

Housing, Health and Communities Committee Meeting	
Meeting Date	20 January 2026
Report Title	English Indices of Deprivation 2025
EMT Lead	Larissa Reed
Head of Service	Larissa Reed
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Classification	Open
Recommendations	1. The committee notes the publication of the English Indices of Deprivation 2025 (IoD2025) and the analysis of Swale's relative position. 2. The Committee supports the adoption of the IoD2025 data as the evidence base for targeting future interventions, specifically supporting the Corporate Plan priority of tackling deprivation and inequality. 3. Members support officers use of the domain-specific data to strengthen advocacy with strategic partners, including the Kent & Medway Integrated Care Board (ICB) and Kent County Council (KCC), to secure needs-based resource allocation.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report presents an analysis of the English Indices of Deprivation 2025 (IoD2025), which were [published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government](#) (MHCLG) on 30 October 2025.
- 1.2 As the successor to the 2019 indices, the IoD2025 constitutes the official measure of relative deprivation in England and serves as the definitive statistical framework for understanding the spatial distribution of poverty and need within the Borough of Swale.
- 1.3 This report aims to inform the Housing, Health and Communities Committee of the updated statistical landscape, highlighting changes in the borough's relative standing since 2019.
- 1.4 The report also seeks to establish this data as the evidence base for the Council's strategic decision-making, particularly in relation to the allocation of scarce resources and the targeting of anti-poverty initiatives.
- 1.5 The data shows a complex picture for Swale, characterised as a "tale of two boroughs." The data indicates a divergence in the borough's summary measures:

- Rank of average score: Swale has seen a relative improvement on this measure, moving from the 56th (out of 317) most deprived local authority in 2019 to the 62nd (out of 296) in 2025. This suggests that when viewed as an aggregate average, the intensity of deprivation across the whole borough has lessened slightly relative to other areas in England.
 - Rank of Average Rank: Conversely, and critically for service planning, Swale's position on the 'Rank of Average Rank' has worsened, deteriorating from 69th in 2019 to 59th in 2025. This indicates that deprivation is becoming more widespread across the borough's neighbourhoods, moving Swale firmly into the most deprived 20% of districts nationally on this key metric.
- 1.6 The analysis identifies a triple threat of income, employment, and health deprivation concentrated in the urban wards of Sheerness, Murston, and Milton Regis, where specific Lower-layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) consistently rank in the bottom 10% of the country.
- 1.7 AT the same time, the 2025 methodology (which introduces new metrics for digital connectivity and transport) has highlighted severe hidden deprivation in rural wards such as Boughton & Courtenay and East Downs. These rank among the most deprived in England for 'Barriers to Housing and Services' despite their relative affluence in income terms.
- 1.8 This report details these findings across all seven domains of deprivation and explores the implications for the Corporate Plan and external funding.

2 Background, Context and Proposals

- 2.1 The English Indices of Deprivation are not merely a statistical exercise. They are produced approximately every four to five years, and allow for the identification of small pockets of deprivation that are otherwise masked by ward-level or borough-wide averages. For a borough like Swale, which shows extreme polarisation between its most affluent and most deprived communities, the granularity provided by the IoD is essential for service delivery.
- 2.2 The IoD supports our strategic objectives by:
- Targeting services - enabling the move away from universal provision towards data-led, targeted interventions at the LSOA level (neighbourhoods of approximately 1,500 residents).
 - Securing funding - serving as the primary eligibility criterion for major funding streams such as the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), Levelling Up, and their successors.
 - Informing formulas - feeding directly into national funding formulas used by the Department for Education (DfE) and public health bodies.

- Advocacy - providing an objective, government-endorsed evidence base to lobby partners such as the Integrated Care Board (ICB) for fair resource allocation.

Methodology and changes in 2025

- 2.3 The IoD2025 is based on the 2021 Census geography, using Lower-layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs). Swale is made up of 90 LSOAs.
- 2.4 The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) is a weighted aggregate of seven distinct domains, each measuring a specific aspect of deprivation. It is important to understand that the IoD measures relative deprivation, not absolute change. An area's rank may worsen even if its absolute circumstances improve, simply because other areas in England have improved at a faster rate.
- 2.5 In addition to the overall IMD and its seven domain-specific indices, there are [two further supplementary indices](#): the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) and the Income Deprivation Affecting Older People Index (IDAOPI).
- 2.6 The composition of the IMD is weighted to prioritise economic and health outcomes, which collectively account for over 50% of the total score. This weighting structure significantly influences Swale's overall ranking due to the specific nature of deprivation on the Isle of Sheppey and areas in Sittingbourne areas.

