



Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities

Local Data Accelerator Fund: Process Evaluation

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Glossary of terms and abbreviations

Abbreviation	Abbreviation in full
BaBi	Born and Bred In (Birth cohort study)
BiB	Born in Bradford
DEA	Digital Economy Act
DfE	Department for Education
DIAG	Data Improvement Across Government
DLUHC	Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities
DSP	Digital and Security Protection
GMCA	Greater Manchester Combined Authority
LA	Local Authority
LDAF	Local Data Accelerator Fund
MDM	Master Data Management
MI	Monitoring information
NCC	Nottingham City Council
NEET	Not in employment, education or training
NIHR ARC	National Institute of Health Research Applied Research Collaboration
SEND	Special educational needs and disabilities
SFTP	Secure file transfer protocol
SOF	Shared Outcomes Fund
TED	Think Education Database

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1.1. The Local Data Accelerator Fund (LDAF) was a £7.9 million fund provided by the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC). It ran for eighteen months between October 2021 and March 2023. The fund supported local authorities and other local partners in England to improve their use of data to support children and families. The objectives of the fund were to: increase the sharing and matching of data across multiple agencies on a range of interlinked social problems; improve local data systems; increase the use of data to improve operational delivery and strategic commissioning decisions; and create networks for the sharing of good practice across LAs.

1.2. Process evaluation method

- 1.2.1. Ecorys UK, in partnership with Social Finance, were commissioned to deliver a process evaluation of the LDAF. The evaluation aimed to gather learning from across the funded projects. A mixed methods evaluation design was used and it included two waves of data collection to capture achievements over time. Data collection included interviews with national policy officials, in-depth case studies of five funded projects, one-off project lead interviews with non-case study projects, a survey of project teams, and a review of project applications and management information. All research data collection tools were developed by the evaluation team and agreed with DLUHC before use. The key findings are summarised below.

1.3. Applications and awards

- 1.3.1. Local authorities and partners welcomed the LDAF. It provided a 'natural alignment' to existing local data improvement projects and ambitions. It was seen as an opportunity to build on existing data projects, to improve and support data-informed identification of needs, service provision and outcomes for children and families. The application process was reported to be straightforward with clear information about the fund and bidding requirements. However, the time for the bidding process was limited, and areas reported that they would have appreciated more time to prepare their application. Forty-one applications were submitted suggesting a high-level of interest in the fund and local appetite for data improvement work. Only three applications did not meet the eligibility criteria. DLUHC and Department for Education shortlisted ten successful projects following a scoring and panel review process.

1.4. Project delivery: progress, challenges and solutions

- 1.4.1. Two of the more mature local authorities (in two separate projects) had delivered most of their intended outputs within 2022/23, while others in their partnerships had outstanding work to deliver. All funded projects faced challenges to implementing their proposed projects. In recognition of this, DLUHC had approved unspent funding to be carried over beyond March 2023 so that projects could be completed. While the funded projects did not meet the entirety of their proposals within 2022/23, they achieved this within 2023/24.

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- 1.4.2. Cultural buy-in: At the proposal stage, partnerships had secured senior buy-in and approval for the LDAF projects. However, during implementation, project teams encountered blockers to gaining buy-in from wider strategic and operational staff. Project teams invested time and resource into relationship building using careful and tailored messaging to engage stakeholders (e.g., information governance leads). To move projects forward, project teams had to allay concerns around data sharing across partners. Early consultations and user testing helped to engage stakeholders and refine project designs. Partners had provided input on project priorities and the types of data and outputs required. This engagement allowed for discussion of ethical and practical concerns for example around access to the data outputs. There was a pragmatic acceptance that some individuals and organisations were sceptical until tangible products had been rolled out.
- 1.4.3. Technical tools and skills: Data maturity differed across the partnerships. Each LA was working from a different starting point, with different technical infrastructure, hardware, software tools and staff skills. Blueprints of successful past data projects were a helpful guide but direct replication was not always possible. Instead, teams developed bespoke approaches to data solutions. Similarly, there was bespoke skills training and knowledge exchange for each partner. Project teams used widely available or low-cost tools for data sharing, analysis and visualisation purposes. This enabled all partners to access them. Some project leads had underestimated the data quality issues they would encounter. They advised those embarking on similar projects to scope partner data landscapes and gaps from the beginning.
- 1.4.4. Ethical and legal consideration: The user testing and piloting phases helped to raise and identify ethical risks and considerations specific to each project. Ethical and legal complexity of projects was a common blocker requiring significant time and resource. This included considering whether data should be shared, who with, and for what purpose. Project teams reported variations in interpretation of data protection law and the UK GDPR, and different risk appetites among different Data Protection Officers and senior leaders across partnerships. This was a primary blocker to project delivery and remained an ongoing issue for many,
- 1.4.5. Timetabling and competing priorities: All projects experienced delays and most remained ongoing in March 2023 (the end of the funding period). Projects for the most part, believed the funding period was too short and that a further year was required to meet their intended aims.
- 1.4.6. Sector-led data improvement projects: Despite the challenges encountered, project teams supported further investment in sector-led data improvements. They strongly believed that they were best placed to develop useful data products and solutions, while strengthening the skills and capabilities of LA workforces.

