

Our Quality of Life



What is the quality of life we want in the UK for the next thirty years?

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Introduction

This question lies at the heart of Anthropy’s purpose and is the focus of this ‘People’ Accord, which considers every stage of life from cradle to grave.

Defining the future we want for ourselves, our families, and our communities, requires us to think not only about today’s pressing needs but also about the kind of society we wish to build for generations to come. It asks us to look beyond short-term fixes and political cycles and to shape a longer-term vision of what it means to live well in Britain.

The results show that across the UK, there is a growing sense that life for the average person is not improving, that despite the rhetoric, the reality is one of stagnation or even decline. Disillusionment with political claims and leadership has eroded public trust, while systemic failings have left people feeling sceptical, unheard, underserved, and uncertain about the future. Unless addressed, this sense of drift threatens to undermine the cohesion and shared values upon which our society depends.

Yet, alongside this difficult picture lies sincere optimism. Our research indicated that Anthropists are more negative than the general public about the present, and more critical than most about opportunities for young people. However, they were also more positive, compared with the wider public (and with participants at Anthropy23) about Britain’s potential over the next two decades to play an important and positive role in the world. This contrast between dissatisfaction with today and confidence in tomorrow signals a strong motivation to create change. The research also reflects a determination to look beyond short-term fixes and political cycles, bringing long-term thinking into the debate in a way that is less often seen in media or public discourse.

This Accord is structured to begin by examining [the current reality](#), before confronting the [uncomfortable truths](#) that often go unspoken. From there, we identify the [key principles for the path ahead](#) and make the [economic case](#), before concluding with a [summary](#) that distils the shared ambitions and insights captured throughout.

The Vision: from individual to collective agency

Many people no longer believe they can make a difference on their own.

Only 23%

of adults believe they can personally influence decisions affecting their local area¹ - the lowest ever recorded (2024) and the solutions presented consistently emphasise the need for collective action.

A quote from the disability rights movement was used more than once at Anthropy25:

“not for us without us”

emphasising that the future requires co-creation from inception, not consultation later.

The current reality

An evidence-led view of where we stand today, grounded in the conversations held at Anthropy25 and supporting research:



Feeling ‘left out’

The evidence paints a sobering picture of Britain today, revealing an eroding social fabric that undermines quality of life across the nation. Since 2005, there has been a 28% decline in libraries, and there has been a 26% fall in the number of pubs since 2001². Youth work funding has decreased by 60% over the last decade³ (2024), leaving young people without crucial support structures. The human cost is evident: over 6 in 10 Britons say they feel ‘left out’, reflecting a profound crisis of belonging⁴ (2024).

 IPSOS INSIGHT

Only **31%** of the public think people have equal opportunities to get ahead, while among Anthropists this is even lower, at just **15%**.

Trust in our systems and institutions has reached crisis levels. In 2024, a staggering 72% felt they could not influence decisions affecting the UK as a whole⁵, while 58% ‘almost never’ trust politicians to tell the truth when in a tight corner - up 19 points from 2020⁶.



Health

15% of children aged 2-15 were obese in 2022⁷, and one in four young people now have a common mental health condition⁸ (2025).

The housing and health crisis compounds these challenges. In 2017 it was calculated that poor housing alone costs the NHS in Wales £95 million per year⁹ (2019). Poor-quality housing often overlaps with affordability pressures as people are less able to afford safer homes, heating, insulation, or repairs.

 IPSOS INSIGHT

Our data reveals that the NHS is a top issue facing Britain today in the minds of the general public (**67%**) and is also a top issue facing the UK for **50%** of Anthropists too. At the same time nearly half of the public (**47%**) and **71%** of Anthropists reported dissatisfaction with the NHS and social care.

These numbers indicate widespread recognition of the pressures on the nation’s healthcare systems but also continued confidence in its value and potential.



Cost of living

Cost of living is taking its toll.

64,000 households needed assistance from British Gas Energy Trust for fuel poverty¹⁰ (2025). House prices have reached 7.7 times median full-time earnings in England and Wales¹¹ (2025), with 1.3 million households on England’s social housing waiting lists¹² (2025).

Meanwhile, the number of economically inactive people remains over 444,000 higher than pre-pandemic levels¹³ (2025), while 948,000 young people aged 16-24 are classed as NEET - not in employment, education, or training¹⁴ (2025). This level of economic inactivity reflects a slowing of the job market which compounds the impact of the cost-of-living crisis as those affected have fewer opportunities to build secure livelihoods, progress in their careers, or achieve financial independence, and may need to rely on community or state support.

