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Introduction

All over the world, countries including the United Kingdom are striving for development in all sectors, including economic, social, environmental, and health. This is probably because the current sustainable development goals (SDGs)—formally, Millennium Development Goals—have been the yardstick for measuring the level of development of member states of the United Nations. In 2012, the United Nations developed the Sustainable Development Goals during the sustainable development conference in Rio de Janeiro; these goals were subsequently adopted in 2015 upon the expiration of the millennium development goals (UNCG, 2017). The Sustainable Development Goals, according to Morton et al. (2017), are a set of international objectives for equitable and sustainable health at all scales, from the global biosphere to local communities. The authors further explain that the mission of this agenda is to eradicate poverty, safeguard the environment, and ensure that everyone lives in peace and prosperity both now and in the future (Morton et al., 2017).

For purposes of effective implementation of the SDGs in the UK, various departments have been assigned the responsibility of executing the various elements, including the Department of Health and Social Care, the Department of Education, and the Department for International Development (Stewart, 2019). With just about seven more years until the end of the fifteen-year life span of the SDGs, the UK has only been able to achieve just 17% of the global goals it signed up to in 2015 (Fox and Macleod, 2022). Nonetheless the United Kingdom has performed satisfactorily in goals relating to Good Health & Wellbeing, Quality Education, and Partnerships to achieve the Goals. This report therefore analyzes the policy interventions implemented by the UK government that led

to the achievement of these goals. It assesses how the people living in the borough of Essex have benefited from sustainable development initiatives.

Overview of the 17 SDGs.

The SDGs are an international call to action to eradicate poverty, safeguard the environment, and guarantee that everyone lives in peace and prosperity by the year 2030 (Stewart, 2019). Calib et al. (2018) opine that the 17 SDGs were built around the 5Ps, that is, planet, people, prosperity, peace, and partnership. The goal, according to Al Salim et al. (2022), is to develop a set of global objectives related to the environmental, political, and economic challenges that humanity is currently facing. Although the SDGs constitute 17 different goals, all of them are interconnected. Hence, efforts towards achieving any of the SDGs must take into consideration gender dimensions, which **goal 5** seeks to achieve, and climate change actions, which are split out in **goal 13**. Similarly, partnership, which is a goal on its own that is goal 17, is required to achieve the other entire goal and vice versa (Gov.uk, 2021). For example, goal 4, which seeks to ensure inclusive and equitable education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, and goal 5, which seeks to achieve gender equality, will have a direct impact on others, such as goal 1, which seeks to end poverty in all its forms globally; goal 2, which seeks to end hunger by achieving food security, enhancing nutrition, and promoting sustainable agriculture to feed between 720 and 811 million hungry; and goal 8, which seeks to end hunger by achieving food security, enhancing nutrition, and

Historically, the United Kingdom has led large bilateral donors in focusing on poverty alleviation and has contributed significantly to the World Bank's International

Development Association Fund (IDAF) for the world's poorest countries, which in a way contributes to **Goal 10**, which aims to reduce inequality within and among countries. Bridging the inequality gap is a panacea to the potential achievement of an inclusive society for sustainable development, peace, and providing access to justice for all, as envisioned by **Goal 16** (World Bank, 2020). Also, **goal 3** seeks to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being at all ages. This is one of the three SDGs that have been successfully accomplished by the UK (Bond, 2022). According to Bond (2020), in relation to **Goal 7**, which is about affordable and clean energy, the UK government is working towards its achievement by installing 2,400 MW of clean energy capacity and enhancing access to energy for 41 million people between 2011 and 2020 (GOV.UK, 2021). This will also help achieve goal 15 because the world's terrestrial resources have been severely exploited, resulting in massive degradation, and must therefore be fixed and sustainable practices developed and adapted. This goal has a direct linkage to **goal 14**, which states that the global economy and human lives are dependent on natural resources, and their sustainable use is significant to sustainable development (UN Habitat, 2020). In relation to **Goal 9**, the 2021 summit was organized with the aim of addressing the infrastructure needs of low- and middle-income nations; this also related to **Goal 11**, as the United Nations (2022) envisioned that by 2030, 60% of the people in the world will be living in cities. In order to achieve sustainability in terms of consumption and production patterns by 2030, under **Goal 12**, the world needs to make significant changes to the way we consume and produce both goods and resources (UN Habitat, 2020). Stewart (2019) argues, based on a summary of the SDGs and their interconnectedness that by recognizing the interlinkages among the goals, businesses, governments, and civil