1.5. Early outcomes of projects

- 1.5.1. By March 2023, there was evidence across all projects that the LDAF had progressed the data maturity of LAs and partners. Data maturity was improved in different ways in each project. Project teams stressed that the changes achieved to data maturity were specific to the given project rather than achieving wholesale data improvements across the LA or Children's Services.

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- 1.5.2. Where services and frontline staff had access to new data, practitioners had a better understanding of children and families' circumstances and events they had experienced. This was reported to have led to better informed decision making around resource allocation and appropriate engagement with vulnerable groups. Strategic staff and data analysts reported time saving and efficiencies of automated data-sharing and linkage. Some LAs workforces had benefited from upskilling or training, for example in using analytic software.
- 1.5.3. Where data linkage and/or flows were in place, projects had equipped practitioners with new and more holistic, high-quality information about children and families. This had the potential to inform service organisation, commissioning and the support offered to children and families. Projects that were closer to conclusion had enabled practitioners to understand underlying factors contributing to children and family behaviours, inform safeguarding considerations, and improve whole family working.
- 1.5.4. Better information sharing between services and professionals was expected to minimise the frustration for children and families of having 'to share their story multiple times'.

2. The Local Data Accelerator Fund (LDAF)

2.1. Background to the fund

- 2.1.1. The Local Data Accelerator Fund (LDAF) was a £7.9 million fund provided by the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) (known as the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government at the beginning of the fund). The fund was managed by the Supporting Families team at DLUHC although it remained separate from the Supporting Families programme. The LDAF ran for one and a half years from October 2021 to March 2023 and awarded funding to ten data transformation projects. The LDAF intended to support partnerships between local authorities (LAs) and local agencies (such as the police, education and health organisations) in England. The fund aimed to improve the sharing and use of data between organisations to support children and families.

2.2. Cross-government data improvement

- 2.2.1. The devolved nature of service delivery across public sector agencies means that support for children and families is often spread across multiple organisations. This has led to a recognition within the UK National Data Strategy¹ that there is a need to share data between stakeholders, to ensure the best possible outcomes for service users. This is to ensure opportunities for early intervention are not missed and vulnerable people are not put at risk.
- 2.2.2. The real-world benefits of data sharing between LAs and partner agencies were demonstrated during the Covid-19 pandemic, when data sharing between local partners enabled the successful identification and shielding of vulnerable individuals. Furthermore, the national evaluation of the Supporting Families Programme used aggregated data from 150 LAs, to successfully monitor outcomes, demonstrating that large scale data sharing can inform planning for family and children's services².

2.3. The role of the LDAF within government data initiatives

- 2.3.1. The LDAF was one element of the Data Improvement Across Government (DIAG) programme, funded by the £200 million Shared Outcomes Fund (SOF). The SOF was established to fund pilot projects to test innovative ways of working across the public sector. The SOF, split into multiple strands with varying aims, sought to improve data sharing between different partners across the public sector. Most strands focused on developing communication between different local level stakeholders to improve early intervention, wrap around care, and life outcomes for vulnerable groups. The LDAF funded LA data linkage pilot projects that facilitated data sharing across multiple local

¹ DCMS & DSIT. (2020). National Data Strategy. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-national-data-strategy/national-data-strategy>.

² MHCLG. (2021). Local Data Accelerator Fund for Children and Families: Prospectus. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/973289/Prospectus_-_Local_Data_Accelerator_Fund.pdf

partners. It aimed to create efficiencies for LA children's services and improved outcomes for vulnerable children and families.