While there is hope in some growth areas, for example in the form of the UK’s net-zero economy which grew 10% in the past year (contributing £83.1 billion)¹⁵ (2025), the trajectory of the wider economy remains volatile and uncertain.

Uncomfortable truths

Reflections on the barriers and risks which may be relevant to consider when striving for authentic and lasting change:



Self-deprecation can become self-defeating

UK culture has a reputation for self-deprecation and its potential negative impact on economic performance and national morale is becoming increasingly recognised. Encouraging more confidence and optimism could foster greater innovation, investment, and engagement among the population. Anthropists, given their roles and perspectives, often have a heightened awareness of the scale and breadth of the challenges ahead. This awareness, while sobering, also places them in a unique position to lead with purpose. Connection, community, and evidence that change is possible can be a powerful source of energy and hope and resolve.

IPSOS INSIGHT

62% of Anthropists expect opportunities for young people to get worse over the next few years, as our data highlighted and **48%** of the general public do as well.



Economic inequality

Economic inequality is a prevalent issue in UK society and has long-term effects on individuals and communities. For example, only 23% of former Free School Meal (FSM) recipients earn above the Living Wage by the time they turn 25 compared to 43.5% of former students who did not receive FSMs¹⁶ (2022). 29% of former FSM recipients had no earnings recorded at age 25, compared with 15% of former pupils who were not reliant on FSMs¹⁶ (2022).

Without financial stability at home, families may be less resilient to challenges caused by the likes of climate change or economic shocks. This can create a vicious cycle where those most vulnerable to future disruptions are least equipped to handle them.



Division can make a lot of money

The eve of a new digital age and the rise of AI presents challenges we are only beginning to understand. Simultaneously, media revenue models rely on advertising and maximum engagement, which can lead to driving clickbait, fake news and populism.

This age of digital immersion also changes the way in which people, predominantly younger generations, source their news and form their perspectives. One perspective shared at Anthropy25 was that Gen Z may have ‘as much confidence in a friend, an influencer, or in a one-man blog as they do in trusted, professional, fact-checked media’. This illustrates a concerning trend in the shifting of trust and influence across the media spectrum.



Change is a constant

Perhaps most challengingly, the pace of change has become exponential while our capacity to respond remains incremental. As one speaker observed, “Humans look to the past to plan the future. But it’s exponential now, it’s completely different.” The scale is staggering: 92 million jobs are expected to be displaced due to structural labour-market transformation¹⁷ (2025), while 39% of workers’ existing skill sets will be transformed or become outdated over 2025-2030¹⁷ (2025). These statistics illustrate the uncertainty many Britons are faced with which cause anxiety in many and make it more difficult to establish long term plans.

Key principles for the path ahead

Certain principles emerged as relevant to bear in mind when shaping decisions to ensure that any progress achieved is equitable and sustainable:



Keeping the goal in sight

Wealth should be a means to wellbeing, not the final goal. There is a small but increasing number of organisations working to support the development of metrics that measure success by wellbeing, rather than income alone.

IPSOS INSIGHT

67% of the public say the NHS is a top priority and **50%** of Anthropists, and our research also tells us that mental health specifically is a top priority for **38%** of Anthropists and **31%** of the public.



Community based models

Community power and ownership could become central to how we organise society, focusing on community strengths and building on local assets. Communities owning and controlling key infrastructure, people owning and stewarding land, represents a fundamental shift in power and helps to build active citizenship.

Stronger communities may also help to alleviate individuals' sense of being 'left out' and lacking agency as well as strengthen their resilience to shocks by having access to a greater support network.



Long-term thinking

Governing for seven generations offers the opportunity to consider every decision against whether it undermines tomorrow's opportunities for today's gain.

IPSOS INSIGHT

81% of Anthropists and **34%** of the public believe that the government focuses too much planning for the short term compared with the long term.

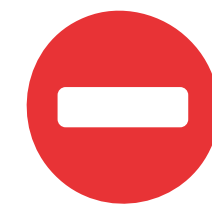


Radical transparency

Trust can be rebuilt through radical transparency. This requires honest reporting about what is working versus 'pretending it is working', with demonstrable outcomes shown through real stories brought to life.

IPSOS INSIGHT

When asked which single words best describe the type of leaders Britain needs to face the challenges of today both Anthropists and the general public cited 'honesty' and 'integrity' at the very top.



Exclusion hurts everyone

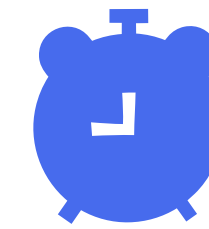
Untapped potential represents enormous opportunity for growth.

