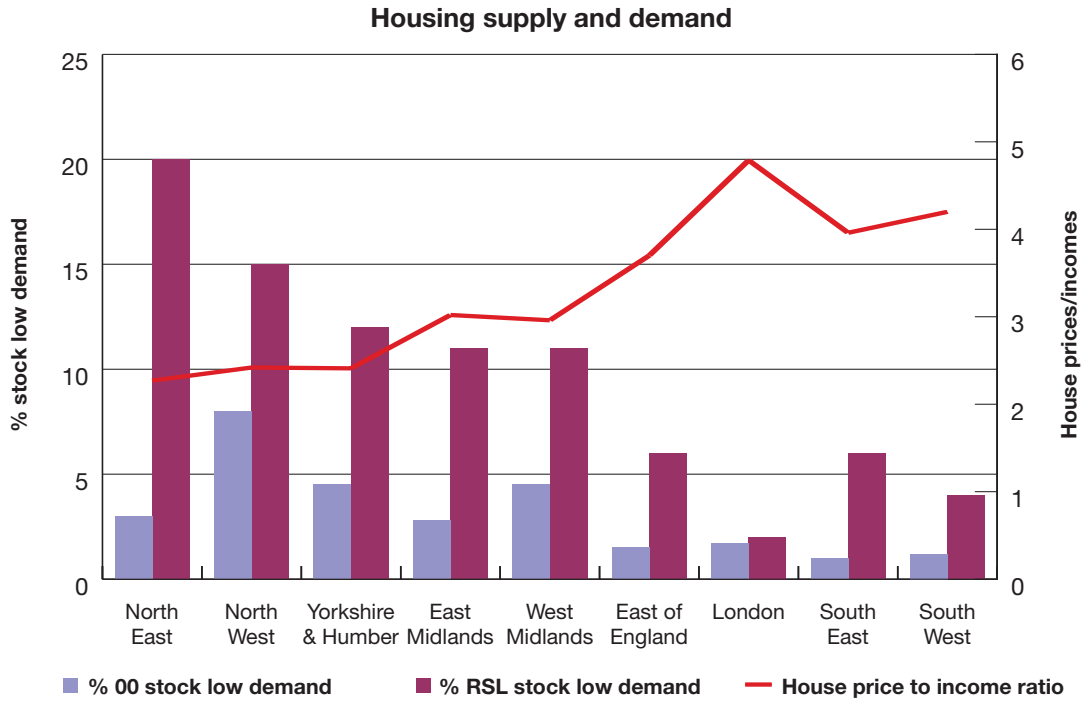
Source: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (National Land Use Database of Previously-Developed Land); CURDS calculations

2.11 There also sustainability issues which are closely linked to regeneration policies, with the central PSA target, *% new development taking place on brownfield land*, usually assumed to be a core indicator. The chart below suggests that this indicator needs to be interpreted in the light of other factors, because whether brownfield land is used will partly depend on the relative pressure of development on the total land available. This point is shown by the region with the far outlying value on the chart being London where, of course, development land availability is severely limited. The three northern regions all have values which lie slightly above the trend (from bottom left to top right) which implies that they have more sustainable patterns of development although, of course, there is also the likelihood that de-industrialisation there previously has given them more available brownfield land. In short, an indicator along these lines has to be very carefully constructed and interpreted. This choice, however, has the advantage that it is robust enough for annual monitoring whereas other sustainability indicators (e.g. air and water quality measures, size of wild bird populations) are not.