- 2.3.2. The LDAF was intended to support data-informed decision-making at the strategic and operational service level. At a strategic level, improved data flows were intended to inform local service planning and allow leadership teams within LAs and partner agencies to understand the service needs, evaluate the performance of existing practices, and better implement preventative services. At an operational level, the LDAF aimed to support frontline practitioners by giving them access to information that could better shape interactions with children, families and other partners. It also aimed to support timely early intervention and track outcomes.

2.4. Structure of the LDAF

- 2.4.1. In its design, the fund recognised and accounted for the significant cultural, technical and legal barriers that can prevent effective data sharing within and across LAs and local partners. The LDAF aimed to overcome these barriers through a partnership-based project structure. Each project was led by a data mature LA partnering with one or more LAs that were comparatively less data mature, and at least one partner agency (e.g., police, education, health service).
- 2.4.2. Data mature LAs were defined as areas that used data warehouses or lakes to store data and make it available to frontline workers. LAs with no level of data maturity were defined as using manual or fragmented data systems.
- 2.4.3. The partnership structure was intended to promote sharing of good practice and make use of blueprints from existing data projects already run by the lead LA partner. Beyond LAs, the LDAF sought to raise the data standards of local partners. The LDAF was designed to serve as a starting point for future data projects, therefore the funding covered activities which helped to spread good practice and expertise between LAs in the project and create toolkits for future use.

2.5. Objectives of the LDAF

- 2.5.1. The LDAF had four key objectives. These were to:
- ▶ Increase the sharing and matching of data across multiple agencies on a range of interlinked social problems.
 - ▶ Improve local data systems.
 - ▶ Increase the use of data to improve operational delivery and strategic commissioning decisions.
 - ▶ Create networks for the sharing of good practice across LAs.

2.6. Application process

- 2.6.1. The LDAF was awarded to ten projects across England, selected from 41 applications. The application process was formally launched on 26 March 2021 and closed on the 10

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of May 2021. DLUHC issued a fund prospectus with information about the fund and application process. They also hosted a webinar for interested applicants to discuss the objectives of the LDAF and answer any questions.

- 2.6.2. In their bids, projects were required to demonstrate how they could deliver tangible benefits for children and families services, across three main criteria:

Exemplar data projects: proposed projects to use data from different agencies to improve services, e.g., better identification of need, better information for practitioners, more evaluation of what works, improved understanding of how problems develop and improved insights into how services are operating.

Knowledge exchange: projects to improve data maturity of project partners through sharing skills and good practice.

Partnerships: Projects had to include a data mature local authority (LA) to lead project. These areas had to partner with less data mature LA(s) and other agencies/organisations(s), e.g., police, education, health.

- 2.6.3. Projects were able to bid for between £100,000 and £1 million with no more than 40% of funding spend on IT systems. Projects had to declare other sources of government funding to mitigate the risk of double funding activity. Bids had to meet a high ethical standard for processing personal data. Therefore, project had to be signed off by the lead LA's Data Protection Officer. Projects were also expected to engage with DLUHC's monitoring, evaluation and support activities.
- 2.6.4. All bids were reviewed and scored by a panel (made up of DLUHC and Department for Education (DfE) data transformation policy leads). Funding award decisions were intended to be made in June 2021. However, awards were announced in October 2021. Each successful project received funding for eighteen months from 2021-2023, with outputs due by March 2023. Where teams had not completed their projects by the end of 2022/23 but work was underway, they were able to complete delivery in 2023/24.
- 2.6.5. Appendix 1. provides an overview of the ten LDAF projects, including the partnership structure, aims and funding.

3. Evaluation design

- 3.1.1. Ecorys UK, in partnership with Social Finance, were commissioned to deliver a two-year process evaluation of the LDAF. The evaluation aimed to gather learning from across the funded projects. This section outlines the research questions, evaluation design, and overall achieved sample, alongside study considerations and limitations.

3.2. Research questions

- 3.2.1. The evaluation was designed to answer six key research questions. These questions were developed by the evaluation team and agreed with DLUHC.
1. How did LAs use the funding?
 2. What were the barriers and enablers to deliver projects against the stated aims?
 3. What challenges and solutions did LAs and partnership teams experience in setting up and implementing projects?
 4. How effective were projects in developing local data systems, skills, culture and use, across partners?
 5. What were effective projects and approaches to improving data-maturity?
 6. Do projects translate into benefits for frontline services, vulnerable children and families?