society can collaborate to develop holistic long-term solutions that benefit a diverse group of people and contribute to achieving multiple goals at the same time.

Discussions on Goal 3, 4 and 17

The UK's holistic approach to the delivery of the goals is evidenced by its achievements so far, especially in goals 3, 4, and 17 (Stewart, 2019). According to the Sustainable Development Report (2022), currently the UK is ranked 11 in terms of performance in the implementation of the SDGs. UK's performance has been very high in relation to goals 3, 4, and 17. This is as a result of its unique policy arrangement. For instance, in relation to **goal 3**, which aims to **promote good health and wellbeing** for all, HM Government (2019) identifies health as one of the most valuable assets in the UK, as the UK's health and care system offers a healthier, fairer, and better future for people, enhancing happiness and the growth of the economy while preventing diseases. Bond (2018) also revealed that people living in the UK have benefited from its policy on universal access to health care for all, which has played an important role in achieving good performance on this goal as compared to many of the targets under the 17 SDGs. For example, when the Global Health Directorate was established, the Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab, identified promoting global health in the UK and beyond as one of its seven development priorities (Gov.UK, 2020). The UK's Integrated Review of Security, Defense, Development, and Foreign Policy, published in March 2021, expanded on this priority, pledging to "prioritize supporting health systems" (Fox and Macleod, 2022).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the focus of promoting health and wellbeing shifted to improving global health security and pandemic preparedness (Bond, 2022). The plans

and programs put in place in the UK continued to support health and care systems by delivering five main priority outcomes: protecting public health through a quality health and social care system that responds effectively to COVID 19, providing high quality and sustainable care at the right time and in the right place, improving infrastructure and adopting innovative technology in the UK's health systems, and providing the right care (Baffes et al., 2020). It is encouraging to see that the UK's recent Disability Inclusion and Rights Strategy included a strand on "achieving inclusive health for all," which also supports the inclusion of mental health and psychosocial support in the delivery of health care (Bond, 2022). Moreover, following consultation with civil society, the Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office (FCDO) published the policy on ending preventable deaths of mothers, newborns, and children by 2030, which is specifically linked to Targets 3.1 and 3.2 of Goal 3 of the SDG, which also aims at strengthening health systems for global health security and universal health coverage. The policy was designed specifically to make the National Health Service (NHS) the best place in the world to give birth by providing tailored, high-quality care and collaborating with system partners to improve maternity services and outcomes (NHS, 2013).

Again, the UK has achieved a high score in goal 3 due to its policy on health infrastructure (Morton et al., 2017). For instance, in 2019, the UK government rolled out a new strategic approach to improve hospitals and health infrastructure. According to Labrie, (2022), even though the UK performs better in ensuring quality health and wellbeing as stipulated in SDG goal 3 as compared to many of its peers in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the NHS and public deserve a world-class healthcare system that is built on robust foundations to support people to stay healthier

for longer and to provide care for them when they need it, which has not been fully realized.

The UK has achieved high success not only in goal 3 but also in goal 4. Boggs et al. (2021) report that there has been a progressive achievement in goal 4, which aims at ensuring quality, inclusive, and equitable education and promoting lifelong learning to create opportunity for all. Also Education in the UK is viewed as a fundamental human right with the potential to change the lives of children all over the UK and the world beyond. Hence educational policies in the UK have been geared towards ensuring quality, safety, inclusiveness, and free public education while ensuring access for all, as education saves lives, improves nutrition and health, decreases child, early, and forced marriage, and leads to more equal, respectful, and open societies (Bond, 2022). The UK's Voluntary Review (2019) reveals that in the UK, education standards have been rising over the years, producing good levels of literacy and numeracy.