For example, the opportunity exists to increase annual Gross Value Added (GVA) from ethnic minority owned businesses from £25 billion to £100 billion¹⁸ (2023).

It was also cited that currently only 2p is received by all-female founder teams for every £1 of equity investment¹⁹ (2024).

The economic case

An outline highlighting the business and economic benefits that can emerge when we take a broader view of people, value, and impact:



Productivity gains

Direct returns on investment can be substantial and measurable. For example, AI is projected to deliver \$4.5 billion in productivity gains for IBM in 2025²⁰ (2025), showing what is possible if comprehensively implemented.

Productivity was further explored with research suggesting a 13% productivity increase for ‘happy workers’²¹ (2019), once again emphasising the need to shift the measure of success to include wellbeing in the workplace.

However, much caution is needed given the UK skills shortage could cost an estimated £120 billion to the economy in 2030 if unaddressed²² (2019).



Social factors affecting health

Preventing problems is often the most powerful way to create change. Since 80% of health outcomes stem from social determinants; social, behavioural, economic, and environmental factors, investing in communities can reduce healthcare costs²³ (2023). Volunteering, belonging, mental health and local renewal widely correlate with research showing engagement to build resilience in people and communities.

A call to action

What steps can leaders, organisations and communities take to improve life in the UK?

Amplifying existing activity

The UK has frameworks, standards and campaigns that either actively campaign on or support businesses to take a more holistic approach to running an organisation²⁴. This includes ensuring businesses are legally responsible for benefiting workers, customers, communities and the environment while delivering profit. The role of business as an employer, ethical supplier and positive contributor to the communities within which it operates, can have a significant contribution to quality of life for both individuals, families and communities.

Backing what works

Communities have enormous power to drive change from the ground up. Supporting community-led cooperative structures or shared ownership can revitalise town centres and create local wealth.

Scaling individual and corporate volunteering locally connects people and builds the social fabric essential for resilience.

Summary

Improving the quality of life in the UK over the next thirty years requires a shift from short-term fixes to multi-generational thinking, and from individual success to collective thriving.

While 70% of Britons believe the country is getting worse not better (2025), the evidence shows we have the assets, capabilities and emerging solutions to build something extraordinary²⁵.

The path forward demands we confront uncomfortable truths

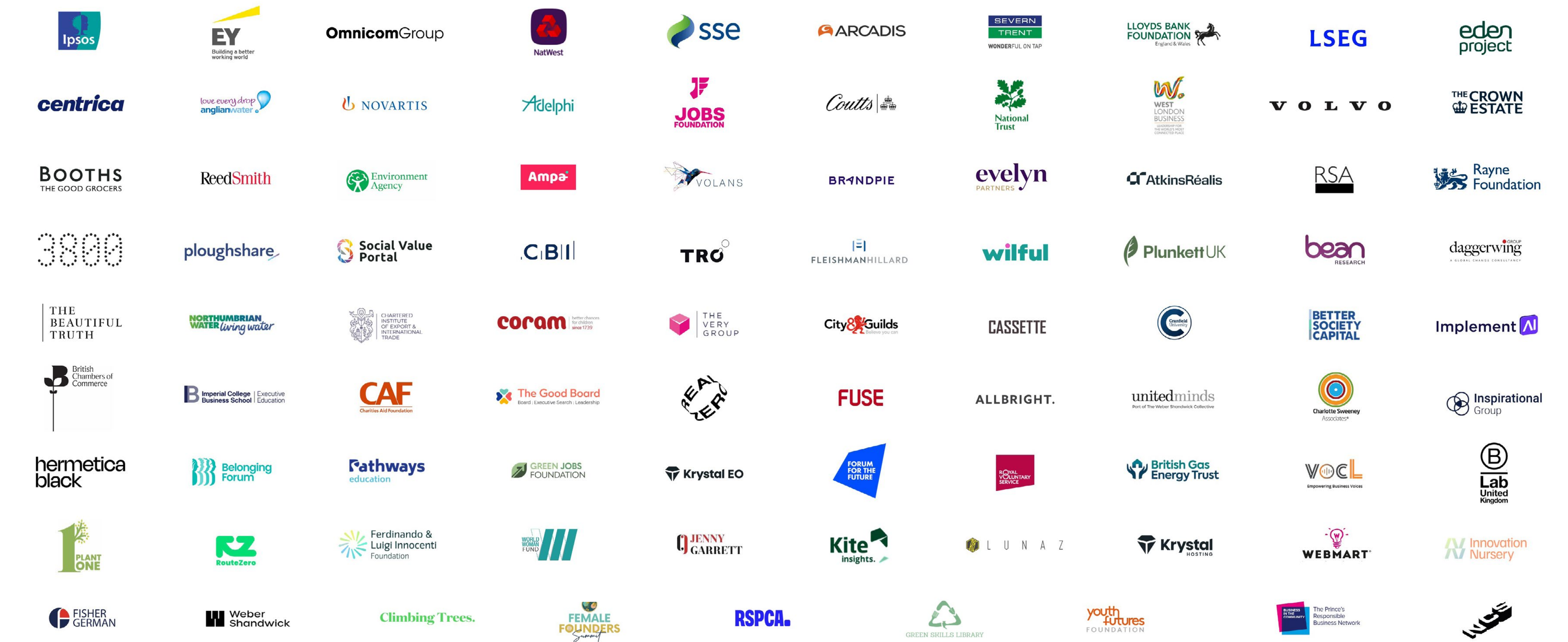
We must move to invest in ourselves, structurally embed equality in our systems, and address the mismatch between the exponential pace of change and our incremental responses. It also reveals immense opportunity in the green transition, in untapped human potential, and in the power of connected communities.