3.3. Process evaluation design

- 3.3.1. The mixed methods evaluation design involved two waves of data collection to capture project progress and achievements over time.
- 3.3.2. **Wave 1: November 2021 to March 2022**
Focused on participants':
- ▶ Understanding of the purpose of the fund.
 - ▶ Reflections on the application and award process, and the formation of project partnerships.
 - ▶ Early project implementation.
- 3.3.3. **Wave 2: January to May 2023**
Gathered evidence on:
- ▶ Project delivery to date; the challenges and enablers to project implementation; the outputs and outcomes delivered.
 - ▶ The next steps and sustainability of project work/outputs and expected project legacies.
 - ▶ Participant suggestions for national and local government regarding future data transformation projects.

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- 3.3.4. Data collection included primary data collection (interviews and a survey), and a review of secondary data (project applications and management information). This is outlined in table 1. All research data collection tools were developed by the evaluation team and agreed with DLUHC before use. The Wave 2 survey and case study topic guide can be found in Appendix 3.
- 3.3.5. All interviews were facilitated by an Ecorys or Social Finance researcher, using a topic guide tailored to each stakeholder type. They were delivered remotely using MS Teams, and lasted, on average, an hour.

Table 1. Data collection activities

Method	Stakeholder type	Frequency and purpose of data collection
Scoping interviews	DLUHC and DfE policy leads	Semi-structured interviews took place ahead of both fieldwork waves to gather contextual information about the fund set up (Wave 1) and ongoing progress (Wave 2) from a policy perspective.
Deep-dive case studies Semi-structured interviews	Five case study projects. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avon and Somerset • Doncaster & partners • East Sussex • Greater Manchester Combined Authority • Nottingham City 	The five case study projects were chosen in agreement with DLUHC and were sampled to represent a range of projects and funding amounts received. Semi-structured interviews with the project lead and project teams across the partnership. Up to 10 people were interviewed per project, per wave. Interviews were carried out across both waves (Wave 1 December 2022-March 2023; Wave 2 January-April 2023) of fieldwork and explored the project delivery from multiple stakeholder perspectives.
Non-case study interviews Semi-structured interviews	Non-case study projects (those not selected to be a case study)	Semi-structured interviews were carried out with the project leads of the remaining funded projects (non-case study projects) at wave 2 fieldwork only. All five non-case study project leads were invited to participate in the evaluation. This was to ensure full breadth of data collection across funded projects.
Online survey	All funded projects	The online survey was made available to all projects (and their partners). The survey aimed to assess and evaluate LA and partner self-reported data maturity. This included how LAs

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		<p>were using data over a range of categories, how this compared to their infrastructure and their initial project goals and priorities.</p> <p>The survey was hosted in Conformat software, and ran at two time points, with similar questions, to capture change over time. Wave1 took place February-April 2022 and Wave 2 took place March-May 2023. The survey took around 10-15 minutes to complete.</p>
Application forms	All funded projects	Project application forms were shared with the evaluation to provide an understanding of the planned activities and deliverables.
Monitoring information (MI)	All funded projects	<p>Projects were required to submit MI on a quarterly basis to DLUHC, which described project progress, risks and spend.</p> <p>This secondary data source was used by the evaluation team as a further data source.</p>

3.4. Achieved sample

- 3.4.1. Table 2 presents the achieved sample for each primary data collection activity, at Wave 1 and Wave 2.

Table 2. Achieved sample

Data collection activity	Wave 1 fieldwork	Wave 2 fieldwork
Scoping interviews with policy leads	4	4
Case study interviews		
<i>Avon and Somerset</i>	10	8
<i>East Sussex</i>	8	5
<i>Doncaster</i>	8	8
<i>Manchester</i>	6	3
<i>Nottingham</i>	7	6
<i>Non-case study project leads</i>	-	4
Online survey	34	14

