



Become a Demonstrator Partner for the Decent Neighbourhood Standard

The Road to a Decent Neighbourhood
June 2025



Centre for the New Midlands



Overview

Following a [successful pilot with Witton Lodge Community Association in North Birmingham](#), we're now inviting new partners to test and shape the Decent Neighbourhood Standard in a range of different neighbourhoods. The Decent Neighbourhood Standard (DNS) framework aims to offer a practical tool to help residents, communities, policymakers, place-based and place-making organisations set out what makes a neighbourhood truly decent.



Figure 1: The Decent Neighbourhood Standard

Become a demonstrator

We're looking for local organisations, from community anchors to place-making companies, housing associations to local authorities, to help us explore how the DNS can be adapted, applied, and embedded across diverse neighbourhoods including across urban, rural, new development, regeneration and existing sites.

We are at an early stage of the research and actively seeking funding to take the programme further. We believe that there is policy and practical potential to for the DNS to shape the emerging neighbourhood agenda nationally and tackle inequalities locally.

This is an opportunity to help build an evidence base around neighbourhood quality and community wellbeing – one that's grounded in community insights and designed for practical implementation and impact.

We are looking for supporters, collaborators and commissioners. You can commit to either fund a project or seek funding jointly with the Centre for the New Midlands and Social Life, to develop the Decent Neighbourhood Standard. We are also open for partners to commit to being a supporter of the programme and join a community of practice.

Objectives of the next phase

Demonstrator sites will work with the Centre for the New Midlands and Social Life collaboratively to:

- Adapt the DNS framework to local context, assets, and ambitions
- Develop local neighbourhood specific metrics using qualitative and quantitative methodologies that draw on existing data and gather new empirical data.
- Pilot inclusive neighbourhood diagnostics and community-led research tools and methods
- Embed resident and community voices in strategic planning, decision-making, and stewardship
- Measure environmental, social, and economic outcomes over time

Why join as a demonstrator?

Becoming a demonstrator means shaping the future of neighbourhood investment and accountability:

- Apply and help shape the emerging DNS framework in an evidence-led approach
- Engage residents directly in shaping priorities, indicators, and solutions through collaborative design
- Strengthen your case for funding by aligning with national and regional agendas on neighbourhoods and place-making
- Benchmarking and learning, allowing you to compare progress across dimensions and neighbourhood quality metrics
- Opportunities to connect with other demonstrator sites in a growing peer learning network

Who are we looking for

We welcome expressions of interest from organisations that:

- Reflect diverse demographics, challenges, and opportunities;
- Have an active local presence
- Share a commitment to community voice, addressing place-based inequalities, championing equity, and place-making

Types of organisations could include:

- Community hubs and neighbourhood associations, community-focused housing providers, housing associations or landlords
- Built environment organisations involved in infrastructure, transport, place-making, new development and regeneration
- Local authorities and other research funders and anchor institutions

Join us in shaping a practical, ambitious, and community-rooted approach to improving neighbourhood quality. Together, we can define what makes a neighbourhood “decent” – and build the research partnerships to deliver it, driving change and shaping policy to support communities to thrive.

The Centre for the New Midlands (CNM) is the only independent, not-for-profit think tank for the West Midlands. The Centre creates a space to debate and shape better region, fostering collaboration across society, industry, and academia. CNM has a strong track record in research spanning digital innovation, infrastructure, people and skills, and housing and communities. The Centre's Housing and Communities research programme seeks to create long-term and sustainable impact, contributing towards new evidence bases around core themes of housing need and affordability, housing quality, neighbourhoods and place-making, health and wellbeing, net zero transitions and tenant engagement.

www.thenewmidlands.org.uk

Contact: Dr Halima Sacranie, Director of Housing Research
halima@thenewmidlands.org.uk

Social Life is an independent research organisation created by the Young Foundation in 2012, to become a specialist centre of research and innovation about the social life of communities. Our work is about understanding how peoples' day-to-day experience of local places is shaped by the built environment - housing, public spaces, parks and local high streets - and how change, through regeneration, new development or small improvements to public spaces, affects the social fabric, opportunities and wellbeing of local areas.

www.social-life.co

Contact: Nicola Bacon, Founding Director
Nicola.Bacon@social-life.co