Table 1: Composition of the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2025

Domain	Weighting	Description of indicators
Income Deprivation	22.5%	Measures the proportion of the population experiencing deprivation relating to low income. This includes claimants of Universal Credit (out of work or low earnings), Income Support, and Pension Credit.
Employment Deprivation	22.5%	Measures the involuntary exclusion of the working-age population from the labour market. Key data sources include claimants of Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), and Universal Credit conditionality groups linked to work search.
Education, Skills & Training	13.5%	Split into two sub-domains: Children/Young People (attainment at KS2/KS4, absence, HE entry) and Adult Skills (proportion of adults with no/low qualifications, English language proficiency).
Health Deprivation & Disability	13.5%	Measures the risk of premature death and the impairment of quality of life through poor physical or mental health. Indicators include Years of Potential Life Lost (YLL), comparative illness ratios, and acute morbidity.

Crime	9.3%	Measures the risk of personal and material victimisation. It aggregates recorded crime rates for violence, burglary, theft, criminal damage, and public order offences.
Barriers to Housing & Services	9.3%	Key Change for 2025: Measures the physical and financial accessibility of housing and local services. It now includes a 'connectivity score' for transport and, crucially, average broadband speeds to measure digital exclusion.
Living Environment	9.3%	Measures the quality of the local environment. Indoors measures housing quality (lack of central heating, poor condition). Outdoors measures air quality and road traffic accidents.

Key methodology updates

2.7 The 2025 release was not a simple update of the 2019 data. The methodology underwent a fundamental review to capture the impacts of significant societal shifts, including the full rollout of Universal Credit, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the cost-of-living crisis. Key updates include:

- The Income and Employment domains now fully integrate Universal Credit data, providing a more accurate picture of households in employment but with earnings low enough to qualify for state support. This is particularly relevant for Swale, where low-wage employment is a known structural issue.
- For the first time, average broadband speed is included in the 'Barriers to Housing and Services' domain. This acknowledges that in 2025, digital exclusion is a primary barrier to economic opportunity, education, and access to services.
- A [supplementary rural report](#) and new transport connectivity tools have been used to better capture the nuance of rural deprivation, moving beyond simple straight line distance measures to more sophisticated travel-time modelling.

Swale's profile – a tale of two boroughs

2.8 The analysis of the IoD2025 data confirms that Swale remains a borough of extreme contrasts. The [government's own research report](#) highlights this phenomenon, explicitly using Swale as a case study to explain how borough-wide averages can mask deep concentrations of deprivation (see 3.3.24-3.3.27 in the linked PDF).

2.9 The presence of affluent areas such as Woodstock and West Downs (ranked in the least deprived 10% nationally) statistically offsets the intense deprivation

found in Sheerness and Murston (ranked in the most deprived 10% nationally) when calculating average scores.

2.10 Understanding the difference between the two primary summary measures is critical for interpreting the borough's trajectory.

- Rank of Average Score:
 - 2019 rank: 56th out of 317
 - 2025 rank: 62nd out of 296
 - Swale has seen a relative improvement on this measure. The 'Average Score' is population-weighted and can be heavily influenced by extreme values. This improvement suggests that while severe deprivation exists, the magnitude of the deprivation score in the very worst LSOAs may have stabilised relative to other authorities, or that the affluent areas have become relatively more affluent, pulling the average "up" (towards less deprived).
- Rank of Average Rank
 - 2019 Rank: 69th out of 317.
 - 2025 Rank: 59th out of 296.
 - Swale has deteriorated significantly on this measure. The 'Average Rank' calculates the mean ranking of all 90 LSOAs in the borough. A worsening here indicates that a larger proportion of Swale's neighbourhoods are sliding down the national rankings. It suggests that deprivation is becoming less isolated and more pervasive across the borough. This metric places Swale firmly in the most deprived 20% of local authorities in England.

2.11 Swale's deprivation profile is characterised by high intensity:

- Most deprived 10% (decile 1) - 14.4% of Swale's LSOAs (13 out of 90) fall into the most deprived 10% of neighbourhoods in England. This is the second-highest proportion in Kent, exceeded only by Thanet (18.6%). By contrast, affluent West Kent districts such as Tonbridge & Malling and Tunbridge Wells have 0% of their LSOAs in this most deprived decile.
- Local concentration rank - Swale ranks 40th nationally for 'local concentration', a measure of how intense deprivation is in the borough's hotspots. This places Swale in the most deprived 14% of districts for intensity of poverty

2.12 The aggregate score, while useful for high-level comparisons, does not provide the diagnostic detail required for targeted service delivery. The following analysis breaks down the borough's performance across the specific domains.

