![Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government logo]

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

The Communities Fund

Report of Evaluation Findings

Contents

Glossary

Glossary of key terms

Term or phrase	Definition / description
VCS organisation	Voluntary or community sector organisation. Each project had to involve at least one VCS organisation, working in partnership with the local authority.
Logic model	A visual representation of the expected inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts of each project. The logic models all followed a standard template defined by DCLG, and also set out each project's underpinning context, objectives and rationale. Project leads each developed a logic model for their project during autumn 2017.
CBA	Cost Benefit Analysis. Project leads were supported to undertake CBA of their own projects, using the New Economy CBA tool and guidance. Each CBA produced a return on investment figure and followed a standardised process.
ROI	Return on investment. This is the amount of value generated for every £1 invested in a project. This was calculated at project level by project leads, as part of the CBA process.
Cashability	Extent to which benefits can be realised as 'cash' savings, such that the funding could be reallocated elsewhere. The estimation of cashable savings is imprecise: estimates of what is cashable will be approximate and based on negotiations between commissioners and providers rather than solely on a formula or calculation.[1]
Financial (or fiscal) benefits	Savings to the public sector due to a specific project (e.g. reduced health service, police or education costs). These should be informed by the cashability of the benefits.
Economic or public value benefits	These are the economic and social benefits emerging from a project or intervention; this is a measure of the overall value to society.

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[1] https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/1584/cashability_discussion_paper.pdf

Term or phrase	Definition / description
Attribution	Extent to which any outcomes (positive or negative) can be causally linked or 'attributed' to a particular intervention or activity.
Payback period	A payback period calculates the point at which the fiscal costs of the programme have been recouped, hence this is only applicable to projects where the financial benefits are larger than the financial outlay. Only projects with an ROI over one (e.g. a positive ROI) have a payback period.
Learning share event / workshop	SQW designed and facilitated two learning share events, one in May 2018 and one in December 2018, to enable project leads to share emerging learning and reflections. Participation by all project leads was encouraged, and external speakers were invited to provide new insights to each event.
Beneficiary / participant	Terms used interchangeably throughout the report. This refers to local people who benefitted from or took part in project activities. Examples of beneficiaries include people with complex needs, or people out of work. This can refer to adults and/or children, depending on the project focus.
Theme / thematic area	Funded projects were categorised into 'thematic areas' by the Department for Communities and Local Government, following grant award. The themes corresponded with the main focus of project activity or target beneficiaries. Themes were not mutually exclusive, and many projects spanned more than one thematic area (although each project was only allocated to one theme).

Executive Summary

Introduction to the Communities Fund and its evaluation

The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG, formerly known as the Department for Communities and Local Government, DCLG) launched the Communities Fund in December 2016. Local authorities, with neighbourhood, voluntary or community organisations (VCS), were invited to submit applications for grants of up to £70,000 to deliver solutions to entrenched social issues within their local communities. The Fund totalled £3.2million; its purpose was to finance new projects or to extend existing projects into new areas.

The Communities Fund built on the legacy of the MHCLG's previous programmes, including the Our Place and Delivering Differently in Neighbourhoods programmes, aiming to bring together local grassroots community groups to serve those with multiple and complex needs in delivering tailored, sustainable solutions to meet increasing and ever more complex needs.

In total, **54 projects were funded through the Communities Fund programme**; however, one project did not progress to delivery. Projects were funded up to 31 March 2018, with the expectation that delivery and monitoring would continue post-funding, and that interventions and approaches would be sustained where shown to have a positive impact.

SQW, a research and consultancy organisation, was commissioned to undertake an independent evaluation of the Communities Fund programme. The evaluation ran from September 2017 to February 2019, generating process and outcome evidence, and providing evaluation capability building support to the funded projects.

The evaluation methodology followed a three-phase approach, outlined in the Table 1 below.

Table 1: **Methodology summary**

Phase 1 feeding into Phase 2	Phase 2 feeding into phase 3	Phase 3 – concluding research
Inception meeting	Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA) Workshops X 2	Analysis and Report
Document Review	CBA exemplars and guidance (including FAQs)	MAXQDA and Excel/Stata
Logic Model Review and tailored feedback	Collate and quality assure CBA from all projects	Triangulation
Steering group meeting to validate approach	Monitoring data gathering (4 waves)	Validation workshop
	Site visits and consultants – case studies X7	Case study write ups and CBA verification
	Verification of the case study logic models	Final report with summary
		Slide deck and data annex
		Final presentation
Evaluation framework(s) and protocol	Further events/workshops x 2; Thematic communities of practice	
Working style: All phases were associated with collaborative working, flexibility, tailored support, exploring sustainability, fortnightly updates and steering and management group meetings		

This report presents a snap shot of emerging outcome and impact data. Greater outcomes and impacts are likely emerge outside of the evaluation timescales. The key outcomes achieved, by project type and geographic location are presented in table 2 below.

Table 2: Key outcome for projects, by geographical area[2]

Region	Outcomes
North East	Developed referral pathways with multi-agency partnerships
Yorkshire	Improved Community Cohesion Reduced substance abuse and increased employability Improved employment prospects Improved social inclusion and employment prospects Improved employment prospects
North West	Reduced anti-social behaviour Improved wellbeing and employability Reduced pressure on frontline services Improved employability prospects Reduced loneliness and improved mental health Improved access to community services Improved health and wellbeing skills Increased training and volunteer opportunities
West Midlands	Reduced social isolation Reduced Loneliness Increase access to services Improve employability and life skills
East Midlands	Improved health and wellbeing Improved mental and emotional health Increased apprenticeships Co-production of services
East of England	Reduced pressure on primary care Reduced isolation for disabled adults Increased access to transport services Improved physical health Improved health and wellbeing Improved access to services Improved access to volunteering
South West	Increased awareness of dementia Reduced rates of offending Reduced pressure on A&E and hospitals Improved employability prospects Developed employability skills Increased integration between services Improve social networks and soft skills Improved health and wellbeing
South East	Improved transitions from school Improved soft skills and wellbeing Improved employability for NEETs Access to apprenticeships for young people Improved life skills Improved physical and mental wellbeing

[2] MHCLG developed the thematic categories following programme inception and project selection, based on project application forms and priorities for the Fund.

	Reduced homelessness
London	Improved support networks Improved employability prospects for carers Improved pathways to employment Reduced mental health relapses and self-harm Increased integration between services Improved soft and employability skills Improved health and wellbeing

Project Activities

Many partnerships were based on pre-existing relationships, offering efficiencies and enabling projects to mobilise quickly. It is expected that partnership working will be sustainable for many, with cultural changes[3] reported. For example, project leads report increased willingness by partner organisations to collaborate on projects, and a desire to continue working together to improve outcomes for local communities.

The number of beneficiaries that projects worked with varied significantly, from four to 14,000 participants. Whilst the reach of projects does not always correlate with funding received, it does generally inversely correlate to the intensity of support provided. Those projects reaching larger numbers of people typically did not provide intensive or one-to-one support; or where this was provided, it was through signposting to other partners or organisations. Those reaching fewer beneficiaries were better able to address needs holistically, but this is time-consuming and limits overall reach.

Projects delivered a range of interventions designed to improve people's lives in many different ways. Project activity in practice did not differ greatly from what was originally expected, although some did undertake additional activities if they identified a gap in provision.

In general, three intervention or beneficiary support models were used by projects. These were:

- **Signposting**: this involved lighter touch work with greater numbers of beneficiaries. This model offered larger reach potential, relying on partnership networks to provide a range of support. However, it is not always clear if needs have been addressed, or whether support was taken up.

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[3] E.g. integrated working practices between local services, increased propensity for collaboration, dissemination of collaborative working to other areas of organisations

- **Intensive support**: this model provides a more holistic approach to addressing beneficiary needs, and often involved 'handholding', providing intensive and/or wrap-around support for a relatively small number of individuals.
- **Focused support**: this model involved supporting beneficiaries to develop specific skills and competencies, and enabled relatively large numbers to be reached. However, wider needs may remain unaddressed, which may limit beneficiaries' ability to achieve positive outcomes.

Table 3 presents an overview of the types of activities undertaken by different types of projects.

Table 3: Project activity by thematic area

Adult Social Care	Support access to services for vulnerable adults e.g. community services, social prescribing. Recruit link workers, volunteers or community champions to support beneficiaries Provide opportunities for 1:1 and peer support
Children	Activities for young people e.g. play sessions, excursion, volunteering and training Work with parents of vulnerable young people (e.g. 1:1 support, co-production of resource) Monitor and evaluate delivery publish findings
Complex Needs	Provide flexible and often intensive support sometimes through link workers Multi-agency approach to support access to services Provide training opportunities for beneficiaries and those who work with beneficiaries
Employment	Provide training to develop employability and soft skills, Provide work experience or volunteering opportunities Work with employers, job centres and local communities to support transition into work
Homelessness	Work with housing associations, and other statutory agencies Provide intensive support, including through training opportunities

	Develop volunteering opportunities for beneficiaries
Social Prescribing	Work with local communities to provide social activities, networks and training opportunities Engage GPs and other health professionals Offer and sign post to other specialist support around wellbeing and healthy lifestyles
Multi-Service Hub	Develop partnerships with agencies and community centres Provide information, advice and guidance to support access to services Develop and deliver community activities e.g. family wellbeing activities, coffee mornings and wellbeing programmes

Outcomes and Impacts

All project leads report that all or some of their anticipated outcomes and impacts had been achieved. Whilst not every project achieved all their expected outcomes and impacts, some project delivery remains ongoing. Additionally, nearly half (47%) of project leads reported achieving outcomes and impacts over and above those originally anticipated, and 13 projects reported achieving all of their intended outcomes and impacts. These projects were focused on complex needs, employment and social prescribing, the first two of which typically were aiming for more focused and measurable outcomes than other types of projects.

The types of outcomes experienced varied by project and thematic area, but the key outcomes identified included:

- Improved **employment** prospects, including engagement in volunteering, and previously unemployed people accessing (and sustaining) paid employment
- Increased or new **skills,** including social skills, as well as technical (e.g. bike repair or landscaping) and IT skills
- Improved **health and wellbeing**, including increased confidence, increased activity rates, and reduced social isolation and loneliness (a significant impact reported by 19 funded projects)
- Greater **access** to appropriate services, including earlier intervention to prevent crises and escalation of need, and reduced inappropriate service use.

Some project leads also noticed an unanticipated **ripple effect** on those close to intended beneficiaries, including family members, partners and friends/peers.

Impacts on the wider community

The Communities Fund projects benefited the local communities. A **more cohesive, better integrated community** was highlighted as a key impact of the Communities Fund across all thematic areas by 13 project leads. For some projects, activity centred around supporting new arrivals to integrate into the community. Other projects improved community cohesion by improving awareness of issues that people may not be familiar with, e.g. dementia; whilst others built **improved support networks within communities**, and improved intergenerational relationships.

A **reduction in anti-social behaviour** through project activities was reported by five projects across children, complex needs and multi-service hubs, leading to safer and more secure communities, and positively impacting on general wellbeing.

Impacts on local services

Seven complex needs projects highlighted successes in **reducing A&E attendance, hospital admissions and ambulance call outs**. Social prescribing projects highlighted reduced pressure on GPs and the wider health service. Four complex needs projects noted a **reduction in beneficiary offending,** whilst four project leads reported that their interventions had **reduced the use of adult and children's social care services**.

Whilst most projects highlighted a reduction in service use, nine project leads stated that their intervention led to **increased use of services, due to improved beneficiary access and earlier intervention**, avoiding crises and escalation of need. This shift in the types of support accessed is important; this typically requires whole system approaches, ensuring resources are available to meet people's needs as early as possible to prevent escalation and crisis. Such approaches can often be difficult to introduce without upfront evidence of savings and reduced demand for statutory services; the Communities Fund enabled local partnerships to trial innovative approaches ('double-running' services to mitigate risk), without the need for the same level of upfront evidence typically required by commissioners.

Longterm impacts expected

Many of the impacts of the Communities Fund are not yet evident, and work remains ongoing to support impact realisation in the future. Table 4 below shows the main long term impacts anticipated by projects.

Table 4: Planned long term impacts from projects

Theme	Long term impacts expected
Adult social care	• A reduction in social isolation and improved support networks • Improved wellbeing, and improved mental health • Improved inclusivity within communities
Children	• Improved wellbeing, including improved safety and happiness • Reduction in those disengaged with education, employment or training • Improved partnership working
Complex needs	• Improved quality of life (e.g. increased life expectancy, safety) • Reduced pressure on statutory services, leading to cost savings • Improved trust in services • Reduction in crime, reoffending and anti-social behaviour
Employment	• Reduced unemployment, increased financial stability and reduced poverty • Improved health and wellbeing • Reduction of young people not in education, employment or training • Improved confidence and aspiration
Homelessness	• Improved health and wellbeing, including mental health • Reduced social isolation and improved relationships • Increase in employment

Multi-service hub	• Improved social cohesion and community networks, to reduce isolation • Increase in employment and better financial outcomes • Improved health and wellbeing
Social Prescribing	• Reduced pressure on statutory services, leading to cost savings • Increased health and wellbeing, including reduced health inequalities • Reduced social isolation and an increase in community support networks

Financial implications and Cost Benefit Analysis findings

Project leads were requested to complete a cost benefit analysis (CBA) using New Economy's CBA tool – a tool recommended by MHCLG to identify the fiscal, economic and social values of projects, alongside project costs and resource requirements.

On average, Communities Fund projects presented a financial return on investment (ROI) of 3.6 and a public value ROI of 28.1 – this means that for every £1 spent, projects deliver an average return of £3.60 worth of financial benefits, and £28.10 of economic or public value benefits.

On average the benefits outweigh the costs in the financial case, as the average costs are £173,459 compared to £571,215 of benefits. The economic case focuses on the social or public value benefits of the projects. It follows a similar pattern to the financial case, yielding a large range of public value return on investment from 0.4 to 127.4.

The public value and economic benefits were seven times larger than the fiscal benefits alone[4]. The three top beneficiaries are the Department for Work and Pensions (the main financial beneficiary for 20 projects), the NHS (13 projects) or the local authority (seven projects).

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[4] Note this is using the median economic case benefits divided by the median financial case benefits

Key learning

Enablers

o **Effective partnership working** was a key enabler at project level. This included effective partnerships between the LA and primary VCS organisation, in addition to others involved in project delivery. **Project leads** with strong project management skills, expertise and knowledge of the issues on the ground and genuine passion and enthusiasm for the role enabled project delivery to progress effectively. A **strong project team further** supported project success. Teams which could offer expertise, knowledge and training to beneficiaries were considered key enablers to the project. Furthermore, dedicated and approachable delivery staff were able to build trust with beneficiaries who had previously been difficult to reach

o Projects reported that having a having a stable, accessible, suitably equipped and comfortable **base for delivery** enabled project success. Having a space that was easily accessible to those in the community was of great importance in attracting and retaining beneficiaries to the projects. Furthermore, having a base which was practical for the delivery of project activities was vital.

o The **ability to set up and mobilise quickly** was a key enabler for project progress. Projects with pre-existing relationships with partners, access to beneficiaries and a base for delivery were able to implement recruitment and delivery processes efficiently.

o Evaluation **capacity building support and opportunities to share learning** were cited as helping to develop project lead skills, supporting effective monitoring and offering opportunities to form new partnerships with other project leads.

Challenges

o One of the key challenges faced by projects was the issue of **short term contracts, or staff turnover**. For some projects, the loss of a project lead or an integral member of the team resulted in a loss consistency for beneficiaries, or delays in project delivery.

o Some projects faced challenges which resulted in **slower mobilisation than expected**. One reason for this was variable access to necessary equipment and infrastructure experienced.

o Difficulty in **recruiting beneficiaries** was a key challenge for projects, again, resulting in slower than expected mobilisation. Some projects reached fewer beneficiaries than anticipated due to challenges accessing the hardest to reach individuals in the community. In contrast, some projects reached a far greater number of beneficiaries than expected, which sometimes proved challenging in terms of evidencing outcomes and remaining focused on achieving project aims.

o   Projects who worked with beneficiaries with complex and severe needs reported several challenges, including providing more intensive support than expected resulting in reduced ability to cope with intended numbers of beneficiaries. Projects sometimes found it difficult to access specific interventions for beneficiaries, due to service requirements and access criteria. Establishing appropriate professional boundaries was sometimes a difficult balance, as often a support worker becomes the only 'constant' for beneficiaries. This could potentially result in overreliance and adverse outcomes when exiting relationships, and therefore it is vital that appropriate exit strategies are in place.

o   **Building trust** with beneficiaries was challenging for many projects. Beneficiaries were sometimes wary of becoming involved in projects which they believed might not provide long term or effective support.

Added value of the Fund

o   The majority of project leads reported that **their project would not have happened without the Fund**, and a further seven projects reported that delivery would have happened on a smaller scale. Only one project maintained that delivery would have happened at the same scale anyway. There were no projects who felt they would have achieved all outcomes to the same scale without the Communities Fund. The Fund enabled projects to forge new partnerships, to learn about CBA (which many are confident will help them in future projects, as well as efforts to sustain their Communities Fund projects), and to mobilse far more quickly or at greater scale than would otherwise have been possible.

o   Some projects greatly valued and benefited from the Communities Fund programme, actively engaging with the evaluation, sharing learning events and the CBA process. However, others appeared to view it as simply a grant, and engaged with the programme to a far lesser degree.

Planning for sustainability

o   Projects adopted different approaches to planning for sustainability. Typically, the most common method cited to support sustainability was **obtaining additional funding** to continue the intervention. Twelve projects[5] drew on the communities they operated in, including beneficiaries they had already supported, in order to ensure the sustainability of activity.

o   Several project leads planned to change where, and to whom, their projects deliver. Some planned to **implement their intervention in new geographical areas**, in

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[5] Three multi-service hubs, two adult social care, two children, two employment, one complex needs, one homelessness and one social prescribing.

order to support new clients in need. Others aimed to widen the beneficiary cohort they were supporting. Some projects planned to **change the scope of what they delivered**.

Conclusions

The Communities Fund delivered what it intended to do; funding a wide range of new or expanding interventions and approaches to tackle entrenched social issues affecting local communities. The Fund added significant value, generated a positive return on investment, and enabled projects to achieve outcomes for communities and individuals that would not have been achieved otherwise.

A similar model could well prove successful again; we recommend that MHCLG makes a series of refinements in order to maximise the value and impact of any similar future fund.

The Fund was intentionally designed to encourage a wide range of social issues to be addressed, and this is reflected in the diversity of the projects funded. This in turn enabled a wide range of beneficiaries to be reached. This illustrates the local focus and flexibility of the Fund. The Communities Fund was successful in supporting local statutory and VCS partners to collaborate and jointly develop ideas to tackle issues that really matter to, and directly affect, their local communities. This marks a move away from recent moves towards the commissioning of local services based on needs identified by funders and policy makers, towards a more localised and personalised approach. The flexibility of the Fund enabled those who arguably know their local communities the best – the local authorities and VCS partners operating there – to plan their projects to address gaps in provision, which in many cases fell between or spanned the remits of different funding streams. In many cases, without the Communities Fund, these project would otherwise not have happened.

System-wide approaches have been adopted, which have proved vital in addressing people' needs holistically, and enabling Fund monies to achieve maximum impact. These take time to develop and implement however, and rely on strong partnership networks. It is encouraging that these have been developed across a range of project types (including complex needs and social prescribing projects), and these offer real potential for improving people's life chances moving forwards. We recommend that adoption of a system-wide focus be encouraged in future similar programmes, to avoid any unintentional or unmanageable knock on implications for demand elsewhere in the system, and to help address holistic needs.

It is important to note that project delivery and reach do not always closely align with the amounts of funding awarded, and numbers reached does not always provide a reliable indication of the impacts of projects. Whilst some projects engaged with relatively small numbers of participants, this typically involved high intensity one-to-one or small group work, addressing people's needs holistically, rather than focusing on just one or two areas of need.

The simultaneous focus on both geographical communities and communities of interest, and flexibility of the Fund to encourage local determination of focus, sets the

Fund apart, and has been a key enabler for its success. Interestingly, many of the project outcomes relate to benefits for individuals, as opposed to communities. Perhaps this is to be expected, given Fund timescales, funding amounts and the challenge of evidencing impacts at a community level. However, this is an important point for MHCLG to consider when commissioning future similar programmes; whether or not the achievement of benefits for individuals (in some cases, a handful or relatively low numbers of individuals) is sufficient to achieve the impact at community level sought. Project leads are confident that community level outcomes are emerging due to impacts on individuals, but robust evidence and measurement of this remains a priority for longer term evaluation of the Fund's impacts.

Recommendations for MHCLG (and other government departments looking to run similar programmes)

Sharing learning from the Communities Fund

Recommendation 1: Showcase learning and the good practice examples identified from the Communities Fund projects. Whilst formal reports and case studies provide the depth of insight sought by some, others may more effectively engage with more succinct or visual outputs. We recommend that MHCLG develops a dissemination plan, segmented for different audiences and different formats.

Using learning to support future funds or programmes

Recommendation 2: Consider more tightly defining project expectations. We recommend that MHCLG may wish to consider clarifying funding requirements or expectations for future programmes, to enable expected programme level outcomes (and an indication of what 'good' project outcomes look like, for example in terms of scale or reach) to be clarified to applicants.

Recommendation 3: Establish communities of practice. Some projects formed their own 'communities of practice', engaging with other similar projects operating within the same vicinity. We suggest that in future programmes, MHCLG might usefully seek to establish thematic (or geographic) communities of practice, providing opportunities for project leads to come together outside of formal, facilitated sessions. This could usefully be done at key points during the programme – for example, following initial launch, and to support monitoring and evaluation processes.

Recommendation 4: Maintain a list of potential funders/sponsors. We recommend that in future programmes, MHCLG maintains the list of potential funders and sponsors developed for this programme, and provides an updated version earlier during programme timescales, to inform and support sustainability planning.

Recommendation 5: Be realistic in terms of programme timescales and outcome expectations. We recommend that longer programme timescales be considered in future, and/or expectations be managed regarding the likelihood of projects being sustained post-funding, and the extent of the outcomes likely to be achieved during project timescales.

Recommendation 6: Share learning from previous evaluations more explicitly. We recommend that MHCLG carefully extracts key learning points and good practice examples or principles, and makes these explicit during the project application stage. Ensuring projects state how they will build on evidenced learning or good practice will help to ensure the leads engage in the existing evidence base, and avoid 'reinventing the wheel' with delivery plans.

Evaluation and monitoring

Recommendation 7: Provide clarity regarding reporting requirements at the outset. We recommend providing a clear timeframe and plan, upfront (ideally during the application process), outlining what is expected in terms of monitoring and reporting, key milestones and timeframes for reporting, and details of any standard headings/formats to be used for reporting.

Recommendation 8: Ensure the economic assessment approach is proportionate to project/fund scale. Whilst many projects successfully completed CBAs, and some found the New Economy model particularly useful and effective, others struggled to engage with the process. We suggest that MHCLG ensures the CBA process is proportionate to project and Fund scales. Where a particular approach is required, we recommend making this explicit during the application process, to enable Fund recipients to allocate sufficient resources and time within their plans.

Recommendation 9: Build closer relationships with projects. Projects were (generally) receptive to 1-1 and group engagement, from SQW and MHCLG. In future programmes, we recommend that short calls be built into monitoring plans, to capture insights leads might not feel willing to put in writing, and to build rapport.

Recommendation 10: Follow up with further light-touch evaluation. Given the scale of expected outcomes and financial return on investment, we recommend that MHCLG revisits the funded projects and conducts a light-touch follow up evaluation, to understand the extent to which the anticipated outcomes emerged in reality, and reasons for any deviation from initial expectations. This could take the form of a short follow up survey to projects, one-to-one phone calls with each project lead, and/or requested a refreshed CBA, for example.

Recommendations for those seeking to deliver similar projects

The recommendations below are aimed at.those seeking to achieve positive outcomes and tackle entrenched issues, based on the learning generated from the Communities Fund projects.

Partnerships

Recommendation A: Consider how partners might help to meet beneficiaries' wider needs. Understanding eligibility criteria, waiting times and referral routes of other services and support available locally is key to ensuring beneficiary needs can be met and expectations managed. If referral or signposting to wider support is proving key, consider how or whether these wider partners could be included within sustainability planning.

Recommendation B: Involve all key partners in monitoring, reflection and evaluation. Building monitoring and evaluation into governance arrangements at project level is also recommended, to ensure it receives appropriate focus and prioritisation.

Recommendation C: Plan careful handovers and roles if project manager turnover occurs. Projects typically experienced a loss of momentum in instances where their project manager left; staff turnover is to be expected to some extent when funding is available for short-term posts only. Any loss of momentum and 'history' poses a major risk to short-term projects, and projects should ensure they plan in order to mitigate against this.

Project design, recruitment and awareness raising

Recommendation D: Carefully consider how communities will benefit, as well as individuals. Benefits may well fall on particular sub-sections of communities; being clear on how these communities are identified, defined, and fully understanding their needs is key. It is important to plan how outcomes can be evidenced, including establishing baselines prior to delivery, considering whether comparators can be ethically and appropriately established (for example, neighbouring areas without intervention) and outcomes tracked over time.

Recommendation E: Identify existing networks and channels for raising awareness. Those projects that recruited most quickly were able to draw on the existing contact networks of partner organisations; they also brought a good understanding of key contextual factors, beneficiary needs and assets. We recommend that recruitment plans be clearly agreed during funding application/project design phase, with consideration given to how existing beneficiary networks could be drawn on where possible (whilst ensuring GDPR compliance).

Recommendation F: Consider undertaking (or drawing on existing) asset mapping. Asset mapping may prove useful in identifying how beneficaries' wider needs can be supported, as well as identifying any gaps in local support provision. Where existing asset mapping work has been undertaken, draw on this (as far as possible) to avoid reinventing the wheel, and ensure the funded project is added into the asset map.

Recommendation G: Build in co-production where possible. We recommend that all community-focused projects build in an element of co-production, guided by good practice guidance available online. Co-production requires adequate time, skills and resourcing, and should be factored into project plans and timescales from the outset.

Delivery

Recommendation H: Clearly define the parameters of the intervention or support. To ensure successful delivery and outcomes realisation within project timescales, we recommend that project leads carefully define the parameters of their intervention, and agree referral mechanisms, eligibility criteria and the duration/nature of the support to be offered up front.

Recommendation I: Ensure wider support networks and exit strategies are in place. Agreeing how and when project interventions with indviduals will end, and clarifying routes to ensure beneficiaries continue to receive any support they may need to sustain the outcomes longer term, is vital. Reviewing the effectiveness of this following implementation will be key, to ensure plans are practical and appropriate in practice, and that benefits can be sustained.

Monitoring and evaluation

Recommendation J: Build in monitoring from the outset, and establish baselines to track progress against. In some cases it was difficult to attribute outcomes to project activity or Community Fund monies, due to a lack of agreed baselines and comparators. Agree outcomes that meet the needs of potential funders/sponsors as well as all partners involved, and agree how outcomes will be tracked. Use existing datasets where possible, to provide a baseline to measure against, and to minimise the burden of data collection.

Recommendation K: Consider how to track 'softer' outcomes, including capturing case study and qualitative insights. Not all outcomes can be robustly quantifiably measured, and capturing data against a wide range of indicators may not be pragmatic or proportionate. Storytelling and case studies to highlight the difference made to people (and communities), particularly during early stages of implementation or in the absence of quantifable evidence, can provide vital evidence for commissioners and potential partners, as well as for communities and potential beneficiaries. Consider how beneficiaries can be empowered to tell their story.

Recommendation L: Build beneficiary confidence and capability in data collection. Consider how beneficiaries can support data collection, for example, capturing stories of impact. Build in capability training or development opportunities to support this wherever possible. Networks of peer researchers may help with sustaining projects, as well as offering additional benefits for participants themselves (in terms of improved skills and confidence etc.).

Recommendation M: Ensure outcomes are evidenced at both individual and community level. Agree with partners how to capture community level outcomes (which may include proxy outcomes), and agree realistic timescales (and parameters) for evidencing change.

Recommendation N: Build in a mid-point formal 'check in' involving all partners. Bringing partners together to formally reflect on progress and outcomes emerging at a midpoint can serve several purposes, including re-engaging more peripheral partners, providing an opportunity for learning to be shared and acted upon, and ensuring partners are aware of the outcomes emerging. Sustainability plans should also be revisited formally at this stage.

Recommendation O: Evidence cost benefit analysis, but proportionately to project size and funder needs. The CBA is only part of the impact story regarding any project, but it can prove key in evidencing the financial implications of a project, and making the case to potential funders and sponsors. We recommend that projects undertake CBA, but ensure the approach and commitment is proportionate to the scale of the project and potential sustainability plans.

Recommendation P: Sustain evaluation activities longer term. Many of the Communities Fund project outcomes will take months, if not years, to fully emerge. This is particularly the case for community level benefits, plus any knock-on implications emerging. Continuing to monitor outcomes will enable project leads to fully 'tell the story' and evidence the full impacts.

Planning for sustainability

Recommendation Q: Plan for sustainability from the outset. This includes developing plans for self-sustaining activities, rather than solely relying on securing additional funding. Examples of things to consider to support sustainability include:

- Building in volunteer capability training and support (in delivering elements of the project, or in wider support functions such as marketing, monitoring and fundraising)

- Building in self-sustaining elements, e.g. aspects which generate funding

- Recruiting former participants to become volunteers for the project.

Recommendation R: If additional funding is needed, think creatively about who might be best placed to provide additional resources. Examples might include CrowdFunding or alternative means of sustaining the project, which may involve offering services or support in return for financial (or in kind) support.

Recommendation S: Establish a culture of collaboration, rather than competition. To fully meet the needs of communities and individuals, collaboration may prove vital. This is likely to require cultural change, and demonstrable commitment from leaders. Identifying shared goals and potential benefits to collaboration (such as economies of scale and more effective referral routes) is likely to prove key; collaboration around a specific project, funding stream or priority area may be effective initial steps to developing a collaborative way of working.

Introduction to the Communities Fund

The Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (formerly known as the Department for Communities and Local Government, DCLG, hereafter referred to as MHCLG throughout this report) launched the Communities Fund in December 2016. Local authorities, in collaboration with neighbourhood, voluntary or community organisations, were invited to bid for grants of up to £70,000 to deliver solutions to entrenched social issues within their local communities. The Fund totalled £3.2million, and its purpose was to finance new projects or to extend existing projects into new areas, rather than sustaining pre-existing approaches.

Applicants submitted project application forms to MHCLG; successful applicants were then shortlisted and selected. Following selection, projects each developed a logic model, outlining their intended aims, objectives, delivery models, outputs, outcomes and impacts.

The Communities Fund built on the legacy of the MHCLG's previous programmes, including the Our Place and Delivering Differently in Neighbourhoods programmes. Localism and community integration remain priorities for the current government. In a similar approach to previous programmes, the Communities Fund aimed to bring together local grassroots community groups to serve those with multiple and complex needs in delivering tailored, sustainable solutions to meet increasing and ever more complex needs.

In total, **54 projects were funded through the Communities Fund programme**; however, one project did not progress to delivery. Projects were funded up to 31 March 2018, with the expectation that delivery and monitoring would continue post-funding, and that interventions and approaches would be sustained where shown to have a positive impact.

The table below outlines the main thematic areas the projects covered, and the number of projects that fell into each category. It is important to keep in mind however that although individual projects have been categorised into just one of the thematic areas, in reality these areas are not mutually exclusive, and many projects span more than one thematic area.

Table 5: Thematic areas covered by the Communities Fund projects[6]

Thematic area	Total number of projects
Adult Social Care	5
Children	8
Complex Needs	12
Employment	16
Homelessness	2
Multi Service Hub	5
Social Prescribing	6

A short write up regarding each funded project is presented in Appendix A, with full case studies regarding seven projects presented in Appendix B.

Introduction to the evaluation

SQW, an independent research and consultancy organisation, was commissioned to undertake an independent evaluation of the Communities Fund programme. The evaluation has run from September 2017 to February 2019. The purpose of the evaluation was twofold:

To undertake an independent evaluation of the programme, to generate process learning and evidence of the outcomes achieved. The focus here was on monitoring the outputs and outcomes of the programme overall, to measure how effective the funding was in achieving the objectives of the projects, and thus the objectives of the programme overall.

To provide support to the funded projects, to help them to develop robust logic models and undertake cost benefit analysis using New Economy's Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA) tool.

Introduction to this report

Report purpose and intended audiences

This report presents the findings from SQW's evaluation of the Communities Fund programme. It presents the findings at programme and project level, providing case

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[6] DCLG developed the thematic categories following programme inception and project selection, based on project application forms and priorities for the Fund.

study insights, verbatim quotations and financial information where relevant. The report has been prepared for review by the following key stakeholders:

Programme leads and policy makers within MHCLG

Leads within other government departments with an interest in the outcomes and learning emerging from the Communities Fund, or interested in commissioning similar funds. Examples might include the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, the Home Office or the Department of Health and Social Care

Leads from local authorities, the voluntary and community sector (VCS) and other organisations involved in community-based delivery (including, for example, the police, fire and rescue services and health trusts)

Others seeking to learn from the programme and/or the funded projects.

Report structure

This report is structured to present:

- The evaluation methodology

- The key evaluation findings, including exploration of the impact evidence, financial implications and return on investment generated, and key process learning regarding programme and project design and delivery

- Key conclusions emerging

- Segmented recommendations for MHCLG and other government departments

- Acknowledgements and thanks to those who have contributed to the evaluation

Evaluation methodology

Introduction

This section of the report presents the evaluation methodology, including details of the key activities undertaken, the sampling and recruitment methods, and the analytical techniques deployed.

Methodology overview

The evaluation methodology followed a three-phase approach, as outlined in the Table 6 below

Phase 1 feeding into Phase 2	Phase 2 feeding into phase 3	Phase 3
Inception meeting	Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA) Workshops X 2	Analysis and Report
Document Review	CBA exemplars and guidance (including FAQs)	MAXQDA and Excel/Stata
Logic Model Review and tailored feedback	Collate and quality assure CBA from all projects	Triangulation
Steering group meeting to validate approach	Monitoring data gathering (4 waves)	Validation workshop
	Site visits and consultants – case studies X7	Case study write ups and CBA verification
	Verification of the case study logic models	Final report with summary
		Slide deck and data annex
		Final presentation
Evaluation framework(s) and protocol	Further events/workshops x 2; Thematic communities of practice	
These phases were associated with collaborative working, flexibility, tailored support, exploring sustainability, fortnightly updates and steering and management group meetings		

Methodology in detail

Evaluation activities were undertaken in three stages: scoping and design; main data collection phase; and analysis and reporting.

Phase one: Scoping and design

Inception meeting: an inception meeting took place between SQW and MHCLG in September 2017, to clarify expectations and parameters for the evaluation and to enable SQW to refine the approach.

Documentation review: key documents were shared by MHCLG with SQW, including:

- PowerPoint slides from the launch event for the funded projects (hosted by MHCLG)

- All successful project application forms

- All logic models (one per project), with a corresponding scoring sheet, which SQW and MHCLG used to review each logic model

- A document detailing the contact details of project leads.

A desk-based review of the content was undertaken, to map key insights.

Logic model review: All project leads were requested by MHCLG to develop a logic model, visually presenting the details of their project, its rationale and the underpinning context. Logic models all followed a standardised format, using a template provided by MHCLG. The logic modelling was designed to encourage project leads to consider the logic chain underpinning their project, to improve project design and delivery; to enable MHCLG and SQW to 'read across' the projects, by providing information in an accessible and standardised format; and to inform the CBA development process.

SQW reviewed and scored individually all initial logic models received. The review and scoring process explored the level of depth and detail across each logic model for all components - the conditions (context), rationale, objectives, inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts anticipated. These were separately reviewed and scored by MHCLG, and scores were discussed and moderated. The findings informed the plans for the CBA development workshops. MHCLG provided abridged feedback to each project lead individually via email.

Phase two: main data collection and CBA support

The second phase focused on collecting primary data from project leads, as well as offering direct support in the development of the CBAs. Data collection involved a **mixed-method approach comprising both quantitative and qualitative data**, including primary and secondary data. This enabled the evaluation to draw on

existing data captured and reports generated by projects, whilst also generating new insights via primary data collection.

The methodology was selected to afford reach across all funded projects, offer a variety of reporting mechanisms for projects, and to enable the evaluators to capture rich insights regarding project progress and outcomes in a standardised way.

Monitoring forms

SQW developed an online **self-completion monitoring form** for all project leads to fill in. This comprised a series of closed and open questions, consistent across all funded projects. The monitoring framework provided details of progress and emerging insights for the projects, enabling synthesis across the programme as a while. At key points throughout the evaluation (January, May, September and December 2018), SQW asked project leads to complete the monitoring form (seeking four returns in total from each project). Response rates were variable across the monitoring rounds, with SQW receiving and analysing 45 responses for the first monitoring form, 40 for the second, 36 for the third and 38 for the fourth and final monitoring round. In total, 26 projects submitted a monitoring response for all four rounds.

To enable comparison and to reduce the burden on each project, the form followed broadly the same format each time and for each project, with minor revisions for each round to reflect emerging insights and project progress. A report of findings from each round was provided to MHCLG, with headline findings shared with project leads via the learning share events (see below).

Cost benefit analysis support and validation

SQW provided support to the funded projects, to help them undertake cost benefit analysis (CBA) using New Economy's CBA tool – a tool recommended by MHCLG to identify the fiscal, economic and social value of projects, alongside project costs and resource requirements. Support was provided to enable project leads to feel confident and capable to complete the CBA, providing step-by-step instructions and 1-1 feedback and discussion, as well as group-based support.

The support projects received to develop their CBAs from SQW included the following:

CBA workshop: all project leads were invited to attend a workshop, focused on assisting project leads in understanding what was required to refine their logic models and develop a CBA model, providing practical advice and guidance grounded in the New Economy model. In total, 38 projects attended this event. The event was run twice, to try to reach as many participants as possible.

One-to-one support: all project leads were offered direct individual support via phone, email, Skype and/or face-to-face to assist with CBA queries. In total, 34 projects took up this offer.

Quality assurance of CBAs: all first draft CBAs submitted were reviewed by the SQW evaluation team. Feedback forms were developed and were used to review the CBAs. In total, 45 CBAs were quality assured by the SQW evaluation team. Individual feedback was provided to all of those who submitted draft CBAs.

CBA quality assurance webinar: a webinar was organised, to which all project leads were invited, in which SQW shared common strengths, weaknesses and suggested improvements found across the reviewed CBAs, offering practical tips and responding to questions posed by project leads ahead of final CBA submission.

The deadline for the final CBA submission was 30 March 2018. While most CBAs were submitted by this date, a few project leads requested extensions or required further assistance. A final cut-off date was later set at 27 April 2018[7].

Out of 54 projects, SQW received CBAs from a total of **50 projects - a 93% return rate**. Overall, the quality of CBAs submitted was sufficiently high for analysis. However, five were excluded from this analysis due to substantial data gaps or providing anomalous results. Therefore, CBA analysis is based on 45 CBAs[8].

