

#11 IPPR North - The State of The North 2026

UNDERSTANDING THE DRIVERS OF POLITICAL DISCONTENT IN THE NORTH

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An Overview...

During my time at IPPR North, I was responsible for gathering and analysing data for the organisation's flagship publication, the *State of the North* report. Every year, this report emphasises the impact of regional inequality on the North of England and underscores the importance of devolution in shaping the region's future prosperity.

The theme for the 2026 edition was political discontent - exploring its causes, its geography and the ways in which it can be addressed. Over 10 weeks, my research examined how well the government was delivering its promises to the North, identifying which places have been left behind and considering how this relates to varying levels of political trust and satisfaction.

Alongside my research, I also attended meetings with local community groups, regional stakeholders and those with key roles in policymaking. These meetings gave me valuable insight into how evidence informs policy design and what 'good policy' looks like when it's put into practice.

Data Analysis...

My data analysis drew upon a range of datasets - though I mainly sourced data from government departments such as the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) - I also utilised external sources such as YouGov polling and similar independent research.

Much of my work involved locating and reconciling data at a deep level of granularity, and I often found myself problem-solving around gaps or geographical inconsistencies. As part of this process, I developed methods for presenting the large amounts of data I had gathered in a clear and intuitive way - ensuring that the meaningful stories within it could be easily interpreted.



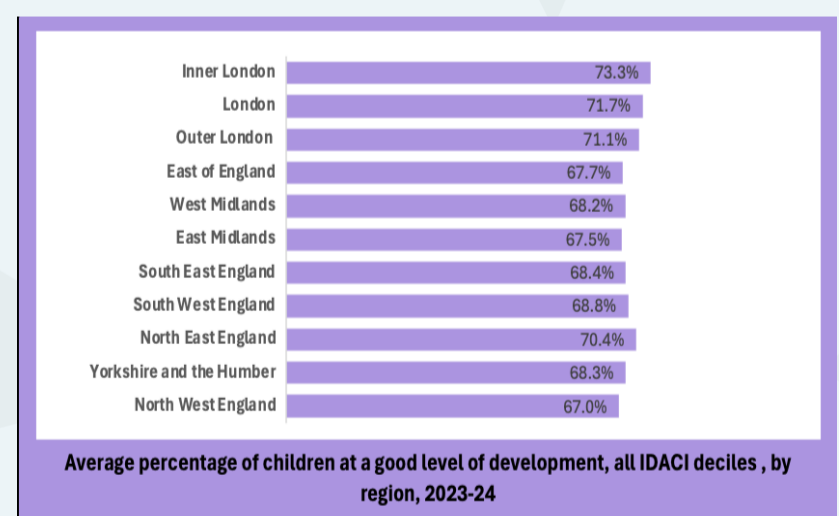
- My little visit to IPPR in London.

Key Skills Developed...

Throughout the fellowship, I strengthened both my quantitative and professional skills. After each completed stage of research, I gradually developed my communication and presentation skills - producing and delivering a series of briefs that brought together all of the quantitative insights across each individual policy area and locality. This process not only enhanced my persuasiveness, but it also taught me the importance of understanding your audience and tailoring your approach for maximum impact.

Overall, I gained confidence and proficiency in:

- Data collection and analysis
- Problem-solving and reconciling complex data structures
- Communication and presentation of quantitative insights
- Stakeholder engagement, persuasion and collaboration
- Critical thinking and policy awareness



Source: DfE

A Reflection...

Reflecting upon my experience, I've not only advanced my analytical skills, but I left IPPR North with a deeper understanding of how evidence-based research shapes fairer, more effective policy. Having been part of a project that directly contributes to national policy discussions - and seeing how data translates into valuable insight - has only strengthened my desire to pursue a career at the intersection of data, research, and public policy.