

# Can housing stem the Northern brain drain?

Homes for the North will shortly publish research which takes a fresh look at data on graduate retention and attraction to towns and cities across the North. The study also examines the extent to which housing plays a role in locational choice for highly qualified and mobile members of the workforce, drawing on the results of a specially commissioned ComRes poll.

## The main findings of the data analysis show that:

- Over the past decade, **310,000** highly qualified British resident workers have left the North with only **235,000** moving in the opposite direction. **This is partly because three years after graduation just half of all employed students educated in the North remain in the regions.**
- Within the North, the challenge of retaining and attracting highly skilled workers differs from area to area. Metropolitan areas such as **Greater Manchester and South Yorkshire fare much better at keeping hold of 18-34 year olds than more peripheral areas.**
- **This loss of talented workers has fed a qualification deficit which puts business investment at risk.** In most parts of the North, companies report that key vacancies are hard to fill because of a shortage of applicants.
- **But the majority of northern city regions have masked this problem by attracting highly qualified younger workers from outside the UK to fill the deficit.** With political commitments to reduce the level of immigration, successful northern cities could begin to struggle.

The challenge for central policymakers, council leaders and the incoming Metro Mayors is to work out how to stem the 'brain drain' and reinforce a net inflow of highly qualified graduates to towns and cities in the North, particularly if overseas migration tails off. Housing could clearly play a role once negative perceptions are addressed, and if the right products are on offer in the right places. The availability, affordability and quality of homes in the North could be seen as an attractive option for many people.

## The polling adds extra insight:

- As expected, **jobs and career prospects are the main drivers of location choice**, but housing does play a surprisingly important role when people think about their post-university future.
- When considering where to live after graduating, around two thirds of respondents agree that the cost and quality of housing are important factors. **Seven in ten recent graduates say that the affordability of housing to buy is important when they are considering where to live.**
- **Half** of the highly qualified people surveyed put the cost of housing in the **top three things** they would consider when moving in the future.
- Place factors are also significant, with **8 in 10** graduates aged **25-35** saying that the availability of housing in well-maintained neighbourhoods is important when they are considering where to live.
- But perceptions of the North can be harsh, with graduate views of the South of England being more positive when it comes to the quality of housing, schools and quality of life in general – not forgetting the weather! **One in five graduates say that the weather in the North is a significant reason why they do not live in there.**
- Again, there are key differences within the North, with more positive perceptions of larger metropolitan areas. **Over half of 25-35 year old graduates would consider moving to Greater Manchester if they were guaranteed a job with the same salary**, in contrast to just one in five who would consider moving to Middlesbrough, Preston or Hull.