Case studies

SQW developed **seven in-depth case studies**, each exploring a funded project in detail. Case studies were selected based on: monitoring return responses (regarding project progress); CBA review scores (the completeness of the CBA and strength of the CBA calculations and modelling); willingness to engage with the evaluation (event attendance and monitoring form completion); geographical spread (to ensure a mixture of rural and urban projects, and spread across different English regions) and project typology. Sampled case study projects were invited to participate in this element of the evaluation.

A total of 8 project leads agreed to participate; refinement of the sampling frame reduced this down to the seven case studies taken forward.

The seven case study projects are illustrated in Table 7

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7 SQW anticipate CBAs to still be submitted from the remaining projects but have been excluded from the analysis
8 Annex A includes a list of all projects that have been included in this analysis

Table 7: Case study project characteristics

Project	Lead organisation	Location	Thematic area
Sense of Place	Tameside Local Studies and Archives	Tameside	Homelessness
Oasis Community Partnership	Oasis Multi-Academy Trust	North Lincolnshire	Multi-Service Hub
Co-production of the Short Breaks Offer in Nottinghamshire	Nottinghamshire County Council	Nottinghamshire	Children
Making a Difference in College Bank and Lower Falinge	Rochdale Borough Council	Rochdale	Complex Needs
Multiple and Complex Needs	Turning Tides	Worthing	Complex Needs
Venetian Waterways	Great Yarmouth Borough Council	Great Yarmouth	Employment
Manchester Dodgeball Employment Programme	World Dodgeball Association	Manchester	Employment

Development of the case studies involved visits to the projects, to view delivery in action where possible, and to meet with key stakeholders. Semi-structured interviews and small group discussions were carried out with project leads, beneficiaries and delivery partners, with notes captured (including verbatim quotations). Engagement with these groups by case study is shown in Each case study was written up into a stand-alone document, exploring the project background, delivery model, outcomes, key learning and CBA findings. Each case study was signed off by the relevant project lead, and subject to peer review by MHCLG.

Case study projects are outlined in Table 8. Follow up conversations took place to update and validate the CBAs developed by the project leads, based on up to date data wherever possible.

Each case study was written up into a stand-alone document, exploring the project background, delivery model, outcomes, key learning and CBA findings. Each case study was signed off by the relevant project lead, and subject to peer review by MHCLG.

Table 8: Groups engaged during case study visits

Project	Project leads	Project partners	Delivery staff	Beneficiaries
Sense of Place	✓	✓		✓
Oasis Community Partnership	✓			✓
Co-production of the Short Breaks Offer in Nottinghamshire	✓	✓	✓	✓
Making a Difference in College Bank and Lower Falinge	✓	✓	✓	✓
Multiple and Complex Needs	✓	✓	✓	✓
Venetian Waterways	✓	✓	✓	
Manchester Dodgeball Employment Programme	✓			

Learning share

SQW held **two learning share events** – one in May 2018, and one in December 2018. All funded projects were invited to attend. Each event involved a combination of whole room plenary presentations and discussions alongside round-table activities, and participants were encouraged to share learning and network with others.

The events explored monitoring form returns and key emerging findings; CBA findings, usage and implications; sustainability and funding sources; good practice in recruitment and delivery; and feedback for MHCLG. Each event involved an external speaker: CrowdFunder presented at the May event, whilst Local Trust presented at

the December event regarding the Big Local Programme. Both speakers received positive feedback from project leads.

In addition, SQW established and maintained a **Google Group** for the programme, as a way of communicating with project leads, and providing a portal for sharing documentation and insights.

Throughout, SQW reported in to a specially convened **Steering Group** for the evaluation, comprised of MHCLG and DCMS policy and research leads.

Analysis and reporting

Data was coded in line with the key lines of enquiry[9]; Excel was used for quantitative data analysis. Analysis was quality assured by a second member of the evaluation team, to ensure rigour, accuracy and minimise the risk of bias.

Throughout the evaluation, emerging findings have been shared via formal reports, Steering Group meetings and fortnightly update calls, as well as monthly update reports:

Monthly written updates: Summary updates were provided from January 2018 onwards, via a two-page Word document exploring progress, emerging issues, next steps and preliminary findings.

Summary CBA slide-pack and Word report: We analysed, reviewed and collated the completed CBAs, to produce a summary CBA slide-pack and Word report in spring 2018. These outputs presented the key findings emerging, common datasets, implications, and limitations in terms of outcomes evidence emerging.

Validation workshop: The emerging findings from the draft final report were validated with Steering Group members, prior to the draft report being submitted for review. This enabled validation of the analysis, datasets utilised, emerging conclusions and draft recommendations.

Key considerations

The **quality and completeness of monitoring returns varied** across the funded projects; where this impacted on the reliability of findings we explicitly highlighted it in the text. Many provided full and detailed responses, including quantified findings and details of learning and outcomes emerging. However, others did not reply, or in some cases provided partial or less detailed responses. Where this was the case, MHCLG

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[9] Exploring progress, key learning emerging (challenges, barriers, enablers), monitoring and evaluation, outputs generated, outcomes emerging and expected (segmented by beneficiary and outcome type).

and SQW undertook phone calls with project leads during autumn 2018, to fill in gaps in understanding and evidence.

For the seven case study projects, we validated the findings with additional primary research and/or triangulation. In addition, SQW provided bespoke detailed feedback to all projects regarding their initial logic model and CBA submissions, identifying potential areas for improvement, including gaps in the analysis and concerns regarding optimism bias, drop-off, lag calculations, and the plausibility of the figures and assumptions included. Some project leads acted upon this feedback and submitted revised CBAs.

The evaluation relied on honest and full reporting of outcomes, challenges and enablers by project leads. This **self-evaluation model** offers many benefits, in that project leads are closer to the activity, enablers and challenges, and best placed to provide insights into the progress and learning emerging. In addition, self-reporting enables the evaluation to span all 53 funded projects, and the evaluators offered capacity building support to project leads to build their self-evaluation skills and confidence, leaving a legacy to support future monitoring and evaluation.

Attempts were made to **independently verify the self-reports** provided by project leads; for example, via the case study CBA validation process, triangulation of multiple stakeholder perspectives for each case study, and via the phone calls conducted by MHCLG and SQW during autumn 2018. Some projects used validated tools for measuring outcomes, and data regarding each project has been triangulated. It has not been possible however to validate all self-reported outcomes. In some cases, this may have led to benefits being over-stated; in others, benefits may not have been reported.

Project activities

This section of the report describes what has happened at project level. This includes details of the partners involved in the projects (and roles played); the recruitment and awareness raising activities undertaken; the types of interventions and support delivered; and the planning for sustainability undertaken by projects.

Partnership working

As a condition of funding, all projects had to be comprised of at least two partners: the local authority and a VCS organisation. Many projects actually involved a far larger group of partners. Some of the partnerships formed were new, whilst others were built on pre-established relationships and familiarity – at an individual and/or organisational level. These findings are presented and reflected on below.

Projects were either led by a local authority or a VCS organisation

Just over half of projects were led by VCS organisations (31), and the remainder of projects were led by the local authority. In some thematic areas (e.g. complex needs)

this spilt was fairly even. However, in other thematic areas, leads were more likely to be one type of organisation than the other. For example, both homelessness projects were led by the local authority (LA), whereas employment projects were more likely to be led by VCS organisations. This is to be expected given the focus of the different project themes, with homelessness being a statutory duty for local authorities.

However, even though projects all identified a lead organisation, the key partner organisation(s) played varying roles. Some projects were run as a partnership, with partners working together with input split fairly equally. For others, the partner organisation(s) played a more peripheral role; for example, the LA holding the budget, but the VCS organisation undertaking delivery, engaging with the evaluation and with other partners.

Table 9: Project lead organisations, by thematic area

Thematic area	Local authority-led	VCS-led
Adult Social Care	2	3
Children	2	6
Complex Needs	6	7
Employment	5	10
Homelessness	2	0
Multi Service Hub	1	3
Social Prescribing	4	2
Total	**22**	**31**

In addition to the key partnerships between the LA and VCS organisation, many projects also involved others in delivery. For example, complex needs projects tended to involve multiple agencies and statutory services, in order to provide 'wrap around support' for beneficiaries; multi-service hubs and social prescribing projects generally connected with community services; and employment projects partnered with local businesses, schools and Job Centre Plus.

In contrast, some partnerships only involved the two partners, such as the Nottinghamshire's Co-Production of Short Breaks project, which involved a close working relationship between Nottinghamshire County Council and Nottinghamshire's Parent Carer Forum.

Partnerships were effective enablers, but also posed challenges for some projects

Regardless of the intensity or number of partnerships, the majority of project leads highlighted **effective working relationships as a vital enabler** for delivery and outcomes realisation.

Many of the partnerships were based on pre-existing relationships, which offered efficiencies and enabled projects to mobilise quickly. Project leads consistently cited pre-existing relationships with partners as the top enabler experienced, with 91% of projects highlighting their importance in the initial stages of project delivery[10]. This is due to the time it takes to build new relationships and embed this into operations. Sometimes when project leads had to form new relationships, it led to challenges with timely delivery, although there have been successful new partnerships formed between project partners. The three projects who reported in the second monitoring round that they had no pre-existing relationships with partner organisations experienced outcomes at a slower scale than they originally expected. Furthermore, two of the three projects had not reached as many beneficiaries than they originally anticipated. Whilst these issues were also attributed to other factors, the time it took at the beginning of the projects to form new relationships and working practices meant that delivery did not happen as quickly as expected.

> *The World Dodgeball Association had worked with Manchester City Council, the Factory Youth Zone and Youth on Solid Ground prior to delivery. This meant that there were established positive relationships to build on, which meant that delivery could begin more quickly.*
>
> *Manchester Dodgeball Employment Programme, case study*

Some projects engaged new partners when **specific issues** arose with beneficiaries. A key example is the 'Making a Difference in College Bank and Lower Falinge' complex needs project, who approached organisations they had not worked with previously if a beneficiary needed support that the current project partners were unable to provide. Whilst this was a positive step for both beneficiaries and the organisations themselves, the quality of these partnerships was not always as strong as the quality of the relationships with existing partners, leading to some delays with support delivery.

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[10] First monitoring report, February 2018.

It is expected that partnership working will be sustainable for many, with **cultural changes**[11] reported. For example, project leads report **increased willingness by partner organisations to collaborate on projects** '*rather than engage in competitive bidding*[12]'.

However, some project leads reported that the **short delivery window** made it challenging to build effective relationships with other services, which constrained their ability to create sustained change in the community. This issue was exacerbated when projects also had to recruit new beneficiaries, recruit staff and mobilise delivery within the timescale. Projects who were able to follow on from previous pilots, and those which already had relationships with beneficiaries and partner services did not find the delivery timescale as challenging.

Recruitment and awareness raising

Projects approached beneficiary recruitment in a range of ways, and some projects used a mix of recruitment avenues to access beneficiaries. This included:

Pre-existing relationships. Some projects had been working with beneficiaries already and/or they were known to partner organisation(s). Those who had worked with the beneficiaries previously cited this as a key enabler, minimising recruitment time and supporting rapid mobilisation. Often, these were projects working with more vulnerable beneficiaries, such as complex needs projects.

Project lead familiarity with the needs and assets of target beneficiaries was a key enabler in these circumstances, reducing lead-in time and enabling projects to be appropriately targeted on addressing identified needs.

Referrals. Multi-service hubs, social prescribing and adult social care projects were most likely to recruit beneficiaries through referrals from other agencies. When effective partner relationships were in place, this largely proved effective.

However there was a significant challenge for some social prescribing projects in engaging GPs for referrals. Projects needed to build GP confidence and assert their stability in order to build up trust for referrals. However three social prescribing projects reported difficulties due to the Fund's timescales for delivery, and uncertainty regarding sustainability.

Awareness raising. Open-access events were held to raise awareness of project activities, or to identify potential participants. For example, the 'Venetian Waterways' employment project held family fun days to promote their volunteering opportunities for unemployed adults, and the 'DFLB' employment project held community events to inform people about their training schemes. However, 'DFLB' experienced initial difficulties with recruitment, and in response opted to recruit via referrals from the Job Centre Plus, which proved to be more effective.

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[11] E.g. integrated working practices between local services, increased propensity for collaboration, dissemination of collaborative working to other areas of organisations
[12] Extend project, BYDP

This highlights the importance of events reaching the target beneficiaries, which may not always prove effective, or may not generate the level of interest required. Knowledge of local target populations, and routes to engaging those populations, proved key here; in addition, effective partnership working acted as an enabler, offering partner networks as an access route to potential beneficiaries.

Project reach was variable, and some projects reached a different cohort than anticipated

The number of beneficiaries that projects worked with varied significantly. For example, the 'Sense of Place' project supported four beneficiaries[13] (compared to initial expectations of supporting 10 beneficiaries) whereas 'Beat the Streets' project engaged nearly 14,000 participants. **Whilst the reach of projects does not always correlate with funding received, it does generally inversely correlate to the intensity of support provided.** Those projects reaching larger numbers of people typically did not provide intensive or one-to-one support; or where this was provided, it was through signposting to other partners or organisations. Those reaching fewer beneficiaries were better able to address needs holistically, but this is time-consuming and limits overall reach.

Some projects reached a far **greater number of beneficiaries** than expected. For example, 'Working Well Foxhill' reached 182 beneficiaries against their target of 100, as the need for support in improving employment and wellbeing outcomes in their community grew, with a large number of Syrian refugees moving into the area. Whilst some emphasised the benefits of widening their reach, particularly in demonstrating the success of (and/or demand for) the project to potential future funders, others noted that the wider reach came with challenges in terms of remaining focused on achieving project aims.

1.1 Contrastingly, some projects **reached fewer beneficiaries** than originally anticipated. The 'Multiple and Complex Needs Programme' originally planned to support 25 beneficiaries. However, after fully assessing the needs that each beneficiary had, the project leads reduced their target cohort down to 22 people, to provide more effective support and lead to better outcomes for each individual engaged. This highlights the importance of ensuring manageable expectations are agreed at project inception and design; intensive support for vulnerable people is time-intensive, and the balance between meeting people's holistic needs, or supporting large numbers of people in a less intensive and less holistic way, needs to be carefully considered.

Other projects reached a smaller number than originally expected due to **issues with referrals, and challenges with accessing the 'hardest to reach' individuals in the community**. Generally, LAs found it more difficult to reach the most vulnerable beneficiaries, due to an entrenched lack of trust in public services. VCS organisations tended to work closely with many hard to reach individuals already, and therefore found it easier to access hard to reach individuals. However, it is important to note

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[13] The project had initially proposed to work with 10 beneficiaries, however after initially recruiting four, they felt that more intensive support (200 hours in total) was required per beneficiary to reach outcomes.

that this was not always the case. The 'Making a Difference' complex needs project supported more beneficiaries than anticipated even though they were an LA-led project, as they had achieved positive results on a previous pilot programme and had built a reputable offer. That said, they reported they were still unable to access some of the most hard to reach individuals within the community.

1.1   In addition to varying numbers of individuals supported, some project leads reported they had **reached different types of beneficiaries** to those originally anticipated. Different types of beneficiaries were reached in addition to those the projects expected, for example new asylum seekers or refugees moving into the area, young people in care or those with different levels of need. For example, the 'Studio Upstairs' complex needs project reached people who had a milder spectrum of needs than originally anticipated, as their public events generated a substantial level of interest in their offer from a wider range of people. Examples include engaging those with additional or different levels of needs. This highlights the importance of flexibility in project design, particularly where interventions were new and untested, and fully understanding local community needs during the design phase.

Other project leads were able to support beneficiaries in localities they had not initially planned to, ranging from other areas of a city, to expanding into surrounding counties.

As might be anticipated, project leads found that **recruitment became easier over time**, due to increased awareness of projects amongst the community through building strong reputations, word of mouth, forging expanded partnership networks, and ongoing marketing of their offers. The proportion of projects reporting that engagement with their target audience was a challenge reduced from 33% to 17% between the first and third rounds of monitoring.

Project activity

Projects delivered a range of interventions designed to improve people's lives in many different ways, as illustrated in Figure 6. **Project activity in practice did not differ greatly from what was originally expected** (as outlined in logic models developed by project leads during 2017), although some did undertake additional activities if they identified a gap in provision. This included the 'Oasis Community Partnership' project, which adapted its community café to become an incubation hub for start-up enterprises, recognising that individuals in the community had entrepreneurial ideas, but no space or resource to put the ideas into practice.

Project activity varied depending on thematic area, in order to most effectively support target beneficiaries. However, there was an element of fluidity in activity between thematic areas. For example, both homelessness projects delivered activities to develop skills for employment, and many complex needs projects focused on activity to support beneficiaries into accommodation.

Table 10: Project activity by thematic area

Adult Social Care	Support access to services for vulnerable adults e.g. community services, social prescribing. Recruit link workers, volunteers or community champions to support beneficiaries Provide opportunities for 1:1 and peer support
Children	Activities for young people e.g. play sessions, excursion, volunteering and training Work with parents of vulnerable young people (e.g. 1:1 support, co-production of resource) Monitor and evaluate delivery publish findings
Complex Needs	Provide flexible and often intensive support sometimes through link workers Multi-agency approach to support access to services Provide training opportunities for beneficiaries and those who work with beneficiaries
Employment	Provide training to develop employability and soft skills, Provide work experience or volunteering opportunities Work with employers, job centres and local communities to support transition into work
Homelessness	Work with housing associations, and other statutory agencies Provide intensive support, including through training opportunities Develop volunteering opportunities for beneficiaries
Social Prescribing	Work with local communities to provide social activities, networks and training opportunities Engage GPs and other health professionals Offer and sign post to other specialist support around wellbeing and healthy lifestyles
Multi-Service Hub	Develop partnerships with agencies and community centres

	Provide information, advice and guidance to support access to services Develop and deliver community activities e.g. family wellbeing activities, coffee mornings and wellbeing programmes

Based on analysis of project monitoring reports, logic models and case study fieldwork

Intervention models

In general, three beneficiary support models were used by projects. These were:

Signposting (typically undertaken by social prescribing projects): this involved lighter touch work with greater numbers of beneficiaries. This model offered larger reach potential, relying on partnership networks to provide a range of support. However, it is not always clear if needs have been addressed, or whether support was taken up. Tracking beneficiary outcomes is typically difficult under this type of dispersed delivery model.

Intensive support (typically delivered by complex needs projects): this model provides a more holistic approach to addressing beneficiary needs, and often involved 'handholding', providing intensive and/or wrap-around support for a relatively small number of individuals. This model involved sustained engagement with beneficiaries over weeks or months.

Focused support (typically delivered by employment projects): this model involved supporting beneficiaries to develop specific skills and competencies, and enabled relatively large numbers to be reached. However, there is a risk that wider needs may remain unaddressed, which may limit beneficiaries' ability to achieve positive outcomes.

The above delivery models were not mutually exclusive; models were sometimes used interchangeably by projects. Some projects provided intensive support initially but would signpost to other support based on individual needs; others provided focused support, but also aimed to work with beneficiaries to address wider holistic needs.

Outcomes and impacts

Introduction

This section of the report is structured to present the key impacts and outcomes emerging for stakeholders at different levels and across different types and sizes of projects. Findings have been generalised to provide a Fund-wide perspective where possible, alongside project and theme-specific findings. This section goes on to explore the outcomes expected but not (yet) achieved. It finishes by exploring the value added by the Communities Fund, including whether or not the outcomes would otherwise have been realised.

The evaluation findings are based on four rounds of monitoring reports from projects; telephone calls conducted by MHCLG and SQW with 'live' projects during autumn 2018; learning share events held in May and December 2018; project CBAs, application forms and logic models; and individual project reports received by the evaluation team.

Impacts and outcomes emerging from the Communities Fund

Project leads, partners, stakeholders and beneficiaries reported a wide range of emerging outcomes, with the Communities Fund impacting on people at a number of levels. This includes beneficiaries themselves, the wider community the project operates in, statutory and community services, and the partner organisations themselves. However, it is important to note that many of the emerging impacts are anecdotal. Some projects have used validated tools (e.g. Outcome Star) to capture evidence, but many have not. Whilst the Communities Fund has evidently led to significant positive outcomes, the exact scale and implications of these outcomes are not yet clear, and in many cases the outcomes emerging are hard to robustly and accurately quantify.

Project leads report that **all or some of their anticipated outcomes and impacts outlined in their logic models had been achieved** (see Table 11) Whilst not every project achieved all their expected outcomes and impacts, some projects remain ongoing. Additionally, 18 (of 38) project leads reported achieving outcomes and impacts over and above those originally anticipated.

Table 11: To what extent project leads report achieving the intended outcomes and impacts (n=38)

	All reached	Some reached	None reached
Outcomes	20	18	0
Impacts	16	22	0

- *Source: SQW analysis of round four monitoring report responses*

In total, 13 projects reported achieving all their intended outcomes and impacts as outlined in their logic model. These projects fell into three thematic areas; complex needs, employment and social prescribing. This could be because complex needs and employment interventions tended to have more focused and measurable outcomes and impacts.

Table 12: Projects who stated they achieved all outcomes and impacts

Thematic area	Projects
Complex Needs	At Risk Frequent Hospital Admissions Making a Difference in College Bank and Lower Falinge Studio Upstairs VIP Project Working Well Foxhill
Employment	Cascade Digital and Financial Literacy Employment Plus Horizons Manchester Dodgeball Employment Programme OX7
Social Prescribing	Healthwise Harrow

- *Source: SQW analysis of round four monitoring report responses*

Emerging impacts for beneficiaries

All project leads responding to the fourth monitoring survey report (38) stated that as a direct result of the Communities Fund, beneficiaries experienced positive outcomes and impacts. The types of outcomes experienced varied by project and thematic area, but the key outcomes identified included:

- Improved **employment** prospects

- Increased or new **skills**

- Improved **health and wellbeing**

- Greater **access** to appropriate services.

Some project leads also noticed a **ripple effect** on those close to intended beneficiaries, including family members, partners and friends/peers.

Table 13 depicts the key outcome achieved for each project, by geographical area. Most key outcomes are centred on beneficiaries.

Table 13: Key outcome for each project, by geographical area

Region	Outcomes
North East	Developed referral pathways with multi-agency partnerships
Yorkshire	Improved Community Cohesion Reduced substance abuse and increased employability Improved employment prospects Improved social inclusion and employment prospects Improved employment prospects
North West	Reduced anti-social behaviour Improved wellbeing and employability Reduced pressure on frontline services Improved employability prospects Reduced loneliness and improved mental health Improved access to community services Improved health and wellbeing skills Increased training and volunteer opportunities
West Midlands	Reduced social isolation Reduced Loneliness Increase access to services Improve employability and life skills
East Midlands	Improved health and wellbeing Improved mental and emotional health Increased apprenticeships Co-production of services
East of England	Reduced pressure on primary care Reduced isolation for disabled adults Increased access to transport services Improved physical health Improved health and wellbeing Improved access to services Improved access to volunteering
South West	Increased awareness of dementia

	Reduced rates of offending Reduced pressure on A&E and hospitals Improved employability prospects Developed employability skills Increased integration between services Improve social networks and soft skills Improved health and wellbeing
South East	Improved transitions from school Improved soft skills and wellbeing Improved employability for NEETs Access to apprenticeships for young people Improved life skills Improved physical and mental wellbeing Reduced homelessness
London	Improved support networks Improved employability prospects for carers Improved pathways to employment Reduced mental health relapses and self-harm Increased integration between services Improved soft and employability skills Improved health and wellbeing

Employment outcomes have been realised for beneficiaries, with many improving skills, gaining qualifications, and some gaining paid employment

Project leads are confident that the Communities Fund **improved the employment prospects** of project participants. This benefit was reported by leads of both employment focused projects and other project types.

Four employment themed project leads reported that beneficiaries have accessed paid employment following project support. In addition, four projects focused on complex needs also report beneficiaries accessing paid employment as a result of Communities Fund activities. For example, the 'Employment Coaching and Support' project supported six women with complex and multiple needs to access employment. This illustrates the fluidity of projects across thematic areas; whilst the project's target beneficiaries were those with complex needs, the key aim of the project was to improve beneficiary employment prospects.

> - *The project supported 20 long-term unemployed parents into employment. Of these, 18 have sustained this employment over a six month period.*
>
> - *Cascade: Pathways to Employment, Vignette*

Fifteen projects also **supported beneficiaries into volunteering, work placements and apprenticeships** in order to improve their transferrable skills, confidence and understanding of the workplace, in addition to gaining experience which could support them when applying for jobs. Whilst some projects supported a relatively large number of beneficiaries into placements (e.g. 60 beneficiaries accessed work placements through the 'Employment Plus' project), some projects have focused efforts on enabling those furthest away from the labour market to access the workplace. For example, the 'Give it a Go Supported Volunteering' project helped adults with a disability gain further experience in the workplace, and as a result, two beneficiaries accessed paid employment.

> - *Through attending employment support sessions, Gill[14] applied for the local university, and has now begun a degree in Social Sciences. This has given her a sense of achievement, as she feels like 'what I have to say matters'.*
>
> - *Oasis Community Partnership, case study testimonial*

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[14] Names have been changed

Fifteen project leads stated that beneficiaries have **improved their employability skills**, therefore improving their employment prospects. This includes the 'Manchester Dodgeball Employment Programme', who focused on improving participant skills by delivering a structured training programme, to develop interview techniques and CV writing skills.

> - *The project partnered with the Co-op to train three beneficiaries in food hygiene… These clients went on to volunteer at the Co-op, cooking means for families in need.*
>
> - *Making a Difference in College Bank and Lower Falinge, case study*

As a result of the Communities Fund, eight projects **supported beneficiaries to achieve qualifications**, expected to improve their employment prospects. For example, the 'S4C' employment project engaged refugees and migrants to help them work towards English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) qualifications, to help them to become better equipped to access employment. In addition, three beneficiaries of the 'At Risk' complex needs project achieved a Level 3 AQA qualification in Leadership and Coaching, to enable them to support other young people who may be at risk of re-offending.

Four projects, including two with a focus on children, **improved educational outcomes in school,** with the aim of reducing the risk of beneficiaries becoming NEET (not in employment, education or training). For example, the 'Dogs for Removing Barriers to Education' project used animal assisted intervention (AAI) to identify barriers to attainment for young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). The project supported twelve young people with SEND to access education and employment opportunities more easily, and improve the success of transition from school to further education. Two projects ('Goole Targeted Youth Project' and 'Oasis Community Partnership', a multi-service hub) also reported that their young beneficiaries increased their attendance at school, keeping them in education and increasing the likelihood of achieving qualifications.

Improved employment prospects

- Projects across almost all thematic areas achieved improved employment prospects for their beneficiaries, including improved skills, access to paid employment and placements.

- All employment projects achieved improved employment prospects, predominantly through volunteering, work placements or apprenticeships (12).

- Four employment projects achieved increased beneficiary access to paid employment, meeting their original objectives.

- The 2 homelessness projects improved employability skills in order to reduce the risk of homelessness for beneficiaries, and

a quarter of (4) complex needs projects succeeded in their objective of getting their beneficiaries to access paid employment.

- The communities that these projects work within often suffer from entrenched long-term unemployment, high levels of NEET and a lack of employability knowledge. In addition, many beneficiaries have typically not experienced one to one support from mainstream employment services previously[15]. Projects supporting those furthest away from employment in communities contributed to greater aspirations, greater knowledge and experience of the skills needed to gain employment, and in some cases, reduced unemployment.

The Communities Fund contributed towards improved skills, including interpersonal, financial management and cookery skills

Project leads (18) reported that the Communities Fund contributed to **improvements in 'soft' skills amongst participants**, for example, confidence and self-esteem. This outcome is not limited to any one thematic area or beneficiary age group. For example, through supporting beneficiaries into paid employment, the 'Choose Work' project noticed raised confidence and aspirations for beneficiaries, which in turn improved the capacity for independence amongst vulnerable beneficiaries. Furthermore, the 'Family Know-How Relationships' project improved the confidence to take part in play for 100% of under-5s on the project, affected by domestic abuse or parental conflict.

- *As a result of volunteering at the archives, they have gained technical skills and a better understanding of local history… they have enjoyed finding out more about Rutherford, creating new blogs and developing the exhibition. 'Andrew'[16] has also begun his own individual research project, which he hopes to develop.*

- *A Sense of Place, case study testimonial*

In addition to soft skills, nine projects across multiple thematic areas reported **improved life skills** amongst beneficiaries. The skills developed varied, depending on the theme, delivery and aim of the project. For example, the 'DFLB' employment project, which worked with jobseekers, reported an improvement in the financial management skills of beneficiaries, increasing their capability to budget. The 'We Care' project, which worked with young carers, reported improved cookery skills, to help participants to support their own wellbeing and that of those they care for.

For the 'Bikespace' project, the development of new life skills was an unanticipated outcome of the Communities Fund. As the project used bicycles as a key tool to improve employability skills, they did not anticipate that beneficiaries would not be

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[15] Cascade: Pathways to employment project vignette
[16] Names have been changed to preserve anonymity

able to ride a bike. However, two beneficiaries could not, and were taught by the project. This is expected to improve their health outcomes and provide them with a sustainable method of transport to support access to employment.

Increased new skills

- Projects across all thematic areas have improved 'soft' skills. This was particularly prevalent within employment projects, as half of these projects directly reported improving beneficiary soft skills.

- Projects across most thematic areas directly reported that beneficiaries had improved a life skill as a result of the intervention. No social prescribing project directly reported this, however through improving health outcomes through activities including table tennis and healthy eating classes, it could be argued that beneficiaries are still learning new life skills.

- Individuals with increased confidence and aspiration reportedly benefitted from knock on health and wellbeing benefits. New skills (e.g. technical skills) impacted on quality of life and employment outcomes, supporting communities with entrenched social needs to develop and become more self-sustainable.

Beneficiaries report improved mental and physical health, and improvements in wellbeing outcomes such as reduced social isolation and homelessness

A key impact reported for beneficiaries is **improved health and wellbeing**. This encompasses improvements in mental health, physical health and general wellbeing. Whilst projects across all thematic areas report that beneficiaries have benefited from improved health and wellbeing, there are some noticeable links between specific thematic areas and outcomes.

A third of projects reporting improved mental health outcomes are those who supported beneficiaries with complex needs (8 of 24). One example is the 'Studio Upstairs' project, which utilised art to support those with mental health difficulties. As a result of art workshops and art therapy sessions, the project reported a reduction in the risk of relapse and self-harm after hospital discharge for beneficiaries.

In addition, a number of social prescribing and adult social care projects reported improved levels of mental health for beneficiaries. This included the GL11 project,

who supported a number of elderly people through mental health issues associated with grief and loneliness. As a result, leads report that 65% of the project's beneficiaries had a positive change to their health and wellbeing.

Improved physical health for beneficiaries was reported by six social prescribing projects. For example, the 'Beat the Streets' reported an increased proportion of adults meeting physical activity guidelines, due to their outdoor game which focused on encouraging people to walk, cycle or run in order to gain 'points'. One employment project, the 'Manchester Dodgeball Employment Programme' also highlighted improved physical health amongst beneficiaries, through participation in team games to improve team work and self-discipline. In total, 21 projects reported improved physical health outcomes.

In addition, beneficiaries supported by complex needs projects experienced a reduction in substance misuse, positively impacting on their physical health, in addition to mental health and wellbeing. Projects from other thematic areas also reported a reduction in substance misuse, including the 'Goole Targeted Youth Project', which reported that the young people they worked with were less likely to abuse drugs or alcohol, citing the intensity of the support as the key factor in achieving this outcome. However, it is too early to understand the sustainability of this outcome, and projects may need to be revisited in the future to fully gauge how effective attempts have been in reducing substance misuse in the long-term.

Increased wellbeing due to a reduction in homelessness was reported by five complex needs projects. The 'Multiple and Complex Needs Programme' reduced homelessness within their beneficiary cohort from 80-90% to 0-15%. The project leads reported that this improved beneficiary wellbeing, through a reduction in poor health (e.g. 10 beneficiaries reduced their alcohol dependency and 13 received mental health assessments), and access to support such as Universal Credit.

> - *Since being on the MCN programme, Sean[17] is now living in a Turning Tides hostel, which he describes as his 'castle'.*
>
> - *Before the project support, Sean was an entrenched rough sleeper who had been evicted from previous hostels due to poor behaviour and alcohol/drug abuse.*
>
> - *Multiple and Complex Needs Programme, case study testimonial*

In total, 19 projects from across all areas saw a **reduction in social isolation and loneliness** amongst beneficiaries. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this was reported most frequently by social prescribing, adult social care and multi-service hub projects. For example, all beneficiaries at 'Sefton Community Connectors' multi-service hub reported feeling less lonely and improved mental wellbeing. This could be due to the fact that projects in these thematic areas mostly worked with groups of people, rather than individuals, offering beneficiaries the opportunity to meet with each other and interact.

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[17] Names have been changed

For some, this benefit was not originally anticipated. For example, the 'Horizons' employment project developed a social café to support employment outcomes for beneficiaries. The café has been particularly well used by elderly people in the local community, who have formed relationships with the young beneficiaries, which has reduced their social isolation and improved intergenerational relationships.

Improved health and wellbeing

- Projects across all thematic areas reported improved mental health outcomes, most commonly in complex needs (8 of 12), social prescribing (5 of 6) and adult social care (4 of 5) interventions.

- Whilst complex needs projects tended to provide 1 to 1 support, social prescribing models were generally based around signposting, suggesting that this outcome was not determined by intervention model.

- Additionally, projects across all thematic areas improved physical health, including all six social prescribing interventions. Interventions to improve physical health varied, from increasing awareness of health issues, to sports activities, to reducing alcohol misuse.

- Reduced homelessness was reported by complex needs (5) and social prescribing (1) projects. Interestingly, homelessness themed projects did not report this, however this was due to their interventions aiming to reduce the risk of homelessness through improved employment prospects.

- Projects across all thematic areas also reduced isolation and loneliness. Developing relationships and networks across individuals in the community had a knock on impact on community cohesion and improved support networks.

Improved access to statutory and community services was cited as an impact of the Communities Fund by project leads, partners and beneficiaries

Overall, nine project leads reported that they improved access to services for beneficiaries. For beneficiaries of complex needs projects, this included improved access to statutory services. In contrast, social prescribing projects were more likely to improve access to non-statutory services, in an attempt to alleviate pressure on statutory services. For example, 'Healthwise Harrow' enabled more accessible community services for those with diabetes, heart disease and hypertension, providing self-care advice and preventative activities.

> - *As a result of the programme, he is now in his own accommodation and is claiming benefits. Access to his own funds has enabled him to learn about money management, pay rent and live more independently.*
>
> - *Multiple and Complex Needs Programme, case study testimonial*

Some projects, particularly complex needs and children focused projects, reported that beneficiaries are now more trusting of statutory services as a result of their engagement with the project. For example, beneficiaries of the 'Nottinghamshire Co-Production of Short Breaks' project report more trust in children's services than they did previously. This is due to the increased transparency of eligibility criteria, and an improved short breaks offer for children. Beneficiaries of the 'Making a Difference' complex needs project also asserted that their trust in the 'system' improved, as they now feel that services will support them, and they will not slip through the net like they may have done before. This was directly reported by four projects, however improved trust was a common thread of discussion at the final learning share event, with many projects in agreement that the Fund activities had contributed to improving trust in public services.

Improved access to services

- Projects across most thematic areas reported improved access to services, apart from employment projects and homelessness projects. Complex needs and social prescribing projects were more likely to report this outcome than projects in other thematic areas.

- Improved trust of services was reported by complex needs, children and multi-service hub projects.

- Whilst a relatively small proportion of projects directly reported improved access and trust in services, this was a common talking point across group discussions and Q&A sessions in shared learning events, highlighting its (largely unanticipated) importance in project delivery.

A 'ripple effect' was reported, increasing the reach of project outcomes and impacts

In addition to the impacts experienced by the intended beneficiaries, some projects noticed a **'ripple effect' of outcomes and impacts for people close to the beneficiaries**, usually family or friends, which they had not anticipated. Generally, this was as a result of complex needs projects, which tended to involve more intensive support to beneficiaries. For example, the 'Reducing Alcohol Related Frequent Attenders' project noted that they were able to access people at risk of being classed as frequent attenders to hospital, but who had not yet come to the attention of statutory services. These people were generally associated with existing beneficiaries of the project, such as their partners. In addition, the 'Multiple and Complex Needs Programme' highlighted that those close to beneficiaries saw the positive impact the programme had on their quality of life, and so were inspired to access supported accommodation, or focus on abstinence-based recovery.

- *'One of the beneficiary's mothers has been heavily involved in the support for her son and has an improved relationship. She is now working with him to build a gardening business.'*

- *At Risk Project, monitoring report*

Projects in other thematic areas also experienced a ripple effect which they had not intended. For example, the 'Dartford Community Wellbeing Network' social prescribing project reported that young people who attended community wellbeing activities with their parents or guardians (due to a lack of childcare options) had benefited from similar outcomes, for example improving their physical health, or increasing their social networks.

Impacts on the wider community

The Communities Fund projects also benefited the wider communities in which projects worked. Project leads reported an increase in community cohesion and a reduction in anti-social behaviour as the key outcomes for local communities.

Projects improved community cohesion through integration, increased awareness and better support networks

A **more cohesive, better integrated community** was highlighted as a key impact of the Communities Fund by 13 project leads spanning all thematic areas. This was achieved through three main mechanisms:

- Supporting the integration of new arrivals to the community

- Beneficiaries working together to improve their community

- Improving awareness of issues within the community.

> - *'The refugees and asylum seekers showed positive attitudes towards making a contribution to the wider society they live in and had wanted to remain in Bradford, learn and become fluent in English. They spoke about liking Bradford, feeling safe and liking the people and city in general.'*
>
> - *Extend project, monitoring report*

For some projects, activity centred on supporting new arrivals to integrate into the community. For example, the 'Extend' project worked with young asylum seekers and refugees alongside other young people in deprived communities in Bradford. Through taking mixed groups on local days out, for example to museums and the countryside, they could access new experiences together, supporting integration into the wider community. In addition, although an unanticipated outcome, the 'S4C' employment project helped to support people integrate into their community through providing ESOL qualifications for those who could not speak English.

For other projects, increased community cohesion came as a result of beneficiaries working together to improve their local community. The 'Dartford Community Wellbeing Network' social prescribing project set up steering groups comprised of local community volunteers to support social prescribing networks and activities. Consequently, 90% of steering group members reported a more positive view of their community compared to before the project.

Other projects improved community cohesion by improving awareness of issues within the community that people may not be familiar with. For example, the 'Dementia Friendly Community Enabler' adult social care project held dementia awareness sessions for those in the community. This resulted in dementia sufferers and their carers feeling more included in the community. Moreover, the 'Supported Employment for People with Autism' project worked to improve awareness of autism amongst the business community, which has led to reduced concern regarding employing adults with autism. The project lead anticipates that this will eventually lead to a decrease in unemployment for autistic people within the community.

Some projects also reported **improved support networks within the communities** they worked with, impacting on community cohesion. For example, 'Leiston Social Prescribing' reported an increase in support networks for beneficiaries, through delivering community based initiatives. This included a café established to support patients with low level mental health conditions and dementia, and walking groups designed to support people to improve their physical health.