According to Bond (2022), the United Kingdom has made strides in leading global initiatives to enhance academic achievement, which has contributed to its high scores in goal 3 of the SDG. For example, in relation to its domestic educational initiatives, the UK government has rolled out various interventions in the following forms, which include a free education policy that focuses on substantially enhancing primary and lower secondary education (Allen and Bull, 2018). There has also been the enactment of the Higher Education and Research Act of 2017, which aims to create a new regulatory framework for higher education to increase competition, offer multiple choices for students, ensure that students receive value for money, and also strengthen the research sector (Morris, 2017). Moreover, the policy for early education with an entitlement of 15

hours for disadvantaged 2-year-olds was introduced in 2015 to ensure inclusion and access to quality education for the vulnerable (Morris, 2017). Again, a total of £220 million has been set aside to assist local areas in preparing for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. This fund aims to assist communities most in need across the UK in piloting programs to invest in communities and supporting people with good learning skills that enhance knowledge to promote employability (UK Department of Education, 2021). Other policies that have contributed to the achievement of goal three include the 2017 Social Mobility Plan in England, which aims to help build inclusive education systems for people in places that need them the most (HM Government, 2019). Similarly, the Scottish Attainment Challenge was launched in 2015, which supported pupils in local authority areas with high deprivation with the £750 million Attainment Scotland fund. Also in Wales, children and young people between 0 and 25 who have additional learning needs are being supported through legislative reforms, workforce development that focuses on person-centered practices, and Lastly, in Northern Ireland, the Sure Start programme aims to promote intellectual, emotional, and social development for close to 40,000 children age 4 and below and their families living in deprived areas in Ireland (HM Government, 2019).

In relation to Sustainable Development Goal 17, which aims for partnership to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, the UK has worked and is still working in partnership with governments, NGOs, and many other agencies to implement programs aimed at reducing poverty and advancing development (Hambrey, 2017). Again (Bond, 2019) reveals that the UK has also contributed to the achievement of the SDGs through partnerships and financing, a critical component of which is official development

assistance (ODA). Under the 2030 agenda for sustainable development, Goal 17 requires advanced nations to fully implement their official development assistance commitments, including many advanced countries' commitment to achieve the 0.7% GNI target for poor economies. In line with efforts to achieve this goal, () reports that the UK government has committed to spending up to 0.7% of its GNP on foreign aid since 2015, supporting and collaborating with other national governments, NGOs, and businesses to implement development activities. Based on the UK's commitment to achieving this goal, it ranks third out of 40 of the world's most powerful countries for its policies on investment. Stewart (2019) also stated that the UK is committed to strengthening relationships and collaboration with other partners in order to collaborate in achieving all other goals and leaving no one behind. That is, people in the UK are generously donating the monies and resources to the challenged areas they care about, and interventions such as UK Aid, Match, and employer-supported volunteering are collaborating with other governments and civil society organizations to contribute to the achievement of the remaining 16 goals both domestically and internationally. In relation to policies for achieving goal 17, the UK National Statistician launched the Data Disaggregation Action Plan (2017) for international development at the World Data Forum in 2017. The action plan focuses on creating a disaggregated resource library where learning and data on gender, age, geography, and disability status are collated from other partners and can be assessed by partners on the library platform (Fox and Macleod 2022). The UK does not only assist partners with information sharing but also provides technical support on how the data can be used to inform decision-making by partners (HM Government, 2019). Moreover, the Wales for Africa programs established under SDG 17 support people from Africa to take

action in eradicating poverty, supporting learning, the exchange of skills, and joint action towards tackling climate change (UN Habitat, 2020). Similarly, the Scotland Climate Justice Innovation Fund was launched in 2017 to support projects in African countries that aim at tackling climate change (UN Habitat, 2020),