Income and Employment

- 2.13 Income and employment deprivation are the primary drivers of Swale's overall ranking, carrying a combined weight of 45%. The correlation between these two domains in Swale is extremely high, indicating that low income in the borough is driven largely by worklessness and exclusion from the labour market, rather than solely by low wages in the resident population (though in-work poverty remains a factor captured by the new UC data).
- 2.14 The data reveals a core of LSOAs that are in the most deprived 10% (decile 1) for both income and employment. These areas represent the deepest pockets of economic disadvantage:
- Sheerness: Swale 001A, 001B, 001C, 002A, 002B, 002C
 - Milton Regis: Swale 010B
 - Murston: Swale 010C
 - Priory: Swale 015D
- 2.15 Analysis of the data (summarised in Appendix I) shows the severity of the situation in Sheerness. For example, LSOA 'Swale 001A' ranks as the 95th most deprived neighbourhood in England for income out of 32,844 areas. This level of deprivation is comparable to the most challenging inner-city wards in the north of England, highlighting the acute nature of coastal deprivation on the Island.
- 2.16 Nationally, Swale ranks 120th for income and 116th for employment. While these ranks are lower than the overall IMD rank (59th), the concentration in specific wards drags the borough-wide performance down. This strongly suggests that any strategy interventions must be geographically targeted. Broad job creation schemes may not reach residents in these specific LSOAs without tailored employability support to address the complex barriers to work found in these neighbourhoods.

Health deprivation

- 2.17 The 2025 data confirms a disturbing correlation, referred to as the triple threat: the convergence of high income deprivation, high employment deprivation, and high health deprivation in the same geographic locations.
- 2.18 Six of the LSOAs identified above as economic hotspots are also in the most deprived 10% nationally for health deprivation. These are:
- Sheerness: Swale 001A, 002B, 002C
 - Milton Regis: Swale 010B
 - Murston: Swale 010C
 - Sheppey East: Swale 006A
- 2.19 The health domain measures indicators such as years of potential life lost, comparative illness, and mood/anxiety disorders. The alignment of these poor health outcomes with economic disadvantage provides a strong evidence base. It

suggests that the health inequalities in Swale are structurally linked to economic circumstances.

- 2.20 This data is important for the council's engagement with the Kent & Medway Integrated Care Board (ICB). It supports the argument that health funding should not just be allocated by population headcounts but reflect those specific LSOAs where the health deprivation is highest.

Education, skills and training

- 2.21 The education domain shows a slightly wider footprint of deprivation than the income/employment domains. This suggests a skills challenge that extends beyond the core poverty hotspots:
- all 13 LSOAs in the bottom decile for income/employment are also in the bottom decile for education
 - deprivation in this domain extends to areas that are slightly better off economically, such as parts of Queenborough & Halfway (005B, 005C), St Ann's (014C), and Homewood (012A)
 - The concentration of education deprivation on the Isle of Sheppey is particularly acute. Almost every LSOA in Sheerness, Sheppey East, and Queenborough ranks in the lowest deciles. This reinforces the need for a specific focus on the Island's educational ecosystem, from early years through to adult retraining.

Barriers to housing and services

- 2.22 A significant finding from the 2025 update is the extent of deprivation in the Barriers to Housing and Services domain. This domain has been heavily impacted by the inclusion of broadband speed data and improved transport modelling.
- 2.23 While urban wards like Sheerness and Murston dominate the economic deprivation tables, the barriers domain reveals a different geography of need. Some of the most deprived LSOAs in England for this domain are found in Swale's rural and semi-rural wards:
- Boughton & Courtenay: all four LSOAs are in decile 1
 - East Downs: both LSOAs are in decile 1.
 - Teynham & Lynsted: all three LSOAs are in decile 1.
 - Hartlip, Newington & Upchurch: three out of four LSOAs are in decile 1.
- 2.24 This challenges the narrative that deprivation is solely an urban or industrial issue in Swale. Residents in these areas, while being potentially more affluent than other areas of the borough, are service-poor. They face extreme challenges in accessing GPs, shops, and schools via public transport, and are now statistically confirmed as suffering from digital exclusion due to poor broadband speeds.

Crime

2.25 The crime domain reveals two distinct types of high-crime areas in Swale:

- Deprivation-linked crime: in areas like Sheerness (001A, 001B) and Murston (010C), high crime rates coexist with high income and employment deprivation. Here, crime is likely a symptom of wider socio-economic stress
- Crime-led deprivation: there are specific clusters where crime is the primary driver of deprivation scores, appearing in areas that are otherwise relatively stable economically. Notable examples include Roman (010E, 011D) and Homewood (012A). In Roman (010E), the area is in decile 1 for crime but Decile 3 for income. This suggests specific localised issues (potentially anti-social behaviour or specific criminal activity) that require a policing and community safety response rather than an economic intervention.

Living Environment

2.26 This domain separates the quality of housing and the external environment from the economic status of the residents. It identifies LSOAs with poor indoor housing conditions (lack of central heating, poor repair) and poor outdoor environments (air quality):

- The worst-performing areas include Boughton & Courtenay (017A), East Downs (016A), and Sheerness (001A).
- The presence of rural wards in this category highlights the issue of older, energy-inefficient housing stock in our rural areas.