Fewer incidences of anti-social behaviour have improved local communities

A **reduction in anti-social behaviour** through project activities was reported by six projects to have led to safer and more secure communities, impacting on general wellbeing. Project leads noted a reduction in anti-social behaviour amongst children in particular. For example, 'Thatto Heath', a youth engagement project, worked with six young people to control risk-taking behaviour and impulsive thinking, which decreased their involvement in anti-social behaviour. 'Oasis Community Partnership', a multi-service hub, also reported a decrease in anti-social behaviour from young people, through family support workers engaging adults to teach parenting skills and the importance of routine.

- *'We have also helped and supported a customer who had mental health problems and was causing lots of anti-social behaviour because she became lonely and isolated after losing her husband. We engaged the customer in weekly events where she made new friends, the anti-social behaviour has now ceased.'*

- *Be Connected, monitoring report*

The 'Multiple and Complex Needs' programme reported a reduction in anti-social behaviour amongst their adult beneficiaries, including less vandalism in local parks and fewer needles discarded in public areas, positively impacting on community safety.

Impacts on the wider community

- Developing a more cohesive community was reported by projects across all thematic areas, most prevalently social prescribing and employment projects. The key mechanisms for improving community cohesion were supporting the integration of new arrivals in the community, beneficiaries working together to improve their community, and improving awareness of issues within the community. Five projects also reported improved support networks, which impacted on community cohesion.

- A reduction in anti-social behaviour was highlighted by five projects within children (2), complex needs (2), adult social care (1) and multi-service hub (1) projects, resulting in improved community safety and improved family relationships.

Impacts on local services

Project leads reported that delivery had **positively impacted on other local services**. However, it will take time and further monitoring to fully understand the impact that the Communities Fund has had on statutory and community services.

Projects have reported reducing the burden on local statutory services

Reduced pressure on local services was predominantly reported by complex needs projects, although this outcome was not limited to this thematic area. Seven complex needs projects highlighted successes in **reducing A&E attendance, hospital admissions and ambulance call outs**. For example, the 'Studio Upstairs' project used art therapy to reduce re-admissions to hospital for those suffering from mental health issues[18]. Furthermore, the 'VIP' project reported that their intensive programme of support for those with substance misuse issues[19] led to a reduction in demand for NHS and other frontline services.

Six further projects highlighted reduced pressure on services, including social prescribing projects, who reported reduced pressure on GPs and the wider health service, due to their community based initiatives.

Four complex needs projects also noted a **reduction in beneficiaries offending and going to prison**. The 'Women's Custody Diversion Project' stated that identifying vulnerable women earlier in the system resulted in increased wellbeing, confidence and resilience. As a result, this led to a reduction in beneficiary re-offending. Furthermore, the 'At Risk' project stated that out of the 13 participants on the programme who had previously offended, 11 had not offended since becoming involved in the project.

> - *The integrated place team worked intensively with Laura to develop strategies that she can use to manage her behaviour when she is feeling low… based on Laura's record with the emergency services, an estimated cost saving of £60,529 in predicted over 4.25 years.*
>
> - *Making a Difference in College Bank and Lower Falinge, case study testimonial*

Four project leads also reported that their interventions had **reduced the use of adult and children's social care services**. For example, the 'Sefton Community Connectors' multi-service hub project highlighted that the local adult social care service had reported fewer inappropriate calls, as these were instead dealt with by the Community Connectors team. The 'Family Know-How' children's project reported that no referrals to children's social care were necessary for any of their beneficiaries during the period of support, when they had previously been identified as at risk of needing social care intervention.

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[18] According to their CBA, it was expected that 19 people would benefit from reduced hospital admissions.
[19] According to their CBA, it was expected that 21 beneficiaries would reduce their alcohol dependency.

Other projects reported an increased use of services by beneficiaries

Whilst most projects highlighted a reduction in service use, nine project leads stated that their intervention led to **increased use of services, due to improving beneficiary access to appropriate support**. This included the 'Multiple and Complex Needs Programme' who reported that 22 beneficiaries registered with a local GP, received a mental health assessment and had been supported in accessing the correct benefits, leading to improved wellbeing. The project lead asserted that at the same time, this alleviated pressure on 'crisis' response services; due to increased wellbeing and access to the right support, beneficiaries attended A&E less, and were more proactive in attending GP appointments when needed, rather than missing them. Therefore, the increase in access is reported to be offset by reductions elsewhere, with **greater provision of preventative or early intervention support to avoid crises**.

- *A complex needs hub has been developed within the local hospital as a result of the complexity of issues highlighted by the project.*

- *Reducing Alcohol Related Frequent Attenders, project vignette*

Impacts on local services

- Projects across most thematic areas stated they had reduced pressure on local services, including on A&E, hospital admissions and GPs, in addition to the prison service, adult social care services and children's services.

- Nine projects stated they had increased service use for beneficiaries, such as GP appointments and unemployment benefits. However, this was largely reported to be offset by reductions elsewhere, avoiding crises by intervening earlier and requiring less intensive intervention.

Impacts on project leads

Whilst project leads commented on outcomes and impacts emerging for beneficiaries, services and the wider community, they were less forthcoming in terms of the impacts they, their organisations and their partners had experienced as a result of the Fund. Impacts they did highlight tended to be unanticipated, and were typically not captured in the logic models.

The Communities Fund allowed project leads to improve their relationships with partners, and to form new partnerships they did not anticipate

Improved partnership working was a key outcome of the Communities Fund. **Better partnerships** were highlighted across all thematic areas, by 17 projects. Strong partnerships were identified as integral to successful project delivery.

Some projects involved the **formation of new partnerships**, which were largely unanticipated. For example, the 'Transforming Lives' complex needs project formed a new relationship with Positive Minds to support beneficiaries to improve their mental health. This enabled some beneficiaries to sustain the benefits beyond the original intervention. In addition, the 'We Care' project (working with young carers) partnered with Working Chance, a recruitment consultancy focused on young people exiting care or the criminal justice system. Working Chance helped the project to support beneficiaries into employment.

Better partnerships between organisations involved has resulted in **cultural changes**. Projects reported an improved propensity for integrated working between local services and community organisations, and better working relationships between individuals as a result. Projects also experienced closer working relationships with other departments within their organisations, particularly within LAs. Project partners reported they would be more likely to work together in the future as a result, including on collaborative bids for further funding opportunities to support people in the local community.

- *The relationship between the council and the Nottinghamshire Parent Carer Forum has 'exceeded expectations'*

- *Nottinghamshire's Co-Production of Short Breaks, case study*

- *'We saw that we were establishing agency networks through our regular meetings as well as our events. A lot of joint working came from our project and we started to see new avenues open up to support micro enterprise.'*

- *Oasis Community Partnership, monitoring report*

Furthermore, through attending the Communities Fund learning share events, six **projects made connections with each other** and shared learning further. This tended to happen based on geographical proximity. Three Yorkshire and Humber based projects have met independently to share learning, and plan future meet-ups to sustain their links post-Communities Fund. In addition, the 'Dogs for Removing Barriers to Education' social prescribing project highlighted connections they had made with a nearby adult social care project 'Dementia Friendly Community Enablers', to enhance and expand their support models. In addition, project leads have formed connections based on shared interests and a common project theme, rather than geographical proximity. The lead from the 'We Care' project in London has been in touch with another children focused project ('Nottinghamshire's Co-

Production of Short Breaks') following the Communities Fund learning share event in December 2018, to learn more about their co-production model.

Training opportunities and internal sharing learning contributed to professional development

Some project leads also reported **professional development** as a result of the Communities Fund. For example, 'Making a Difference in College Bank and Lower Falinge' project partners reported accessing training opportunities through their involvement with the project; this was something they had not anticipated when they first engaged with the programme.

In addition, the 'Nottinghamshire's Co-Production of Short Breaks' project organisation is sharing learning internally. They have developed a co-production toolkit to support other areas of children's services, and the wider Council, in undertaking co-production to improve services.

Project organisations have benefited from their involvement in the Communities Fund

Project leads highlighted **benefits for their organisation** which they had not anticipated. Some reported that their organisation is now more aware of specific issues affecting the local community. For example, the 'Manchester Dodgeball Employment Programme' improved their understanding of the NEET population in the areas they work in, and as a result are expanding their project to engage with NEETs in surrounding areas.

The 'Sense of Place' project enabled the lead organisation (the Tameside Archives) to demonstrate outreach and innovative engagement of volunteers. This resulted in accreditation status, which will allow more prominent collections to be hosted within the Archives.

Impact on project leads

- Projects across all thematic areas stated they had improved or generated partnerships due to the Fund, however employment projects (7) were more likely to highlight this than other project types.

- Six projects have begun to make connections as a result of attending Fund events, to work collaboratively or share best practice.

- Further impacts included improved professional development and benefits for their organisation (e.g. securing accreditation).

Attribution

The **majority of project leads attributed the outcomes and impacts achieved to the Communities Fund**. Over two thirds of round 4 monitoring respondents (27) asserted that project delivery would not have happened without the Communities Fund, with a further seven maintaining that project delivery would have happened at a smaller scale. Only one (employment) project lead stated that delivery would have happened anyway at the same scale, whilst three were unsure.

Similarly, whilst seven project leads report that the project outcomes would have been achieved at a smaller scale, **none felt that their project outcomes would have been achieved at the same scale without the Fund**.

Table 14: To what extent project delivery would have happened, and project outcomes would have been achieved, without the Communities Fund (N=38)

	At the same scale	At a smaller scale	Someone else would have delivered/achieved outcomes	Not sure	Would not have happened
Project delivery would have happened	1	7	0	3	27
Outcomes would have been achieved	0	7	0	3	28

Source: SQW analysis of monitoring report responses

However, projects noted further drivers of success, which supported interventions in meeting their delivery and outcome targets. Interventions that built on pilots or projects elsewhere were particularly successful, as delivery processes were already in place, and the intervention had been tried and tested. Furthermore, nine projects[20] reported that changes in the local context whilst the project was ongoing had a positive effect on the success of the project. This included:

Increased integrated working, for example, one project stated that locality working across health and social care was implemented in their area, which improved relationships with colleagues in other agencies

One project lead was involved in a transfer (TUPE) as part of an organisational change, increasing the potential to expand and extend the project reach

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[20] Final monitoring report

Increasing recognition of key interventions. For example, the recognition of social prescribing as a 'valid, professional service' positively affected one project, as they can now 'lay the foundations for a *stable quality offer'*. Another project noted increasing recognition of the impact of poverty and lack of proper nutrition on young people.

Long term impacts expected

Projects are at different stages of delivery, with some already completed whilst others remain ongoing – in many cases, having secured (or seeking) further funding. Many of the impacts of the Communities Fund are not yet evident, and work remains ongoing to support impact realisation in the future.

The long term impacts expected by projects varied by thematic area. The majority of long term impacts centred on beneficiaries and services; however some project leads also noted that an improved partnership network was expected to bring benefits in the future. The outcomes that have already been achieved by projects are expected to support realisation of long-term impacts within communities. Project leads are confident they are on the right trajectory towards achieving the longer term impacts expected.

Table 15: Long-term impacts anticipated by projects, by thematic area

Theme	Long term impacts expected
Adult social care	• A reduction in social isolation and improved support networks • Improved wellbeing, and improved mental health • Improved inclusivity within communities
Children	• Improved wellbeing, including improved safety and happiness • Reduction in those disengaged with education, employment or training • Improved partnership working
Complex needs	• Improved quality of life (e.g. increased life expectancy, safety) • Reduced pressure on statutory services, leading to cost savings • Improved trust in services • Reduction in crime, reoffending and anti-social behaviour
Employment	• Reduced unemployment, increased financial stability and reduced poverty • Improved health and wellbeing • Reduction of young people not in education, employment or training • Improved confidence and aspiration
Homelessness	• Improved health and wellbeing, including mental health

	• Reduced social isolation and improved relationships • Increase in employment
Multi-service hub	• Improved social cohesion and community networks, to reduce isolation • Increase in employment and better financial outcomes • Improved health and wellbeing
Social Prescribing	• Reduced pressure on statutory services, leading to cost savings • Increased health and wellbeing, including reduced health inequalities • Reduced social isolation and an increase in community support networks

Financial implications and Cost Benefit Analysis findings

As part of the evaluation of the Communities Fund, projects were requested to complete a cost benefit analysis (CBA) using the CBA tool developed by the Greater Manchester Combined Authority Research Team (GMCA, formerly New Economy – a tool recommended by MHCLG to identify the fiscal, economic and social values of projects, alongside project costs and resource requirements. When reviewing this section, it may be particularly helpful to refer to the glossary at the start of the report.

When reviewing the financial implications and CBA findings, it is important to note the following considerations:

- **Project-led assessments**: The CBA findings are based on project lead expectations / evidence – which (with the exception of the case study projects) has not been verified by SQW, although we did provide individual guidance, support and feedback to all project leads regarding the CBA development. It does appear that some projects were more optimistic in their calculations of outcomes and costs than others, and some of the CBAs were more comprehensively completed than others, despite the feedback and support provided. Overall, the quality of CBAs submitted however was sufficiently high for analysis.

- **Timing**: Some CBAs were ex-ante, e.g. presenting anticipated outcomes and costs into the future, some were ex-post (undertaken post-delivery), e.g. focused on what was achieved by the Communities Fund monies. The majority were a combination of both approaches, providing a retrospective and prospective view of costs and benefits. This variation reflects both the intended usage (by the projects) of their CBA, and the stage of development and implementation of the projects at the time of CBA development; some were well underway with delivery, others had almost completed their activities, whilst others were planning to scale up. Some used the CBA to make the case to funders; some as a self-evaluation tool; others to provide the insights and data requested by SQW. This distinction between ex-ante and ex-post CBAs is important to note because ex-ante calculations may not accurately reflect all costs and outcomes that emerge in reality. Project leads were encouraged to revisit their CBA during the latter stages of the evaluation, to update it as needed.

- **Expectations versus actuals**: It was not always clear in the CBAs which projects had secured funding for future years of delivery, and hence whether their CBA costs and expected outcomes reflect future scale and delivery accurately, and whether they are likely to be realised. Where possible, this was checked during individual phone calls by MHCLG and SQW during autumn 2018, as well as via monitoring returns.

- **Bespoke benefits**: Where bespoke benefits were added, projects varied in the depth of their assumptions and clarity of evidence sources regarding these.

The individual CBA summaries and CBA Analysis Report should be reviewed to obtain a more detailed picture of the CBAs.

This section provides an overall outline of the costs and benefits identified across all CBAs submitted[21], as well as the overall return on investment, both financially and economically. The timescales used by projects to model these factors varied between **one to ten years, with an average analysis timeframe of four years.**

On average, Communities Fund projects expect to yield a financial ROI of 3.6 and a public value ROI of 28.1 – this means that for every £1 spent, projects deliver a return of £3.60 of financial benefits, and £28.10 of economic or public value benefits.

Across all CBAs, the modelled **average overall financial return on investment (ROI) is 3.6**, ranging from 0.0 to 19.0[22]. **On average the benefits outweigh the costs in the financial case, as the average costs are £173,459 compared to £571,215 of benefits**. In total, 16 projects modelled a payback period[23], from 0 to 8 years, with a mean of 1.2 years and a median of 1 year.

The economic case focuses on the social or public value benefits of the projects. It follows a similar pattern to the financial case, yielding a large range on public value return on investment from 0.4 to 127.4. However, **unlike the financial case, there are no projects which have a negligible economic ROI**. Like the financial case, in the economic case the average benefits outweigh the average costs, however (as may be expected), this is greater in the economic case than the financial case.

Table 16: below presents a summary of the CBA average findings, coverall all submitted CBAs completed by project leads except for the three that were excluded from the analysis for anomalous results. The table shows that there were significant variations in ROIs, payback periods and the scale of costs and benefits for each project.

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[21] SQW received CBAs from 50 projects, giving a return rate of 93%. However, six were excluded from this analysis due to substantial data gaps or providing anomalous results. Therefore, CBA analysis is based on 44 CBAs.
[22] ROI measures the amount generated on an investment, relative to the investment's cost. For example, an ROI of 11.2 would mean that £11.20 was generated on an investment, relative to every £1.
[23] A payback period calculates the point at which the fiscal costs of the programme have been recouped, hence is only applicable when financial benefits are larger than financial outlay. Only projects with an ROI over one have a payback period.

Table 16: Summary of CBAs[24]

	Average	**Median**	**Minimum**	**Maximum**
Analysis timeframe included in the CBA	4	3	1	10
Financial case				
Overall financial ROI	3.6	1.9	0.0	19.0
Financial case: costs	£173,459	£78,631	£17,761	£1,181,701
Financial case: benefits	£571,215	£264,209	£456	£5,006,673
Payback (years)	1.2	1.0	0.0	8.0
Economic case				
Public value ROI	28.1	13.3	0.4	127.4
Economic case: costs	£198,427	£101,385	£25,108	£1,361,701
Economic case: benefits	£5,488,095	£1,706,603	£24,203	£58,126,551

Source: SQW analysis of Communities Fund CBA models

Costs

Across all projects, the average financial cost is £173,459, with an average economic cost of £198,427. Within the CBA, projects were required to consider not only financial costs, but also offset and in-kind costs. Additionally, projects input an optimism bias percentage to indicate the accuracy of the figures.

Two projects included offset costs in their CBAs: Be Connected and Great Yarmouth Venetian Waterways. It is likely that other projects also had offset costs not identified in their CBAs.

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[24] This table is based on 44 CBAs

On average, 14% of total economic costs across projects are in-kind costs. This varies significantly across the different projects, and ranges from £0 to £180,000[25].

Optimism bias is set at an average of 4%, suggesting that project leads were generally confident in their costings. This could be because most projects modelled their CBAs on a short-term timeframe. However, overall this 4% optimism bias is significantly lower than expected for this type of CBA, and is likely to reflect substantial over-optimism by some project leads.

New Economy defined the levels of optimism bias applicable to different CBAs, based on the confidence in the accuracy and completeness of the underpinning data. For example, costs based on 'uncorroborated expert judgement' should have an optimism bias of +40% added to the project costs, whilst those based on 'independently audited cost data' from the current year should add an optimism bias of +0% from the outcomes calculations[26]. Given that none of the projects reported independently auditing their cost data, and many were working on ex-ante calculations of expected costs if the model were to be scaled up and sustained, an average cost optimism bias of -4% appears to be lower than expected. An optimism bias of 5-15% may be more realistic, which would in turn increase project costs by the same amount.

Benefits

The **average financial benefit[27] identified across all projects is £571,215**. This is typically based on benefits to four organisations. Only one project did not include additional economic or public value benefits. The wider benefits including public value and economic benefits were over six times larger than the fiscal benefits alone[28].

The average engagement of target beneficiaries is presented as 61%. However, the average retention rate is higher, with 77% of beneficiaries retained to the point of benefit realisation. There is an average deadweight of 19% across projects. Optimism bias was set at an average of -15% for benefits. However, it is generally expected that CBAs of this nature to have at around -40% optimism bias, which could suggest a higher degree of certainty (or overoptimism) from projects than might normally be expected.

The modelled short-term cashable benefit was typically 65% of the benefit, and had a vast range, from £380 to £3,534,344, with a mean of £390,870 and a median of £134,031. The modelled long term cashable benefit was typically 83% of the overall benefit, and ranged from £456 to £4,632,619, with a mean of £497,202 and a median of £236,937. Both ranges are large, which could mean that different projects have under or over-estimated the value of benefits they will receive in the longer term. However, the range in benefits could also reflect the size of the beneficiary cohort

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[25] In-kind costs are not included in the total fiscal costs but are included in the total economic costs when the wider costs and benefits of the project are considered

[26] https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/research/research-cost-benefit-analysis/)

[27] Undiscounted benefits

[28] Note this is using the median economic case benefits divided by the median financial case benefits

(and project scale), engagement and retention rates and the nature of the outcomes modelled.

The three top beneficiaries are the DWP (the main financial beneficiary for 20 projects), the NHS (13 projects) or the LA (seven projects). Around two thirds of projects (27) have four or more beneficiaries, whereas four projects have only one.

**Figure 1: Average percentage of fiscal benefits used by projects[29]**
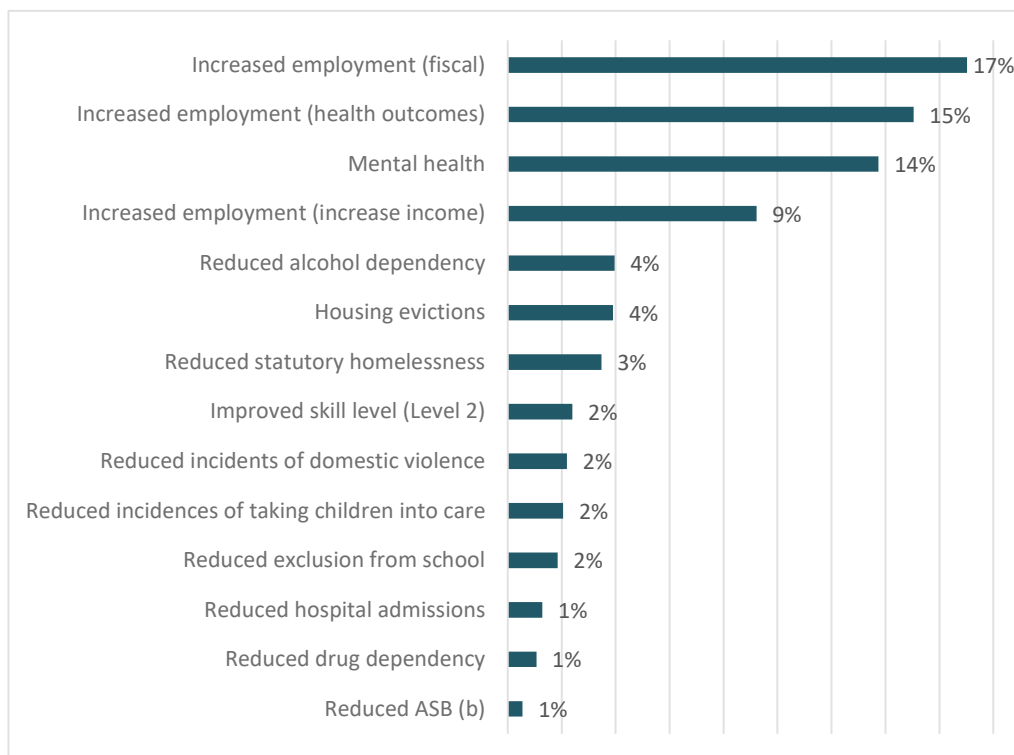
Typically, the majority of economic and public value benefits related to health and wellbeing[30]. This includes the improved wellbeing of individuals (23%), improved community wellbeing (18%), improved family wellbeing (11%) and improved children's wellbeing (1%). Further public value benefits included increased employment (7%), improved mental health (6%) and reduced incidents of domestic violence (3%). These can be identified as their individual components in the figure overleaf. Overall, these estimated benefits need to be treated with some caution – health and wellbeing impacts are generally difficult to evidence, and particularly so if modelling is ex-ante and therefore assumptions-based. Monetisation of the health

[29] This only covers benefits which were in a project's top five most valuable benefits
[30] This is the value generated, based on the additional £ benefits presented in the economic case (top 5 benefits identified) overall, and showing the % of which relates to these elements

and wellbeing benefits is high level, using proxy values derived from the quality adjusted life years (QALY) impact of depression, and there are challenges in considering levels of deadweight and the extent to which impacts and related benefits are likely to be sustained over time. It is likely that the benefits of the projects on health and wellbeing have been overstated, and in light of this, the average optimism bias correction of -15% seems low: for public value benefits of health and wellbeing, optimism bias estimates of 40% are more common.

Figure 2: Average percentage of public value benefits used by projects[31]
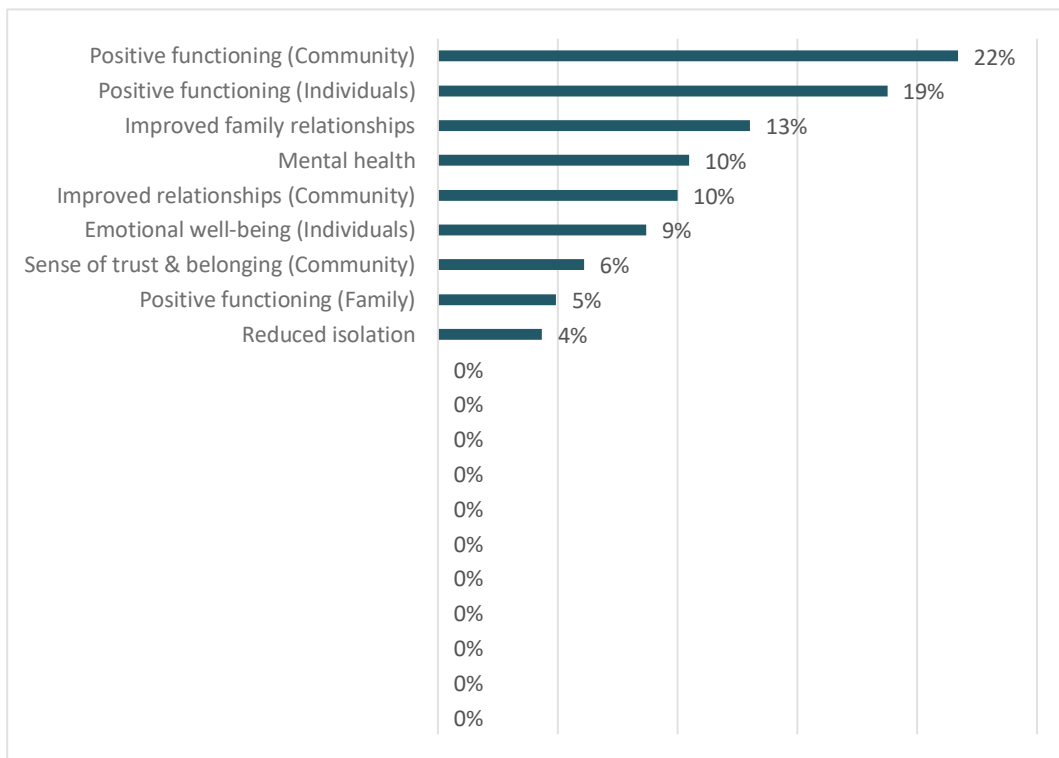
Variations across thematic areas

Average financial ROI ranged from 1.4 for adult social care projects, to 8.4 for homelessness projects. All thematic areas presented relatively high public value (economic) ROIs on average, particularly social prescribing (49.2) and adult social care (72.6) projects. This may be due to the greater number of beneficiaries engaged in these areas. This is presented in table 6-5, overleaf.

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[31] This only covers benefits which were in a project's top five most valuable benefits

Factors which influence the overall ROI differed between thematic areas:

- **Average in-kind costs.** These varied across projects, with the highest cited by multi-service hubs.

- **Engagement of beneficiaries varied**. Only homelessness projects reported 100% engagement, and this is likely to be because these projects had a small target cohort. Multi-service hubs reported lower engagement, although these projects had a wider target cohort, due to the range of their offer.

The two top fiscal benefits cited most commonly related to improved mental health and a rise in employment, with the exception of social prescribing projects, which identified bespoke benefits such as GP prescription costs. The top beneficiaries were either the NHS or the Department for Work and Pensions, which is consistent with the fiscal benefits identified.

Table 17: Comparison of project CBA findings, by project theme

	Adult Social Care	Children	Complex Needs	Employment	Homelessness	Multi-Service Hub	Social Prescribing
Average financial return on investment (ROI)	1.4	1.6	3.5	4.0	8.4	2.3	5.5
Average public value return on investment (ROI)	72.6	25.4	18.6	23.8	38.0	13.9	49.2
Average payback period (years)	3	3	4	4	6	4	2.4
Range of beneficiaries engaged[32]	40-1,822	6-310	13-250	12-220	4-15	50-368	100-3,500
Costs							
Average financial case	£234,893	£75,072	£274,651	£166,772	£64,935	£160,133	£87,693

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[32] The range of beneficiaries is based on more up to date information from the vignettes/monitoring data.

	Adult Social Care	Children	Complex Needs	Employment	Homelessness	Multi-Service Hub	Social Prescribing
Average economic case	£259,320	£83,708	£292,968	£204,621	£94,679	£202,379	£91,095
Average offset costs	£22,696	£0	£0	£31,329	£0	£0	£0
Average in-kind costs	£24,428	£8,636	£18,317	£37,848	£29,744	£42,245	£3,422
Top funder	Local Authority	Comm. Fund	Local Authority	Comm. Fund	Local Authority	Local Authority	Local Authority
Benefits							
Average financial case	£373,786	£79,670	£806,778	£785,164	£550,956	£252,692	£388,641
Average economic case	£21.1m	£1.5m	£3.6m	£6.4m	£2.6m	£2.7m	£6m
Average engagement	62%	77%	49%	72%	100%	24%	46%
Average retention	69%	74%	79%	81%	75%	69%	80%
Top fiscal benefit	Mental Health	Mental Health	Rise in employ-ment	Rise in employ-ment	Rise in employ-ment	Mental Health	Bespoke
Top beneficiary	NHS	NHS	NHS	DWP	DWP	NHS	NHS
Top public value benefit	Positive function-ing (community)	Bespoke	Improved relation-ships (communi-ty)	Positive function-ing (communi-ty)	Mental Health	Improved family relation-ships	Positive functioning (community)

Key learning

Introduction

o This section of the report presents the key learning emerging, at both Fund ('programme') level and project level. The key findings regarding enablers experienced, challenges encountered and how/where these were overcome, and reflections on the support offered as part of the Communities Fund, are explored below.

Programme level process learning

o Project leads were **genuinely grateful for the Communities Fund**. The funding allowed project leads to build on previous pilot projects and trial new approaches to benefit those in need in their communities. The Fund also gave projects the opportunity to learn new skills (such as CBA), and build networks through the learning share events. Project leads emphasised that they would like these networks to continue, through both sustaining their relationships with MHCLG, and further opportunities to share learning and best practice with other Fund recipients.

o The project application process was considered by project leads to be **straightforward and simple to complete**. In contrast, some suggested that the evaluation and monitoring expectations were excessive, and project leads did not always fully understand what they had agreed to until after their application was accepted. To overcome this, it was suggested that the sequencing of evaluation activities and outputs could be revised, with the logic model being completed prior to or during the application stage, rather than post-acceptance of the funding.

o When timescales are considered, projects did all manage to achieve at least some of their intended outcomes, and the progress made by many is quite remarkable when the amount of funding received and the timescales they were working to are considered.

o The timeframe for project delivery was highlighted as insufficient for around a third of

> *'It is really important for government departments to be so involved in the work on the ground as has happened during this Communities fund programme.'*
>
> *Making a Difference in College Bank and Lower Falinge, monitoring report*

project leads[33]. These project leads reported that the two year funding period did not allow enough time for projects to be established, to finalise the delivery model, recruit beneficiaries, deliver support or interventions, evidence impact and plan for sustainability. This was particularly challenging for projects with no pre-existing strong partnerships or established relationships between organisations or individuals; where new ways of working had to be agreed across partners unfamiliar with one another, mobilisation was delayed.

o   The timescale was also cited as a challenge for sustaining benefits amongst projects who provided intensive support to very vulnerable individuals; project leads worked hard to ensure appropriate exit strategies are in place in these cases.

Project level process learning

o   This section of the report presents the key learning emerging at project level. It has been structured to explore enablers and challenges emerging, and mitigation strategies adopted by projects. The findings are drawn from the monitoring reports, case study fieldwork, learning share events, and individual calls with projects during autumn 2018.

Enablers

The people involved with delivery, such as project partners, project leads and delivery teams.

Effective partnership working was a key enabler at project level, and was highlighted as the key success story by 10 leads in the final monitoring round. This included effective partnerships between the LA and primary VCS organisation, in addition to other partners involved in project delivery:

- Working with other organisations often improved beneficiary recruitment pathways, opening up new opportunities for referrals, or recruiting beneficiaries known to other organisations.

- In addition, effective partnership working enabled some projects, particularly those

Partners helped to recruit young people onto the programme. Manchester City Council has good connections with harder to reach communities… this ensured that the most in-need young people had the opportunity to participate.

Manchester Dodgeball Employment Programme, case study

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[33] Seven of 24 who gave final comments on the fund in the final monitoring round.

providing intensive support, to share information regarding beneficiary needs, enabling more effective support to be provided.

- For some VCS leads, having visible LA involvement offered credibility to the project, and enabled them to extend their networks across other public services.

- Many partnerships have been sustained, and partners plan to continue working together due to the strong personal and professional relationships established.

The presence of **committed, stable leads** with an array of skills was cited as a key enabler. Project leads with strong project management skills, expertise and knowledge of the issues on the ground and genuine passion and enthusiasm for the role enabled project delivery to progress effectively. Enablers highlighted by partners included strong communication and dissemination of information to relevant parties and effective organisation of activities. For beneficiaries, project leads fostered trusting relationships, and as a consequence built trust.

A strong project team further supported project success. Teams which could offer expertise, knowledge and training to beneficiaries were considered key enablers to the project. Furthermore, dedicated and approachable delivery staff were able to build trust with beneficiaries who had previously been difficult to reach

Operational enablers centred on factors in place at project inception, including a good base for delivery and existing monitoring processes

'Sean' feels that his relationships with his navigator is important, and does not want to let them down.

Multiple and Complex Needs Programme, case study testimonial

Projects reported that having a having a stable, accessible, suitably equipped and comfortable **base for delivery** enabled project success. Having a space that was easily accessible to those in the community was of great importance in attracting and retaining beneficiaries to the projects. Furthermore, having a base which was practical for the delivery of the project activities was a key enabler. For example, having a kitchen space was vital for setting up community cafes, and access to meeting rooms was important for projects holding steering group or community meetings.

Having the facilities in place to create a shared space for the volunteers to use was an enabler to more social impacts, as it allowed relationships between volunteers to happen more organically, for example, 'over a cup of tea'.

Sense of Place, case study

The **ability to set up and mobilise quickly** was a key enabler for project progress. Projects with pre-existing relationships with partners, access to beneficiaries and a base for delivery were able to implement recruitment and delivery processes efficiently, resulting in outcomes being realised sooner. Projects with **existing monitoring processes in place** found that this was an enabler in undertaking the

CBA. These projects found they were more able to provide more accurate estimates of benefits and scope than projects who were not clear what benefits had been realised already.

Challenges

One of the key challenges faced by projects was the issue of **short term contracts, or staff turnover**. For some projects, the loss of a project lead or an integral member of the team resulted in a loss consistency for beneficiaries, or delays in project delivery. It also disrupted monitoring and evaluation processes when handovers were not effectively delivered, or not delivered at all. This became a greater challenge towards the end of the funding period, when staff on short term contracts moved on before further funding could be secured.

Some projects faced challenges which resulted in **slower mobilisation than expected**. One reason for this was variable access to necessary equipment and infrastructure experienced.

Difficulty in **recruiting beneficiaries** was a key challenge for projects, again, resulting in slower than expected mobilisation. Some projects reached fewer beneficiaries than anticipated due to challenges accessing the hardest to reach individuals in the community. In contrast, some projects reached a far greater number of beneficiaries than expected, which sometimes proved challenging in terms of evidencing outcomes and remaining focused on achieving project aims.

Projects who worked with beneficiaries with complex and severe needs reported several challenges:

Providing more intensive support than expected resulted in some projects having reduced ability to cope with intended numbers of beneficiaries. One project made changes to their eligibility criteria as they were unable to support those with high levels of complex needs, such as long-term and severe mental health conditions and substance misuse. They now signpost these beneficiaries to other, better suited organisations for support.

> *Sometimes partners and frontline workers faced challenges with 'system conditions'. There were some clients who were unable to be referred to particular agencies as 'they don't fit the bill'.*
>
> *Making a Difference in College Bank and Lower Falinge, case study*

Projects sometimes found it difficult to access specific interventions for beneficiaries, due to service requirements and access criteria. Some beneficiaries were unable to be referred for support, e.g. if they required a mental health assessment but were also substance abusers.

Establishing appropriate professional boundaries was sometimes a difficult balance, as often a support worker becomes the only 'constant' for beneficiaries. This could potentially result in overreliance and adverse outcomes when exiting relationships, and therefore it is vital that appropriate exit strategies are in place.

Building trust with beneficiaries was challenging for many projects. Beneficiaries were sometimes wary of becoming involved in projects which they believed might not provide long term or effective support. Furthermore, many beneficiaries had a deep mistrust of statutory agencies, and therefore it was particularly challenging for LAs to persuade beneficiaries to become involved.

Hindsight reflections

Despite the positive outcomes achieved and progress made, several project leads would make changes to their project design or delivery model in hindsight. This is to be expected, given the Communities Fund was designed to support new (or expand existing) projects, which in some cases were pilots or involved innovative approaches. There was a wide range of changes suggested across projects, with no clear thematic commonalities. The key changes project leads would make included:

> *A key challenge for the hub has been the level of mistrust in the community… previous projects in the area have generally stopped abruptly and left the community without support. Whilst the hub has been successful in dispelling some of this mistrust, there are still families who are disengaged from activity.*
>
> *Oasis Community Partnership, case study*

Change in the emphasis of the project. For example, the 'Family Know-How' project stated they would change the emphasis of the project to avoid the stigma of parental relationship difficulties to encourage more families to participate.

Allocate more time for delivery by lengthening timescales. Some project leads would have increased the timescale of the project, with the 'Bikespace' project stating they would have allowed for more time to recruit beneficiaries before the project began.

Access further funding. In hindsight, some projects would have accessed more funding to support the project; for example the 'Manchester Dodgeball Employment Programme' stated they would have secured additional investment to expand the project earlier.

Allocate more resources for monitoring. Two respondents mentioned that they would have allocated more time and funding towards monitoring and evaluation of the project.

Tweak the project design. This included developing a social prescribing data platform, implementing a more detailed risk assessment and improving the location and suitability of the venue used.

The suggested changes are generally not major revisions to the project delivery models, and instead focus on refinement to improve delivery and the support offered. This is expected to provide useful learning as models are sustained or replicated elsewhere, and to inform any future similar delivery that project partners may be involved in.

Evaluation

This section of the report presents the key learning emerging for the programme level evaluation, project engagement with monitoring and evaluation strategies, and reflections on the CBA process. The findings are drawn from the monitoring reports, case study fieldwork, learning share events, and individual calls with projects during autumn 2018.

Programme evaluation

The programme level evaluation was generally well received by projects. However, it is important to note that the funding agreement had few 'requirements' in terms of monitoring and evaluation, rather it requested that projects engaged. Therefore, projects were not compelled to participate in any evaluation activities.

Project leads welcomed the learning share events as a chance to engage with other projects, with genuine and enduring relationships built between project leads. Furthermore, project leads valued the external speakers as offering useful learning, and engaged with roundtable discussions and Q&As. However, there were challenges experienced in finding a convenient location to suit all projects; the majority of events were held in London and some projects did not attend due to lack of resource and capacity to travel. This resulted in variable attendance at the events. To mitigate this, MHCLG offered to fund the travel for project leads attending the final event.