The Borough of Essex

Essex is one of the over 149 cities in the UK and according to the UK Department of Education Essex has a population of over 1.4 million people as of 2017. Its economy is more robust than many city regions, producing about £40 billion in output annually (Essex County council, 2022). Essex has over 600 local businesses and three universities. It is the home of two largest container ports in the UK. Although the Essex economy has much strength, it is necessary to increase economic resilience by diversifying the economic base and securing growth in important opportunity sectors (Essex County council, 2014). Like the UK Essex has made considerable gains in in terms of efforts towards achieving the SDGs and this is explain in the table below:

Table 1: The SGD's and Associated Government Policies in the Borough of Essex

SDGs	Associated Policies
Goal 1: No Poverty	The Housing and Regeneration Act of 2008 in Essex requires local authorities to "make social/council housing available to people whose needs are not adequately served by the commercial housing market," and this type of housing is subject

to the Regulating the Standards guidance (ESSEX.GOV.UK, 2022).

Goal 2: Zero Hunger

Through the eating well program the Borough of Essex support close to 40, 000 children from low income households and deprived areas with free meals during school holidays (Essex County Council, 2022)

Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being

The Essex Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, which runs from 2018 to 2022, aim to improve 55% mental health, address 66% obesity, change conditions and behaviors associated with health inequality, and support people who have chronic illnesses and disabilities and improving health at all levels (ESSEX.GOV.UK, 2022)

Goal 4: Quality Education

All school-age children in Essex receive free education in a variety of settings, with 85% of English schools receiving "good" or "outstanding" ratings from Ofsted as of December 2018, up from 82% in August 2015 and 68% in August 2010.

Goal 5: Gender Equality

Equalities Strategy 2015–18 and Equalities Policy Statement. Section 146 of the Equality Act of 2010 establishes the equality duty for the public sector in Essex aims at enhancing laws and regulations to end discrimination and advance gender equality (University of Essex, 2022)

Goal 6: Clean Water Sanitation	The Waste Local Plan policy for Essex aim to ensure proper waste management now and in the. The plan allocates sites capable of providing 490,000 tpa of inert waste recycling and landfill sites that can accommodate 14.08 million tonnes (Essex County Council, 2017)
Goal 8: Decent work and Economic Growth	Essex County Council has committed about £10m investment in economic growth £500,000 into a financial wellbeing programmer (Essex County Council, 2022)
Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities	❖ All workers over 25 in the UK are now covered by the National Living Wage. In the Borough of Essex women make up more than 60% of its beneficiaries. The Essex County Council pledges in the 2018 Good Work Plan to uphold workers' employment rights and guarantee that they can access fair, decent work (University of Essex, 2022)
Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities	Investment £42m of into Colchester and Harlow by renewing existing communities and building high quality new ones
Goal 13: Climate Action	Essex Council Net Zero policy envision to make Essex a carbon neutral and sets recommendations to 2050 aim to £200m to its plan on climate and lunched £500,000 to support community action plans that tackles climate change (Essex County Council, 2020)

Goal 17: Partnership for the Goals	Working with partners Essex has secured £489m from the housing infrastructure fund and £27m from building fund project which funds have been channeled to the development of other key areas of the SDGs (Essex County Council, 2020)
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Status of Implementation Of Goal 3 By Essex.

In the area of quality education progress of young people to higher education across Greater Essex has been variable (Essex County Council, 2022). As of 2021, Essex had 508 primary schools and 134 secondary schools with only 7% being privately owned as well as the University of Essex to offer higher education (Ibid). Between 2014 and 2021 the progression rate for young people who reached 18 and participated in higher education was 31.9% in Essex, 30.2% in Southend and in Thurrock it was 22.6% compared to a national progression rate of 32.6% for the United Kingdom for the same period (ibid). According to Essex County Council, (2022) Anglia Ruskin University and the University of Essex offer the majority of higher education in the area with the university of Essex ranking among the first 50 universities globally in 2020. Six of the further education colleges and Writtle University College offer higher education provision (directly funded and through partnership arrangements) and of the general further education colleges, South Essex College, Harlow College and Colchester Institute have the largest number of higher education students.