Ward-level analysis

2.27 The IoD2025 data allows for a granular analysis of the seven domain of deprivation for each of Swale's 90 LSOA's. These are summarised in Appendix I and can also be explored, including maps and downloadable data, from the [Governments deprivation in England website](#).

3 Recommendations

3.1 The committee notes the publication of the English Indices of Deprivation 2025 (IoD2025) and the analysis of Swale's relative position.

3.2 The Committee supports the adoption of the IoD2025 data as the evidence base for targeting future interventions, specifically supporting the Corporate Plan priority of tackling deprivation and inequality.

3.3 Members support officers use of the domain-specific data to strengthen advocacy with strategic partners, including the Kent & Medway Integrated Care Board (ICB) and Kent County Council (KCC), to secure needs-based resource allocation.

4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

4.1 Do nothing/retain 2019 data baseline.

- 4.1.1 The committee could choose to note the report but continue using the 2019 Indices of Deprivation for current operational planning.
- 4.1.2 This option is strongly recommended against. The 2019 data is six years old and predates the COVID-19 pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis, and the full rollout of Universal Credit. Furthermore, it does not include the new digital connectivity metrics. Relying on outdated data would result in the misallocation of resources (e.g., failing to recognise the new depth of rural deprivation) and would significantly weaken the council's position when bidding for competitive external funding, where the use of the latest national statistics is a mandatory requirement.

4.2 Report only the average score improvement.

- 4.2.1 The council could choose to focus its external communications solely on the improvement in the 'Rank of Average Score' (from 56th to 62nd) to present a positive narrative of borough-wide improvement.
- 4.2.2 While statistically accurate, this approach would be strategically damaging. It would mask the worsening rank of Average Rank (69th to 59th) and the high local concentration of deprivation. Ignoring these negative trends would undermine our case for support from central government and partners.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 As this report deals with the analysis of a national statistical release, public consultation on the figures themselves is not applicable. However, the data acts as a trigger for consultation on the strategies it informs.
- 5.2 The initial analysis was presented to the Senior Management Team in November to make sure directors and heads of service were aware of the implications for their respective directorates.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	The report aligns directly with the Corporate Plan 2023-2027, particularly objectives related to tackling inequality. The worsening 'Rank of Average Rank' serves as a critical Key Performance Indicator (KPI) baseline.

	Future success in delivering the Corporate Plan could be partly measured by the council's ability to reverse this trend in the next IoD2025 release.
Financial, Resource and Property	There are no direct financial implications from noting this report. However, there are indirect financial implications. The IoD2025 is a key metric used for the allocation of government grants (e.g., Household Support Fund, UKSPF). Accurate application of this data ensures the council maximises its income potential.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	The council has a general duty of Best Value to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement. Basing decisions on the most up-to-date and robust statistical evidence (IoD2025) supports this duty and reduces the risk of legal challenge (e.g., Judicial Review) against decisions regarding resource allocation or service reduction. There are no immediate procurement implications, though the data could inform social value requirements in future contracts.
Crime and Disorder	The identification of specific crime-led" deprivation pockets (e.g., Roman, Homewood) provides an evidence base for the Community Safety Partnership.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	The 'Living Environment' domain highlights areas with poor housing energy efficiency. This data allows targeting of programmes such as HUG2 to the areas with the highest carbon footprint and fuel poverty, directly supporting the Climate and Ecological Emergency declaration.
Health and Wellbeing	The data shows severe health inequalities linked to economic status. The data supports the council in holding the Integrated Care System to account for the delivery of health equity in Swale.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	The IoD2025 includes the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) and Income Deprivation Affecting Older People Index (IDAOPI). High IDACI scores in Sheerness and Murston indicate areas where children are growing up in poverty, which is a known risk factor for safeguarding issues.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	Using outdated data for funding bids leads to failure to secure resources. These risks are mitigated by adopting the recommendations of this report.
Equality and Diversity	The IoD2025 helps the council discharge the Public Sector Equality Duty. Deprivation often correlates with protected characteristics (e.g., disability in the health domain; age in IDAOPI).

	By targeting resources at the most deprived areas, the council is likely to be positively impacting groups with protected characteristics.
Privacy and Data Protection	The IoD2025 uses aggregate, anonymised statistics published by the ONS and MHCLG. No personal data is processed in the production of this report, so there are no GDPR implications. The data is Open Government Licence compliant.
Local Government Reorganisation	Any future discussion regarding devolution or reorganisation in Kent would rely on this data to determine the needs-based funding formula for a new authority. Swale's high deprivation ranking relative to other Kent districts would be a material consideration in any financial settlement.

7 Appendices

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: Domain deciles by ward

8 Background Papers

None