> *'We found the Communities Fund events very supportive and helpful to our wider work.'*
>
> *The Compass Project, monitoring report*

Projects were given the opportunity to share learning through a specially created Google Group, facilitated by the evaluation team. However, this was not well used. Feedback received from project leads suggest that **regional or thematic face-to-face or webinar events** would be more beneficial for sharing learning and encouraging networking.

Throughout the evaluation research, projects have emphasised the outcomes achieved for the individual, as opposed to at community level. Whilst it was possible in some cases to extrapolate the benefit to the community on a small scale (e.g. the 'ripple effect' on beneficiaries' family and friends), where projects were dispersed over a large geographical area it was difficult to assess the community benefit, especially if those projects only supported a small number of beneficiaries. Projects which had a defined geographical area (e.g. Oasis Community Hub supported beneficiaries in the catchment area of three local primary schools, and may have been a more 'suitable' project in this sense) were more able to identify community level benefits. However, for many projects, community level benefits will not be fully evidenced at this stage, these benefits are more likely to develop over time.

Project level evaluation

The level of self-evaluation and monitoring varied between projects. Some projects, such as 'People First' and the 'At Risk' project commissioned external consultants to undertake an evaluation or the CBA. Other projects used validated tools to monitor outcomes, such as the Outcomes Star, and the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale. However, **many projects used anecdotal reports and relied on case study examples** to convey outcomes and impacts achieved.

The confidence in evaluation varied across different project leads, as did capacity for monitoring and evaluation. Whilst some saw it as a priority, others did not.

Reflections on the CBA process

Engagement with the CBA process was mixed, although the draw-down 1-1 support provided by SQW to support the CBA was highlighted as particularly useful by project leads. Whilst all project leads were requested to submit a CBA by April 2018, a few did not, whilst others did not fully engage with the process. However, some project leads have continued to update and utilise their CBA since its original development.

Some projects have updated their CBA, impacting on the anticipated return on investment

Around one third of projects (13 of 38 respondents to the fourth monitoring report) have updated their CBA, to inform discussions with potential funders or to help with project level evaluation and reporting. Projects updated their CBA due to the improved accuracy of available data, a clearer understanding of the costs and benefits associated with the project, and to reflect increased costs and benefits through scaling-up delivery. Whilst only 13 projects have updated their CBA so far, others indicated that they may well update their CBA in the future as and when they come across similar changes in data and/or scale.

Seven projects reported that revisiting the CBA altered the ROI of the project, with three reporting higher ROIs and four reporting lower ROIs. This is mostly due to the improved accuracy of data, or through the case study CBA validation process undertaken by SQW. However, all three projects reporting reduced ROIs maintain that there is no major implication for their project's viability.

The CBA process received a mixed response from project leads, although CBA development has become less challenging over time

Project leads outlined their overall reflections on the CBA process as part of the final monitoring report. There was a mixed response to the CBA process. However, there are some commonalities amongst project views regarding the CBA process.

Complex needs project leads typically stated that the CBA process provided them with '*a robust method of evaluating the work we do*' and was useful to support forward planning. It was also noted that the CBA was helpful in 'pitching for resource'

and providing evidence to potential funders. However, some felt that it required a high input of resource; one noted that they already used a similar method, duplicating work. Two complex needs projects commissioned researchers to undertake the CBA on their behalf, although recognised that not all organisations would have the funding to do so.

Employment projects generally focused on the ROI aspect of the CBA process as a useful tool. One project lead highlighted that the process useful when securing new partners and investors. Contrastingly, some employment project leads stated that the CBA received '*little interest in the results from prospective funders'.*

Whilst some children themed projects thought that the CBA was '*useful'* and '*worthwhile'*, the majority thought the process was time consuming and complicated, particularly for smaller organisations with limited capacity. Therefore, projects which did not have the capacity for the CBA completed it with less detail, in order to save on resource.

Determining a social value for their project was highlighted as a positive for an adult social care project.

Some multi-service hub projects found it to be a very '*positive process'* in developing insight into the project and showing impact '*with numbers people relate to'.*

Most social prescribing projects found the process challenging and complex. However, one project intends to revisit the CBA again later in the year.

Only one homelessness project responded in this monitoring round; whilst they stated they did not plan to revisit the CBA in the future, the project lead '*personally found it useful to find out more about the CBA process'.*

Many projects would use the CBA method again in the future, with one noting that they had recently used the methodology for a European Social Funding application. Key reasons highlighted for using the CBA method again included:

- **To attract further investment**. Projects stated that they would use the methodology when applying for funding, as it is '*very persuasive for funders looking to see [the] impact of projects'*. Employment projects in particular highlighted this as a key reason for using the methodology in the future.

- **To determine a return on investment**. Using the approach enables project leads to effectively demonstrate value for money, both internally and externally.

- **To demonstrate the impact of the project**. The methodology was credited as providing a good way to show and review the impact that a project is having.

- **For evaluation**. One project will use the methodology in future to undertake evaluation and '*compare against previous work'*.

In contrast, some found the CBA tool **complex and overcomplicated to use**, and they would not be confident in accurately completing a CBA without guidance in the future. In addition, there were concerns that the CBA methodology focused too much on costs and financial returns, rather than the social need of the intervention.

In the first monitoring round, 80% of projects cited CBA development as a key challenge; this decreased to 36% by the third monitoring round. Whilst the CBA is evidently remained a challenging process for some projects, many improved their capacity to develop the CBA and recognised value in the methodology.

Added value of the Fund

Whilst the Communities Fund has evidently made a positive contribution to people's lives and improved the communities that projects operated in, in some cases it was difficult to disentangle the added value of the Fund and attribute impacts, due to the additional alternative funding some projects utilised. One example was the Venetian Waterways project, which was part of a larger £2.7m regeneration project of the Venetian Waterways and boating lake in Great Yarmouth. The funding provided by the Communities Fund was relatively small in comparison to the broader regeneration funding pot; however, this was not typical of Communities Fund projects.

Overall, there is anecdotal evidence to suggest added value. The majority (27 of 38 who responded to the final monitoring report) of project leads reported that **their project would not have happened without the Fund**, and a further seven projects reported that delivery would have happened on a smaller scale.

> *'Thank you for the Funding! Our final evaluation report will tease out our key findings and learning points. Without the Communities Fund award the lives of six young would definitely be far worse…'*
>
> *Goole Targeted Youth Project, monitoring report*

Only one project reported that delivery would have happened at the same scale anyway; this is a VCS-led employment project which had significant backing from private partner organisations and extensive experience in delivering funded employment interventions. In terms of outcomes, however, the leads from this project stated that the outcomes achieved would not have been achieved to the same scale without the Fund.

There were no projects who felt they would have achieved all outcomes to the same scale without the Communities Fund, highlighting the added value that the funding had on local communities.

There were also additional factors which supported projects to achieve their outcomes, on top of the funding received. For example:

Building on tried and tested interventions or pilot projects (e.g. the 'Making a Difference' project who had undertaken the intervention in a similar area close to College Bank and Lower Falinge, helping them to identify challenges and enablers to project delivery in that context from the outset).

Increased integrated working between local agencies (e.g. the 'Multiple and Complex Needs' project who met agencies for a monthly MARAC meeting to discuss beneficiaries, ensuring agencies had regular contact and could discuss issues)

Growing national and local profile and recognition of certain delivery models (e.g. social prescribing, which has become increasingly prominent in both NHS England policy documents and in the media, with growing recognition of its potential to achieve positive outcomes for individuals and communities).

In addition, the Fund timescales, whilst acting as a challenge to embedding sustainable processes in some projects, served as a key enabler in other respects. For example, projects were required to mobilse and begin evidencing outcomes within a relatively short timescale, in order to inform sustainability plans and demonstrate achievement. In this respect, it can be concluded that activities funded by the Communities Fund happened at a faster pace (and in several cases, at a greater scale), than they otherwise would have.

Some projects greatly valued and benefited from the Communities Fund programme, actively engaging with the evaluation, sharing learning events and the CBA process. However, others appeared to view it as simply a grant, and engaged with the programme to a far lesser degree.

It is also important to note that many projects received funding from other sources, either during their project or after the Communities Fund ended, in order to continue their work. This highlights the number of funding streams available to social and community interventions (e.g. Big Lottery Fund), which projects could have accessed if they had not been successful in achieving Communities Fund funding. In some cases the areas of project focus have become increasing priorities in policy and have been rolled out elsewhere using other funding sources. One such example is social prescribing, which has become inceasingly prominent as an area of focus for local health and care commissioners and national policy makers. It is questionable whether some of the funded projects might have received funding from other sources within Communities Fund timescales; however, as outlinecd above, the Communities Fund enabled project leads to trial new approaches and demonstrate outcomes and learning regarding 'what works' without the same evidential thresholds that funders often require prior to commissioning.

In addition, many of the outcomes and impacts resulting from the Communities Fund (e.g. new partnerships with other Communities Fund projects, such as Dementia Friendly Community Enablers and Dogs for Good, which has enabled expansion into other localities) are unlikely to have been achieved without this particular funding stream.

Planning for sustainability

Projects adopted different approaches to planning for sustainability. Typically, the most common method cited to support sustainability was **obtaining additional funding** to continue the intervention. This is despite the intention that projects would be established to be self-sustaining, without the need for continuous external funding for delivery.

That said, some projects adopted other approaches in order to sustain delivery. Examples included changing and adapting their interventions, using current beneficiaries to support sustainability and improving monitoring and evaluation processes. These approaches are explored in turn below.

Whilst projects have not as yet been able to fully sustain their interventions to the same scale without additional funding, there are some projects which plan to do so in the future. The leads from one project (OX7) plan for it to be established as a charitable trust or similar legal entity to sustain the activities they deliver. Another project (Oasis Hub) has diversified their offer to establish an incubation hub for start up enterprises. In future, there is potential for the hub to implement a membership business model for participating start ups, to make this aspect of the project self-sustaining.

However, the majority of projects required funding in order to sustain delivery, as well as for wider replication or scaling up activity. Projects that were not sustained stated that this was due to their inability to secure further funding to continue to deliver their intervention, and did not report considering alternative mechanisms for sustaining their project.

Changing interventions

Whilst some continuing projects had no planned changes to their intervention, others outlined key changes planned. For some, this echoed what they would have changed in hindsight, but others focused on different aspects of their project.

Several project leads planned to change where, and to whom, their projects deliver. Some planned to **implement their intervention in new geographical areas**, in order to support new clients in need. Others aimed to widen the beneficiary cohort they were supporting; for example the 'Compass' project planned to expand their parent support groups to encourage fathers and grandparents to attend.

Some projects planned to **widen the scope of what they delivered**, by providing new services. For example, the 'DFLB' project planned to offer information, advice and guidance within the Prison Service, in addition to the digital and financial training they have delivered to date. Furthermore, the 'Reducing Alcohol Related Frequent Attenders' project is expanding the number of staff and capacity, and extending their remit to provide support to people experiencing drug abuse (in addition to a continuing focus on alcohol misuse), and are also introducing an Independent Domestic Violence Advisor (IDVA) to support positive outcomes amongst their client group. In contrast, some projects planned to **narrow their focus or operate on a smaller scale** going forward. The 'Transforming Lives' project was refining their CBA to calculate the value of one aspect of their project, to seek further resource for a more narrowly focused project.

Drawing on the local community to support sustainability

Twelve projects[34] drew on the communities they operated in, including beneficiaries they had already supported, in order to ensure the sustainability of activity.

The 'Dartford Community Wellbeing Network' Multi-Service Hub planned to continue to use community volunteers recruited through the project to run steering groups rather than paid members of staff. The volunteers will support the existing community networks built through the project, designed to improve wellbeing in the local community.

'Healthier Fleetwood' social prescribing project allocated small grants to community members to set up new groups and run events aimed at improving health and wellbeing. Many of the newly established clubs will continue to run, and will continue to benefit the local community.

The 'At Risk' complex needs project trained three beneficiaries as key mentors, by supporting them through the level 3 AQA qualification in Leadership and Coaching. As a result, the beneficiaries learnt how to support young people to overcome the same challenges they once faced.

Some projects set up community cafes or start-up spaces for local businesses, many of which will continue to be run by beneficiaries and community volunteers.

> *The Sense of Place project now aims to make itself more sustainable, by using the first year volunteers as mentors to train newer mentors… Using older volunteers as trainers will also increase the capacity of the project, allowing more volunteers to access the support available. It is hoped that the project can upscale to 25 volunteers over the next 10 years.*
>
> *Sense of Place, case study*

Improving monitoring and evaluation processes

Projects also planned to **improve and embed their monitoring and evaluation processes**. The 'Making a Difference in College Bank and Lower Falinge' project lead planned to implement regular mini-evaluations, whilst 'Healthwise Harrow' leads plan to use Patient Activation Measures to demonstrate impact. Some projects also stated that they would use their CBA to support planning for the future, in order to ensure their intervention was financially viable.

Securing further funding

The majority of projects applied for **further funding** to ensure sustainability going forward. Some were funded by the organisations involved; these were typically projects that were LA-led. For example, Nottinghamshire County Council extended the role of the Co-Production Officer recruited to support the 'Nottinghamshire's Co-

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[34] Three multi-service hubs, two adult social care, two children, two employment, one complex needs, one homelessness and one social prescribing.

Production of Short Breaks' offer through internal funding, to support further co-production within the Council.

Other projects were successful in securing external funding. For some projects, funding was secured through other government bodies, which included the Home Office, the Department for Work and Pensions, Public Health England and the Cabinet Office's Life Chances Fund. Projects also received funding from charitable organisations, such as the Big Lottery Fund and Sport England. Other sources of funding were local CCGs and the private sector (e.g. Santander).

One project ('Choose Work') is planning to work with another community organisation to deliver a specific aspect of their project (supporting pre-NEET young people in schools). This was considered the most effective route to sustainability for the project, as local businesses are funding the work, and it will allow the project to deliver their intervention across the locality footprint.

Conclusions

The Communities Fund has delivered what it intended to do; funding a wide range of new or expanding interventions and approaches to tackle entrenched social issues affecting local communities. The Fund provided support to 53 projects, operating in local communities stretching from Cornwall up to Sunderland. The findings outlined in this report highlight how valuable the Fund has been in enabling outcomes to be realised that otherwise would not have been achieved, and in sowing seeds for longer term impacts to be realised over coming months and years.

The Fund added significant value, generated a positive return on investment, and enabled projects to achieve outcomes for communities and individuals that would not have been achieved otherwise. Projects have improved people's employment prospects, helped people to secure (paid, sustained) employment, built people's skills and confidence, improved wellbeing and health, and helped to divert vulnerable people away from needing crisis support by signposting to earlier intervention and help. At community level, project leads report that integration and cohesion have been improved, crime and anti-social behaviour have reduced, and communities are working together to tackle social isolation and loneliness. The scale of outcomes achieved are impressive, and many projects have been able to sustain their activities after the Fund ended, either by securing further funding, or developing self-sustaining models and interventions.

Extensive good practice has been generated for others to learn from, and the Fund has left a positive legacy that is highly likely to be sustained over years to come. A similar model could well prove successful again, and we recommend that MHCLG makes a series of refinements in order to maximise the value and impact of any similar future fund, as explored below and in the next section of the report.

Delivery, reach and outcomes

The Fund was intentionally designed to encourage a wide range of social issues to be addressed, and this is reflected in the diversity of the projects funded. This in turn enabled a wide range of beneficiaries to be reached – spanning the entire life course, with varying levels and types of needs and assets. Whilst this makes comprehensive and cohesive analysis of the funded projects more challenging (due to the lack of comparable outcomes sought and diversity of areas of focus), it illustrates the local focus and flexibility of the Fund. The Communities Fund was successful in supporting local statutory and VCS partners to collaborate and jointly develop ideas to tackle issues that really matter to, and directly affect, their local communities. This marks a move away from recent moves towards the commissioning of local services based on needs identified by funders and policy makers, towards a more localised and personalised approach. The flexibility of the Fund enabled those who arguably know their local communities the best – the local authorities and VCS partners operating there – to plan their projects to address gaps in provision, which in many cases fell between or spanned the remits of different funding streams. In many cases, without the Communities Fund, these project would otherwise not have happened. However,

it is important to recognise that whilst some of the Fund specific outcomes may not have been achieved without the Communities Fund, projects could have applied for other funding streams (as many of them have during and post- Communities Fund) which may have allowed them to deliver their intervention (though this may have been to a different scale, quality or focus).

System-wide approaches have been adopted, which have proved vital in addressing people' needs holistically, and enabling Fund monies to achieve maximum impact. These take time to develop and implement however, and rely on strong partnership networks. It is encouraging that these have been developed across a range of project types (including complex needs and social prescribing projects), and these offer real potential for improving people's life chances moving forwards.

It is important to note that project delivery and reach do not always closely align with the amounts of funding awarded, and numbers reached does not always provide a reliable indication of the impacts of projects. For example, whilst some projects have engaged with relatively small numbers of participants (e.g. 4-8 people), this support has typically involved high intensity one-to-one or small group work, addressing people's needs holistically, rather than focusing on just one or two areas of need. The intensity of support and range of beneficiary needs met, as well as whether or not activity was all delivered by the project partners or whether beneficiaries were signposted to support elsewhere, have all varied, and influenced project reach. This makes it difficult to compare outcomes emerging at individual project levels.

The Fund was welcomed by project leads and partners as providing the opportunity to innovate and deliver interventions tailored to meet local people's needs. The desire expressed by many project leads to sustain their relationship with MHCLG moving forward highlights how grateful project leads were for this opportunity. The simultaneous focus on both geographical communities and communities of interest, and flexibility of the Fund to encourage local determination of focus, sets the Fund apart, and has been a key enabler for its success.

Interestingly, many of the project outcomes relate to benefits for individuals, as opposed to communities. Perhaps this is to be expected, given Fund timescales, funding amounts and the challenge of evidencing impacts at a community level. However, this is an important point for MHCLG to consider when commissioning future similar programmes; whether or not the achievement of benefits for individuals (in some cases, a handful or relatively low numbers of individuals) is sufficient to achieve the impact at community level sought. The evidence from the Communities Fund remains largely inconclusive; project leads are confident that community level outcomes are emerging due to impacts on individuals, but robust evidence and measurement of this remains lacking at this stage, and we recommend this be a priority for follow up evaluation activity, and built into the monitoring plans for any future similar programmes.

Given the variation in the types of projects funded, and range of activities undertaken and reach achieved, it is difficult to clearly articulate the impact and legacy of the Communities Fund as a whole. Whilst it has undoubtedly achieved more than the sum of its parts (through learning share and capacity building activities), it is difficult

to clearly state the programme level outcomes emerging, as outcomes have been categorised and recorded differently across all the different projects. That is not to say projects haven't achieved valuable outcomes and made a difference to people's lives and local communities; it is just that what has been achieved is so diverse and wide-ranging, there is no 'typical' Communities Fund project or a coherent set of outcomes consistently being achieved by the projects.

Moving forward, we recommend that MHCLG more clearly defines the outcomes expected from projects financed under a single fund, to enable outcomes achieved by projects to be compared and cumulatively reported. In addition, this would help to provide a sense of scale regarding expected impacts – both for individuals and communities – and reach, which varied widely across Communities Fund projects. Balancing this against local flexibility to determine focus is key; requiring logic models during application process may help to provide details regarding project plans, scale, reach and impacts upfront, to inform commissioning decisions and ensure project plans are realistic and evidence-based.

Financial implications and return on investment

The CBAs indicate a positive economic return on investment from projects, and the vast majority outline a positive financial return. This is encouraging, and indicates that the Communities Fund overall has delivered a positive return on the £3.2m of funding invested. As might be anticipated given the disparate nature of the projects and their delivery models, the amount of return outlined in the CBAs varies widely, depending on a range of factors including project theme, numbers of beneficiaries reached/anticipated, and also the optimism of the project lead. However, overall the CBA calculations are extremely encouraging, and indicate that the Communities Fund is on course to deliver outcomes worth far in excess of the amount of funding allocated.

Achieving cashable savings is a far more difficult ask; despite this, project CBAs indicate that some cashable savings are expected to be realised. This is encouraging; following up with projects to explore the extent to which the savings can be realised over the medium to longer term will be key to evidencing this.

Despite some challenges for project leads in completing the CBA process, overall we do recommend that it is replicated in other similar programmes. However, requirements should be aligned with the amounts of funding secured by projects; a project receiving £20,000 of funding is likely to have fewer resources to undertake a CBA than a project receiving £70,000.

Sustainability and implications

Project leads were enthusiastic about the partnerships formed or strengthened through the Fund, being optimistic about future potential collaborations and the capacity built locally. The focus within many projects on building the confidence and

capabilities of local citizens also offers the potential for many (as yet) unrealised outcomes to emerge longer term.

Delivery remains ongoing in many cases, with others continuing to seek funding to sustain their activities. The expansion of some projects into neighbouring areas, or targeting those with different characteristics or needs is also extremely encouraging, and highlights the 'seed funding' or pump-priming nature of the Fund. Providing a relatively small amount of funding to enable leads to trial new ways of working or delivery in new locations has enabled some to leverage additional funding and achieve far more than originally anticipated.

There are however important risks to note moving forward. Many of the projects are still seeking additional funding in order to continue delivery, whilst others have secured further short-term funding, which means sustainability is not guaranteed.

There is also a more fundamental risk associated with short-term support, particularly interventions aimed at those with complex or severe needs. If short-term support stops or is withdrawn before beneficiaries are ready to move on to other support or exit the project, this poses a risk to their longer term wellbeing and outcomes. Whilst no project leads expressed concern or highlighted a risk regarding withdrawal of support, it may be important to monitor this moving forward, to ensure no negative unintended outcomes emerge.

In addition to monitoring and mitigating any negative outcomes, it may be useful for MHCLG to sustain light-touch engagement with projects over coming months, for other reasons. Project leads generally welcomed the interest shown by MHCLG in their activities, and were keen to report outcomes back to the funder. Currently, it is unclear to what extent the 'yet to emerge' outcomes will be tracked – whilst some project leads report clear and comprehensive evaluation plans, others have not indicated any planned monitoring or evaluation moving forwards. Given that many outcomes are likely to emerge over the coming months and years, light-touch follow up monitoring of, and engagement with, projects may help to capture the full extent of the impacts and learning emerging from the Communities Fund. Continuing to encourage project leads to provide end of project reports in a standardised format may also help to provide insights, as well as an element of consistency to the reporting.

Recommendations

Sharing learning from the Communities Fund

Recommendation 1: Showcase learning and the good practice examples identified from the Communities Fund projects. There are many examples of good practice and effective delivery emerging from the Communities Fund programme, spanning the range of project types undertaken. Many of these have been highlighted throughout this report. We recommend that MHCLG carefully considers how the learning and good practice can be communicated to reach a wide range of potential target audiences. Whilst formal reports and case studies provide the depth of insight sought by some, others may more effectively engage with more succinct or visual outputs (for example, videos, which we know are being produced by some project leads). We recommend that MHCLG develops a dissemination plan, segmented for different audiences and adopting different formats.

We anticipate that some project leaders would be willing to support this and share their experiences more widely, and may usefully be able to assist with communication activities aimed at their peers. Those that have most extensively engaged with the evaluation may be suitable 'champions' for the Fund and its legacy moving forward.

Using learning to support future funds or programmes

Recommendation 2: Consider more tightly defining project expectations. The Communities Fund was designed to be focused on addressing local needs, as defined (and based on solutions identified) by local partners. This 'bottom-up' approach was intended to enable good practice to be developed and learning shared, and to ensure solutions were developed which were owned by local partners. This did indeed lead to many positive benefits and outcomes. However, the evariety and range of projects funded means that it is difficult to identify the programme's legacy. In addition, some projects engaged with a small number of beneficiaries compared with the funding allocated, and it is not clear from the evaluation data how all projects spent their funding. With this in mind, we recommend that MHCLG may wish to consider clarifying funding requirements or expectations for future programmes, to enable expected programme level outcomes (and an indication of what 'good' project outcomes look like, for example in terms of scale or reach) to be made clearer to applicants.

Recommendation 3: Establish communities of practice. Some projects formed their own 'communities of practice', engaging with other similar projects operating within the same vicinity. Project leads were positive about this, and welcomed the learning share events for providing opportunities for them to network and meet with others. We suggest that other projects may also have benefitted from increased engagement with other similar project leads, either those operating close-by or

running similar types of projects. This may offer opportunities to share learning and good practice, identify potential funding sources, or establish cross-referral pathways, as well as offering peer support. With this in mind, we suggest that in future programmes, MHCLG might usefully seek to establish thematic (or geographic) communities of practice, providing opportunities for project leads to come together outside of formal, facilitated sessions. This could usefully be done at key points during the programme – for example, following initial launch, and to support monitoring and evaluation processes. Whilst the Google Group was established partly to fulfil this purpose, it was not well utilised by project leads, and face-to-face engagement was more popular amongst participants.

Recommendation 4: Maintain a list of potential funders/sponsors. This information was requested by project leads seeking to explore options for sustaining their activities. However, whilst MHCLG did provide a list of potential funding sources and opportunities immediately after this request, this came too late for some projects, which had already closed due to a lack of sustained funding. We recommend that in future programmes, MHCLG maintains this list and provides an updated version earlier in the programme, to enable project leads to submit applications for funding where needed.

Recommendation 5: Be realistic in terms of programme timescales and outcome expectations. Linked to the point above, whilst self-sustaining projects were anticipated as a result of the programme, in many cases 1-2 years has proved insufficient to enable project leads to establish, deliver and evidence outcomes emerging from their projects. We recommend that longer programme timescales be considered in future, and/or expectations be managed regarding the likelihood of projects being sustained post-funding. In addition, providing clarity about the type and scale of outcomes expected is likely to offer greater clarity to project leads; balancing this against the desire for locally-determined projects must however be carefully weighed up. Requiring details of milestone outputs and outcomes, and ultimate impacts expected (e.g. logic modelling) during project application process may well help to provide clarity regarding project plans and expected scale and impacts up front.

Recommendation 6: Share learning from previous evaluations more explicitly. The Communities Fund built on the legacy of the Our Place programme, including learning from its evaluation. However, it was unclear how aware the projects were of the previous programme or the learning emerging. There was a risk of previous mistakes being repeated, and good practice not being used to inform delivery models of the Community Fund projects. With this in mind, we recommend that MHCLG carefully extracts key learning points and good practice examples or principles, and makes these explicit during the project application stage. Ensuring projects state how they will build on evidenced learning or good practice will help to ensure the leads engage in the existing evidence base, and avoid 'reinventing the wheel' with delivery plans.

Evaluation and monitoring

Recommendation 7: Provide clarity regarding reporting requirements at the outset. The evaluation of the Communities Fund commenced once the programme was already underway, with projects recruited and initial workshops regarding the CBA already held. There was some confusion amongst participants regarding monitoring timeframes, which extend beyond the end of the funding timescales. We recommend providing a clear timeframe and plan, up front (ideally during the application process), outlining what is expected in terms of monitoring and reporting, key milestones and timeframes for reporting, and details of any standard headings or formats to be used for reporting, and reiterating this throughout the programme. Whilst most project leads did actively engage with the evaluation and provide relevant insights in a timely manner, some did not, and some confusion regarding reporting expectations was identified as a cause for this.

Recommendation 8: Ensure the economic assessment approach is proportionate to project/fund scale. Whilst many projects successfully completed CBAs, and some found the New Economy model particularly useful and effective, others struggled to engage with the process. For some, the CBA development fell too early for them to confidently present their outputs, outcomes and costs; for others, the process felt overly burdensome and disproportionate to the scale of funding received. With this in mind, we suggest that MHCLG ensures the CBA process is proportionate to project and Fund scales; for example, those projects supporting fewer than 12 beneficiaries or without analytical support typically found it particularly hard to complete the CBA. Where a particular approach is required, we recommend making this as explicit as possible during the project application process, to ensure Fund recipients allow sufficient resources and time within the plans.

Recommendation 9: Build closer relationships with projects. Projects were (generally) receptive to 1-1 and group engagement, from SQW and MHCLG. In future programmes, we recommend that short calls be built into monitoring plans, to capture insights leads might not feel willing to put in writing, and to build rapport.

Recommendation 10: Follow up with further light-touch evaluation. As outlined above, many of the outcomes will take months, if not years, to fully emerge, and it is not yet possible to assess the full scale of the programme's impacts. Given the scale of expected outcomes and financial return on investment, we recommend that MHCLG revisits the funded projects and conducts a light-touch follow up evaluation, to understand the extent to which the anticipated outcomes emerged in reality, and reasons for any deviation from initial expectations. This could usefully focus on community level outcomes and impacts emerging. This could take the form of a short follow up survey to projects, one-to-one phone calls with each project lead, and/or requested a refreshed CBA, for example.

Recommendations for those seeking to deliver similar projects

The recommendations below are aimed at.those seeking to achieve positive outcomes and tackle entrenched issues within their local communities, based on the learning generated from the Communities Fund projects.

Partnerships

Recommendation A: Consider how partners might help to meet beneficiaries' wider needs. Understanding eligibility criteria, waiting times and referral routes of other services and support available locally is key to ensuring beneficiary needs can be met and expectations managed. If referral or signposting to wider support is proving key, consider how or whether these wider partners could be included within sustainability planning, as they may have opportunities to access alternative funding streams, and risks may emerge for beneficiaries or outcomes realisation if partners' provision becomes unavailable.

Recommendation B: Involve all key partners in monitoring, reflection and evaluation. This is vital to ensure a variety of viewpoints are reflected in the monitoring and reporting, and to identify both good practice emerging and any negative knock on implications or challenges emerging. Building monitoring and evaluation into governance arrangements at project level is also recommended, to ensure it receives appropriate focus and prioritisation. Those projects that more actively engaged with the external evaluation, learning share and monitoring activities appeared to experience the most added value through the Fund.

Recommendation C: Plan careful handovers and roles if project manager turnover occurs. Projects typically experienced a loss of momentum in instances where their project manager left; staff turnover is to be expected to some extent when funding is available for short-term posts only. This highlights the importance of wider partners playing a role in project oversight and monitoring, and ensuring an effective handover and documentation of processes. Any loss of momentum and 'history' poses a major risk to short-term projects, and projects should ensure they plan in order to mitigate against this.

Project design, recruitment and awareness raising

Recommendation D: Carefully consider how communities will benefit, as well as individuals. Benefits may well fall on particular sub-sections of communities; being clear on how these communities are identified, defined, and fully understanding their needs is key. It is important to plan how outcomes can be evidenced, including establishing baselines prior to delivery, considering whether comparators can be ethically and appropriately established (for example, neighbouring areas without intervention) and outcomes tracked over time.

Recommendation E: Identify existing networks and channels for raising awareness. Awareness raising events varied in effectiveness; some proved effective, whilst others struggled to identify and recruit the target beneficiaries. Those which recruited most quickly were projects which were able to draw on the existing contact networks of partner organisations; they also brought a good understanding of key contextual factors, beneficiary needs and assets. With this in mind, we recommend that recruitment plans be clearly agreed during funding

application/project design phase, with consideration given to how existing beneficiary networks could be drawn on where possible (whilst ensuring GDPR compliance).

Recommendation F: Consider undertaking (or drawing on existing) asset mapping. Linked to the point above, asset mapping may prove useful in identifying how beneficiaries' wider needs can be supported, as well as identifying any gaps in local support provision. Where existing asset mapping work has been undertaken, draw on this (as far as possible) to avoid reinventing the wheel, and ensure the funded project is added into the asset map. Focusing on assets at community level may well prove effective in supporting sustainability longer term.

Recommendation G: Build in co-production where possible. Some projects specifically focused on co-production approaches to transforming service provision, whilst others adopted lighter touch approaches to engaging service users and beneficiaries in project design. There are numerous good practice guides available regarding co-production, and effective engagement of (potential and actual) beneficiaries in project design can lead to numerous benefits for both the individuals and the project, helping to ensure it meets user needs. We recommend that all community-focused projects build in an element of co-production, guided by good practice guidance available online (for example, from the Social Care Institute for Excellence, amongst others). Co-production requires adequate time, skills and resourcing, and should be factored into project plans and timescales from the outset.

Delivery

Recommendation H: Clearly define the parameters of the intervention or support. Some projects experienced 'scope creep', particularly when beneficiary needs were more complex than originally expected or did not align with orignal expectations. To ensure successful delivery and outcomes realisation within project timescales, we recommend that project leads carefully define the parameters of their intervention, and agree referral mechanisms, eligibility criteria and the duration/nature of the support to be offered up front.

Recommendation I: Ensure wider support networks and exit strategies are in place. Agreeing how and when project interventions with indviduals will end, and clarifying routes to ensure beneficiaries continue to receive any support they may need to sustain the outcomes longer term, is vital. Reviewing the effectiveness of this following implementation will be key, to ensure plans are practical and appropriate in practice, and that benefits can be sustained.

Monitoring and evaluation

Recommendation J: Build in monitoring from the outset, and establish baselines to track progress against. In some cases it was difficult to attribute outcomes to project activity or Community Fund monies, due to a lack of agreed baselines and comparators. We recommend that projects agree monitoring and

evaluation metrics and approaches at the outset, and build these into delivery plans. Agree outcomes that meet the needs of potential funders/sponsors (if further funding is likely to be needed for expansion or sustainability) as well as all partners involved, and agree how outcomes will be tracked. Use existing datasets where possible, to provide a baseline to measure against, and to minimise the burden of data collection.

Recommendation K: Consider how to track 'softer' outcomes, including capturing case study and qualitative insights. Not all outcomes can be robustly quantifiably measured, and capturing data against a wide range of indicators may not be pragmatic or proportionate, depending on project size and focus. Case studies, including a focus on changes occurring in people's lives, including feelings, aspirations, confidence, resilience and wellbeing, can all prove powerful. Storytelling to highlight the difference made to people (and communities), particularly during early stages of implementation or in the absence of quantifable evidence, can provide vital evidence for commissioners and potential partners, as well as for communities and potential beneficiaries. Consider how beneficiaries can be empowered to tell their story.

Recommendation L: Build beneficiary confidence and capability in data collection. Consider how beneficiaries can support data collection, for example, capturing stories of impact, as described above. Build in capability training or development opportunities to support this wherever possible. Networks of peer researchers may help with sustaining projects, as well as offering additional benefits for participants themselves (in terms of improved skills and confidence etc.).

Recommendation M: Ensure outcomes are evidenced at both individual and community level. It is vital to ensure that the impacts at community level are captured, not just the outcomes for direct beneficiaries. Consider how benefits for individuals are likely to offer broader impacts, and build in mechanisms for capturing these. Agree with partners how to capture community level outcomes (which may need to include proxy outcomes), and agree realistic timescales (and parameters) for evidencing change.

Recommendation N: Build in a mid-point formal 'check in' involving all partners. Bringing partners together to formally reflect on progress and outcomes emerging at a midpoint can serve several purposes, including re-engaging more peripheral partners, providing an opportunity for learning to be shared and acted upon, and ensuring partners are aware of the outcomes emerging. Sustainability plans should also be revisited formally at this stage, to ensure partners remain content with the plans and consider how they can offer support.

Recommendation O: Evidence cost benefit analysis, but proportionately to project size and funder needs. The CBA is only part of the impact story regarding any project, but it can prove key in evidencing the financial implications of a project, and making the case to potential funders and sponsors. We recommend that projects undertake CBA, but ensure the approach and commitment is proportionate to the scale of the project and their potential sustainability plans. CBA (as with all evaluation and data collection) must meet commissioner needs; agreeing what commissioners

consider important up front and using this to inform data collection and analysis techniques will be key to meeting their evidence requirements.

Recommendation P: Sustain evaluation activities longer term. Many of the Communities Fund project outcomes will take months, if not years, to fully emerge. This is particularly the case for community level benefits, as well as evidencing any knock-on implications emerging. Continuing to monitor outcomes will enable project leads to fully 'tell the story' and evidence the full impacts of their project.

Planning for sustainability

Recommendation Q: Plan for sustainability from the outset. This includes developing plans for self-sustaining activities, rather than solely relying on securing additional funding, which learning from Communities Fund projects shows can be particularly challenging. Examples of things to consider to support sustainability include:

Building in volunteer capability training and support (for example, in delivering elements of the project, or in wider support functions such as marketing, monitoring and fundraising)

Building in self-sustaining elements, e.g. aspects which generate funding

Recruiting former participants to become volunteers for the project.

Recommendation R: If additional funding is needed, think creatively about who might be best placed to provide additional resources. Examples might include CrowdFunding or alternative means of sustaining the project, which may involve offering services or support in return for financial (or in kind) support. Altrnatively, if public sector organisations are deemed most appropriate, consider what evidence they require in order to commit funding, and ensure appropriate data collection and monitoring are built into project activities from the outset.

Recommendation S: Establish a culture of collaboration, rather than competition. At a local level, VCS organisations may operate within a culture of competition, particularly if operating in a similar sphere and relying on the same/similar funding sources. However, to fully meet the needs of communities and individuals, collaboration may prove more effective. This is likely to require cultural change, and demonstrable commitment from leaders. Identifying shared goals and potential benefits to collaboration (such as economies of scale and more effective referral routes, for example) is likely to prove key; collaboration around a specific project, funding stream or priority area may prove to be helpful initial steps to developing a collaborative way of working.

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The funded projects and evaluation team used the New Economy Cost Benefit Analysis tool and guidance materials for the CBA development. These materials are publicly available and can be accessed here:

http://www.neweconomymanchester.com/our-work/research-evaluation-cost-benefit-analysis/cost-benefit-analysis/cost-benefit-analysis-guidance-and-model

Project vignettes

This section presents write ups regarding the funded projects. These have been developed by SQW, and validated by project leads. Projects have been grouped and presented thematically. Each project vignette shows the project title, lead partner, and the amount of Communities Fund money awarded.

Adult Social Care

Be Connected, Stafford and Rural Homes (SARH), £41,000

The Be Connected project aimed to reduce social isolation and loneliness for over 65s living in rural areas of Stafford. The Be Connected service encouraged customers to attend activity groups and events to meet other elderly residents, to ultimately improve mental health and wellbeing.

The project recruited over 150 beneficiaries to undertake activities designed to reduce social isolation. This included weekly lunch clubs, wellbeing events, technology awareness groups and friendship groups. The project also held exercise clubs including Tai Chi, Pilates and armchair exercise. One to one support was also offered to beneficiaries. SARH worked with VCS organisations to deliver activities, and also recruited 12 volunteers to help support the activities.

As a result, the project leads report that it has reduced social isolation and loneliness for the elderly, leading to improved mental health outcomes. Exercise activities are reported to have helped to improve the health of participant, whilst one beneficiary is reported to have ceased committing anti-social behaviour as a result of her involvement

The project leads have applied for funding for the service to continue for the next four years. Going forward, they are planning to focus more on one-to-one work within rural areas.

The Be Connected project submitted a completed CBA in April 2018. The project leads calculated a financial return on investment of 0.02 and a public value return on investment of 40.7, with the greatest financial beneficiary cited as the NHS.

Dementia Friendly Community Enabler Project, Forest of Dean District Council, £69,000

The Dementia Friendly Community Enabler Project was designed to increase local people's knowledge of dementia, and to enable people living with dementia and their families to have better access to information and support, to improve their wellbeing. The Forest of Dean has an ageing population in which dementia is becoming increasingly common, and previous attempts to improve outcomes for local sufferers of dementia were unable to create sustainable change, due to a lack of funding and capacity. The Dementia Friendly Community Enabler

Project aimed to build on previous work, to bridge the gaps between infrastructure organisations and communities.