Analysis is based on figure from the latest reporting between 2018 and 2021. In terms of the proportion of disadvantaged pupils, overall, Essex has a lower proportion of

disadvantaged pupils than England nationally (Education policy institute-EPI, 2022). Thus in all phases of education, fewer pupils in Essex are disadvantaged compared to the national average for instance in early years which also known as the reception years only 10.8 per cent of early years pupils in Essex were eligible for free school meals in 2018/19, compared to 14.1 per cent nationally across UK. Also at the key stage about 23.9 per cent of pupils finishing key stage 2 in Essex were disadvantaged and living in deprived areas in 2018/19, compared with 30.5 per cent nationally. Moreover for key stage 4 close 18.5 per cent of pupils finishing key stage 4 in Essex were disadvantaged in 2019/20, compared with 24.1 per cent nationally (EPI, 2022)

However, disadvantage gaps in Essex are consistently wider than the national average for every phase of education, except for the gap in early years, which is narrower than the national average (EPI, 2022). However, in recent years the early years gap has been widening in Essex and is now nearly in line with the national average. According to EPI (2022), in relation to attainment Essex has proven to be consistently above or below the national average for all stage/phases of education For example in early years: the average total point score in Essex 2018-2019 was 35.0 according to the Early years foundation stage profile (2022) this was higher than the national average of 34.6 (on a scale from 17 to 51). Again with regards to key stage 2: In Essex the average scaled score was 103.3 in 2018/19, which is very close to the national average of 103.2 (EYFSP, 2022). In relation to key stage 4, in 2018/19, the average General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) points achieved in English and maths in Essex was 4.6, and in 2019/20 (following exam disruption) this figure was 4.9. This is in line with 4.6 and 4.9 nationally (EPI, 2022) Lastly youth who were 19-year-olds and in school in Essex achieve similar

levels of qualifications to other students nationally; however, attainment varies depending on which types of qualifications are entered.(EPI, 2022)

CONCLUSION

A broad review of literature reveals that even though the UK have had significant achievement in three of the seventeen SDGs' implementation, there is more to be done in terms of the remaining fourteen goals. Various interventions, policies or projects designed in line with the SDGs are being implemented by various departments with aim of successfully achieving the global goals. However, a review of the various policies, projects and strategies towards achieving the goals show that there is still much to be done by the various departments responsible for implementation of the strategies and policies. The global Covid-19 pandemic has negatively impacted progress across all sectors of national economies across the globe, and the UK cannot insulate itself from it. For instance, a report published by the UK Department for Works and Pensions in 2021 showed how the Covid-19 pandemic had a ravaging impact on people's livelihoods hence the need to deliver welfare support package competently and compassionately during the period. With regards to the borough of Essex, it can be concluded that, it has had significant benefits from the implementation of various interventions towards achieving the SDG goal 3 compared majority of its peers in the UK

RECOMMENDATIONS.

1. Given the interruption of progress towards achieving the global SDG goals, by the UK, it is important that the various departments tasked to implement the SDGs expedite action in order to meet the 2030 timeline for achieving the goals.

2. Work with partners, to deliver place-based regeneration and growth programmes, addressing the socioeconomic determinants of health that is income, education, employment, and housing in order to reduce the proportion of the Essex population living in the most deprived by 20% of by 2030 (Essex County Council, 2022)
3. Ensure that social protection programs are part of a comprehensive set of interventions that can foster grass root development to help households escape and stay out of poverty over time (Bound 2019).
4. As required by SDG Indicator 2.3.2, the Essex County Council should develop an updated inclusive data strategy to collect and report disaggregated data on marginalized populations such as pastoralists, fishermen, family farmers, and indigenous people (Bond, 2019).
5. The Essex County council should capitalize on the UK's efforts in driving partnership for development to secure collaboration in all forms for tackling the development challenges in the area (Fox and Macleod 2022)..