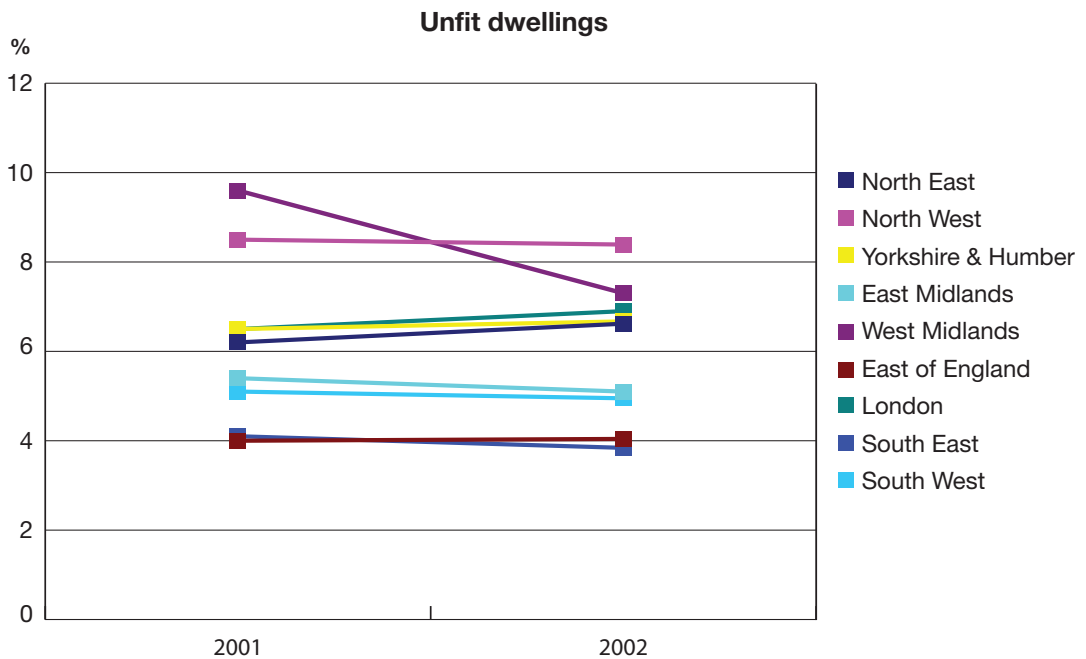
Source: Office for National Statistics (Regional Trends; Land Use Change Statistics); CURDS calculations

2.12 Linked to regeneration is the newly-prioritised housing policy field. Here the government has made very clear that its primary target for housing strategies is balancing the demand and supply of housing, but again further research would have been needed before specifying precisely the most valid measure, or measures, to use for an ERA evaluation. The chart below illustrates some of the key component measures which we considered most relevant. Once again there is an important choice between measures which centre on more policy-sensitive issues – in this case, low demand housing – or ones which encompass the wider situation (illustrated here by the overall ratio between house prices and income levels). The chart shows that there is only a very broad tendency for these three measures to indicate similar contrasts between regions. For example, London has the expected opposite pattern to the North East in terms of housing unaffordability and little evidence of low demand for the homes provided by housing associations (Registered Social Landlords or RSLs) and yet there is relatively little difference between the two regions in terms of low demand owner-occupied housing.



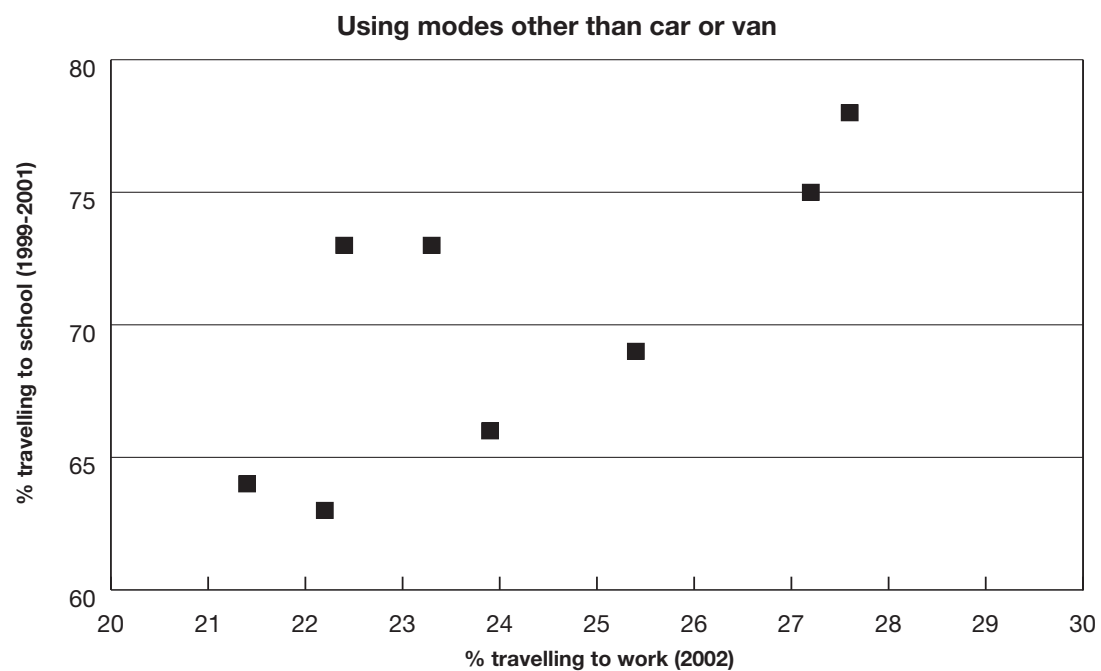
Sources: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (Local Housing Statistics); Joseph Rowntree Foundation (York Publishing Services: "Can work: can't pay")

2.13 One consistent feature across housing policy targets recently is the drive to reduce *the % of housing deemed unfit* but the evidence in the chart is that the northern regions are not narrowing the gap between themselves and the southern regions (outside London) on this indicator.