The project established five Dementia Enablers to recruit a network of Community Dementia Champions, resulting in sustainable community-led solutions working in partnership with statutory services. The project delivered dementia awareness sessions, mentored the Community Dementia Champions and upskilled staff to carry out accessibility audits of buildings.

All intended beneficiaries were reached by the project; in the first year of delivery the project had 1,382 conversations with people about dementia, and delivered 138 dementia awareness sessions to 1,822 people. This significantly exceeded the initial target of 60 sessions. The project lead reports outcomes including improved understanding of dementia in the community, improved wellbeing for people living with dementia, and more supportive connections between communities and established care organisations. This in turn is reported to have increased inclusivity for dementia sufferers and their carers in the community.

The project has been successful in securing funding to continue delivery, and has begun to cascade learning across Gloucestershire. The leads have also developed cross-border links with Wales, to share learning. The project is working closely with partners to support sustainable change, including involvement in the Dementia Pathway Pilot Review, and establishment of the Gloucestershire Dementia Action Alliance, to support project expansion.

The Dementia Friendly Community Enabler project submitted a completed CBA in April 2018. The project had a financial return on investment of 2.75 and a public value return on investment of 99.78. The project utilised their CBA to support their bid for further funding. In addition, the Clinical Commissioning Group are exploring the potential to use the CBA across the county.

Glossop Community Connections, The Bureau, £56,980

Glossop Community Connections is a community-based social prescribing model, which works with GPs and local partner agencies in the Glossop area of Derbyshire. Stakeholders have come together to co-produce an enhanced social prescribing offer for local people. The model targets older people struggling to live independently, as well as adults experiencing complex social, economic and mental health issues. Glossop residents have a lower than average life expectancy, and Gamesley falls in the top 10% most deprived communities in England, with high levels of unemployment, substance misuse and debt.

The enhanced social prescribing model was designed to address these issues, by streamlining services to improve health and wellbeing outcomes for local people. The project was intended to reduce inappropriate referrals and repeat visits to GPs driven by social issues. Activity has included social prescribing support in four GP practices and the Gamesley Community Hub, weekly peer support groups, and three new self-help groups. It has provided in-depth casework through 500 life skills and self-management training sessions and a team of community mentors.

The project has reached over 480 beneficiaries, with more clients than expected being referred for support.

Glossop Community Connections report achieving all their expected outcomes, including reduced demand on statutory services, improved access to information, better beneficiary wellbeing and mental health, and improved employment outcomes. The project also reported unanticipated outcomes, including increased integrated working within the neighbourhood, and a 'culture change' in the local community towards 'more than medicine' approaches.

The Glossop Community Connections project remains operational, and is reporting good progress. Challenges have centred around sustaining referral numbers from GP surgeries; this is currently being addressed by project leads.

Glossop Community Connections submitted a completed CBA in 2018. The project has a financial return on investment of 1.32 and a public value return on investment of 77.38. The project has a payback period of two years.

Independent Living Companions, Staffordshire Housing Association, £65,203

The Independent Living Companions project sought to address the loneliness and isolation experienced by many older people in the areas of Stoke on Trent and Newcastle borough. It was designed to strengthen the ability and motivation of communities to support local older residents. The project developed a volunteer network to help local older people build confidence and motivation, access community activities, facilities and services, and maintain and develop social networks.

Independent Living Companions were recruited and trained, and deployed working with over 80 beneficiaries. The programme provided volunteers with a variety of training activities including one-on-one support sessions, group peer support workshops and face-to-face support sessions with Volunteer Coordinator.

A key success of the project was the development of a face-to-face befriending model. This included mapping customers' locations, which allowed for lonely people to connect to other lonely people in their local area, arranging and facilitating groups for customers to meet one another, and helping customers to connect socially online. For the most vulnerable customers (those who were housebound with no access or interest in connecting digitally), the project team provided the option of hosting other customers in their own home.

Independent Living Companions report achieving outcomes including improved skills, knowledge and confidence amongst volunteers, plus improvements in physical and mental health and wellbeing for customers.

Leiston Social Prescribing, Suffolk Coastal District Council, £35,000

The Leiston Social Prescribing programme was developed to address the social determinants of health inequalities in Leiston, a town in East Suffolk which was among the UK's top 20% of most deprived neighbourhoods in 2015. More specifically, the project sought to reduce the number of patients who visit GPs with non-medical issues, by raising knowledge about more appropriate local community resources.

The project commenced in April 2017. A steering group was formed at a community conference, to focus on the local social prescribing opportunities. Link Workers were recruited to undertake asset mapping, to establish the confidence and trust of partners, to support individuals to be signposted to appropriate support groups and services.

The project has so far supported over 40 patients. Project leads report that beneficiaries have experienced positive wellbeing outcomes, measured using the Warwick and Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale[35]. The project leads report improved quality of life of local residents and reduced social isolation and loneliness. The project has successfully engaged the local community to provide additional group-based support. For example, a café has been established to support patients with low-level mental health conditions and dementia, and a healthy walks group has been established to improve physical activity. It is anticipated that a reduced demand for primary care will ultimately lead to cost savings for the NHS.

The Leiston Social Prescribing model has been iteratively developed, and delivery will continue with a new provider. Furthermore, the additional community groups are expected to be sustained by local residents, providing a support network that did not previously exist.

The project submitted a completed CBA in April 2018. The project leads estimated a financial return on investment of 49.03 and a public value return on investment of 337.38. The project has an anticipated payback period of one year.

Children

Compass Project, Bexley Voluntary Service Council, £58,350

Compass is a two-year initiative which began in 2017 to improve the care pathway for children and young people (CYP, aged 10-16) with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The initiative seeks to improve awareness of support and where to access it, as well as tackling isolation, long waiting times and gaps in care for those not meeting

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[35] https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/med/research/platform/wemwbs

statutory thresholds. The overall objective is to make families more resilient and improve their wellbeing.

The project has undertaken marketing communications activities, developed a website, funded an ADHD nurse, delivered a helpline, provided one to one support and guidance, plus a parental peer support programme, parent workshops and a Facebook support group.

The project so far reports reaching the families of 244 young people up to 17 years of age. The project has worked with a number of local services to provide support and to break down barriers between families and professionals. This is reported to have resulted in reduced isolation and improved support networks for families with children with ASD/ADHD. Further reported outcomes include improved skills to support children, an improvement in family life, increased access to services and improved child emotional health and wellbeing.

Compass have been unsuccessful in applying for further funding to sustain their work. They have also implemented sustainable practices to enable people to access support, for example establishing a user-led 'dads' group in a local pub.

The Compass Project submitted a completed CBA in April 2018. The project has a financial return on investment of 0.01 and a public value return on investment of 1.7. The project's in-kind costs total £3,621.

Dogs for Removing Barriers to Education, Dogs for Good, £20,000

Dogs for Removing Barriers to Education involved a collaboration between Dogs for Good and Nescot College, to explore how a specially trained dog and specialist handler could help young people with a range of special educational needs or disability (SEND) to access education, employment and training. The project supported young people with special needs in Surrey who were not in education, employment or training (NEET) or who were in education but at risk of becoming NEET. The project was based on evidence that young people with SEND and those experiencing mental health difficulties are at particularly high risk of becoming NEET.

The project applied well established Animal Assisted Intervention (AAI) practices as a social prescription to promote improvements in the physical, social, emotional and/or cognitive functioning of participants. A specially trained dog and experienced practitioner worked closely with each young person and their support team to identify barriers to attainment and to support achievement of their educational, social and wellbeing goals. Each young person had a personalised programme of activity to achieve in partnership with their dog, handler and key worker (or other professional); typically this consisted of eight weekly sessions.

The project supported approximately twelve young people in Surrey to achieve outcomes and impacts including improved wellbeing, social skills, independence, reduced anxiety, better engagement with and access to education and

employment opportunities, and successful transitions from school to further education.

The learning from the project in regards to Animal Assisted Intervention has already been used by Dogs for Good in other partnerships, particularly within the local authority sector.

Dogs for Good submitted a completed CBA in April 2018. The project has a predicted financial return on investment of 2.72 and a public value return on investment of 30.23. The project has a predicted payback period of one year.

Extend Project, Bradford Youth Development Partnership, £65,600

Extend was a one-year partnership of five Bradford voluntary & community sector (VCS) organisations collaborating to address unmet needs amongst disadvantaged young people. VCS organisations based in disadvantaged communities in Bradford carried out a survey which suggested that not enough activities were provided for girls or focused on arts & crafts, volunteering and extra learning. It noted that almost half of the young people responding felt unsafe in their communities. The project aimed to address the lack of activities and improve young people's sense of safety.

Partners provided activity venues, whilst staff and volunteers planned and delivered training. The project aimed to form new partnerships amongst local organisations, as well as delivering over 260 hours of new activities for young people. The partners recruited volunteers to help run the project, to facilitate sustainability.

The project reached 249 beneficiaries, including young asylum seekers in the community. The project delivered a wide range of activities for young people, leading to improved confidence, wellbeing and community cohesion. Furthermore, some of the young people involved had never left their neighbourhood, and so visits to places of interest including museums and the countryside helped to broaden their horizons.

The project is currently looking for funding to sustain delivery. The partners plan to continue to work collaboratively, rather than competitively, to bid for available funds.

The Extend project submitted a completed CBA in April 2018. The project reported a financial return on investment of 0.13 and a public value return on investment of 17.48. The project's in-kind costs totalled £8,580.

The Family Know-How Relationships Project, Home-Start South Leicestershire, £64,045

The Family Know-How Relationships Project in Harborough District provided recovery support for families affected by domestic abuse or parental conflict. Local stakeholder consultation revealed a gap in support for children in Leicestershire under 8-years affected by domestic abuse or parental conflict, due to statutory group provision starting at 8-years. County DVA data revealed that the level of need was high, with an estimated 100 Harborough District children recognised as in need of support in 2015-16.

The objective of The Family Know-How Relationships Project was to improve the mental and emotional health, wellbeing, parental relationships and development of children aged up to 8 years. The project offered support shown to strengthen parent and child relationships, avoid or repair early trauma, build resilience and improve behaviour by delivering family groups, after school play sessions and a volunteer home-visiting service.

The project, through Home-Start South Leicestershire, provided direct support for 64 children. Project leads report achieving relevant outcomes in close to 100% of sustained referrals. These included improved confidence to play (measured for under 5's), an improved relationship with caregivers (measured for under 5's), improved emotional health and wellbeing (measured for 5-7yrs), and improved relationships with peers and adults (measured for 5-7yrs). No referrals to social care were necessary during the period of support.

The Project concluded in July 2018 due to lack of funding for sustainability, although the project leads are considering applying for funding to enable the project to be replicated across Leicestershire.

The Family Know-How Relationships Project submitted a completed CBA in 2018. The project reported a financial return on investment of 5.03, and a public value return on investment of 89.08. The project payback period was one year.

Goole Targeted Youth Project, Goole Youth Action, £57,900

The Goole Targeted Youth Project was a 16-month programme run by Goole Youth Action (GYA). It intended to help transform the lives of six young people (aged 15-19 years) with intensive life coaching and mentor support. GYA is a coalition of statutory and local charity organisations committed to the support of a pilot called Goole Young People's Project. The project intended to fill a gap in intensive support offered to young people, and aligned with the East Riding Child Poverty Strategy aim of reducing harm caused by a cycle of family poverty.

Goole Targeted Youth provided the opportunity to pilot a new 'super intensive' life coaching approach with a small cohort of six young people who self-reported issues with relationships, drug use, or interaction with the youth justice system. Project activity included developing a steering group of GYA partners, hiring a youth worker to give daily support to the cohort in reaching achievable goals, and facilitating opportunities, activities and new learning experiences for each young person.

The project reported many of its expected outcomes and impacts, including a reduction in drug and alcohol abuse, increased attendance in educational opportunities, and an increase in skills and qualifications amongst participants. Leads also report a reduction in anti-social behaviour and an improvement in the health and wellbeing of young people. The intensity of the project and the perseverance of staff (particularly in the most complex cases) proved key.

The project ended in September 2018, having been unable to secure funding to sustain the project longer term.

The Goole Targeted Youth Project submitted a completed CBA in April 2018. The project has a financial return on investment of 0.26 and a public value return on investment of 0.43. These figures are not surprising, as changing the lifestyles and behaviour of young people is a longer term impact of the project. Therefore, the project expects to see a more promising return on investment in the long term.

Thatto Heath Conversion Programme, St Helens MBC, £68,600

Thatto Heath Amateur Rugby League Community Project is a five-year youth engagement programme aimed at diverting children and young people in Thatto Heath, an area of multiple deprivation, away from anti-social behaviour.

The project built on the positive image and reputation of Thatto Heath Rugby Club within the local community, to engage young people in a diverse range of activities. These included one-on-one personal coaching, weekend outreach activities, and workshops focused on topics such as lifestyle management and consequences of crime. Awareness of the programme was raised through a website incorporating video testimonials from young people participating in the programme. The project supported 8-10 beneficiaries in total.

The project leads report that it resulted in an improvement in the general well-being of the young people taking part in the programme, by controlling risk-taking behaviour and impulsive thinking, and preventing their involvement in crime and anti-social behaviour. This, in turn, is anticipated to have a positive wider impact at the community level by increasing aspiration, educational engagement and outcomes, ultimately making the area safer for residents.

The project leads are exploring funding avenues to continue the project. The partners are considering how they might invest in similar schemes.

The Thatto Heath project CBA did not provide sufficient detail to enable a return on investment to be calculated.

We Care, IARS, £63,498

We Care aimed to redesign local services for young carers from black, Asian and Minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds. The programme followed the guidelines set out in the Southwark Children and Young People Plan (CYPP), prioritising the needs of marginalised youth while providing tailored services designed from the bottom up. The project adopted a youth-led methodology by empowering local young people to manage, deliver and monitor its outcomes.

Young Carers Matter provided training to over 100 local BAME carers on overcoming the barriers to employment, and recruited a further 10 onto the IARS youth advisory board to monitor and manage the programme. In addition, the project provided 200 local stakeholders with youth-led CPD accredited training. New, unexpected partnerships were formed with 'like-minded' organisations, including Working Chance, a recruitment consultancy focused on young people exiting care or the criminal justice system. Leads report that Working Chance have helped to support We Care beneficiaries into employment.

In terms of other outcomes, the leads report that as a result of project delivery, young carers have improved their employability, improved life skills (e.g. cooking) and have improved confidence. An individual example is a beneficiary who used their skills as an informal carer to develop their CV, and as result gained meaningful employment. The young person was supported to find employment that was flexible enough for them to retain their caring responsibilities whilst undertaking paid work.

The We Care Project submitted a completed CBA in April 2018. The project expects a financial return on investment of 301.39 and a public value return on investment of 330.42. There are a total of £24,750 in-kind costs contributed to the project.

Complex Needs

At Risk, Key4Life, £45,402

Key4Life is a charity focused on creating solutions to tackle youth offending and gang conflict, through the delivery of an innovative rehabilitation programme to those in prison or at risk of going to prison. The Key4Life 12-month At Risk programme extended an existing 6-month programme that had an especially vulnerable cohort suffering from multiple and complex disadvantages that put them at high risk of falling back into patterns of offending. The intended outcomes of the programme were to extend support to ensure that participants could create sustainable and meaningful change in their lives. It was underpinned by the principle that At Risk programme graduates are community assets with a powerful role to play in crime prevention by sharing their own experiences with others.

The programme received in-kind support from Mendip District, Taunton Deane and Sedgemoor Councils and Somerset Police, as well as a variety of local businesses. The project encompassed three sets of activities:

Transitional support involving tailored solutions and action plans

Bespoke Key Mentor training to provide Key4Life alumni with accredited qualifications in Leadership and Coaching, allowing them to be role models for future cohorts and the younger generation

Shared learning work bringing together 40 stakeholders to discuss best practice, successes and opportunities for more targeted future preventative measures.

The project leads report that it achieved all intended outcomes, including reducing rates of offending amongst participants, as well as reduced depression and addiction, increased rates of employment and economic activity, and improvements in emotional resilience, relationships and confidence.

Of the 13 At Risk participants, 8 are now in employment and 11 have not offended since the programme. Additionally, the project had a positive ripple effect on the wider support network. This includes one of the beneficiary's mothers, who is now working with the beneficiary to build a gardening business.

Three beneficiaries have trained as key mentors, and gained a Level 3 AQA qualification in Leadership and Coaching. They have learnt how to support young people to overcome the same challenges that they once faced. This has enabled the project to implement sustainable change. The project has also received funding from Great Western Railway and the Home Office to expand the project into the Bristol at Risk programme.

The At Risk project submitted a completed CBA in April 2018. The project had an expected financial return on investment of 14.36 and a public value return on investment of 29.3. The project payback period was anticipated to be one year.

Employment Coaching and Support, London Borough of Ealing, £70,000

The Employment Coaching and Support project looks to increase access to the labour market in Ealing for people with physical disabilities, autism and mental health needs, with a specific focus on supporting women with complex and multiple needs. The objective of the project is to develop a partnership (working across disciplines and sectors) to facilitate tailored support for people with multiple and often complex needs. It aims to provide a joined up and clear pathway to services and move people towards the job market. Activities focus on giving people the tools to make informed choices and move towards independence.

The project recruited two employment coaches to provide training, to engage with employers to create pathways to employment, and give advice, information and signposting to employers with regards to the Equalities Act. The project also implemented a peer support network, a group training programme and organised a jobs fair with 40 local employers.

Project leads report that the project worked with 35 beneficiaries, and that by mid-2018 six clients had gained employment, four had entered volunteering and two had undertaken work placements.

The Employment Coaching and Support project submitted a CBA in April 2018. The project CBA calculated an expected financial return on investment of 5.52 and a public value return on investment of 7.0. The project received £9,500 of in-kind support.

People First, Vennture, £70,000

The People First programme was designed to help individuals with complex needs in Hereford who may lack the ability to fully benefit from public services, who disengage from them at an early stage, or do not meet the threshold for support. This was delivered by the voluntary organisation Vennture, in partnership with Herefordshire Council, creating three new part-time posts of Project Manager, Link Worker and Senior Link Worker. Several volunteer mentors were recruited and trained to offer further support to beneficiaries.

A key worker model was developed based on a proven model of behavioural change, providing individualised weekly mentoring through the trained volunteers. On commencement, a full profile was recorded for each individual, setting a baseline against which to measure progress. The project has supported 16 beneficiaries, compared to an original expectation of working with 20 people.

The project reports success in reducing six participants' risk of homelessness, reducing the risk of harm for 9 participants, and supporting 11 individuals at risk of losing jobs, benefits and education. Furthermore project leads report that 5 individuals are now less socially isolated, and 8 individuals with mental illness are now seeking and engaging with ways to improve their health and wellbeing. There is now also greater insight to 'what works' locally.

The project leads plan to use underspend on the project to undertake research to fully understand the needs of potential beneficiaries. The project aims to secure further funding from the Big Lottery's Building Connections Fund to continue to support beneficiaries.

The People First project submitted a completed CBA in April 2018. The project cited a financial return on investment of 0.37 and a public value return on investment of 3.92. The project has since updated their CBA on completion of activities, which has increased the public value return on investment to 4.04. Furthermore, both the Council and the housing sector report significantly greater benefits than expected.

Reducing Alcohol Related Frequent Attenders, Cornwall Council, £68,000

The Reducing Alcohol Related Frequent Attenders project run by Cornwall County Council is an assertive outreach project, which seeks to improve

outcomes and life chances for adults experiencing multiple problems, including alcohol misuse. The project is designed to reduce the impacts on emergency services and local communities.

Cornwall has an above national average level of dependent drinkers, and hospital admissions for alcohol-related conditions are higher than national rates, and rising. Reducing the harms related to alcohol is a strategic priority in Cornwall. Research suggests local dependent drinkers also experience complex physical health, mental health and housing problems. The key premise of the project is that people experiencing multiple problems present the largest challenges to services, find it difficult to attend appointments, and require a more intensive, assertive approach to engage them effectively.

The project aimed to proactively manage the transition between hospital and community for beneficiaries, sustaining engagement with those known to treatment services, providing support and developing community detox and care packages for people on discharge.

The project leads report reaching over 250 beneficiaries, including unanticipated clients, such as partners of beneficiaries who were also at risk but who had not yet come to the attention of services.

As a result, Reducing Alcohol Related Frequent Attenders report achieving all intended outcomes and impacts. Beneficiaries have successfully completed alcohol treatment, and there has been a reduction of rough sleepers in the cohort. In addition, there are reports of reduced A&E attendance, hospital admissions and ambulance call outs. A Complex Needs Hub has also been developed within the hospital as a result of the complexity of issues highlighted by the project.

The project secured funding from the Life Chances Fund to continue delivery for seven years through a Social Impact Bond. Frequent Hospital Admissions are expanding their capacity by employing more staff, and extending the remit to include drug misuse.

The Reducing Alcohol Related Frequent Attenders project did not submit a final CBA, as the Council no longer require a CBA for projects which reduce demand on emergency services, acute care or high impact service users.

Removing the Borders (Community Transport Hertfordshire), North Herts Centre For Voluntary Service, £65,203

The key objectives of the Removing the Borders project were to support Hertfordshire residents with special needs to retain their mobility, and to improve access to services. More specifically, it sought to improve access to and the availability of appropriate door to door transport.

The project identified community transport providers in Hertfordshire, to develop a local network comprising both voluntary providers and statutory partners. To improve and co-ordinate transport provision, Removing the Borders leads agreed quality standards, developed shared office functions, delivered training, and

organised an annual conference. Service users informed project design and delivery, and a website was developed to provide an online directory of information.

The project has improved information about, and access to, door to door transport provision in the county. The project leads report that it has also supported a reduction in loneliness, and increased access to services for those with special needs. The project has also enabled strong collaborative working with a number of partners, building a local network of community transport providers and statutory partners.

The project has begun to improve its publicity, in order to access more beneficiaries in the future. This includes promoting a phone number, rather than just a web address, which will enable those without internet to access the service.

The Removing the Borders Project submitted a completed CBA in April 2018. The project reported a financial return on investment of 0.74 and a public value return on investment of 62.58. The fiscal beneficiaries identified are the NHS and the Local Authority.

Studio Upstairs South London, Studio Upstairs, £60,720

The Studio Upstairs South London project addressed an unmet need for moving-on support provision amongst people with mental health problems. By offering creative and social activities delivered by therapeutic professionals, Studio Upstairs aimed to provide a 'stepping stone' towards independence and autonomy for adult social care clients and others in need.

The project activities included twice-weekly art workshops, ongoing support from qualified art therapists, discussion forums, peer-to-peer interaction and idea exchange, open gallery evenings, one-to-one support sessions on various art topics, and provision of exhibition space. Studio Upstairs aimed to engage with 45 beneficiaries, however leads report that it reached over 120 beneficiaries. The project reached people who were on a milder spectrum of needs than intended, of which some were in part-time work and education. This happened through public events the project held, which generated a significant level of interest in their services.

The project leads are particularly proud of the reduction in the 'revolving door of care' for people with mental health issues, thereby reducing the risk of relapse and self-harm following hospital discharge. This is anticipated to have reduced costs to adult social care budgets.

The project has secured a new site for delivery, and have applied for private and Big Lottery funds to 'bridge the funding gap' until the project is better integrated into the health pathway locally.

The Studio Upstairs Project submitted a CBA in April 2018. The project leads expected a financial return on investment of 0.81 and a public value return on investment of 5.58. The project's top beneficiary is expected to be the Department for Work and Pensions.

Transforming Lives, Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council, £70,000

Transforming Lives began in 2018, aiming to develop a support service targeting vulnerable households at risk of crisis. The programme operates in Blackburn with Darwen, where employment, health, life-expectancy and education levels are below national and regional averages, and crime above. This has created an unprecedented strain on local services. The initiative aligns with requirements of the Care Act 2014, which encourages local authorities to consider individual empowerment and the attributes of local support networks and services in planning its care strategy.

Transforming Lives involves the coordination of multiple agencies through a key support worker, who delivers an intervention based on a support plan co-designed with the beneficiary. After the plan has been delivered, support de-intensifies and is provided by 'Community Connectors', who signpost local voluntary support and services and monitor and encourage progress to avoid recurrence of crisis indicators. Transforming Lives also encourages volunteering, to build the capacity of local voluntary and community sector (VCS) groups to provide support for stepped down cases.

Transforming Lives report reaching a larger cohort of beneficiaries than originally anticipated. The project reports outcomes for beneficiaries such as improved wellbeing, increased employability, improved physical and mental health, the creation of new VCS groups, and new volunteers. Various high-level outcomes are reported, including improved long-term resilience pathways and demand management, (particularly at pressure points such as A&E), a decrease in unemployment, drug and alcohol abuse, crime and homelessness. Furthermore, the project has worked with Positive Minds to support beneficiaries in improving their mental health; this has enabled some beneficiaries to sustain the benefits beyond the original intervention.

Through the CBA, the Council realised the monetary benefits to the Department for Work and Pensions, which they had not considered before. Therefore, they approached DWP and are now working with them to ensure their £200,000 social integration funding is spent on complementary initiatives, building on learning from the Communities Fund project.

The Transforming Lives Project submitted a completed CBA in April 2018. The project anticipated a financial return on investment of 4.24 and a public value return on investment of 9.34. The project in-kind costs totalled £180,000.

Transitions Safeguarding Pilot, Changing Lives, £70,000

The Transitions Safeguarding Pilot was designed to reach young adults who had experienced childhood trauma, abuse or domestic violence. In particular, it prioritised individuals aged 18 to 21 – the age of transition from child to adult services, which often feel very different to those accessing them.

Using a person-centred and assertive outreach approach, the 1-year pilot project intended to prevent young women from being exposed to further sexual abuse and exploitation. This was achieved through the provision of opportunities to engage in meaningful activities, as well as the offering of therapeutic interventions such as dialectical behaviour therapy (DBT). Project staff delivered a weekly drop-in 'hot desk' – a safe place for women to seek support and participate in peer-led activities – and a multi-agency safeguarding hub led by Northumbria Police and involving a range of other organisations from the voluntary and statutory sectors. The programme has supported 30 individuals.

The project has developed referral pathways with multiagency partnerships, and leads report that it has increased awareness among professionals regarding the signs of sexual exploitation at an early stage.

The Transitions Safeguarding Pilot did not submit a completed CBA.

VIP Project, Stockport Council, £65,936

The Victoria Intensive Project (VIP) was designed to address the growing number of people with alcohol/drug issues and other complex needs in the Victoria area of Stockport, who were creating significant demand in the system. The aim was to reduce the corresponding alcohol-related hospital attendances and admissions, and reduce demand on other services. Supported by Stockport Together, a partnership which aims to fundamentally reform the way health and social care is delivered locally, CGL worked intensively, flexibly and creatively with a cohort of individuals with complex needs who were not engaging in community or primary care services.

The project trialled a key worker approach who was empowered to work intensively, creatively and flexibly with the individual and connect a wide range of professionals and community volunteers. The Complex Needs Worker regularly liaised with statutory agencies and primary care on behalf of the beneficiaries, and brought other professionals together to form a team around each service user, working alongside each other to support people to change their lives. The project initially worked with 25 beneficiaries through an intensive support programme, which lasted around 12 weeks but was not time-limited.

The initial evaluation report in April 2018 and subsequent local evaluation in November 2018 reports VIP achieving its outcomes, including a reduction in demand of NHS and frontline services (leading to cost savings), and reduced demand for adult social care and other mainstream services. This is in addition to significant improvements in individual health and wellbeing outcomes.

In future, the VIP project aims to expand into other areas in Stockport and strengthen provision with some additional resources. .

The VIP Project submitted a completed CBA in April 2018. The project expected a financial return on investment of 1.28 and a public value return on investment of 13.05, with a payback period of four years. A locally produced CBA using up to date information, indicated fiscal benefits of £364,238 (2.83 financial return on investment) and economic benefits of £896,776 (5.50 economic return on investment).

Women's Custody Diversion Project, West Sussex County Council, £67,878

The Women's Custody Diversion Project adopted a preventative approach to engaging women with multiple vulnerabilities, seeking to improve their engagement with services and divert them from the criminal justice system at an earlier stage. More specifically, the programme targeted women aged 18+ living in Sussex who had been taken into police custody.

As part of the programme, female case workers provided individual support across multiple pathways of need, including accommodation, finance, physical and mental health, domestic and sexual abuse, children and families, and substance misuse. Additionally, case workers coordinated access and referrals to specialist services. The project engaged over 200 women, through voluntary engagement from referrals from police custody suites.

Identifying vulnerable women earlier in the system and supporting them at the first point of contact was intended to lead to higher levels of confidence, wellbeing and resilience. This, in turn, was expected to contribute to a reduction in the number of women re-offending and attending emergency medical services. In addition, the programme sought to encourage closer working between local voluntary and statutory sectors.

The project ended in March 2018, when it was re-commissioned.

The Women's Custody Diversion project submitted a completed CBA in April 2018. The project leads reported a financial return on investment of 7.49 and a public value return on investment of 22.29. The greatest beneficiaries were cited as the NHS and the Department for Work and Pensions.

Working Well Foxhill, The Curo Group, £65,932

The Working Well project was established to integrate and improve Foxhill, an area of high deprivation, with low levels of community engagement and poor infrastructure. Working with local volunteers and partners, an integrated programme was delivered to improve health and wellbeing, skills, and employment access in the local community. The project was delivered through regular drop in sessions in Foxhill Community Centre, which offered one to one

support and group training, in addition to family fun days. A Community Small Grants Scheme offered grants of up to £200 for community activities.

The project leads report exceeding the targets originally set. In total, 182 local residents were engaged (against a target of 100); this included 57 residents who were supported in gaining new skills and undertaking training to improve employability. The project has enabled members of a hard to reach community to access services they may not have been able to otherwise, through working with local partners to create a cohesive community, support local refugees, reduce social isolation and improve mental health.

The Curo Group is actively exploring funding opportunities to continue project delivery and support the community. Whilst a suitable funding stream has not yet been identified, the Curo Group is still providing other services to the community, including a weekly employability drop in for local residents.

The Working Well Foxhill Project submitted a completed CBA in April 2018. The project expected a financial return on investment of 0.01 and a public value return on investment of 6.07. The key financial beneficiary was cited as HMRC.

Employment

Bikespace Hub, Bikespace, £70,000

Bikespace Hub was established to develop employability skills and enhance the wellbeing of the most disadvantaged adults in the community. Bikespace Hub operated in the context of high unemployment levels and a disparity in wellbeing across different wards within Plymouth. Specifically, Bikespace Hub aimed to improve the employability of the long-term unemployed by offering vocational training to adults disengaged from mainstream education, via dedicated bicycle training centres. Donated bikes were refurbished and sold at affordable prices, teaching packs were created alongside a workshop stocked with tools, training in bicycle building, maintenance and repair, and employability and CV training.

The project supported 48 beneficiaries to develop employability skills. Bikespace leads report achieving all the intended outcomes, including improved knowledge of the workplace, developing up-to-date CVs for beneficiaries, and increased self-confidence. The project also provided beneficiaries with a sustainable form of transport, to help remove employment barriers. Bikespace leads report also achieving unanticipated outcomes, including teaching biking skills to those previously unable to ride a bicycle, and improving health and wellbeing outcomes.

Bikespace have been successful in securing additional funding for a further 18 months, enabling them to continue delivering the project, building on the Communities Fund success.

The Bikespace Project submitted a completed CBA in April 2018. The project expected a financial return on investment of 2.75 and a public value return on investment of 69.32, with a payback period of one year.

Cascade: Pathways to Employment, Salford City Council, £65,000

The Cascade project aimed to provide local parents with employability support, to help them to move into or closer to employment. It engaged with a cohort of long term unemployed people and those who are heavily dependent on welfare benefits. This included parents who lacked experience, confidence, motivation, had low levels of literacy, numeracy and IT skills, and those with few qualifications. The project also aimed to help those who were experiencing issues regarding mental health, substance dependency and family instability. Beneficiaries had typically not experienced one to one support from mainstream employment services previously.

Using two key workers and an operations manager, the programme delivered 1:1 weekly support sessions and progress reviews, as well as job search activities, a weekly employability club (covering interview techniques and CV preparation), and training sessions on subjects such as food hygiene and first aid.

The project engaged 78 beneficiaries, supporting 20 of these into employment. In total, leads report that 18 of the 20 sustained their employment over six months, whilst 71 beneficiaries improved their employability skills through CV writing and training courses, which resulted in increased self-esteem. In addition, 11 beneficiaries are reported to have undertaken work experience placements. As a result, beneficiaries have increased their confidence and resilience, and report reduced substance misuse. The project leads also report reduced reliance of clients on out-of-work benefits, and increased household incomes. Pathways to Employment was designed to also have wider impacts including cost savings to public services, improved mental and physical health, and improved family stability.

The Cascade Project submitted a completed CBA in April 2018. The project reported a financial return on investment of 3.52 and a public value return on investment of 11.1, with a payback period of two years.

Choose Work, Chichester County Council, £70,000

Choose Work was an employment support project designed to help those furthest away from employment to return to work. Choose Work supported Chichester residents to find high quality, meaningful employment before they reached a 'crisis point'. In particular, the project targeted young people at risk of

becoming NEETs (not in employment, education or training) and ESA claimants in order to prevent crisis. In addition, they worked with the Homelessness Prevention Team and local schools to ensure clients received the support they needed at the earliest opportunity. Delivery was tailored to individual needs, working with clients in workshops, one to one mentoring and work experience placements.

Choose Work partnered with Be the Change to deliver work with pre-NEETs in schools. Local businesses have also been involved and have supported the funding of this area of the project.

The project leads report working with over 90 beneficiaries, against a target of 80. They developed support to improve employability, and engaged pre-NEET pupils, schools and rural communities. This has resulted in more resilient beneficiaries with increased employment prospects, and improved coordination between local businesses and schools.

Choose Work highlighted their key success as supporting beneficiaries into paid employment, through developing their CVs, personal statements and interview techniques. This has impacted on beneficiaries' confidence and aspirations, and for one vulnerable beneficiary, has supported their independence.

The Choose Work Project submitted a completed CBA in April 2018. The project reported a financial return on investment of 12.49, and a public value return on investment of 109.47. The project's greatest financial beneficiary was identified as the Department for Work and Pensions.

Digital and Financial Literacy Birmingham (DFLB), Catalyst Mutual Enterprise C.I.C, £70,000

Digital and Financial Literacy Birmingham (DFLB) was established in 2017 to develop the digital and financial literacy of unemployed jobseekers in the most deprived and financially vulnerable areas of Aston. These areas experience high levels of unemployment and poverty when compared to the rest of Birmingham and the UK. The increase in online government portals to apply for benefits and the requirement for digital and financial skills in most jobs has disadvantaged many within the community.

The project sought to develop the ability of individuals to budget, access further learning, and navigate online platforms for government services and job searching. To support beneficiaries in improving their digital and financial literacy, the project delivered skills training courses to unemployed jobseekers. Catalyst promoted the course through community outreach events in local community centres, although found that the best route to engagement was through the Job Centre Plus. The project engaged with 220 beneficiaries.

DFLB reports achieving all intended outcomes and impacts. The project successfully supported beneficiaries in improving their confidence to seek employment or training opportunities, improving their financial management capability, resilience and independence, enabling easier access to online services, and reducing isolation. The envisaged long-term impacts of the

programme include a reduction in poverty and reliance on out-of-work benefits, improvement in health and wellbeing, increased awareness and engagement with services, and greater social inclusion.

Since the start of the project, the delivery model and training materials were modified to reflect a more personalised and citizen-centric approach, with increased contact time.

The project is currently trying to secure future funding to continue. The leads hope to deliver the project within the Prison Service, and provide information, advice and guidance in addition to digital and financial training.

The DFLB Project submitted a completed CBA in April 2018. The project expected a financial return on investment of 4.22 and a public value return on investment of 39.87. The key financial beneficiary was cited as the Department for Work and Pensions.

Employment Plus (Camden), The Salvation Army, £70,000

Employment Plus was a one-year innovative employability project linked to the Salvation Army Lifehouse in Camden, focussed on the homeless population. It emphasised community outreach to engage those most marginalised from employment, by integrating delivery with homelessness provision in Camden. Employment Plus used a key worker model, via one full-time Employment Development Coordinator (EDC) post. The EDC provided employability support directly to clients and supported a team of volunteers to assist local people towards employment.

The delivery model was based on intensive support, motivational training and coaching, work experience placements and in-work support, including accredited e-learning courses, groupwork and 1:1 skill development programmes. The Salvation Army report reaching all intended beneficiaries, engaging with 60 clients during the initial 12 months of the project. The leads report that all intended outcomes and impacts were achieved, with beneficiaries achieving qualifications and attending work placements. In addition, a key success has been demonstrable integration between previously unaligned services.

The Salvation Army used the Communities Fund to implement a self-sustaining complimentary service that would not otherwise have existed. The Salvation Army has now brought resources to the project, to improve the infrastructure and monitor and continually improve the service offered.

The Employment Plus Camden Project submitted a completed CBA in April 2018. The project expected a financial return on investment of 1.57 and a public value return on investment of 17.83, with a payback period of one year.

Employment Plus (Swindon), The Salvation Army, £70,000

Employment Plus is one-year innovative employability project linked to the Salvation Army Lifehouse project in Swindon, focussed on the homeless population. It employed community outreach to engage those most marginalised

from employment, by integrating delivery with homelessness provision in Swindon. Employment Plus used a key worker model, via one full-time Employment Development Coordinator (EDC) post. The EDC provided employability support directly to clients and supported a team of volunteers to assist local people towards employment.

The delivery model was based on intensive support, motivational training and coaching, work experience placements and in-work support, including accredited e-learning courses, group work and 1:1 skill development programmes. The Salvation Army report reaching all intended beneficiaries, engaging with 60 clients during the initial 12 months of the project. All intended outcomes and impacts were reportedly achieved, which included beneficiaries completing action plans, achieving qualifications and attending work placements. In addition, the biggest success outlined by the project has been demonstrable integration between previously unaligned services.

The Salvation Army used the Communities Fund to implement a self-sustaining complimentary service that would not otherwise have existed. The Salvation Army has moved resources from elsewhere in the organisation to improve the infrastructure around the project, in order to monitor and continually improve the service offered.

The Employment Plus Swindon Project submitted a completed CBA in April 2018. The project expected a financial return on investment of 2.68 and a public value return on investment of 59.2, with the biggest financial beneficiary cited as the Department for Work and Pensions.

Horizons, Access Dorset and Bournemouth Borough Council, £70,000

Horizons was delivered by Access Dorset to help young people with social, emotional and health needs (particularly those on the autistic spectrum), to achieve improved and sustainable personal outcomes. Young people transitioning to adulthood who are on the autistic spectrum are often no longer receiving, or are coming to the end of, their Education and Health Care Plans. Unemployment, poor health and social isolation are prevalent[36]. Within the national context of welfare reform and continuing budget restrictions, the project leads identified a need to better coordinate the statutory services which provide health and social care, housing, education and employment support, and engage more fully with specialist expertise available within the voluntary sector.