For leaders across all sectors and levels, the message is clear - The People agenda calls for a collective responsibility not just to improve services, systems and outcomes but to restore a sense of direction and hope. It asks policymakers and organisational leaders to look beyond short-term metrics and recognise their role in sustaining the civic values of honesty, fairness, creativity and reliability, which people still hold dear.

Meeting this responsibility means re-engaging everyone in shaping a future they can believe in, addressing the inequalities and inefficiencies that hold people back, and rebuilding the trust that has been lost. In doing so we can encourage greater confidence that we can create the conditions for a Britain that is united in purpose, confident in its future, and committed to a better quality of life for all.

With thanks to our members

We extend thanks to the following members who contributed to Anthropy25, and those who have joined us since: Your support is vital to the continuing Anthropy mission of inspiring a better Britain.



Further information

At the Anthropy national gathering, we also asked three further questions, each with their own summary:

What qualities of place and planet do we need to achieve our desired quality of life?

What qualities do we wish to see in a good economy and in the best of businesses and public sector organisations?

What qualities do we want to express to the world, to help solve shared issues such as poverty, climate change, and human rights?

Keen to explore any of this in more detail? Remember, if you were an Anthropy25 ticket holder, you can still open the Anthropy App, navigate to any session and listen back to the session recording, just like a podcast.

We have also taken this incredible volume of insights a step further – from these Accords, 10 overlapping ‘intersections’ are born. These intersections represent a new perspective on overlapping challenges, and tangible routes forward.

We welcome your contribution to inspiring a better Britain, and to Anthropy26. There are several ways to be involved in our next national gathering:

- **Corporate Membership.** Our corporate members guide the national agenda, involve their networks and inspire impact.
- **Individual Membership.** Our individual members attend the national gathering and support a variety of activities.
- Participate. Join us at the **national gathering**.
- Become an Anthropist. Even if you are unable to make the next gathering, at no cost anyone can **sign up to the Anthropy Charter** and become an Anthropist by applying these principles, and following the Anthropy Pathway to identify and create impact within their own area of influence.

Methodology

Anthropist survey: Ipsos interviews took place online from 26 March to 9 May 2025. A total of 504 adults aged 16+ completed the survey.

Citizen survey: Ipsos interviewed a Nationally Representative quota sample of 731 – 1,176 (depending on the question) adults aged 16+ in the UK. Interviews took place online using the Ipsos i:omnibus solution from 14 – 17 March 2025. Minimum quotas on the UK Omnibus are age, gender, region and working status. Data has been weighted to the known offline population proportions.

These Accords have been shaped by the contribution of our c.2,000 participants at Anthropy25, as well as the public who responded to the Ipsos surveys.

Our heartfelt thanks goes out to everyone who has contributed, and although we cannot possibly hope to include every opinion, every solution and every idea, we can confirm that every conversation was transcribed and reviewed and has contributed in some way to these summaries. AI tools were used to assist in transcribing, analysing and drafting portions of these Accords. All information, analysis, and conclusions remain subject to human editorial oversight and approval.

These Accords reflect not consensus, but the commitment of so many to engage in open, sometimes uncomfortable but always constructive dialogue. The courage to collaborate is the spirit of Anthropy.

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Inspiring a better Britain





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