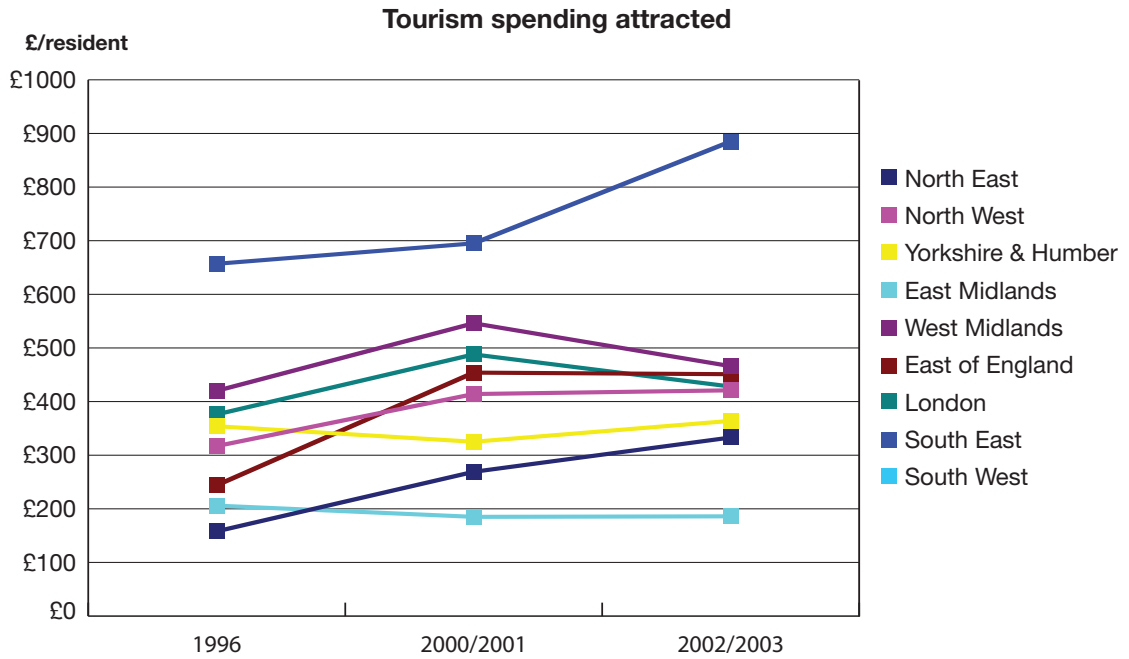
Source: Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (English House Conditions Survey)

2.14 Another policy regime with links to regeneration, as well as sustainability, is transport. There is no shortage of indicators which reflect the aspiration for greater public transport usage although, to date, few if any show signs of policy impact even at the national level. Indicators of road congestion would pose an especially severe and challenging target. An alternative which deserves assessment is the Welsh Assembly indicator of the **% of working people who commute by a more sustainable mode of transport** and this is certainly more relevant than a simple focus on average commuting distance. The chart below sets this indicator against a similar measure for travel to school: the two midland regions are those with high values on the school travel measure but not on the commuting one (ie. top left of the chart), whereas the three northern regions score highly on both (ie. top right). Once again, care would be needed with interpretation due to the likely effect on regions' values of car ownership, and the differing proportions of people living in more rural areas in each region.