By creating partnership arrangements across statutory and voluntary sector health and social care providers, Horizon was designed to provide cost effective person-centred, holistic packages of support to empower and enable young people to achieve improved and sustainable personal outcomes, through structured personal development plans and activities. Over a 15-month period Horizons provided a support programme to 30 individuals through a Community Hub, where Access Dorset provided social prescription activities. One-to-one

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[36] Access Dorset (2017) Horizons Logic Model

support was provided to create personal development plans to identify further training, education, volunteering and employment opportunities.

Horizons leads report reaching all intended outcomes and impacts, including improved social networks for beneficiaries, improved independence and improved health and wellbeing. The project also improved the employability skills of beneficiaries, which resulted in some beneficiaries entering further education, volunteering and paid employment. More widely, the project has reduced dependence on statutory health and social care services. One outcome the project did not anticipate was the benefit for the elderly in the community. A social café was developed through the project, in which the young people and elderly have developed relationships. This has resulted in reduced isolation and loneliness.

The project has continued, and has begun to deliver more structured work experience opportunities for beneficiaries. Access Dorset has secured funding from Lloyds Bank Foundation, Awards for All and Santander Foundation to enable this.

The Horizons project submitted a completed CBA in April 2018. The project reported a financial return on investment of 1.83 and a public value return on investment of 7.05, with a payback period of one year.

OX7, Experience Chipping Norton, £70,000

The OX7 project was created to reach young people in the Chipping Norton area who were not in work, education or training.

The Community Digital Hub was established, to provide young people with a range of services including bespoke support and skills training, as well as linking them to local work placements and apprenticeships. The project actively supported more than 20 beneficiaries.

The project leads report achieving all planned outcomes and impacts. This included linking young people with apprenticeships and local work placements, and developing young people's employability and social skills. The leads engaged the wider business community network by recruiting sponsors, partners, mentors and employers. Additionally, the project led to greater engagement of young people within their communities, as well as increased collaboration between local educational organisations, businesses, charities and young people.

In the future, the project leads hope to establish the OX7 project a charitable trust or similar legal entity in order to continue the work, and maybe even broaden out the scope to support a wider demographic.

The OX7 project leads submitted a completed CBA in April 2018. The project was expected to have a financial return on investment of 7.78 and a public value return on investment of 11.25. The project payback period was one year.

R.A.D.A.R. (Recruit, Acclimatise, Develop and Retain), Kirklees Council, £69,890

The R.A.D.A.R. project sought to engage 16-24-year olds from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds in Kirklees; a community twice as likely to be unemployed as the Kirklees average. This target group was identified as requiring a multi-faceted, more personalised approach focused on understanding how individuals' life experiences may have shaped their outlook and possibly caused distrust in the mainstream support systems.

Support was delivered through a combination of different activities targeting individuals, employers and the wider support network. These included one-on-one coaching, training volunteers on leadership and management courses, an employability programme, and diversity support delivered to employers. Social media was used to boost engagement. The project leads report engaging approximately 180 beneficiaries in confidence building coaching sessions, which far exceeds their initial aim of supporting 30 young people.

As a result, the leads report meeting all the intended outcomes for the project. This includes supporting beneficiaries into employment, education and apprenticeships, and using volunteers trained in leadership and management to coach unemployed local residents. In addition, the project leads report that they were able to increase awareness of apprenticeships and employment opportunities within BAME communities, and establish strategic employment links with employers, educational organisations and the local community. Leads anticipate that the programme will eventually lead to a reduction in unemployment in Kirklees and improved aspirations in the area.

The R.A.D.A.R project submitted a completed CBA in April 2018. The project leads expected a financial return on investment of 8.46 and a public value return on investment of 37.22, with a payback period of one year.

S4C, Skills4communities, £69,266

The S4C project was designed to promote social inclusion and employment opportunities, particularly in manufacturing and engineering, within disadvantaged and disengaged communities in and around west Hull.

Project activities included courses such as pre-entry ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) for newly arrived migrants, ESOL Entry 1 to 3 levels, and Functional Skills, as well as training around transferrable skills such as CV writing and interview skills. Referrals were made to the Green Port Hub for apprenticeships with Siemens and other employers.

By the time the project finished in spring 2018, leads report that it had reached over 150 individuals, with a particular focus on BAME communities. This exceeded their original target of reaching 65 beneficiaries; however oversubscription resulted in difficulties measuring outcomes.

Participants completed a structured programme of learning with some acquiring qualifications, resulting in better employment prospects and apprenticeship opportunities. In the long-term, this is expected to reduce unemployment rates and the number of people claiming unemployment benefits. The leads are particularly proud of the project's work to provide ESOL to refugees and migrants in the area, supporting their integration into society.

In future, the project leads are planning to replicate the project in the area and elsewhere, however this is dependent on securing funding.

South West Peak: Future Custodians, Peak District National Park Authority, £32,500

The Peak District National Park Authority identified the future of young farmers and land managers as a key concern for the local community. Traditional farming skills tend to be held within older generations, and are at risk of being lost as the workforce ages and retires. Classic agricultural higher education courses include little grounding in wider conservation issues, whilst countryside management courses offer little insight into the practicalities of farming. The Future Custodians project aimed to address these concerns by engaging young people to help them understand the relationship between sustainable rural land management and environmental conservation, thereby tackling skills gaps in the upland farming sector.

Working with local authorities and NGOs across administrative boundaries, the project introduced a more integrated approach to countryside and farming apprenticeships, with work programmes and identified training needs specific to the upland area of the South West Peak District. The project leads report that it employed five apprentices, against an initial target of 12; three apprentices are employed directly by the Peak District National Park Authority, and two are employed by farmers within the National Park. The plan is for a further seven apprentices to be supported to deliver land management projects until July 2021.

By running apprenticeships both within the National Park Authority, including work with a variety of partner organisations, and with farmers, project leads expect that there will be a better understanding of conservation and farming issues.

The Future Custodians project submitted a completed CBA in April 2018. The project leads calculated a financial return on investment of 0.81 and a public value return on investment of 1.56. The greatest beneficiary was identified as the Department for Work and Pensions.

Supported Employment for People with Autism, Care Trade, £70,000

The Supported Employment project aimed to address high levels of anxiety and low levels of full-time employment among adults with autism. Alongside the project, a research study was undertaken to evaluate different elements of support from a service user's perspective.

The programme recruited 22 participants to take part in various activities, including employability and social skills workshops, one-to-one job search and coaching sessions, and peer mentor talks. Participants were linked with employers for work experience opportunities and mock interview practice.

The project leads report that it has improved participants' self-confidence, communication skills, ability to search and apply for jobs independently, employability skills and employment prospects. Participants have all undertaken work placements with local employers, which is expected to lead to higher levels of employment among the group. The project also worked in close collaboration with employers, in order to bring about greater awareness of the benefits of a diverse workforce and greater confidence to hire individuals with autism.

The project is fixed-term, ending in March 2019. The disseminated findings from the research study element will then be used to better understand supported employment needs of adults with autism. This is expected to inform improvements to supported employment practice and outcomes throughout the UK and, in turn, bring about a decrease in the use of mental health services.

The Supported Employment project submitted a CBA in April 2018. The project leads reported a financial return on investment of 0.54 and a public value return on investment of 1.46. The greatest financial beneficiary was cited as the Department for Work and Pensions.

Give it a Go Supported Volunteering, Community Central, £60,000

The Supported Volunteering programme was designed to improve access to volunteering for people with additional needs and increase the number of volunteers in the local community of St Albans. The project provided training and ongoing 1:1 support to beneficiaries to help them build on their confidence and practical skills, preparing them for volunteering.

A group volunteering activity was organised for each training programme to provide every delegate with volunteering experience. On the employer side, training sessions were delivered to organisations to raise awareness and help them involve adults with a disability.

The project leads report that it supported 54 volunteers and trained eight volunteer mentors to support someone with a disability. The project leads report that it has engaged with 17 organisations, and has given information to over 30 other organisations on supporting volunteers with additional needs. Whilst their aim was to engage with 72 beneficiaries, 72 volunteers and 72 organisations, the project is continuing until July 2019 and continues to work towards these targets.

The project has been designed to reduce isolation for adults with a disability and offer greater opportunities to socialise through volunteering, as well as improving volunteers' mental health over the medium to longer term. The project leads report that for two volunteers, participation in the project has enabled them access to paid employment.

In the longer term, the project leads aim to encourage the local voluntary sector to develop an inclusive and positive approach to involving volunteers with a disability, to increase the number of people with additional needs volunteering locally.

The Supported Volunteering project submitted a completed CBA in April 2018. The project CBA estimated a financial return on investment of 1.73 and a public value return on investment of 13.34, over a payback period of one year.

Homelessness

Prevention Plus project, Folkestone & Hythe District Council £45,000

The Prevention Plus project is two-year a collaboration led initially by Kent County Council, and latterly by Folkestone & Hythe District Council. Under the new leadership the project has focused on addressing practical issues around housing, with referrals from a wider range of partner agencies. The initiative funded a dedicated support officer who acted flexibly as a conduit to 'join up' the Council's Housing Options service. It sought to improve the quality of advice and support to those who have severe difficulties around housing.

There is high demand for housing in the area, with a lack of social housing, welfare rights issues, and an unwillingness amongst many landlords to accept tenants in receipt of benefits. These barriers to housing accessibility are resulting in high levels of homelessness.

Early intervention support was provided via a 12-week programme open to individuals or couples without children who live in Shepway and who were experiencing difficulties with housing. Participants often had problems with debt, benefits, employability skills, budgeting, employment, health and/or wellbeing. The project recruited and funded a support officer, and involved collaborative working with a wide range of agencies, and the provision of tenant training.

The project leads report that it has been effective in providing flexible support for beneficiaries, tailored to their needs and interests. As a result of this flexible provision, the project leads report that it has led to improved health and wellbeing for beneficiaries. The project also hoped to increase the number of sustainable tenancies and increase rates of employment for clients.

The project secured funding to July 2019, when it is expected to end.

The Prevention Plus project submitted a completed CBA in April 2018. The project reported an expected financial return on investment of 15.57 and a public value return on investment of 71.87, over a payback period of one year.

Multi-Service Hub

Dartford (DA1) Community Wellbeing Network, Porchlight, £64,199

The Dartford Community Wellbeing Network was designed to improve local connections and wellbeing, developing a strong community voice and ensuring services respond to the needs of the DA1 community. The local community has high proportion of deprived wards and a disproportionate number of referrals to services from the DA1 postcode. Compared to Dartford as a whole, DA1 has high rates of adult obesity, smoking and drinking.

The project involved development of Community Wellbeing Networks, in partnership with local people, service providers and local government, based on the 'six ways to wellbeing'. The networks were designed to increase early diagnosis of heart disease, diabetes and COPD, to raise awareness and signpost to existing services, and develop a range of social activities to encourage physical activity, information sharing and reduced social isolation. The project recruited a co-ordinator and mentors, and established a steering group made up of members of the community, to support the networks.

The project leads report supporting over 320 beneficiaries to achieve improved physical and mental wellbeing, including improved social connections, increased activity and learning new skills. They report that 93% of people scored more highly on wellbeing measurements after involvement with the project. Furthermore, 90% of steering group members reported a more positive view of their community through involvement in the project.

The project also had a wider impact on additional beneficiaries in addition to those originally targeted. This included local business owners, for example the owner of a local café where bi-weekly steering group meetings were held. Other unintended beneficiaries were young people who attended community wellbeing activities with their parent/guardian, and local groups who showcased their skills at events.

Whilst no additional funding has been secured for the project yet, the steering group continues to run bi-weekly, led by local volunteers. They are keen to continue to deliver wellbeing and community activities, and therefore potential smaller local grants for organised activities are being explored.

The Community Wellbeing project submitted a CBA in April 2018. The project estimated a financial return on investment of 0.03 and a public value return on investment of 2.2, however the project has since updated their CBA, resulting in a higher ROI. This was due to two services being developed, and increased involvement from local people which has lowered the costs.

Sefton Community Connectors, Sefton Council for Voluntary Service, £69,000

The Sefton Community Connectors project aimed to increase access to early intervention and prevention opportunities for adults at the first point of contact. The project was intended to reduce inappropriate calls to Sefton Council's Contact Centre and accelerate the assessment process for those meeting eligibility criteria. More specifically, it sought to connect people to resources,

groups and organisations within their local community, such as lunch clubs, knitting groups and befriending services.

The project involved recruitment and training of volunteer Community Champions. Community Champions were introduced to support the social wellbeing of others in the community and become 'role models'. Community Connectors also took referrals from Adult Social Care to support people in reducing loneliness and isolation, and improve wellbeing.

The project leads report that they received 368 referrals to August 2018. By strengthening connections with community resources, the project is reported to have achieved the intended outcomes; 100% of clients reported feeling less lonely, with improved mental wellbeing. Many clients have increased their digital media usage to connect with family who live away or don't visit often either by WhatsApp group messages or Skype calls. Furthermore, the project is reported to have led to fewer inappropriate calls being logged by Adult Social Care, as inappropriate cases were referred to Community Connectors.

The project witnessed many success stories, including connecting a client with acute anxiety who had an interest in wood and metal work with the local community workshop, and helping an elderly lady with mobility issues to apply for attendance allowance - which allowed her to get out into the community more often.

The project has recently secured funding for a further 3 years as it becomes a partner of Living Well Sefton; an integrated wellness system funded by Public Health.

The Community Connectors project submitted a completed CBA in April 2018. The project reported a financial return on investment of 2.01 and a public value return on investment of 41.98, with a payback period of one year.

The Shoebury Hub, Southend-on-Sea Borough Council, £62,000

In June 2015, Southend-on-Sea Borough Council and South Essex Homes worked together to establish The Victoria Hub, a community drop-in facility in the heart of Southend. Operating from the high-footfall location of the Victoria shopping centre, the hub provides a central point from which a wide range of public and voluntary sector organisations provide targeted services and guidance directly to the residents of Southend.

Following the success of this outreach work, premises for a potential new community facility were identified at Shoebury, an area of high deprivation two miles to the east of Southend town centre. The Council worked with a local community group called My Town Southend to bring the premises (a redundant church) into a safe condition for use as a 'satellite' hub, to tackle issues relating to social isolation, domestic abuse, money management and housing. The Communities Fund enabled the Council to extend the offer to match those in

place at the successful Victoria Hub, meeting the specific needs of an outlying section of the community unable to travel to central Southend.

The Hub has provided residents with a wide range of support and advisory services, including domestic abuse support, a counselling service, tenancy sustainment support and job search guidance. By offering access to a range of agencies in one place, the project has prevented issues from escalating to a point where more intensive intervention is necessary, as well as enhancing collaboration between local providers. The project leads also report that the Hub has also unexpectedly contributed to reduced social isolation, through providing a 'valued community space' to local residents.

The Shoebury Hub Project submitted a completed CBA in April 2018. The project has an anticipated financial return on investment of 6.64 and a public value return on investment of 6.36. There were an estimated total of £53,725 of in-kind costs contributed to the project.

Social Prescribing

Beat the Streets, Colchester Borough Council, £50,000

Colchester Borough Council and partners have funded several initiatives to tackle health inequalities, including 'Beat the Streets', a game that seeks to promote activity. The game involved participants walking, cycling and running in order to gather points from 'beat boxes' scattered across the town. The initiative aimed to improve the life opportunities for those individuals, families and children in the most deprived wards of Colchester, by increasing physical activity and community cohesion.

Colchester Borough Council's Livewell Campaign, Essex County Council and the local community organisation 'Community 360' worked together to deliver Beat the Streets to a target population of 130,000 (two-thirds of the local population), by engaging 46 schools and pre-schools, providing game equipment, delivering presentations about the game, recruiting volunteers to champion the programme, and signposting players into activity opportunities. In total, 13,914 people participated in the game, of which 47% were from BAME backgrounds (compared to 10% in Colchester) and 12% had a long-term condition. This exceeded the original target of engaging 13,000 players.

The project is credited with leading to an increased proportion of adults meeting physical activity guidelines, and a 4% reduction in people who reported themselves to be inactive at the end of the game. Longer-term, leads report an 8% increase in people walking for active travel six months after the game had ended. Leads are particularly proud that many individuals, particularly older people, have highlighted how the game has improved their activity levels. It is hoped that the game has been a catalyst for a longer term impact on health inequalities in the borough, and over time reduce the burden on the healthcare system.

The partners have secured funding from Sport England to run a three year pilot project to decrease inactivity. The relationships built through this project provided support for the partnership bid to Sport England.

The Beat the Streets Project submitted a completed CBA in April 2018. The project expected a financial return on investment of 0.26 and a public value return on investment of 292.31. The NHS was identified as the top fiscal beneficiary of the project.

GL11 Community Wellbeing Project, GL11 Community Hub, £65,600

GL11 Community Wellbeing Project 'Your Way to Wellness' is a two-year project which began in 2017 around the GL11 Community Hub, targeted at patients who frequently attend GP surgeries for non-medical reasons and would benefit from social prescribing. Your Way to Wellness looks to tackle loneliness against the backdrop of an ageing population vulnerable to social isolation. There are almost 4,000 people aged over 65+ living in GL11 wards, and the project was informed by research revealing that 78% of GPs had prescribed antidepressants despite believing that an alternative treatment may be more beneficial.

Your Way to Wellness aligns with NHS commitments to using social prescribing to reduce pressure on services and communities. The project seeks primarily to reduce unnecessary use of primary care, increase wellbeing and reduce loneliness for patients at the Cam and Uley Family Practice GP surgery. The project uses a key worker to link GPs to GL11 as an activity provider. GL11 raises awareness and delivers 1-2-1 support, light touch activities, volunteering and structured courses.

GL11 have been able to reach their intended beneficiaries, with over 170 people receiving support from GL11 in the Communities Fund timeframes. As a result of the project, project leads report that 65% of participants have reported a positive change to their health and wellbeing, and 76% have reported a change in feeling part of the community. Leads report that beneficiaries have demonstrated improved mental health, a reduction in social isolation and loneliness, and improved confidence and self-worth. Furthermore, one beneficiary stated:

'If I am on my own my mood sinks. GL11 helps me so I don't have to think about stuff at home. I have found out that there is life after your husband dies and I've got that through coming to GL11'.

The work will continue; GL11 has received £275,000 funding from the Big Lottery to continue the project over the next three years.

GL11 submitted a completed CBA in April 2018. The project anticipated a financial return on investment of 0.3 and a public value return on investment of 39.04. The greatest financial beneficiary was identified as the Department for Work and Pensions.

Haverhill LifeLink, West Suffolk Council and One Haverhill Partnership, £57,900

Haverhill LifeLink is a two-year project bridging the gap between statutory services and the third sector through the implementation of a social prescribing model in Haverhill. Health provision in the town is limited, approximately 20% of GP appointments are taken up with social (rather than health) needs, access to secondary care services is limited, and transport links are poor. There are high long-term unemployment rates as well as high levels of obesity.

Haverhill has an active voluntary and community sector. LifeLink was designed to make this support more accessible to others, to increase people's connectivity to their town and other residents, whilst strengthening groups to support sustainability moving forward. The activities involved referrals to LifeLink, followed by up to seven coaching sessions led by participants. The project involved signposting to relevant services, and coproducing action plans, plus providing buddy support, opportunities for volunteering, and healthy lifestyle advice and support.

Lifelink engaged with most of their intended beneficiaries, reporting outcomes and impacts for over 160 people. Outcomes reported include improved health and wellbeing, increased skills and experience through volunteering and training, and reduced social isolation and loneliness, with people creating new opportunities for themselves after participating in the project. It has also increased support networks within the local community.

Haverhill Lifelink has secured a further three years of funding from the West Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group and Business rates retention fund, will be expanding the project into two further localities and a full time project manager started in January of this year. The project plans to monitor longer term impacts going forward.

Haverhill Lifelink experienced a delay in data collection and referrals, and therefore did not submit a complete CBA in April 2018. In March 2019 the first tranche of data will be analysed by the University of Essex, who will carry out an academic study including CBA.

Healthier Fleetwood, Lancashire County Council, £56,891

Healthier Fleetwood is a long term programme aimed at promoting health and community connectedness in the town of Fleetwood, which has consistently performed worse than the UK average in key health indicators including depression, obesity, and long-term illness or disability.

The project focuses on the development of a social prescribing system to complement traditional healthcare provision, by enabling healthcare professionals to refer patients to non-health, community-based interventions. In providing a platform for the many groups, activities and events taking place in Fleetwood, it acts as a link between residents and the agencies working in the community. The project has supported over 100 beneficiaries through providing a small grants programme to support local groups and clubs to establish

themselves in the community. It also holds meetings with the community to promote community based activities.

One of the key successes of the project has been to increase the number and variety of activities available in the Fleetwood area. Small grants have been used to support local residents in setting up and promoting new groups or clubs such as the Women's Aloud Support Group, a Table Tennis Club and a Harmony and Health Choir. These activities have supported the improvement of both physical and mental health and wellbeing for beneficiaries, reduced isolation and loneliness, and an increased sense of community empowerment.

The Healthier Fleetwood Project submitted a completed CBA in April 2018. The project has a financial return on investment of 1.92 and a public value return on investment of 11.43. The project has a payback period of three years.

Healthwise Harrow, Connecting Communities Ltd, £69,000

Healthwise Social Prescribing was a one-year pilot scheme which began in July 2017, to provide solutions to social issues and address the wider determinants of health inequalities. Healthwise Harrow operated in the context of high rates of preventable hospital admissions and high pressure on statutory resources. In the Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (STP) area over 30% of hospital admissions were preventable, and people with long term conditions used 75% of healthcare resources. The model aligned with a national policy focus on prevention and self-management to reduce pressure on health services.

Specific objectives of the project were to reduce pressure on hospital services in relation to diabetes, falls, hypertension/heart disease and dementia, improve wellbeing, and encourage positive lifestyle changes for Harrow residents. To do this, Healthwise delivered a range of social prescribing interventions including Expert Patient Programmes for Hypertension and Diabetes, Healthy Eating stalls, a Dementia Café, a Healthy Living Club and pioneers a social prescribing offer for two mental health wards within Northwick Park Hospital (one of two within England and Wales). Each beneficiary received a co-produced personalised plan, which was locally evaluated; the results of the completed plan were shared with the referrer (typically their GP).

Healthwise supported over 3,500 beneficiaries, which exceeded their original target of 3,000 engagements. The project delivered 57 programmes of activity, of which at least half are sustainable through the mutual exchange networker schemes. This has resulted in a wide range of reported outcomes, including improved self-care awareness, improved health and wellbeing, and a reduction in social isolation and loneliness. In addition, leads report that beneficiaries are now better able to access information, advice and guidance in relation to issues such as housing, benefits, debt and legal issues, which has contributed to increased quality of life.

The project lead has secured funding to sustain the social prescribing service for adults in Harrow. It is expected that they will deliver 340 interventions per month.

Healthwise Harrow submitted a completed CBA in April 2018. The project has a financial return on investment of 18.96 and a public value return on investment of 18.92. The greatest financial beneficiary is cited as the NHS.

South Norfolk Social Prescribing, South Norfolk Council, £70,000

Whilst the population of South Norfolk has better than average health compared to Norfolk as a whole, South Norfolk remains average or below average for rates of obesity, diabetes and dementia[37]. The South Norfolk Social Prescribing project was designed to help people find local, community-based solutions to their health and social care needs, with communities developing new ways of supporting each other.

The project built on the Council's existing Community Connector role and created an additional six positions, including one senior post. The project engaged 13 GP practices across South Norfolk, and drew on the support and commitment of 27 partner agencies through a Help Hub, which provided local residents with access to social prescribing services.

The project leads report that it has supported over 900 beneficiaries achieve outcomes including earlier and more appropriate access to support, improved health and wellbeing and an increased sense of community. In addition, the project has fostered valuable relationships with GPs who have promoted the early help approach, reportedly reducing demand on their resources. The project leads highlight its biggest successes as reducing the risk of homelessness and supporting domestic abuse victims to access appropriate services.

The project secured funding to continue delivery to March 2020.

South Norfolk Social Prescribing submitted a completed CBA in April 2018. The project reported a financial return on investment of 0.75 and a public value return on investment of 127.41. The greatest financial beneficiary was identified as NHS primary care.

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[37] South Norfolk Council (2017) South Norfolk Social Prescribing Logic Model

Case studies

Making a Difference in College Bank and Lower Falinge, Rochdale Borough Council

- The Making a Difference project in College Bank and Lower Falinge built on a successful pilot programme in the Kirkholt area, led by Rochdale Borough Council.

- The model has provided intensive support through frontline workers, supported by an integrated place team of over 20 partner agencies within Rochdale borough. In addition to intensive multi-agency casework, the team supported community drop-ins, offering adult learning programmes plus access to health services, financial advice, skills and employment and housing support.

- The outcomes reported include measurable improvements in health and wellbeing, employability and essential life skills. This includes a reduction in homelessness, inappropriate call outs of police and domestic violence, and an increase in participation in learning and take up of dental services.

- The introduction of the integrated place teams is reported to have led to improved collaborative working practices across agencies and organisations within Rochdale borough, with improved information sharing and an increase in the take up of support.

Background and Context

The Making a Difference in College Bank and Lower Falinge work has been led by Rochdale Borough Council, based on a successful pilot programme, Making a Difference in Kirkholt. The Council worked in partnership with Greater Manchester Police, Rochdale Boroughwide Housing and The Big Life Group to identify College Bank and Lower Falinge to develop the second phase of the programme.

College Bank and Lower Falinge is made up of high concentrations of high-rise social housing, with a high proportion of single person households (82% in College Bank, 62% in Lower Falinge). Many of the target client group misuse drugs and alcohol, which impacts on their health, behaviour and ability to retain information, as well as their engagement with services. Debt is a major issue,

affecting 65% of households in College Bank and 88% of households in Lower Falinge (as identified by the social housing provider).

The integrated place team identified many people in the area who are homeless, some experiencing difficulties in accessing housing because of previous rent and council tax arrears or poor behaviour, as well as others putting their tenancies at risk. Spice abuse in particular is '*endemic*' in the area amongst the homeless population.

Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) is now managing its own finances in health and social care as part of its devolution deal with the UK government. GMCA's Taking Charge Strategy[38] highlighted the need for local services to work together to take '*a more proactive approach rather than responding to crises',* and tackle historic fragmentation of health and care services.

Project overview

The Making a Difference project targeted people who are vulnerable and at risk of high-cost crisis demand within the system. This included, for example, those linked to high volumes of calls to the police, and unemployed adults with low skills. The project had four tiers of clients; referrals from the police, referrals from adult social care, referrals from other partner agencies, and those who attended drop-ins. However, the tiers were fluid, and clients could span multiple tiers.

The overarching objectives of the project were to:

- Reduce costs by establishing an integrated system that effectively deals with high demand, complex and vulnerable cases

- Redesign the system to enable a new model of leadership in response to input from the local community and frontline workers

- Achieve sustained improvements in people's lives and reduce unnecessary / inappropriate demand, especially on the policy and health services

- Embed learning and employment support with wellbeing, financial and citizenship activity in the community through local drop ins

In addition to the Communities Fund, the project has been supported and resourced through Rochdale Borough Council, GMCA and Rochdale Boroughwide Housing, The project received paid support from Edge Hill University and in-kind support from partner agencies and volunteers. Work took place at several community drop-ins, one of which is located on the ground floor of a high-rise flat complex in College Bank.

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[38] Greater Manchester Combined Authority (2015) Taking Charge of our Health and Social Care in Greater Manchester

The project has supported many new and enhanced partnerships across the public, community and voluntary sector system in Rochdale borough. This included partnerships with new organisations commissioned to deliver health, drug or alcohol support. This is in addition to the partners already working on the project, as shown in Table 1.

Detailed activity and outputs

Frontline workers offered intensive support for clients referred to the project. Referrals were received mainly through the police or adult social care. The frontline workers provided a person-centred approach, identifying what was most important to and for the person, co-ordinating an action plan and doing everything possible to ensure the client engaged. Frontline workers also provided support at drop-ins. Volunteers and Community Champions (who had often had experience of the issues faced by clients) provided advice to clients and supported frontline workers.

The project hosted well-attended **community drop-ins.** These proved particularly effective in reaching young men living in one-bedroom properties surrounding the town centre, who often experienced social isolation. Local people who are homeless, or are experiencing problems as a result of substance misuse, also attended the drop-ins. Key individuals from local agencies have taken part to provide advice and support for the people attending each week; for example, providing health advice, skills and employment support, and financial and housing advice.

In addition, a commissioned training supplier provided access to equipment, knowledge, expertise and related resources for the attendees to use to improve their digital inclusion, develop other skills, search for job opportunities and keep in contact with friends and family. This supplier has been particularly successful in 'hooking in' isolated individuals already experienced in using technology, and encouraged them to join the local Heritage Hackers group. This group enabled them to advance their skills and learn coding and problem-solving.

The project **established, developed and strengthened integrated place work across Rochdale borough**. The project hosted weekly meetings with frontline workers from all local agencies, including the police, housing, homelessness, adult social care, health and wellbeing services (including mental health services), drug and alcohol support, probation, children's centres and schools. During the meetings, the workers provided as much up to date information as possible on each client. The meetings were chaired by a team member from the charity Big Life, which helped develop a sense that the work is integrated and not just in the interests of large organisations such as the Council or Greater Manchester Police.

Training and learning opportunities for staff, volunteers and clients were provided through the project. Training and development included person-centred approaches and planning; strengths-based tools; domestic violence and abuse; cognitive behaviour theory; restorative practice; loan sharks and behaviour change.

Clients have also taken part in the Citizens Curriculum, a person-centred approach to allow clients to access informal learning to improve their basic life skills. This innovative approach to adult learning, was based on evidence from Learning Through Life, identifying the core capabilities adults need in order to make good progress.

The project developed and arranged **citizens' hearings** in the borough; formal sessions in which people from the local community posed key questions to Council representatives, using an agenda co-produced with support from academics and development workers. This was credited as giving '*power to the citizens'*, providing the opportunity to feel on an equal standing to those in decision making positions, and to feel like they have a say. An independent chair from Rochdale Connections Trust supported the process. The power balance was measured by academics from Edge Hill University as 50/50 between citizens and the Council. Importantly, the hearings resulted in the setting of a local challenge, worked on by 20 local leaders together with the citizens. This is reported to have led to measurable system change in a short space of time.

Outcomes achieved

Whilst partners assert that this is a long-term approach, and therefore many outcomes and impacts have yet to be realised, the project is already reported to have resulted in some substantial outcomes for both the clients and working practices in Rochdale borough.

Partners report **improvement in client health and wellbeing**. Clients have accessed numerous services, such as mental health, drug and alcohol support and housing support that they had not accessed previously. There has also been a reduction in social isolation, as those who attend the drop-ins are interacting with each other and forming friendships. This resulted in one client stating that the drop-in was *'one of the best things in my life'*.
There is evidence of the project **reducing incidences of children taken into care**. For example, the team worked closely with a family whose children were at risk of being taken into care, due to anti-social behaviour and unsustainable housing. However, due to the support provided by the integrated place team, this was prevented. In addition, the project prevented vulnerable adults entering residential care, through supporting families in need.

Some of the less measurable improvements are important building blocks for larger successes. Many of those taking part have **improved their skills and, in some cases, have achieved qualifications**. For example, the project partnered with the Co-op to train three clients in food hygiene. They completed the course and received certificates, greatly improving their confidence and self-worth. These clients went on to volunteer at the Co-op, cooking meals for families in need. Improved skills also led to **increased employment**, with some people involved in Heritage Hackers finding paid work within the digital sector.

Testimonial A

- After his wife passed away and his daughter moved to study at university, Joe[39] found himself unable to pay his rent or bills. Joe became homeless when he was evicted from his property, and stayed in hostels and temporary accommodation, finding the experience '*terrifying*'.
- Through Joe's involvement with the Making a Difference project, he is now sustaining a tenancy in social housing, which he feels has greatly improved his health and wellbeing. He attends the drop-in every week, through which has made friends and improved his digital skills. He has gained a qualification in food hygiene, and now volunteers cooking and serving meals to families in food poverty, which he enjoys.
- Even though he has now secured paid employment, Joe also attends the drop-in to offer advice to those who may be homeless themselves, as he feels it is important to '*give back*' to the project. He now feels safe and well, and he attributes this to the frontline workers who supported him when he needed it most**.**

Testimonial B
- Before receiving support from the project, Laura was one of the top 10 demand cases for Greater Manchester Police and categorised as high demand by the North West Ambulance Service. Laura suffers with severe mental health issues.
- The integrated place team worked intensively with Laura to develop strategies that she can use to manage her behaviour when she is feeling low. Mental health services have also worked closely with other partners and frontline workers, to ensure they have the skills and knowledge to provide weekly, more informal support at the drop-ins.
- **Based on Laura's record with the emergency services, and assuming the team continues to be successful in supporting Laura, an estimated cost saving of £60,529 is predicted over 4.25 years, based on reductions in Laura's emergency service use.**

The project has **improved trust between clients and agencies**. An example of the humanising approach (which is credited as leading to improved engagement) is in the type of activity workers have undertaken. A personalised approach has improved trust in agencies. Furthermore, the intensive support provided by frontline workers has fostered a trusting relationship, leading to clients disclosing

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[39] Names have been changed throughout to protect anonymity

information they had not revealed to agencies before, with agencies then being better equipped to support the client.

The project has led to **less siloed working between agencies,** which, as well as improving efficiency when resources are tight, has begun to change the working practices and culture of agencies in the borough of Rochdale. Project partners believe that the regular meetings have supported this and the current close links with other agencies have promoted the culture of *'high challenge, high support'.*

Unanticipated outcomes

The project has begun to see a **ripple effect within the community**. The drop-in approach has meant that clients who attended regularly started referring friends and family, by bringing them along if they needed support. Seeing someone they know succeed has encouraged the idea that *'someone like me can do this'*. Furthermore, client referrals have allowed the project to provide support for people within the community who may have *'fallen through the cracks'*.

Partners also report that the project has impacted on them professionally. They report an **increased network of contacts** through the integrated place team, and received valuable **training opportunities**, leading to them better supporting clients.

Partners report that they have **engaged more with the project than originally anticipated**, with a tangible sense amongst workers that this is 'the right way to do things'. They report that this has resulted in increased information sharing and improved knowledge of working practices in the area.

Within the GMCA, every local Council shares their best practice regularly. Citizen involvement was cited as a key strength of Rochdale Borough Council, stemming from the high level of community involvement and the change achieved by the citizen hearings.

Long-term outcomes
Clients are expected to continue to benefit from the programme, based on learning from the Kirkholt pilot programme. Long-term outcomes reported through that work include:
- o Improved employment outcomes
- o Fewer people dependent on benefits
- o Reduction in premature mortality rates and long-term ill-health
- o Reduction in admissions to residential care
- o Reduction in crime and antisocial behaviour
- o Reduction in demand for emergency services, hospital attendances and admissions
- o Reduction in evictions and homelessness
- o Reduction in children taken into care
- o The provision of a sustainable service across Rochdale borough for clients to utilise.

Cost benefit analysis

The timeframes considered in the CBA run from 2016/17 to 2020/21. Whilst costs are well understood, there is more uncertainty regarding the benefits – reflected in a higher level of optimism bias.

Under the assumptions in the CBA, **the Overall Financial Return on Investment for the programme is 2.04, with a payback period of 3 years**. The costs largely fall on the Local Authority, with contributions from other local providers such as Greater Manchester Police, the NHS and Housing. The benefits identified are 50% short term cashable and 80% long term cashable, shared by different organisations through a variety of benefits including reduced admissions to residential care, reductions in children being taken into care, reduced housing evictions and increased employment.

The service built several different CBA models as part of their sensitivity analysis. They use a CBA with the set-up costs removed, because when the project team moves on, this way of working is intended to become 'business as usual' in the place. For the College Bank and Lower Falinge project, there was a total of £113,600 costs associated with set-up, which is 49% of the total spend; without these costs the service offers a **higher Financial Return on Investment of 4.05**.

Placed Based Work – college bank and lower Falinge	
Financial Case	**Economic Case**
Discounted cost: £222,000 This is funded by the local authority (85%), NHS (7%), Housing providers (6%) and Police (3%)	Discounted cost:£222,000 There are a total of £0 in kind costs
Discounted Benefit:£453,009 Those include local authority (505), NHS (23%), DWP (AME – 12%) and Other (15%)	Discounted Benefit: £7,686,784 There are £7,233,775 additional public value benefits (94%)
"247,460 (50%) is short term cashable and £96,129 (80%) is long term cashable*	The top public value benefits ** include: Sense of trust and belonging (community) 33%; Improved relationships (community 33%) Positive functioning (Autonomy, control, aspirations) (community) (14%), Reduced isolation (individuals) (7%); Emotional wellbeing (individuals) (5%), Positive functioning (individuals) (4%) and increased confidence/self-esteem (individuals) (4%)
The top fiscal benefits are Reduced residential care admissions (28%), reduced children taken into care (18%), Housing evictions (11%), increased employment (ESA/IB) (9%)/ (JSA) (5%) Reduced drug dependency (7%), Reduced alcohol dependency (7%) & other (15%)	
***Overall financial return on investment = 2.04	Public value return on investment = 34.63

> Timescales:
> The programme has been modelled over 5 years and started in 2016-17, payback period of 3 years

Reflections on the CBA process

The CBA tool has been used by the project to **promote the benefits of a 'no targets model' to commissioners** within Rochdale Borough Council. The CBA provides tangible evidence that the model has financial value. Making a Difference leads hope that the evidence from the CBA will support the sustainability of this work as part of the Greater Manchester approach to reform.

Key learning emerging

Enablers
- A fully integrated place team meant that **information was shared effectively, and referrals are made more quickly between agencies**. Furthermore, as all agencies were *'singing from the same hymn sheet'* they can work together to support those who are hardest to reach. For example, if a client missed an appointment, all agencies were informed, so if an agency came across the client on the street, they could remind them or help them to re-book. Sometimes they were able to find them before an appointment, and able to take them, resulting in fewer missed appointments.
- The project supported **quality outcomes over quantity of outputs**, with frontline workers investing a lot of time into a small number of clients. This approach enabled frontline teams to be adaptable and innovative, to provide an immediate response to ongoing issues and provide support as and when needed. Whilst requiring a lot of capacity, it is expected to save resources long term, making the project cost effective and sustainable.
- **Buy-in from senior leadership within Rochdale Borough Council** proved extremely beneficial for the citizens' hearings. The citizens set the agenda and received honest answers from the Council, and this made citizens, who had previously been mistrustful of public agencies, feel empowered and listened to. It made sure that system leaders understood the challenges that citizens felt were most important, to prioritise these issues.
- **Strong project leadership** was highlighted as a key enabler by partners. There was good communication, with partners receiving regular updates and training opportunities.

- **Sharing learning was a key enabler**. The project is currently working with partners across Europe and across the UK, to share best practice around the Citizens' Curriculum.