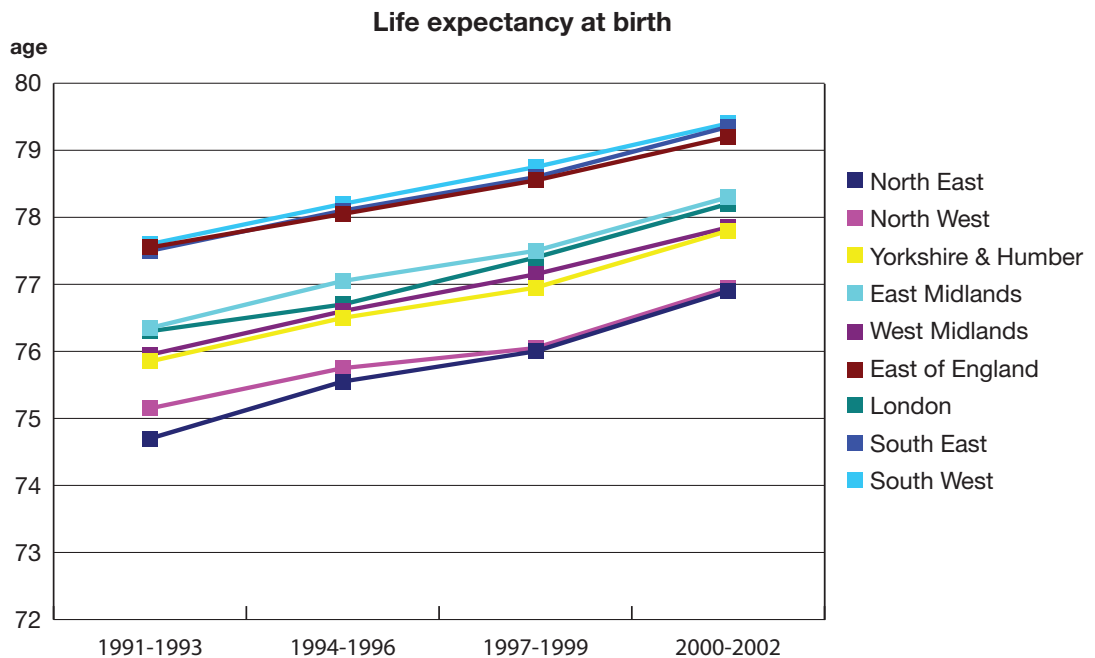
Sources: Office for National Statistics (Regional Trends; Labour Force Survey); Office for National Statistics (Regional Trends; National Travel Survey)

2.15 In the White Paper, ERAs were charged with oversight of tourism development and here the best available dataset is collected partly to support the funding of local authorities by central government. The chosen indicator is **the level of spending by holiday-makers relative to the resident population** because this measures tourism as a driver of regional economic development more effectively than a more standard indicator such as the crude number of overnight stays in hotels. The three northern regions trail all the others bar the East Midlands on this indicator although there is some indication, particularly in the North East and North West, that the more positive trends to be found in the north in recent years may see them emulate all but the most tourism resource-rich regions in the near future.



Source: Statistics on Tourism and Research UK (United Kingdom Tourism Survey)

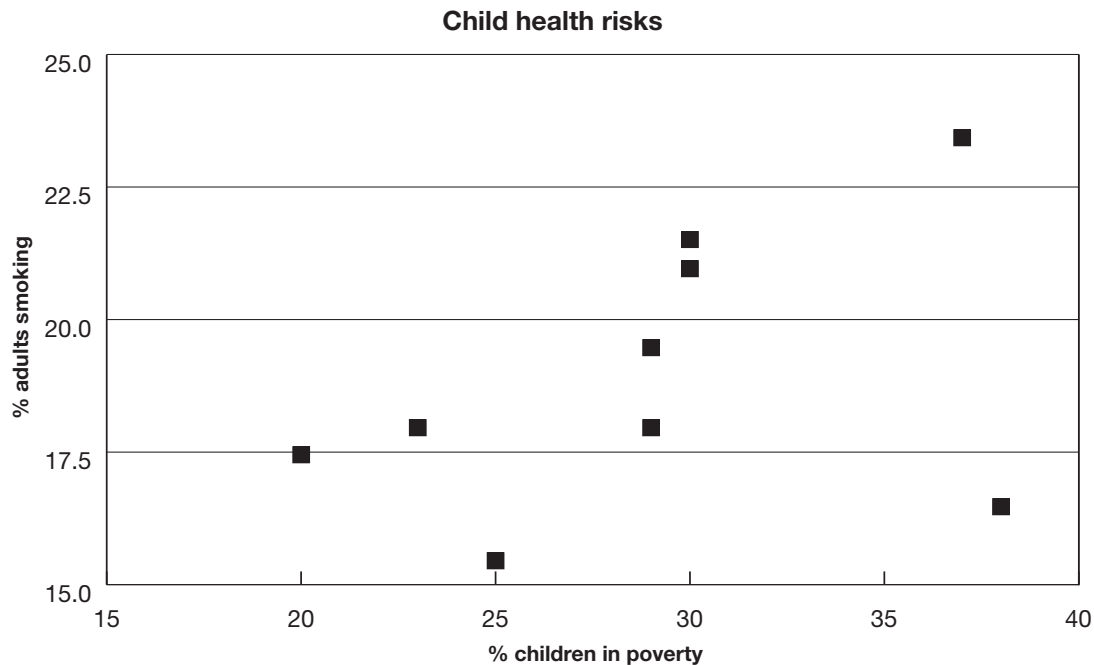
2.16 Turning to the health agenda, data limitations ease somewhat. Here there is an extremely well-established indicator – standardised mortality rate – but also a more recent derivative, *average life expectancy* which is our preferred alternative. The series of values shown in the chart reveal that, whilst the period has seen increases in life expectancy in all regions, the differentials between regions remain stubbornly wide with the three northern regions – and the North East and North West in particular – consistently trailing the rest.