Challenges

- **Health and children's services were more difficult to integrate within the team**. This has been particularly challenging in parts of the system where crisis demand is high and increasing. The project leads found that integration works best at a case level in these instances.
- Because the support offered is been intensive, **partners have found it difficult to integrate the project into their workload**. However, the work is *'becoming the norm'* as they can see the longer-term benefits for their workload, and the impacts that this way of working has on their clients.
- Sometimes partners and frontline workers faced **challenges with '*system conditions*'**. There were some clients who are unable to be referred to particular agencies as '*they don't fit the bill'*. These examples have been flagged up through the partnership in order to co-design appropriate support for the client.
- A key challenge for the integrated place team is to maintain the trust and support of clients when partners have no choice but to implement enforcement actions, e.g. eviction from housing.

Sustainability and next steps

Making a Difference in College Bank and Lower Falinge has now become business as usual. The Council plans to expand its work into neighbourhoods across the borough of Rochdale. They have asked internal auditors to review their processes to ensure their resource use is appropriate and sustainable.

In Kirkholt, the project had such a positive effect that the area is becoming a desirable area to live. Whilst this brings '*hope'* to the neighbourhood, it also raises the potential challenge of gentrification and displacement of existing residents. This important consideration is being addressed through the innovative development of a New Pioneers Programme, which pays equal attention to people as well as physical regeneration. The programme aims to prevent displacement by implementing a basic income model, whilst also investing in the physical space.

Table 18 Partners involved in the Making a Difference Project

Theme	Partners	Partners
Adult Care Services	Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service	Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust
Big Life	Greater Manchester Police	Petrus
Children's Centres	GPs	Rochdale Borough Council
Children's Services	Healthy Young Minds (formerly CAMHS)	Rochdale Boroughwide Housing and other local housing providers
Community Champions	Key to the Door	Rochdale Connections Trust
Community Drugs Team	Link4Life	Sanctuary Trust
Community Mental Health Team	Mental Health Lead Practitioner (RAID)	Schools
Community Rehabilitation Company (CRC) - probation service	Motiv8	Stepping Stone
Creative Support	No Worries IT	Victim Support
Department for Work and Pensions	North West Ambulance Service	Voluntary sector organisations (MIND, WHAG, CAB, the Bridge etc.)
Early Break	Pennine Acute Health Trust	Youth Offending Service

– *Source: Project documentation*

Manchester Dodgeball Employment Programme, World Dodgeball Association

> - The Manchester Dodgeball Employment Programme works with young people aged 16-24 to improve their employment prospects in the sports sector. The World Dodgeball Association leads the programme.
> - The Communities Fund enabled the World Dodgeball Association to fund a project manager and train coaches to support employment training, sports training and mentoring.
> - As a result of the programme, young people have accessed placement and volunteering opportunities with organisations in the sports sector. They have also improved their employability skills and understanding of the opportunities available. Health and wellbeing of participants has improved through undertaking Dodgeball activity, positively impacting on confidence and self-worth.
> - The programme has secured further funding, which has enabled expansion into Wigan. The new programme will run on a shorter six-month timescale, enabling young people to access employment opportunities more quickly.

Background and Context

The Manchester Dodgeball Employment Programme, led by the World Dodgeball Association in partnership with Manchester City Council, builds on a two-year engagement programme for 16-24-year olds. The World Dodgeball Association is the official world governing body of Dodgeball, delivering to over 70 million people worldwide[40]. The Association operates as a not for profit social enterprise.

In 2016, Manchester held the first Dodgeball World Cup. As part of this, the World Dodgeball Association, in partnership with the Factory Youth Zone and Youth on Solid Ground, established a two-year engagement programme, which engaged over 2,000 young people. The programme uncovered evidence of high demand for sports specific employment opportunities in the areas of Harpurhey, Levenshulme and Longsight, which also suffer from high levels of unemployment.

Across these areas, 10.8% of the working age population are claiming out of work benefits, and 31% of these are identified as long term unemployed[41]. The areas also suffer from high levels of income deprivation; Harpurhey is the second most income deprived ward in Manchester[42].

The sports sector is traditionally quite poor in providing opportunities for young people to get involved in sports employment programmes. However, Greater

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[40]https://www.worlddodgeball.net/dodgeballhub
[41] Logic Model
[42] Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (2015) A measure of Manchester's relative level of deprivation

Manchester's Sport Strategy[43] aims to maximise the contribution of the sport sector to economic growth, offering potential for increased employment opportunities for young people with the right skills for working within the sector. Further, the Strategy aims to support young people between 5-25 to develop life chances through a more active lifestyle, with a focus on reducing health inequalities. The programme also builds on the Manchester Work and Skills Strategy[44], which aims to address inequality through improving skills for those furthest from the labour market, in order to provide opportunities which will '*provide a good standard of living*'.

Project overview

The Dodgeball Employment Programme targets young people aged 16-24 who are not in employment, education or training (NEET), and are furthest away from the labour market. The programme is designed to enable changes in behaviour, attitudes and willingness to enter the labour market, through participation in Dodgeball and a training programme. The key objectives are to:

- Provide employment training, placements and opportunities to unemployed young people aged 16-24 within Harpurhey, Levenshulme and Longsight
- Offer work based placements to NEET young people to give young people a chance to live a better life
- Increase levels of enmployment for NEET young people to improve quality of life and wellbeing
- Increase participations in community Dodgeball activity by creating new employment opportunities. (source World Dodgeball Association (2017) Manchester Dodgeball.

Employment Programme Logic Model

The World Dodgeball Association has partnered with multiple organisations to deliver the programme. This includes various departments in Manchester City Council, Youth on Solid Ground, the Factory Youth Zone, the Football Association and the Manchester Bees Dodgeball Team.

The programme received £61,100 from the Communities Fund. In addition, they have received match funding from the World Dodgeball Organisation of £12,000, to support the delivery of Coach Education and the cost of equipment. The programme has also received in-kind support from the project coordinator at the World Dodgeball Association, and from Manchester City Council, who provide essential support staff to deliver programme elements. The in-kind support is worth over £30,000.

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[43] Greater Manchester Moving (2017) #GMMoving: The plan for physical activity and sport 2017-2021
[44] Manchester City Council (2015) Manchester Work and Skills Strategy 2015-20

Detailed activity and outputs

The recruitment of young people has occurred through **multiple referral pathways**. The first route has been to recruit those who engaged with the World Cup engagement programme who were keen to progress into the employment programme. Secondly, the programme developed referral pathways with local colleges, to refer any students who drop out of further education. Finally, the programme formed referral pathways with local job centres.

The programme delivers **weekly employment training modules** for young people. This involves improving key skills, including interview techniques and CV writing support. Other modules include entrepreneurialism in sport, and the diversity of careers in sport. Mentoring sessions are also delivered for young people, including peer-mentoring.

The programme offers **placement opportunities for young people**, in addition to providing access to employment opportunities. These opportunities are across multiple sectors.

Young people who have engaged with the programme also **regularly participate in Dodgeball** training sessions and Dodgeball games, amounting to one hour of physical activity per week.

The programme has been working to align their resources and budgets, in addition to sharing contacts and networks. This is occurring more frequently, as organisations are beginning to approach the programme to understand how they can support young people into employment in the sports sector.

Outcomes achieved

Of the 61 who enrolled onto the programme, **56 young people have completed it**. The five young people that did not complete the programme received offers of employment from non-sports employers due to prior job applications.

Participants have **improved their employability skills**. This is through the modules provided by the programme, which have given young people the skills to apply for jobs (including CV writing and interview techniques), in addition to improved knowledge and understanding of the opportunities available across the sport sector. The programme has '*opened the eyes of young people*' to the diversity of employment in sports, from the more traditional opportunities such as coaching and running sports clubs, to opportunities many young people hadn't considered in the sports sector, such as marketing and IT based employment.

In addition, participating in Dodgeball games and training has taught both employability and life skills. Young people have improved their confidence, ability to work in a team, and discipline. Participation has **improved the health and wellbeing** of young people, through increased physical activity.

As a result of the programme, **28 young people have received volunteering or internship placements** across a number of organisations, including sports clubs, Dodgeball clubs and private coaching businesses. It is expected that other

young people participating in the programme will also receive volunteering or internship opportunities in the near future.

Unanticipated outcomes

The programme has experienced further outcomes which were not anticipated:
- The programme has gained interest from other areas across the country, including in Leicestershire and Nottinghamshire. They have also **garnered interest in the programme internationally**, including from organisations in South Africa.
- The programme has also gained **further knowledge and understanding of the NEET landscape** within the areas they operate in, that had not previously been anticipated. This has aided the project in understanding the demand for the project, allowing them to plan accordingly for the future.

Long-term outcomes

The programme expects to achieve long-term outcomes for participants, including:
- A reduction in young people not in employment, education or training
- Improved wellbeing and happiness
- Living healthier lifestyles, expected to have a ripple effect on siblings and/or peers, resulting in reduced obesity and morbidity
- Becoming role models and community champions for other young people, sustaining the peer mentoring aspect of the programme
- A reduction in youth crime, by providing positive diversionary activities and role-models.

Attribution

The Communities Fund has enabled the programme to work with NEET young people in a way they would not have been able to otherwise, by supporting more young people on a more intensive programme. The programme has provided opportunities to young people which they would not have accessed without the programme, resulting in '*life changing'* impacts.

Cost benefit analysis

The timeframes considered in the CBA run from 2017/18 to 2021/22; whilst costs are well understood, there is more uncertainty regarding the benefits –reflected in a higher level of optimism bias.

Under the assumptions in the CBA, **the Overall Financial Return on Investment for the programme is 5.33, with a payback period of 2 years**. The funding is 88% from the Community Fund and the remainder from the World Dodgeball Association. The expected benefits, which will occur after the training programme is complete, relate to getting young people into work opportunities; as such, they fall to the DWP and the NHS. The benefits reflect the cost to the exchequer of those who are NEET (in terms of benefits paid, tax receipts

foregone and from the working tax credit) along with the health impacts of increased employment.

The programme anticipates growing year-on-year, from 61 participants in the first year to an expected 110 in 2021, with a lower rate of growth in cost due to the use of peer-to-peer methods. No wellbeing impact has been included in the CBA modelling, but going forward if this was included it would further contribute to the wider economic case for this programme.

Unanticipated benefits of the CBA process

Through using the CBA to promote the financial benefits of the programme, the World Dodgeball Association has received **further funding,** being awarded £9,000 in Awards for All funding to spread the Dodgeball Employment programme to Wigan. The CBA also supported the Association's bid to develop their social investment finance, through which they have received £9,300.

Dodgeball Employment Programme cost-benefit analysis summary

World Dodgeball Association – Manchester Dodgeball Employment Engagement	
Financial Case	Economic Case
Discounted cost: £276,771 This is funded by MHCLG (88%) and World Dodgeball Association (12%)	Discounted cost:£396,251 There are a total of £119,480 in kind costs (30%)
Discounted Benefit:£1,476,285 Those who benefit include DWP (AME) (90%) and NHS (10%)	Discounted Benefit: £2,821,943 There are £1,345,658 additional public value benefits (48%)
Of which £1,419,587 (87%) is short term cashable and £1,541,730 (95%) is long term cashable* The top fiscal benefits include Reduction in NEETs (84%) increased employment (JSA) (16%)	The top public value benefits ** include Reduction in NEETs (91%) increased employment JSA (9%)
Overall financial return on investment = 5.33	Public value return on investment = 7.12
Timescales:	

The programme has been modelled over 5 years and started in 2016-17, payback period of 2 years

Source: SQW analysis of CBA model

Key learning emerging

Enablers
- The World Dodgeball Association had worked with Manchester City Council, the Factory Youth Zone and Youth on Solid Ground prior to the programme. This meant that there were **established positive working relationships** to build on, which meant that delivery could begin more quickly. Furthermore, the Association had relationships with key contacts across City Council departments, which supported different elements of the programme.
- **Partners helped to recruit** young people onto the programme. Manchester City Council has good connections with harder to reach communities, which the World Dodgeball Association had not previously had the opportunity to access. This ensured that the most in-need young people had the opportunity to participate.
- **Using Dodgeball to sustain the engagement of young people** is an enabler. The game is inclusive, allowing mixed gender teams, offering the opportunity for everyone to learn key skills such as teamwork, discipline and motivation. Dodgeball '*gets the best out of people'*.
- The **Communities Fund evaluation** was cited as a key enabler. It has ensured that the programme could forge relationships with MHCLG, and access support and tools for sustainability from SQW.

Challenges
- **Sustaining engagement by young people referred from Job Centre Plus** has been a challenge, as those young people are under pressure to constantly apply for jobs in order to receive job seekers allowance. This can interfere with placement or volunteering opportunities that the young people are offered through the programme. The programme timescale of one year

has exacerbated this issue, therefore the programme is trialling a six-month alternative in Wigan.

- **Engaging private sector companies** to support the programme through their corporate social responsibility schemes has been challenging. This is because many companies prefer a light touch approach, compared to offering placements or mentoring for unemployed people.

Sustainability and next steps

The World Dodgeball Association is currently trialling the programme in Wigan, on a shorter timescale of 6 months, with the aim of getting young people into work more quickly. After the programme, these young people will access drop-in sessions and receive regular contact from the programme, in order to ensure sustained support. The programme hopes to broaden its target market from 16-24, to engage with younger people.

The programme is hoping to secure more long-term financial support from the private sector. With long-term funding, the Association hopes to develop an 8-10-year strategy for the programme.

Multiple and Complex Needs Programme, Turning Tides

- The Multiple and Complex Needs Programme provides multi-agency support to 22 rough sleepers in Worthing with complex needs. The programme is led by Turning Tides, a community led homeless organisation, supported by Adur and Worthing Council and other agencies.
- The Communities Fund has enabled Turning Tides to employ two 'support navigators', who work with their clients to help them access support, including drug and alcohol services and health services.
- As a result of the programme, beneficiaries are reported have experienced a reduction in homelessness (from 80-90% of the cohort to 0-15% of the cohort). Through the aid of support navigators, beneficiaries have each registered with a local GP, received a mental health assessment, and been supported in accessing benefits. Improvements in wellbeing and stability are reported to have resulted in reduced A&E visits, fewer missed GP appointments and reduced offending.
- Turning Tides have accessed further funding for the programme (via the Rough Sleepers Fund), which has enabled the employment of a third support navigator.

Background and Context

The Multiple and Complex Needs (MCN) Programme is led by Turning Tides, a community led homeless organisation who provide specialist support and accommodation to rough sleepers across Sussex. With support from Adur and

Worthing Councils, MCN builds on a 6-month pilot undertaken in Worthing, which supported six homeless people.

The programme is using Making Every Adult Matter's (MEAM) approach, which helps local areas design and deliver better coordinated services for people experiencing complex needs. MEAM is a national organisation funded by the Big Lottery Fund. It supports grass roots partnerships (in 22 other areas across the country) to develop effective and coordinated approaches for supporting service users with multiple needs.

Worthing has experienced an increase in the number of rough sleepers with complex needs. There has been an increase in homelessness in Worthing, including visible street homelessness. It is thought that Worthing has a high proportion of homeless people due to an 'overflow' from the nearby city of Brighton, coupled with a relatively high level of temporary accommodation for the homeless population in Worthing. However, despite a rising number of people rough sleeping in Worthing, prior to the MCN Programme there was no long-term intervention in place to break the cycle of homelessness.

The programme supports Adur and Worthing Council's Community Homelessness Strategy (2017-22), which sets out a commitment to tackle homelessness, particularly of single people, through strong partnerships and enhanced housing options provision. This feeds into the Council's Housing Matters Strategy (2017-2020).

Project overview
 'A person centred, multi-agency response to individuals in Worthing and Adur who have become disengaged from local services'[45]

The programme has worked with 22 of the most vulnerable individuals in Worthing, from an initial identified cohort of 30. The individuals targeted for support are those who are the hardest to reach, and who struggle to find and use services that may improve their health, wellbeing and standards of living. The overarching objectives of the programme are to:

- Reduce the use of crisis and emergency service support through multi-agency working
- Increase social inclusion through one to one support by 'support navigators'
- Reduce rough sleeping by establishing housing options using the 'housing first' model
- Reduce offending by offering in-reach support and planning housing options before release
- Improve wellbeing through offering mental health assessments and GP appointments

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[45] Turning Tides Logic Model

The programme was funded by Communities Fund monies until March 2018, subsequently funded to March 2019 through the Rough Sleepers Fund. The Communities Fund enabled Turning Tides to recruit two complex needs workers, who act as support navigators and offer intensive support for beneficiaries.

The project also receives in-kind support from multiple organisations and partners. For example, one of their short stay accommodation buildings has been gifted by a local developer for five years. This provides accommodation for up to 40 people, 10 of which are on the MCN programme.
The programme is centred on multi-agency working for the benefit of those with complex needs, and therefore incorporates a wide range of partners, including Adur and Worthing Council, Probation service, Police, Housing provider, Community Safety Partnership, Drug and alcohol services, and Social Workers.

Detailed activity and outputs
The support navigators help beneficiaries to navigate the system of support and consider their best options. Navigators work with project partners to enable beneficiaries to access support from different agencies, and often accompany beneficiaries to appointments with partner agencies. This **wrap-around support** enables navigators to form ongoing relationships with beneficiaries, and allows them to work flexibly and creatively with beneficiaries who have traditionally struggled with accessing support.

Wrap-around support may include scheduling and attending GP or probation appointments with them, collecting individuals from prison and taking them to a safe place, or advocating for clients with particular care needs. Scheduling appointments is particularly difficult when clients are sleeping rough, or do not have a phone or watch. However, with multiple partner agencies invested in the programme, it makes it easier to track clients.

The navigators were expected to provide one-to-one 1.5 hour weekly support sessions, with separate 2 hour multi-disciplinary meetings for specific cases of concern, for each beneficiary. However, in practice, navigators give more time to each client than anticipated, resulting in **22 clients being supported** as opposed to the 30 originally planned.

All partners involved with the programme attend monthly **Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs)**. Each client is discussed in turn at the MARAC, and actions developed, Navigators update all partners on the level of support given to each individual, and what is needed for each client. The MARAC meeting is well attended and promotes a multi-agency team structure. In between MARAC meetings, partners meet with each other, allowing navigators to provide continuous and flexible support for beneficiaries. The MARAC is flexible, and can expand to include other partners depending on client needs.

The programme also provides a **personalisation fund** for beneficiaries. This allows individuals to spend a small amount of money in ways that will increase their wellbeing, as '*the little things are important*'. This is non-restrictive in order to provide beneficiary choice, and has resulted in a wide array of uses. For example, one beneficiary used the fund to put down a deposit for a mobility scooter, whilst another purchased a new pair of trainers, enabling them to take pride in their appearance and enhance their self-worth. One beneficiary, who was also a victim of domestic violence, purchased a phone, in case of emergency. Currently, MCN is focusing on co-production. Partners feel it is important to involve the client in their own care, through listening to the client and taking their individual needs into account.

Outcomes achieved

The MCN programme has achieved key outcomes in line with its aims; it has also experienced some wider and unanticipated outcomes.

The key outcome for beneficiaries has been a reduction in homelessness.
Around 80-90% of the cohort were regularly rough sleeping, and this has reduced to 0-15%. Some have secured temporary accommodation, whilst three beneficiaries are now in rented accommodation. MCN has helped beneficiaries access the housing register.

Testimonial A

- Before involvement in the MCN programme, Jon[46] had a long history of homelessness and drug abuse. He was also involved in an accident and spent three months in hospital, which left him with long term health issues including poor mobility and a speech impediment.

- However, as a result of the programme, he is now in his own accommodation and is claiming benefits. Access to his own funds has enabled him to learn about money management, pay rent and live more independently. He also volunteers at one of the day centres run by Turning Tides, as he was experiencing problems with isolation and loneliness due to disassociation with his previous peer group. The beneficiary stated he felt '*brave'* through his volunteering experience. In addition, he now plays walking football with a local group, and is planning to invest in a bike in order to improve his wellbeing and facilitate a more independent lifestyle.

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[46] Names have been changed

> - Jon attributes his progress wholly to the programme, and attributes his ability to '*be nicer to people'* to his navigator. His navigator also enabled him to access services such as the dentist, GP and housing association which Jon believes will improve his long term health.

Beneficiaries have each registered with a local GP, received a mental health assessment, and been supported in accessing the correct benefits. Whilst this has improved beneficiary wellbeing,   partners are confident that the additional costs of providing these services to the client group are off-set by the benefits emerging.

 There have been substantial reductions in the number of A&E visits by the client group. For example, a client who was sleeping rough and suffered from alcohol addiction spent a lot of time at A&E. However, through the programme they spent three months in an alcohol recovery house, and have not attended A&E in four months.

There has also been a reduction in missed GP appointments and reduced use of the criminal justice services. Before the MCN programme, one client suffered from drug abuse and carried weapons in public. However, since taking part in the MCN programme, he is classed as posing a lower risk of re-offending, resulting in reduced demands on the police and prison services. Across the cohort as a whole, there has been a reduction in reoffending, resulting in longer periods out of prison, and in some cases not returning at all.

> **Testimonial B**
> - Prior to his involvement in the programme, Sean was homeless and suffered from alcohol and drug addiction. He was a persistent reoffender and had been in and out of prison.
> - Since being on the MCN programme, Sean is now living in a Turning Tides hostel, which he describes as his '*castle'*. He also now attends regular GP appointments (which has improved his health). With the support of his navigator, Sean is now attending his probation appointments on his own. He also plans to purchase a bike so he can improve his wellbeing, and wants to begin volunteering in the future.
> - He feels that his relationship with his navigator is important, and is does not want to let them down. Sean stated that he attributes his progress to the

> programme:*'It works for people that the system won't work for'.*

Beneficiaries have experienced positive outcomes as a result of their involvement with the programme. Unfortunately, of the 22 beneficiaries, one has passed away, and one is now in a hospice. However, the programme enabled them to have 'a dignified end', for example, the individual currently in a hospice was able to have a final holiday, improving their wellbeing.

Unanticipated outcomes

There have been unanticipated outcomes for the local community, including **a reduction in vandalism in local parks, improved local environment, and fewer needles** left in areas such as car parks.

Partner agencies have begun to see a **'ripple effect' in the community**. Beneficiaries have inspired other people close to them to aspire to a better quality of life. A key example is a partner of an existing MCN client. As a result of the support given to the client, their partner is now living in supported accommodation. This has inspired the partner to focus on abstinence based recovery, contributing to their improved health and wellbeing.

Long-term outcomes

Beneficiaries are expected to continue to benefit from the programme. Longer term outcomes expected include:
- Improved life expectancy
- Improved aspirations, as *'they begin to see a future for themselves'*
- Reduced offending/reoffending
- Reduced risky behaviour
- A changing culture, reflected in changed relationships between the most vulnerable citizens and agencies
- More efficient use of services.

However, achieving these outcomes is likely to be dependent on support being sustained for beneficiaries, even if at a relatively low level. This has implications for any 'exit strategy' for the programme.

Attribution

Without the Communities Fund, partners believe that the programme would have been slower to start and would have operated at a reduced scale, limiting the number of beneficiaries supported. Multi-agency meetings would have still occurred, but not with the momentum that the MARAC meetings have facilitated. Furthermore, navigators believe that the funding has enabled them to work more flexibly with their clients, in order to make greater progress and sustain outcomes.

Cost benefit analysis

The timeframes considered in the CBA run from 2017/18 to 2019/20 and whilst costs are well understood, there is more uncertainty regarding the benefits – reflected in a higher level of optimism bias.

Under the assumptions in the CBA, **the Overall Financial Return on Investment for the programme is 1.96, with a payback period of 2 years**. The benefits identified are 49% short term cashable. The costs largely fall on Turning Tides. The benefits are shared by different organisations through reduced housing evictions, reduced statutory homelessness, reductions in service use and incidents of crime and anti-social behaviour.

The project is collecting quarterly statistics which include service use, the Homelessness Outcomes Star and the New Directions Team Assessment. This data could, at a later date, be used to improve upon the estimates currently used in the CBA. In addition, there may be benefits which have not been identified or quantified which may come to fruition. Some benefits may continue after the three-year time frame.

Unanticipated benefits of the CBA proces

As a result of the CBA process, Turning Tides have increased their skills and knowledge capacity within the organisation. This has resulted in some unanticipated benefits for both the organisation and the wider community.

Turning Tides have **applied the CBA to other projects**. This has enabled them to assess the costs and benefits of a range of projects efficiently, including projects with relatively small cohorts. The time taken to complete a CBA has decreased, further enhancing the efficiency of the process.

Turning Tides have offered **CBA guidance to other local agencies**. For example, Turning Tides coached another local homeless agency on how to use the CBA tool. This has increased knowledge capacity in the local area, and may improve the likelihood of achieving funding to support the local homeless population. Sharing learning has also facilitated data sharing between Turning Tides and other agencies.

MCN programme cost-benefit analysis summary

Financial Case	Economic Case
Discounted cost: £183,124 This is funded by WCHP (95%, NHS (2%), Police (1%) and other (3%)	Discounted cost:£186,431 There are a total of £3,307 in kind costs (2%)
Discounted Benefit:£359,653 Those who benefit include WCHP (36%)NHS (28%) local authority (22%) other 14%	Discounted Benefit: £2,821,943 There are £1,345,658 additional public value benefits (48%)
Of which £176,719 (49%) is short term cashable and £266,439 (74%) is long term cashable*	The top public value benefits ** include positive functioning individuals (13%)
The top fiscal benefits include housing evictions (39%), reduction in statutory homelessness (15%) reduced alcohol dependency (9%) Reduced ASB (7%), Reduced hospital admissions (6%) and other (24%)	Positive functioning families (13%) Positive functioning communities (13%) Mental health (6%), confidence/self esteem 6%) and other (48%)
Overall financial return on investment = 1.96	Public value return on investment = 10.38
Timescales: The programme has been modelled over 5 years and started in 2017-18, payback period of 2 years	
Adur and Worthing: Making every adult matter (MEAM) project	

– *Source: SQW analysis of CBA model*

Key learning emerging

Enablers
- **The MARAC is a key enabler:** It facilitates regular buy in from partners, and ensures actions are collectively agreed. Partners are held to account for taking actions forward. The MARAC also allows navigators to share good news stories regarding the status of beneficiaries, as '*there are positive things to celebrate*'.
- **The navigators provide additional support that otherwise would not be available for clients.** For example, for those on the MCN programme who serve time in prison, their navigator meets them on release, and helps to ensure they have accommodation in place.
- **Taking time to establish strong relationships between the navigators and clients is vital**. Navigators build sustainable relationships with their clients through providing ongoing support, which builds trust. This trust enables navigators to achieve buy in from their clients to the programme. In addition, a consistent relationship means that the navigator knows the client's history, and so nothing is missed when using referring to a new service.
- **Navigators are able to be flexible and creative when working with clients.** This can involve providing more intensive support when needed, and taking a light touch approach when clients are making progress. They are able to advocate for their clients, resulting in beneficiaries accessing help which '*many just can't do on their own*'.
- **Being part of the MEAM programme offers opportunities to share learning.** Through MEAM, there are opportunities for sharing learning with similar projects around the country, whilst also offering peer support for programme staff. Because MEAM also supports 12 Fulfilling Lives Programme areas, MCN has the opportunity to share learning with more established programmes, as Fulfilling Lives areas have received Big Lottery funding for the last four years.
- **CBA support and familiarity**. Once comfortable with the CBA tool, it became easier to navigate, and Turning Tides were able to utilise the tool effectively. Key enablers to effective use included sense checking benefit data with the support navigators, and feedback and support received at each stage of the CBA process by SQW.

Challenges
- **Establishing appropriate professional boundaries could be a challenge for navigators**. Often, a navigator becomes the only constant in a client's life, which could result in overreliance, and cause difficulties when exiting relationships. All partners believe that when there is clarity around what the navigators can and cannot do for beneficiaries, the relationships can function successfully.
- **Navigators have sometimes found it difficult to access specific interventions for clients, due to service requirements and access criteria**. For example, clients cannot have a mental health assessment if they are not sober, and therefore cannot access appropriate medical support or medication. Clients who are dependent on drugs or alcohol are often unable to access temporary accommodation, however, clients are more likely to suffer from drug and alcohol dependency if they are homeless. Difficulties often arise for beneficiaries from flaws in the system, rather than difficulties with the service provider themselves.
- **There is a lack of psychological services**. This can lead to delays in accessing necessary support.

- **The programme is currently reactive, rather than proactive.** In future, partners would like to focus on clients before they have a long-term entrenched need, to prevent beneficiaries from reach crisis point and requiring more intensive (and costly) support

Sustainability and next steps

Through the Rough Sleepers Funding, the programme has been able to increase their workforce to three support navigators, and MCN are now planning to expand their client base to 24 (8 per navigator). However, with services for housing support potentially ending from April 2019, there is a risk that hostels in the area may stop operating. This would put pressure on the programme, as MCN uses these hostels to support their clients.

Moving forwards, partners would like to expand their remit, for example, to involve employment and careers agencies in supporting people to gain skills and employment.

Nottinghamshire's Co-production of the Short Breaks Offer, Nottinghamshire County Council

- Nottinghamshire County Council, in partnership with the Nottinghamshire Parent Carer Forum, has co-produced the review of its short breaks offer.
- Communities Fund money was used to employ a Co-Production Officer, who worked with a core group of parents and carers and the Young Pioneers group of young people with disabilities. Together, they have reviewed the eligibility assessment and the offer, and have designed a more cost effective, transparent and reliable service for young people with disabilities and their families.
- Co-production has become embedded within the Council, particularly across services for children and young people with disabilities. It has also empowered the service users, which has instilled trust in the system. The short breaks offer was approved by elected members in March 2018, and the online system of assessment was launched in September 2018.
- The project has received further funding internally in order to fund the Co-Production Officer's post for a further year.

Background and Context

The co-production of Nottinghamshire's short breaks offer was led by Nottinghamshire County Council's Integrated Children's Disability Service (ICDS), in partnership with Nottinghamshire's Parent and Carer Forum (NPCF). The local authority is required by law to provide services for individuals who provide care for disabled children, to enable them to continue to do so (or to do so more effectively), by giving them breaks from caring.

Nottinghamshire County Council met its statutory duty through the provision of three tiers of short breaks: flexible, targeted and specialist short breaks, providing different levels of support. However, Nottinghamshire has experienced increased demand for short breaks, resulting in a substantial overspend. The Flexible Short Breaks budget, which was Nottinghamshire's entry level for short breaks, had been overspent since 2014/15, and projected an overspend of over £176,000 in 2016/17, if spending had continued to increase at the rate of 7.18% as it did in 2015/16.[47]

Furthermore, parents and carers found the process difficult to navigate, and there was a lack of clarity around eligibility criteria. Some parents and carers felt it was unfair that certain families received short breaks, when other similar families did not.

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[47] Nottinghamshire County Council (2018) Refreshed Community Short Breaks Offer for Children and Young People with Disabilities

In 2016, the Council decided to co-produce the review of its Short Breaks offer for parents and carers of disabled children. Co-production is a requirement of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Reforms 2014 and is a way of working that brings families and professionals together to review and shape future provision. It also provides the opportunity to make decisions together, including determining the most effective use of limited resources.

Project overview

The project involved a core working group of parents and carers, supported by the Co-Production Officer. They worked to develop a new (financially sustainable) offer to support disabled young people and their families. The objectives of the project were to:

- Redesign the current short breaks offer in Nottinghamshire following co-production with children and young people with disabilities and their parents and carers
- Focus the revised offer on the outcome that matter mosr to service users
- Embed principles of coproduction within the ICDS and the wider partnership in Nottinghamshire
- Develop a partnership wide coproduction charter together with supporting toolkit.

The Communities Funding was predominantly used to employ a Co-Production Officer, responsible for co-producing the short breaks offer and creating a Co-Production Charter and toolkit, to support co-production on other projects. The project has also received time and capacity in-kind from the County Council and NPCF.

Detailed activity and outputs

The project held **family fun days to introduce and promote the idea of co-production** to parents and carers. The family fun days were informal, with food stalls and children's activities. In addition, the Council and NPCF jointly delivered a presentation for parents and carers which provided an overview of the project, co-production and the issues facing the current Short Breaks offer. Following these family events, a **working group** formed of parents and carers who were interested in co-producing the short breaks offer.

To get an idea of the benefits and challenges of the short breaks offer from as wide a stakeholder group as possible, the project **designed and distributed a survey to parents and carers**, which gained over 200 responses. The project also held short meetings with different groups in the community, through partners such as 'Cool Kids', in order to ensure they were hearing from seldom heard families as well as those engaged with the current offer.

The Working Group meetings were co-chaired by the Council and NPCF. This ensured a fair balance of power to support the co-production process. Six meetings were held to develop the short breaks offer, which involved shaping both the offer and the eligibility criteria. Meetings were held flexibly in order to accommodate availability. A core group of 22 attended the majority of meetings; in total up to 40 individuals attended at least one meeting.

The project also **engaged with young people** to inform the review, by liaising with the Young Pioneers group of young people with disabilities. In addition, the project held an event for providers of short breaks.

Outcomes achieved

The revised short breaks offer was **approved by elected members in March 2018**. The fact the revised offer was co-produced ensured that elected members were confident that it would work.

Since the inception of the project, **co-production has been embedded within the Council**. A Co-Production Charter has been produced by a working group and partners and approved by the County Council. The Charter sets out the values required for effective co-production. A toolkit has also been developed to support other co-production projects across Nottinghamshire.

The co-production process review has **empowered families and has instilled a sense of trust and faith in the resulting short breaks offer**. Parents and carers involved in the working group now feel more confident that the needs of the child are at the centre of the short breaks offer.

The short breaks online assessment went live in September 2018. The **online system is now more transparent, with clear assessment criteria and a scoring system for eligibility**. The short breaks offer will be reviewed annually, to ensure it remains appropriate. A short-term review of the offer is currently being undertaken, to examine the outcomes and impacts on recipient young people and families.

Unanticipated outcomes

Parents and carers in the working group have experienced unanticipated outcomes. It has given them opportunities to learn about system processes, information technology and co-production. Furthermore, some parents and carers have reported a **reduction in social isolation** as a result of their involvement in the project.

The project lead has been approached by other Council departments and other local authorities in the Midlands to **share learning around co-production**.

Long-term outcomes

Project partners are confident that the project will result in long-term outcomes, including:
- Improved trust in the short breaks process amongst families and carers
- Greater financial sustainability of the short breaks offer
- Increased partnership working between the Council and parents/carers
- Improved levels of understanding and trust.

Attribution

The short breaks offer may not have been reviewed without the Communities Fund funding. The funding provided time and capacity via the addition of a Co-Production Officer. Furthermore, even if the review had gone ahead, it would probably not have been undertaken in consultation with families to the same extent, as partners would not have had the capacity or skills to co-produce the offer.

Cost benefit analysis (CBA)

The timeframes considered in the CBA run from 2017/18 to 2020/21; whilst costs are well understood, there is more uncertainty regarding the benefits – reflected in a higher level of optimism bias.

Under the assumptions in the CBA, **the Overall Financial Return on Investment for the programme is 1.23, with a payback period of 4 years**. The funding is 100% from the Communities Fund. The benefits identified are 27% short term cashable and 59% long term cashable, shared by the local NHS and the Council through reductions in costs relating to mental health and safeguarding.

The benefits include both social and fiscal benefits; the social benefits are for the volunteers involved in the co-production process; the wider benefits relate to the service users of the short breaks service. Through co-production the service has been able to improve quality and offer the service to a larger group of service users; without the redesign and co-production process the revised offer would have been limited to a smaller group of families. **The Public Value Return on Investment for the programme is 13.5;** this includes the wellbeing of those families directly involved in co-production.

Reflections on the CBA process

Whilst the Council has not utilised the CBA as yet, it plans to do so. The **CBA will be shared with Service Directors to demonstrate the benefits co-production** as a way of working which has both financial and economic value. Additionally, the CBA will provide a baseline to compare with national averages and the value of similar offers.

Co-production of the Short Breaks Offer in Nottinghamshire cost-benefit analysis summary

Financial Case	Economic Case
Discounted cost: £71,821 This is funded by Communities Fund (100%)	Discounted cost:£102,773 There are a total of £30,952 in kind costs (30%)
Discounted Benefit:£88,446 Those who benefit include Notts NHS (78%) and local authority (22%)	Discounted Benefit: £1,387,324 There are £1,298,879 additional public value benefits (94%)
Of which £25,636 (27%) is short term cashable and £56,544 (74%) is long term cashable* The top fiscal benefits include Mental health (84%) reduced cost of safe guarding (16%)	The top public value benefits ** include reduced isolation (33%), mental health (27%) emotional wellbeing (13%) increased confidence and self esteem (13%) positive functioning (autonomy and control aspirations) (13%)
Overall financial return on investment = 1.23	Public value return on investment = 13.5
Timescales: The programme has been modelled over 4 years and started in 2017-18, payback period of 4 years	
Co production of short breaks	

Source: SQW analysis of CBA model

Key learning emerging

Enablers

- Recruiting a **dedicated Co-Production Officer** was a key enabler for the project. The Officer was seen as impartial and independent of both the Council and NPCF, allowing the working group to feel listened to and supported. The working group felt confident in the passion and experience of the Co-Production Officer, which fostered a trusting relationship, allowing the process to run more smoothly.
- The **working group were realistic** when it came to the offer and the criteria for families to meet. Before the initial meeting, project partners were concerned that the group may suggest things that the Council would have to object to, which would have disrupted the co-production process. However, the working group were very aware that the Short Break offer had to be financially sustainable and be targeted at the children and families with most need. The eligibility criteria produced in fact actually disqualified some members of the Working Group from receiving a short break for their children.
- Because all parties were **open and honest from the outset**, partners were able to work through *'tricky decisions'* together and form effective solutions to inform the short breaks offer. For example, from the beginning the Council was clear about the budget, and the fact that the existing short breaks offer was not financially viable. The working group were also open and honest about their lived experiences, which enabled the most appropriate solutions to be established.
- **The relationship between the Council and NPCF has *'exceeded expectations'*.** They have worked together effectively and become stronger through the project. Partners attribute this to good communication, compatible working practices and shared passion for the project.

Challenges
- Co-production was a **time-consuming process** that required a lot of capacity from partners and the working group of families. This required flexibility and focus, to ensure parents and carers could attend, and that it was not just a *'tick box exercise'*.
- Parents and carers were initially wary of the short breaks offer and the assessment process, due to poor communication and a lack of transparency around eligibility. This made it more of a **challenge to recruit working group members**. However, the Council and NPCF used the initial events to promote co-production as a way to overcome these issues, and were honest from the outset.
- **Achieving buy in from senior members of the Council** was a challenge. Although some key individuals invested in the process, because of the time commitment required there was scepticism from others regarding its viability.

Sustainability and next steps
As the co-production of the short breaks offer has been recognised as successful across Nottinghamshire County Council, the Co-Production Officer's role has been extended, with internal Council funding. This will support further co-production within the Council.
The short breaks offer has now been implemented and a short-term review is being undertaken to understand what is working well in delivery, and the emerging outcomes

and impacts of the short breaks offer on young people and families. The offer will be reviewed annually, in line with service user expectations[48].

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[48] 71% of service users stated they want an annual review of their short breaks offer.