Source: Office for National Statistics (Life Expectancy Tables)

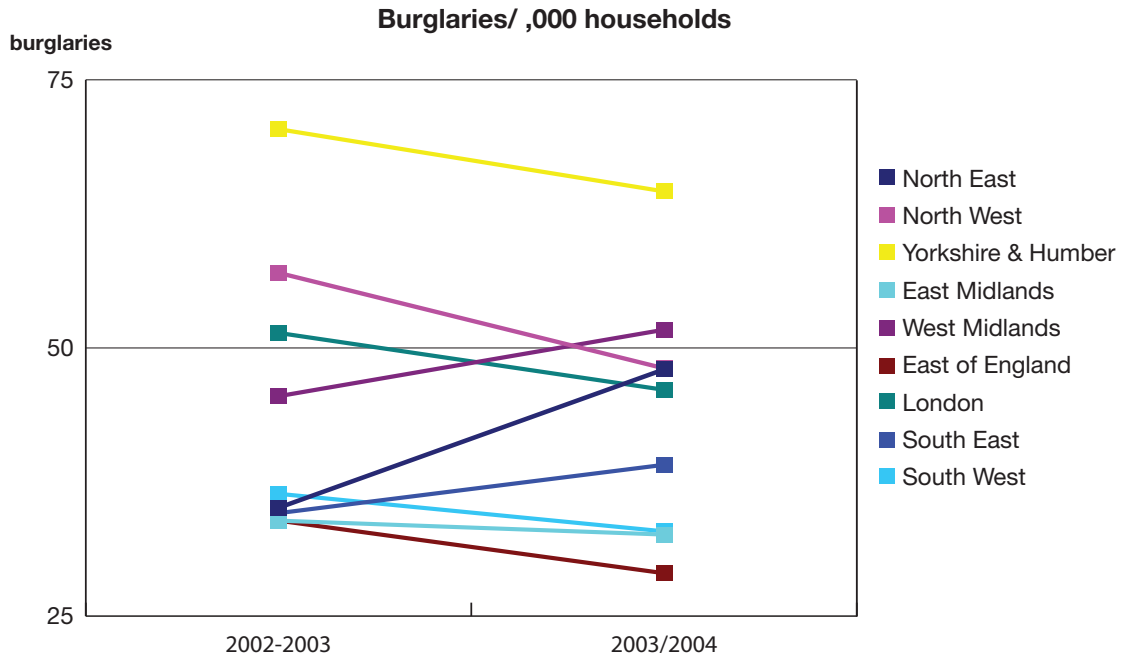
2.17 Perhaps more directly relevant to the ERAs' health improvement remit would have been an indicator of voluntary, individual health risk such as the incidence of smoking or drinking in large quantities. Our preference was for a less prescriptive stance and we opted instead to highlight factors that which put

children's health at risk. The first factor is poverty, and is measurable from datasets which allow the IMD to be updated; the second factor is smoking by adults, with its relevance here based on a range of evidence that children are more likely to take up smoking if it is commonplace among adults around them. Once again, the three northern regions stand out as those that have high levels of both risk factors, in the top right part of the chart below.



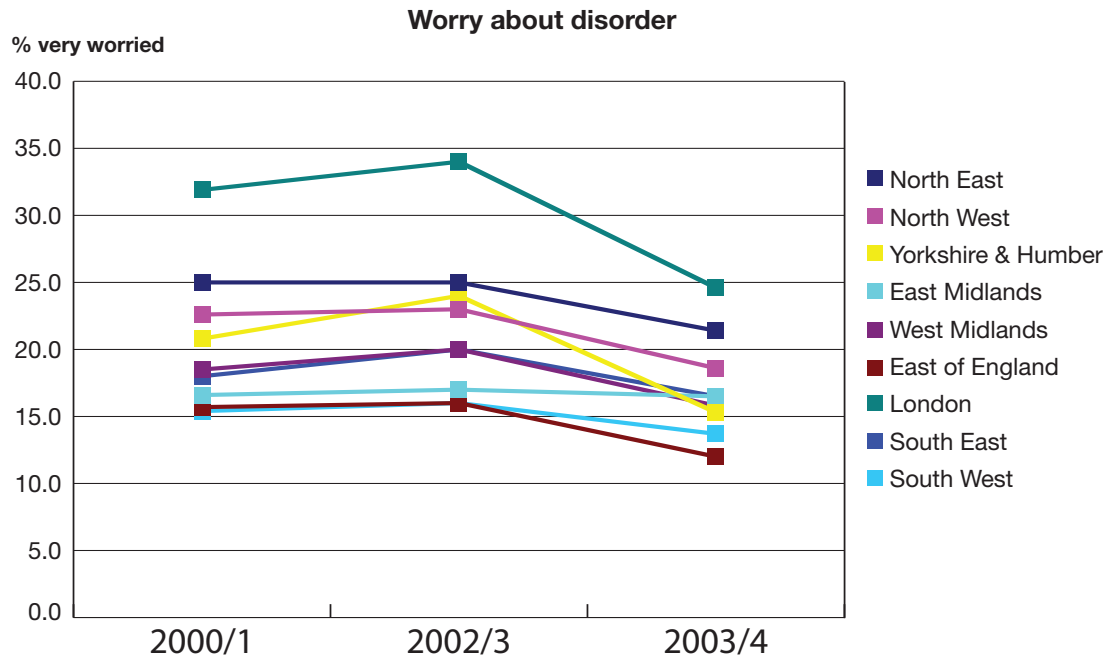
Sources: Office for National Statistics (Regional Trends; General Household Survey); Dept. for Work and Pensions (Households Below Average Income)

- 2.18 The final policy field of interest here is crime reduction. Perhaps more than in any other policy field, crime reduction highlighted the risk of potentially over-interpreting the evaluation of ERAs given the very limited and indirect influence they would have had upon 'real world' outcomes. There are specific partnerships of agencies and institutions tasked with crime reduction responsibilities and, more than in most other policy fields, the likelihood that ERAs can steer their priorities is not high. That said, the target set by government for reductions in ***the number of burglaries per thousand households*** provides a suitable indicator here. Until such time as the new 'counting rules' for recorded crime are seen to yield a dataset which is convincingly consistent between all regions and across several years, it is necessary to rely on the newly annual data from the British Crime Survey (BCS). Unfortunately the available BCS dataset, used in the chart below, suggests a level of change from one year to the next which is not plausible. Our response to this, had we gone onto collect data for future years, would have been to take an average of two or more years which would, of course, have meant foregoing the possibility of annual updating. Within the particular field of crime selected here, however – burglaries per thousand households – the evidence is still that, annual fluctuations notwithstanding, the incidence of crime is considerably higher in the three northern regions and in London than it was elsewhere.



Source: Home Office (British Crime Survey)

2.19 The other crime-related indicator we selected relates to fear of crime, given the volume of evidence that this has just as great an impact on quality of life as the incidence of actual recorded crime. Here this concern is combined with the government’s considerable emphasis on public order and anti-social behaviour to focus on *the % of people who are worried about disorder*, another trend which is monitored through BCS data. The trend in recent years, shown in the chart below, is perhaps surprising in revealing a general downturn while policy rhetoric about disorder has increased in volume. Setting aside again the possible qualms about the robustness of annual BCS data for regions, the values once more reveal that the three northern regions, along with London, are those most in need of improvement. It is notable here that crime, and the fear of crime, tend to be most acute in deprived areas and so these last two indicators are among those which could benefit most from having data on people in such neighbourhoods analysed separately: the BCS data does in fact allow this to be done, but the consequence is to markedly reduce the sample size on which the analyses would be based and the result is that very many years’ data would have to be pooled before the sample size was large enough to produce robust data from, for example, people living in the South East’s deprived neighbourhoods.



Source: Home Office (British Crime Survey)