Oasis Community Partnership, Oasis Multi-Academy Trust

- The Oasis Community Partnership provides support for the Crosby community in Scunthorpe, to enable them to improve their quality of life. The partnership is led by the community hub at Oasis Henderson Avenue Primary School.
- The Communities Fund has supported a hub leader and family support worker who undertake a range of activities, including running a community café, a space for start-up companies (the Crosby Collective), employment support activities and community events. The support worker also provides more intensive support and guidance for 30 of the most in need families.
- As a result of the partnership, these families have reported improved health and wellbeing outcomes, and a safer and more secure home life. Across the wider community, there are reports of reduced social isolation and increased access to education and employment opportunities.
- The partnership will continue using additional funding, and support from Oasis Multi-Academy Trust, to scale up the Crosby Collective and continue to provide support and guidance for people in the community.

Background and Context

The Oasis Community Partnership is led by Oasis Multi-Academy Trust (MAT), the second largest MAT in the country, with over 52 primary and secondary school academies across England, in addition to 11 learning and research hubs with ties to local communities. Oasis Henderson Avenue, a primary school in Scunthorpe, holds one of these hubs.

Crosby and Park is one of the most deprived wards in North Lincolnshire. The area suffers from above-average incidences of child poverty and domestic abuse. GCSE attainment is below both the local and national averages, whilst rates of excess weight amongst primary aged children are above the national average; over a quarter of five-year olds show signs of dental decay[49]. Life expectancy is the lowest in North Lincolnshire. Furthermore, the area has a high unemployment rate, with 9% of the population identified as long-term claimants of job-seekers allowance (JSA) in 2018[50]. Those in work tend to have low income, low-skilled jobs.

Additionally, the community is diversifying. Within Henderson Avenue Primary School, 60% speak English as an Additional Language (EAL), and the population of the area grew by 13% between 2001-2011[51]. However, the area is limited in community space and activity, so those new to the area and those who do not work do not have many

[49] North Lincolnshire Health and Wellbeing Board (2018) Joint Strategic Assessment of Health and Wellbeing in North Lincolnshire
[50] North Lincolnshire Health and Wellbeing Board (2018) Joint Strategic Assessment of Health and Wellbeing in North Lincolnshire
[51] North Lincolnshire Strategic Assessment (2013) Overview of North Lincolnshire

opportunities to foster relationships. This has resulted in Crosby being identified as a high-risk area for social isolation[52].

The hub's community partnership supports North Lincolnshire Council's Strategy[53] priority three, *'make our communities safer and stronger'*. The strategy highlights that to improve communities, there need to be early intervention processes in place for the most in need, to promote positive lifestyles, improve access to community services, and raise achievement across all life stages.

Project overview

Whilst the hub is located in Henderson Avenue Primary School, it is foremost a hub for the whole community. The project supports families from all schools within the area of Crosby and Park. The hub aims to support an improved quality of life and tackle issues faced by local children and families. Its key objectives are to:

- Build a coworking model that acts as an engine for start ups and pre start ups
- Develop a creative agency made up of established creatives in the area and those seeking to establish themselves
- Create community empowerment and pride through building a local movement of people who are engaged in designing, delivering and leading community activities
- In partnership create and deliver a family 'whole life' wellbeing programme
- In parneship create a pathway to support adults back into education and employment.

> *Source: Oasis Multi-Academy Trust (2017) Oasis Community Partnership Logic Model*

The Communities Fund supported both a hub leader and family support worker, in addition to funding running costs. In-kind event space is provided by the local community centre (worth £2,500 per year) and the Children's Centre next to Henderson Avenue School.
The hub collaborates with multiple agencies and organisations to deliver its objectives. This includes the local police, children's services and three local primary schools. The hub also works with community organisations, including churches and mosques, domestic violence organisations, homeless shelters and Crosby Together, a local charity.

Detailed activity and outputs
The hub is **working with 30 families, providing intensive support and guidance**. This has increased from the 20 initially anticipated, due to high demand for support in the area. Many families had a prior relationship with the hub, due to their links with the primary school; however families have also been referred through the local children's centre. These families have regular contact with the Family Support Worker, who carries out home visits and provides support around safeguarding, skills, employment, health and wellbeing. The hub runs a **community café** in the local community centre, open to wider community. The café is open one day a week staffed by volunteers, acting as a micro-enterprise and

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[52] North Lincolnshire Health and Wellbeing Board (2018) Joint Strategic Assessment of Health and Wellbeing in North Lincolnshire
[53] North Lincolnshire Council (2018) North Lincolnshire Strategy: Aspiring People, Inspiring Places

providing experience for volunteers. The café is a key point of entry to the project for those who require support. The project is looking to relocate the café to a larger community centre which is more centrally located between primary schools, allowing easier access for the whole community.

Breakfast mornings are also held at the café. Community members can attend to obtain information, advice and guidance on skills and employment pathways, family support, or to socialise with others in the community. The breakfast provides free healthy food, promoting healthy eating and educate families. Parents or carers can bring young children with them, so they are not restricted in their attendance.

The hub runs the **Crosby Collective** from the café space from 9-4 Monday to Friday. This is a co-working space for 20 individuals in the community with entrepreneurial ideas, but no resource to carry these out. The café acts as an **incubation hub for start-up enterprises**, delivering support ranging from digital drop-in training to Cognitive Behavioural Therapy sessions. Enterprises are able to access digital hardware and software, and sell produce via the Crosby Collective online store. Examples of Crosby Collective members are a production company and a catering company.
Quarterly events are held within the community by the hub, including a small local film festival called 'Our Stories'. The festival aimed to promote a positive image of Crosby and wider Scunthorpe, with social media promotion and support from local college students undertaking creative courses.

They also hold **Crosby Connect**, in partnership with Crosby Together, a local charity organisation. This supports community groups who plan to bid for funding. Crosby Connect provides detailed feedback at a 'Dragon's Den' style practice pitch, in order for community groups to improve and develop their ideas. One example of a group that participated was a local mosque, who wanted to purchase a house next-door to turn into a youth centre.
The hub also regularly provides **community training courses** in partnership with the local college and university, who have provided sessions on a wide range of employability and educational skills, including how to write a personal statement for course applications. The hub organises family wellbeing activities, such as children's parties, pram walks, exercise, mindfulness sessions, and cook and eat sessions.

Outcomes achieved
Families who received support from the hub's family support worker reported **improved health outcomes** – including for parents/carers and children. This includes improved access to dental hygiene, through the 'teeth team' initiative, which educates young people and adults on the correct tooth brushing practices.
In addition, project leads report that families are living in **safer and more secure homes**. Adults have been educated by the support worker on boundaries and enforcing the correct behaviour for children, resulting in better safeguarding practices within the home and *'fewer children out on the streets'*. This is reported to have had a knock-on effect in schools, with **improved attendance**. Furthermore, the support worker educates families on the importance of looking after their home environment, and helps to source furniture for families such as bed frames and mattresses. This has resulted in a cleaner and safer environment to live in. There has also been a **reduction in the incidences of anti-social behaviour** from both adults and children.

Families who have received intensive support, and those who have been supported more widely through the café and breakfast mornings, have reported **reduced social isolation**. Families have been able to extend their social networks through the activities run through the hub, and this is reported to have reduced social anxiety and increased confidence levels.

Leads report that families have **improved their employment prospects** and have increased their aspirations. Through the employability support provided by the hub, four parents started university courses in September 2018; three are working towards a qualification in Social Sciences, and one in Business Management.

Volunteers who support the community café and family activities have also **improved their employability skills**. With the help of the hub leader, volunteers planned a Halloween children's party. Whilst this enabled the community to come together, it also improved organisational skills, team work and confidence. Some volunteers have also used their role as a platform to gain further volunteer experience, including working with the elderly.

Testimonial A

Gill[54] was referred to the hub's breakfast morning by the children's centre. Gill wanted to get involved in youth work and make a difference in her community. However, prior to her referral, Gill was unaware of how she could support the community, and was socially isolated, looking after a large family of young children at home.
Since her initial referral to the hub, Gill has become a volunteer for the community café, and has helped organised multiple events, including a Halloween children's party. She feels this has improved her confidence through interacting with community members she would not have met previously, and she has made friends, building a strong support network.
Additionally, through attending employment support sessions run by the college, Gill applied for the local university, and has now begun a degree in Social Sciences. This has given her a sense of achievement, as she feels like '*what I have to say matters*'.
Gill wants to continue on her course and continue volunteering with the hub. She wants to continue to build relationships with people in the community and encourage them to attend the hub. In the future, she would like to establish a youth club, as there is not currently one in the area.

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[54] Names have been changed

Long-term outcomes

The Crosby Collective has given individuals the **opportunity to grow their business and sell products and services online**. Whilst the Collective has only recently been set up, and therefore no outcomes have been achieved yet, it is hoped that those involved will increase the income they are currently generating, improving their quality of life.

Further outcomes expected from the partnership as a whole include:

- o Increased social cohesion
- o Increased community networks
- o Improved financial management
- o Improved mental and physical health
- o Increased attendance and attainment at school
- o Increased participation in employment and volunteering
- o Increased engagement in the community.

Attribution

Without the Communities Fund, the capacity of the hub would have been greatly limited. Even though they are supported by the MAT, and therefore would have still held coffee mornings and some family support, the hub would not have been able to offer such a wide range of support activity, particularly the Collective. There would have been a reduction in beneficiaries reached, and outcomes achieved.

Cost benefit analysis

The timeframes considered in the CBA run for ten years from 2017/18 to 2026/27 and whilst costs are well understood, there is more uncertainty regarding the benefits – reflected in a higher level of optimism bias.

Under the assumptions in the CBA, **the Overall Financial Return on Investment for the programme is 0.59**. The funding is 66% from the Community Fund and 34% from the MAT. Whilst the modelled benefits from the programme are not currently covering the initial outlay, the benefits identified are 92% short term cashable. The benefits include individuals gaining higher education degrees, reduced persistent truancy, and reduced anti-social behaviour.

The programme includes wellbeing improvements and benefits to 30 children and their families. The **Public Value Return on Investment for the programme is 4.9,** offering positive returns when the wider economic and social impacts are considered.

However, the current CBA does not include benefits through the Crosby Collective, which is a relatively new element of the work. It is envisaged that this could be considered in future versions of the CBA with benefits relating to two types of Crosby Collective members; those who are currently out of work and move into self-employment, and those who supplement existing income through micro enterprise. These would offer savings to the exchequer through reduced benefits payments and increased taxation and higher incomes to individuals, and overall improve the financial return on investment.

The hub has appreciated the CBA process, as it has allowed them to '*measure the immeasurable'*. The hub plans to use the CBA to support its application for European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) Community Led Local Development funding in the near future, and Shared Prosperity Funding in the long-term.

Oasis Community Partnership cost-benefit analysis summary

Oasis Hub Henderson Avenue	
Financial Case	**Economic Case**
Discounted cost: £356,701 This is funded by Communities Fund (66%) and Schools (34%)	Discounted cost:£409,294 There are a total of £52,593 in kind costs (13%)
Discounted Benefit:£210,422 Those who benefit include HMRC (88%), Police (6%) local authority (2%) and other (4%)	Discounted Benefit: £2,013,297 There are £1,802,875 additional public value benefits (90%)
Of which £214,851 (92%) is short term cashable and £251,086 (96%) is long term cashable* The top fiscal benefits include higher education (88%), reduced persistent truancy (less than 85%) attendance at school (7%) reduced ASB with further action (5%)	The top public value benefits ** include improved family relationships (17%) Reduced isolation (13%) Improved relationships community (13%) Sense of trust and belonging (13%) Emotional wellbeing (7%) Other (37%)
Overall financial return on investment =0.59	Public value return on investment = 4.92
Timescales: The programme has been modelled over 10 years and started in 2017-18, payback period of - years	

Source: SQW analysis of CBA model

Key learning emerging

Enablers

- The **use of community space to host activities** meant that the project was able to access people within the community close to the centres, who felt comfortable attending. Furthermore, the space enabled the hub to set up the Crosby Collective.
- The hub has **re-established relationships with local partners**, enabling effective partnership working. The hub now has strong relationships with the local Adult Learning Centre, the local college and the children's centre, which has enabled more effective referrals and resulted in increased in-kind support.
- As the hub is located within Henderson Avenue School, and works with families with children at the school, they are able to **access the school's data** (e.g. attendance data) and are able to discuss particular cases with relevant staff within the school. This has enabled a more tailored approach to each family, as the hub is more aware of their experiences, and are up to date with any issues arising.
- A **strong hub team** was a key enabler. Both the family support worker and hub leader engaged effectively with the local community, resulting in improved trust and long-term relationships between the families involved, the community and the hub.

Challenges

- A key challenge for the hub has been the **level of mistrust in the community** regarding support opportunities. This is because previous projects in the area have generally stopped abruptly and left the community without support. Whilst the hub has been successful in dispelling some of this mistrust, there are still families who are disengaged from activity.
- It can be **difficult to communicate with staff within the school**, as they do not live in the area and do not often have the capacity to attend meetings. Furthermore, they often have competing priorities for the young people and families involved, with schools focusing more on attainment and attendance. However, the hub aims to conduct monthly meetings with the head-teacher, pastoral lead and special education needs lead to gain relevant updates on families.
- Secondary schools were particularly challenging to get involved with the programme.
- **Collecting longitudinal data from the families involved** has been challenging. The hub uses the Outcome Star tool to measure wellbeing, however this can sometimes be difficult to use with those with severe learning difficulties or language barriers.

Sustainability and next steps

The hub leader is now funded through Oasis, although the hub has also accessed further funding, including Big Lottery funding and the Community Development Fund, in order to keep delivering community support activity. Without the Communities Fund, the hub does not feel they would have been able to achieve additional funding, as it has allowed activity to develop and demonstrate impacts. Oasis MAT has also employed the hub leader permanently, to continue to work with the community. In future, the hub hopes to expand the Crosby Collective, to support more people in the community into employment in a sustainable way. They have begun to partner with E-Factor in Grimsby, to support this.

Sense of Place, Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council

- The Sense of Place project, led by Tameside Local Studies and Archives, offers volunteering opportunities within the Archives for those at risk of homelessness in Tameside. Adullam Housing, the project partner, identified the volunteers.
- The Communities Fund has enabled employment of a project coordinator to provide intensive support for four volunteers, alongside training courses and visits to other museums across Greater Manchester. The volunteers contributed to the design and collation of an exhibition at the Archives.
- As a result of the project, volunteers have improved their employability skills, and their literacy has improved more quickly than originally anticipated. Volunteers report improved mental and physical health and wellbeing, reduced social isolation and improved confidence, in addition to an increased sense of belonging to their community.
- The project leads plan to scale up the Sense of Place project to support 25 volunteers over 10 years, utilising the existing volunteers as mentors.

Background and Context

Tameside Local Studies and Archives lead the Sense of Place volunteering project. They are part of Cultural and Customer Services at Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council (MBC). The Archives collects local history material relating to the Borough of Tameside, making local history accessible to the public. Whilst the Archives run a strong volunteering project already, the majority of volunteers are over 55 years old and retired.

Homelessness is a growing concern for Tameside MBC. During 2017/18, demand for assistance from the Tameside Housing Advice Service increased by 47% on the previous year, alongside an 11% increase in the number of placements into temporary accommodation. The impact of welfare reforms, coupled with the lack of social housing and supported accommodation in the area, has resulted in a greater number of households at risk of homelessness.

However, whilst the risk of homelessness in Tameside is increasing, there are a limited number of sustainable local interventions to develop employability skills and wellbeing, outcomes which can greatly reduce the risk of homelessness.

Tameside's Draft Preventing Homelessness Strategy (2018-21) emphasises the importance of employment, increased self-esteem and wellbeing in reducing the risk of homelessness, and has identified the importance of maintaining and building upon the aspirations of those at risk. It advocates a '*holistic and integrated response to preventing homelessness*'[55].

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[55] Tameside Borough Council (2018) DRAFT Tameside Borough's Preventing Homelessness Strategy 2018-2021

Project overview

The Sense of Place project has worked with four volunteers at risk of homelessness in Tameside. The volunteers were recruited by Adullam Homes Housing Association, the main project partner, through an expression of interest sent to their service users. The project aims to give the volunteers a sense of place and a sense of belonging, as well as an understanding of their heritage and skills. The key objectives for the project are to: Reduce the risk of homelessness through an archive volunteering project by

- Improving employability skills
- Improving self confidence
- Improving health and wellbeing
- Improving community wellbeing

The project received £31,000 of Communities Fund monies to fund its first year. This allowed the project to employ a project coordinator to manage the volunteer project, in addition to funding training materials, volunteer expenses and additional project outputs. The project has experienced underspend in its first year; the remaining funds are being used in year two to cover travel expenses and volunteer childcare costs, in order for volunteers to continue attending.

The project has also received in-kind support totalling £5,500. This has included office space at the Archives and Local Studies Centre, in addition to time given to the project by centre employees.

Adullam Homes Housing Association is the key delivery partner for the project. Adullam provides accommodation to those at risk of homelessness and people with complex needs. In addition to recruiting volunteers from their social housing residents, Adullam work closely with the Archives to deliver training and support to the volunteers to develop their skills and capabilities.

Tameside MBC's Education and Skills team have also been engaged, as has Jigsaw Housing, who have delivered training sessions for volunteers on employment skills and CV writing. Furthermore, they have worked with libraries and museums across Greater Manchester to facilitate volunteer visits. There is potential for the project to partner with Adult Public Health services in the future, using the model to engage vulnerable adult volunteers.

Detailed activity and outputs

The project at Tameside Archives provides **intensive support for volunteers, offering 200 hours of time within the archive per volunteer**. Four volunteers attended Tameside Archives once a week over 33 weeks, to support the Archives in the processing and collation of the 'Rutherford' Collection, for a final exhibition for the public. The project matched the skills and interests of the volunteers to specific tasks, to keep them engaged and enable volunteers to shape their roles, giving a sense of ownership to their work. Volunteers were supported to research local history subjects they were interested in (e.g. the Black Knight), create blogs relating to their research, and created five films on different topics.

Volunteers attended 11 formal training courses to develop their technical archiving skills, including cataloguing, conservation, printing and preservation. In addition they were

trained in practical skills, such as blogging and skills for employability (e.g. CV writing). Volunteers attended the training when the Archive was closed to the public, giving them the opportunity to test their new skills practically without distractions or disturbing others. As part of the project, **volunteers were taken on eight visits to other museums and archives**, including Portland Basin Museum, Manchester Central Library and the People's History Museum. Some of these visits and training sessions were also attended by Adullam Housing Association staff. This provided opportunities for Adullam staff to upskill themselves, as well as improving their awareness of the heritage opportunities they could offer to other service users.

Whilst the project had a core of four volunteers[56] who consistently attended, the project was flexible to allow other volunteers to drop in and out of the project to fit with their individual circumstances. As the project was task based, this allowed all volunteers the opportunity to contribute to the final exhibition and learn key archiving skills.

The project did not achieve its original target of recruiting 10 volunteers, although partners believe this was '*a blessing in disguise*', as they feel they would not have had the capacity to provide as much support to each volunteer.

Outcomes achieved

The leaders of the Sense of Place project report that it has achieved key outcomes in line with its aims, in addition to some wider and unanticipated outcomes. However, it is too early to determine whether the project has contributed to a reduced risk of homelessness for the volunteers involved.

Volunteers involved in the project have **improved their employability skills**. This is through the direct employability training provided by Jigsaw Housing, and through training on archiving and practical skills. This has developed transferrable skills including time management, teamwork, independent research and digital skills.

Through the project, the volunteers have **improved their basic academic skills**, such as literacy. This is through activities such as blogging, in-depth research and reading. Improvements in literacy for all volunteers have progressed more quickly than initially anticipated by the project leads.

All four volunteers report that their confidence has greatly improved. Working together on a project with an '*end result*' allowed them to take pride and ownership of the collection and the work undertaken. At the exhibition the volunteers interacted with the public, feeling confident enough to share the expertise and knowledge they had gained with others. They have become '*ambassadors*' for the project, and continue to engage with the public when the archives are open.

Testimonial

Tom and Andrew[57] have been volunteering for the project for the past year. Tom had previously volunteered with Adullam Housing, but the Sense of Place project was the first opportunity Andrew had to volunteer. Andrew had very little self-confidence and struggled to leave his home. The first time he came to Tameside Archives, he turned around and went back home as he did not feel confident enough to enter. Tom and Andrew both live in Adullam social

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[56] This is based on monitoring data of four participants. Two of these volunteers have benefited from continual engagement, whilst the other two volunteers have attended less consistently.

[57] Names have been changed

> housing, and prior to the project felt socially isolated, and *'outsiders'* in their community. Neither volunteer had heard about the Archives beforehand.
>
> As a result of volunteering at the Archives, they have gained technical skills and a better understanding of local history. They have also made new friends who are good company and work well together. They have gained confidence to speak to members of the public. They have both enjoyed their work *on 'fascinating and interesting projects'* and have enjoyed finding out more about Rutherford, creating new blogs and developing the exhibition. Andrew has also begun his own individual research project, which he hopes to develop.
>
> Both volunteers feel their work has had real value, which makes them feel good. For example, Tom saw a member of the public reading documents which had been cleaned by him; without his work the documents would not have been accessible.
> Tom and Andrew are now taking on a mentoring role with new volunteers, and are both involved in launching a heritage element within the Adullam newsletter. '*We are ambassadors for the project'*.

Volunteers have benefited from improved wellbeing due to the project. Three volunteers felt their mental health had improved, and all four stated they benefited from decreased isolation and loneliness. One volunteer, who previously spent most of their time alone with their son, felt the project was '*a great opportunity for us to spend time with peers in our age group*'.
Furthermore, one volunteer has experienced **improved physical health benefits**. Since attending the archives, they have started taking more pride in their appearance, and have lost weight through healthy eating. Their new friends at the Archive continue to support the volunteer on their weight loss journey.

All volunteers feel an **increased sense of belonging to the community**, as they are able to '*give back'* through their work in the Archives. In addition, they have had the opportunity to integrate with other volunteers from the wider Archive programme of volunteering, widening their social experiences within their community.

Unanticipated outcomes
Whilst the project aims centre on the volunteers themselves, the Sense of Place project has achieved unanticipated outcomes for Tameside Archives. The project has enabled the Archives to demonstrate outreach, engagement and the innovative engagement of volunteers. This has resulted in **accreditation status,** which will allow more prominent collections to be hosted in the Archives as well as ensuring the Archives remain a place of deposit for public archives.
Furthermore, the project has **raised awareness of Tameside Archives within the local community**, and supported connections with local galleries for work placements. Adullam Homes Housing Association have also benefited from an increased awareness of their

offer within the Council, which they hope will lead to more awareness of their work amongst other agencies.

Adullam Homes have improved their own knowledge of the local area and support provision. Having an understanding of resources available means they can give support and advice to service users, to help them engage in the local community and on the path to employment. In addition, Adullam have benefited from volunteer contributions. Two volunteers living in Adullam Homes housing now contribute to the newsletter, and have begun a cinema club for other residents, which is expected to reduce isolation amongst a wider range of people.

Long-term outcomes

It is expected that volunteers will benefit from long-term outcomes through the project, including:

- Increased employment
- Improved mental health, resulting in reduced costs for statutory services
- Reduced isolation and increased self-esteem
- Improved relationships and positive functioning
- Increased sense of trust and belonging.

Tameside Archives is also hopeful that the project will become sustainable, with the use of established volunteers as mentors and trainers for new volunteers.

Attribution

Partners do not believe that the project would have gone ahead without the Communities Fund. The project coordinator would not have been recruited, and there would have been no capacity to train and support new volunteers. Furthermore, the Rutherford Collection would '*still be in boxes'* and not in the public domain, if the volunteers had not processed and collated it.

Cost benefit analysis

The timeframes considered in the CBA run for ten years, from 2017/18 to 2026/27; whilst costs are well understood, there is more uncertainty regarding the benefits – reflected in a higher level of optimism bias.

Under the assumptions in the CBA, **the Overall Financial Return on Investment for the project is 1.18, with a payback period of 8 years**. The funding is 44% from the Communities Fund and 28% each from Tameside MBC and Adullam Homes Housing Association. The benefits identified are 76% short term cashable and 90% long term cashable, shared by various organisations including the DWP, Adullam Homes Housing Association and Tameside MBC. They include reduced costs relating to homelessness and housing evictions, increased skills and employment and improved mental health.

The project is tracking the impact on their volunteers through regular surveys; participants are receiving benefits relating to different aspects of wellbeing including reduced isolation, sense of trust and belonging and improved relationships. The wider **Public Value Return on Investment for the project is 4.17.**

Reflections on the CBA process

The project leads feel that the CBA tool is not appropriate for their project, as there is such a small cohort and the '*culture*' of the Archives department leans towards social outcomes, rather than the financial value of a project. However, Sense of Place leads do recognise the value of the CBA when liaising with other Council departments, as it enables them to '*speak the language*' of those other departments and promote their project.

Sense of Place cost-benefit analysis summary

Sense of Place project	
Financial Case	Economic Case
Discounted cost: £63,946 This is funded by Communities Fund (44%) Adullam Homes Housing Association (31%) Thameside MBC (17%) Other (11%)	Discounted cost:£123,433 There are a total of £59,487 in kind costs (48%)
Discounted Benefit:£210,422 Those who benefit include HMRC (88%), Police (6%) local authority (2%) and other (4%)	Discounted Benefit: £515,217 There are £440,066 additional public value benefits (85%)
Of which £68,173 (76%) is short term cashable and £81,391 (90%) is long term cashable* The top fiscal benefits include housing evictions (35%) increased employment (32%) increased employment -JSA (15%) reduced statutory homelessness 13%, mental health 4% and other 1%	The top public value benefits ** include Reduced isolation (20%) Improved relationships community (20%) Sense of trust and belonging (20%) Positive functioning (8%) Other (24%)
Overall financial return on investment = 1.18	Public value return on investment = 4.17
Timescales: The programme has been modelled over 10 years and started in 2017-18, payback period of 8 years	

Source: SQW analysis of CBA model

Key learning emerging
Enablers

- **The project has strong management, which has proved vital**. The project coordinator has organised and arranged the training and trips effectively, which has led to the positive outcomes for the volunteers. Changes and processes have been communicated well to all partners, which has enabled the project to run efficiently.
- **Having an archivist in place who can offer experience, knowledge and training to the volunteers has helped**. The archivist attended sessions when the archives were closed to the public. The archivist '*could have left them to their own devices*' but instead he attended the sessions and supported the volunteers.

- **Having a complete collection to be processed and exhibited** has broadened the spectrum of skills acquired. Because volunteers were able to engage with the project all the way through, this was more rewarding than working on tasks across an already established collection, and has built a stronger sense of pride in their work.
- **Working with a smaller cohort of volunteers than originally anticipated was an enabler**. This allowed the project to provide more intensive and longer-term support to the volunteers. If there were more volunteers from the start, the project leads believe that they would not have been as successful in supporting individuals to achieve their outcomes.
- **Having the facilities in place to create a shared space** for the volunteers to use was an enabler to more social impacts, as it allowed relationships between volunteers to happen more organically, for example, '*over a cup of tea'*.

Challenges
- **Staffing issues were a key challenge**. The archivist originally appointed to lead the project left. This meant the project experienced a delayed start, which meant that some potential volunteers had already left social housing, causing continuity issues.
- **Differing opinions between departments on how to utilise funding** proved challenging. However, partners are confident that support for the volunteer coordinator will be sustained going forward.
- **Many of the staff involved in the project have other roles and responsibilities**. The majority of the staff involved give their time to the project in-kind, and for some it is not a priority. '*The project is asking people to do more than their job'*, which can be difficult when working to a specific timeframe.
- **It was difficult to take part in learning share events**. Tameside MBC have experienced cuts to travel budgets, which makes it difficult to make the case to attend.

Sustainability and next steps
The Sense of Place project now aims to make itself more sustainable, by using the first year volunteers as mentors to train newer mentors; so far they have two new volunteers for the second year of the project. Using older volunteers as trainers will also increase the capacity of the project, allowing more volunteers to access the support available. It is hoped that the project can upscale to 25 volunteers over the next 10 years. However, there is concern that when volunteers no longer need support, or leave Adullam Homes housing, they will leave the project, jeopardising sustainability of the project.
Moving forwards, the partners are hoping to work together on further volunteer opportunities, using the knowledge and resources created from the Sense of Place project.

Venetian Waterways, Great Yarmouth Borough Council

- The Venetian Waterways Project provides training and volunteer opportunities for those furthest away from the labour market in Great Yarmouth, and supports the local workforce in expanding their skills. Great Yarmouth Borough Council leads the project.
- The Communities Fund has contributed to a wider programme of regeneration to restore the Waterways and boating lake developed in 1928. The Communities Fund has supported volunteering at the Waterways, and training in areas such as thatching, research and photography, and has enabled the Council to run events to engage the local community in local heritage.
- Whilst outcomes of the project are not expected to emerge until spring 2019, there is anecdotal emerging evidence of improved mental health amongst participants, an improved sense of belonging and increased skills.
- The Venetian Waterways project remains ongoing, with plans to develop a sponsorship model and secure funding through paid events at the site.

Background and Context

Great Yarmouth Borough Council leads the Venetian Waterways Project, in partnership with the Great Yarmouth Preservation Trust. The Venetian Waterways, a Grade II listed site, was first developed in 1928 to provide relief work for the unemployed in Great Yarmouth. The site also incorporates a boating lake, rock gardens and thatched shelters, in addition to a café on the boating lake island.

The Venetian Waterways project aims to build on the site's heritage of taking unemployment. Great Yarmouth has a high unemployment rate (7.9%[58]), exacerbated by seasonal employment patterns. Furthermore, the area ranks the highest out of 326 areas for deprivation relating to education, skills and training[59], and 42.1% of the population have a qualification of NVQ1 or lower[60].

As set out in Great Yarmouth Council's Corporate Plan (2015-20)[61], there is a need for initiatives to support residents to take pride in their community, in order to make the most of their lives and opportunities. In addition, the Council's Cultural Strategy, 'Making Waves'[62] highlights the need to develop distinctive approaches to skills training, as well as introducing a 'bottom up' approach to community pride, cohesion and regeneration, by encouraging people to engage with local cultural assets.

The Communities Fund has supported a wider effort by the Council to regenerate the Waterways. In 2017, the Council secured £2.7m of funding to restore and regenerate the Venetian Waterways and boating lake. Funding was sourced from the Heritage Lottery

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[58] Great Yarmouth Borough Council (2017) Borough Profile 2017
[59] Norfolk County Council (2015) The English Indices of Deprivation 2015 – A County summary, LSOA analysis and comparison of change
[60] Great Yarmouth Borough Council (2017) Borough Profile 2017
[61] Great Yarmouth Borough Council (2015) The Plan 2015-2020
[62] Great Yarmouth Borough Council and Arts Council England (2016) Making Waves: a culture strategy for Great Yarmouth 2016-2021

Fund, New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership and the Council itself to regenerate the Waterways, whilst the Communities Fund was used to provide training and volunteer opportunities to support the regeneration process.

Project overview

The project secured £68,000 from the Communities Fund to provide training and volunteer opportunities for those furthest from the employment market, whilst also upskilling the local workforce and engaging the community. So far the project has worked with up to 100 volunteers from a diverse range of backgrounds, including students from the local college and people with mental health issues. This so far has equated to 482.5 hours of volunteer time. The projects key objectives are to:

- Enhance people experience of training and volunteering by providing a strong support network for future personal and professional development
- Improve the employability of project participants and provide a small number of employment opportunities in the future of the project
- Engage a wider range of people in the heritage of great Yarmouth to improve education, health and wellbeing
- Deliver a variety of community based activities including research and interpretation, thatching, carpentry and gardening
- Develop a sustainable model of end use – testing a community enterprise model for asset management

Source: Great Yarmouth Borough Council (2017) Venetian Waterways project logic model

The Communities Fund monies continue to fund the training and volunteering project, and will do so until summer 2019. The project also receives in-kind support from Neighbourhoods that Work, a Council-run initiative which provides support for local residents to access employment. Neighbourhoods that Work provide '*in-kind individual and group support to project participants in all areas of their personal and professional life*'[63]. In addition to the Great Yarmouth Preservation Trust, the key partners include BBC Voices, English Heritage, the New Anglia LEP and community groups such as the Model Boat Club, Neighbourhoods that Work, Green Gym, Sea Change and Flip Side.

Detailed activity and outputs

The project delivers **formal training and provides volunteer opportunities** in horticulture and traditional building skills. For example, a thatcher working on regenerating the shelters around the Waterways began to train a volunteer in thatching skills. In addition, Green Gym have used the project to give their volunteers the opportunity for weeding and clearing the park area. The project leads also plan to work with Bread Kitchen in future to deliver accredited training for those seeking a qualification for their volunteering.

Engaging people in research and interpretation workshops is a key ongoing activity. BBC voices provided in kind support to train to four volunteers. The plan is for the volunteers to capture oral histories from local people, to incorporate into listening posts

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[63] Great Yarmouth Borough Council (2017) Venetian Waterways project logic model

around the park. It is expected that 20 people will undertake a formal traineeship with the project, which will aid them in progressing to employment, education or further training. The project also provides **support for participants in personal and professional development**. Participants volunteer in increasingly professional roles as they progress, with volunteers undertaking photography for events and promotional activities, and supporting events, working in partnership with Neighbourhoods that Work.

The project also provides **community activities**, with the aim of enhancing social cohesion. The project put on an Easter Egg Hunt event at the Waterways, which attracted 288 children and 106 parents. The event aimed to foster a greater sense of place and pride within the local community, and provided a volunteering opportunity. Community activities have attracted a high level of interest from local people keen to become volunteers.

Community activities are also undertaken away from the site. In partnership with English Heritage, the project has provided CPD for teachers in local schools to support them to engage with the Waterways. This has resulted in strong enthusiasm and engagement from schools.

The project has also established a **stakeholder group** that includes café owners, People of North Yarmouth (PONY), and the Model Boat Club.

Activities have fallen into two phases. The initial phase involved site development, including clearing the parks and boating lake, making the area safe, and undertaking structural work and physical regeneration. The second phase, due to begin in spring/summer 2019, will provide more opportunities for volunteering and events, as the site will be open and will need to be maintained. To support this, a gardening apprentice has been employed.

Outcomes achieved

As the project remains ongoing, outcomes are not yet fully evident. However, anecdotal reports of outcomes for volunteers have already emerged. For example, one of the participants was previously unable to sustain employment due to ongoing mental health issues. However, volunteering on the programme has **improved their confidence, sense of purpose and self-worth**, which is anticipated to improve their employment prospects and wellbeing longer term.

Participants have **gained new skills through the training provided**, for example, horticultural skills and research skills. Volunteers are in the process of refining these skills through ongoing work on the project. This is also contributing to an improved cultural and heritage environment, and contributing to an improved sense of belonging in the local area.

Project leaders are confident that following project completion, half of participants will have found employment, education or training.

Long-term outcomes

Project leads expect wider, long-term outcomes stemming from the project events and community engagement, including:

- o Communities will feel pride in their local area, appreciating the town as a whole for its green spaces and heritage
- o Greater footfall, with positive economic impacts on local businesses, including job creation

- Improved health and wellbeing through greater engagement in outdoor activities.

Attribution
It is thought that the programme would still have gone ahead without the Communities Fund, however the shortfall in funding would have been requested from partner organisations, and delivery may have been on a smaller scale. This may have led to fewer engagement events and a reduction in volunteering opportunities.

Cost benefit analysis
The timeframes considered in the CBA run from 2017/18 to 2021/22; whilst costs are well understood, there is more uncertainty regarding the benefits –reflected in a higher level of optimism bias. Under the assumptions in the CBA, **the Overall Financial Return on Investment for the programme is 2.3, with a payback period of 3 years**. The funding for the training and volunteer programme is 87% from the Communities Fund and 13% from the Local Authority. The benefits identified are 87% short term cashable and 95% long term cashable, which fall largely to the DWP through increased employment opportunities, but also to the NHS and Local Authority.

The benefits of the programme include both social and fiscal benefits; whilst the fiscal benefits are related to the traineeships and apprenticeship, the social benefits also include the larger group of volunteers associated with the programme. This includes reduced social isolation, sense of trust and belonging, and improved relationships. **The Public Value Return on Investment for the programme is 7.2**.

Whilst the project leads feel that keeping the CBA as a live document would be beneficial, that has been challenging due to changes in personnel within the project team.

Great Yarmouth Venetian Waterways cost-benefit analysis summary

Great Yarmouth Venetian waterways	
Financial Case	**Economic Case**
Discounted cost: £80,571 This is funded by Communities Fund (87%) local authority (13%)	Discounted cost:£129,209 There are a total of £48,638 in kind costs (38%)
Discounted Benefit:£184,795 Those who benefit include DWP AME (89%), NHS (11%) and local authority (0%)	Discounted Benefit: £924,994 There are £740,199 additional public value benefits (80%)
Of which £174,883 (87%) is short term cashable and £190, 487 (95%) is long term cashable* The top fiscal benefits include increased employment (ESA/IB) (54%) increased employment(LPIS) (20%) mental health (1%)	The top public value benefits ** include Reduced isolation (19%) Improved family relationships (15%) Improved relationships community (15%) Sense of trust and belonging (15%) Increased employment (8%) Other (32%)
Overall financial return on investment = 2.29	Public value return on investment = 7.16
Timescales: The programme has been modelled over 5 years and started in 2017-18, payback period of 3 years	

Source: SQW analysis of CBA model

Key learning emerging
Enablers

- **Positive relationships with other providers** have been beneficial for the Venetian Waterways project. The project complements other ongoing local projects, such as Green Gym, which means they can cross-refer participants to enable them to receive the best package of support possible. In total, 20 Green Gym volunteers attend the Waterways project per week, which means the site is being cleared more quickly than expected.
- **The events have enabled engagement with the local community.** Running an event that was free to attend helped to attract people from the local area. The events also promote the project and the history of the site, generating interest amongst others.
- **Existing relationships with organisations** was an enabler for the project. The project has been able to draw on past connections and relationships to provide training opportunities, for example with BBC Voices.
- **Giving volunteers a sense of ownership** within the project is reported to have encouraged participants to invest in the community and feel a sense of pride and belonging in their local area.

Challenges
- **Engaging with all stakeholders** has been challenging for the project. As there is only one coordinator for the project, it has been difficult to communicate effectively with all

stakeholder groups. This has resulted in some uncertainty for local businesses as to whether they are involved in the project. Changes in personnel have led to a lack of continuity.

- There have been difficulties in **providing appropriate opportunities for volunteers** which provide them with new skills and confidence, but are not too challenging or time-consuming to develop. A local club wanted to utilise project volunteers to help clean the water, however they remain unsure as to whether Council regulations allow them to do this.
- Further, the site was originally thought to be partially closed in phases throughout the works enabling small-scale engagement to continue. However the site has been closed entirely as recommended by the Contractor for Health and Public Safety reasons. This arrangement has resulted in no events being held directly on the site. The Borough Council has instead worked with neighbouring businesses to host engagement activity.

Sustainability and next steps

The project is still ongoing, and the Council are looking for funding to continue the programme. They are exploring potential sponsorship opportunities, and are planning to host some pay-to-attend events, and open the Boating Lake Café in order to fund the project. They are also planning to begin capturing more qualitative data from the participants in order to evidence the full range of outcomes emerging.