3.5. Analysis and synthesis

- 3.5.1. Analysis of the qualitative interview data started early in the fieldwork stages with the development of an analytical framework of themes and codes which were mapped to key research questions. Interviews were recorded with participant permission, and auto-transcribed. Detailed summaries were then written up thematically using the interview transcript data. Interview summaries were managed in NVivo. This is software for qualitative analysis, which allowed data from across all the projects to be grouped together and reviewed by themes and codes. The qualitative data was then systematically and thematically analysed to explore the range of participants' experiences and views, identifying similarities and differences within and across funded projects. This approach allowed for thorough analysis of the data and comparisons between cases (looking at what different stakeholder groups said about the same topics) and within cases (looking at how opinions/experiences of project implementation related to their views on another project component). The analysis was fully documented, and conclusions can be clearly linked back to the original source data.
- 3.5.2. Quantitative survey data was downloaded into Excel from the Confirmit survey platform and cleaned, managed and analysed in R which is software for statistical analysis. The data cleaning involved excluding incomplete surveys, and matching Wave 1 and Wave 2 survey responses for each participating project partner. Due to the small survey sample, the analysis involved descriptive statistics only, frequencies, means and cross tabulations of key questions.

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- 3.5.3. Social network analysis was also performed using the survey data to provide an understanding of the state of different organisations' data sharing and use across, including whether they receive and/or send data from different sources. The evaluation intended to compare the survey data from Wave 1 and Wave 2 to chart the development of data maturity over the course of the project. However, due to limited survey response this analysis was limited and does not fully represent all project partners. The possible analysis is presented in Appendix 2 of this report. All analysis was transparently logged in the R code. Graphical outputs were created in Excel and R.
- 3.5.4. As a final step in the analysis, all data sources were synthesised. Using a convergence coding matrix, findings were cross-analysed and triangulated across all data sources and assessed against the research questions and fund objectives. This enabled the findings to be considered in the round, identification of the amount of agreement and disagreement between findings, and the strength of the findings for each evidence claim.

3.6. Limitations of the study

- 3.6.1. As with any study, the data limitations and caveats must be identified. This process evaluation met the requirements, allowing for an exploration of all the key themes and topics to assess the implementation of the fund. The research satisfied the 'saturation principle', whereby interviews conducted in the later stages of the project largely reinforced and reflected the body of evidence from the study, with diminishing returns in terms of identifying completely new themes or issues. When considering the report and evaluation findings, readers should be aware of the following limitations:
- 3.6.2. **Case study participants:** In some cases, staff changes within projects meant that participation in the evaluation was not carried over from Wave 1 to 2. Projects were delayed in delivering final outputs and therefore a limited number of frontline practitioners (and end users) of project deliverables were consulted in the evaluation.
- 3.6.3. **Non-case study interviews:** One project chose not to take part in an interview, representing a missing perspective on the LDAF.
- 3.6.4. **Online survey:** A low response rate was achieved for the survey, particularly at Wave 2, which has limited the value of this evidence source, possible analysis and strength of the survey results. This includes the ability to sufficiently chart the development of data maturity over the course of the project via quantitative survey results. For example, the evaluation intended to compare the survey data from Wave 1 and Wave 2 to chart the development of data maturity over the course of the project, using a social network analysis method. However, due to limited survey response at Wave 2, this analysis was limited and does not fully represent all project partners. The possible analysis is presented in Appendix 1.
- 3.6.5. **Timing of the evaluation activities:** Some projects did not reach completion by March 2023. Therefore, the timing of the Wave 2 evaluation fieldwork was out of sync with project delivery. As **such**, projects were not able to report fully on the final achieved outputs and outcomes.
- 3.6.6. **Assessment of outcomes:** It should be noted that this study was a process evaluation and did not include an impact evaluation. As such, the conclusions do not provide an

assessment of the empirical impact of the projects on public service systems, professionals, and children and families. However, project teams' perceptions of current and future project outcomes were explored in the interviews and surveys and are reported on.

3.7. The findings

3.7.1. This report provides evidence of how the LDAF has performed against its stated outcomes. Drawing on all data collected in this evaluation, it outlines how projects were delivered, detailing the factors and circumstances that supported successful implementation, the challenges encountered, and the early outcomes. The subsequent chapters present the findings from the LDAF evaluation.

- **Chapter 4 Applications and awards.** This presents reflections on the application and award process
- **Chapter 5 Project delivery and outputs.** This summarises project delivery and outputs by March 2023, and project plans beyond the fund.
- **Chapter 6 Challenges and solutions.** This chapter focuses on common project challenges, solutions and learning for future.
- **Chapter 8 Early outcomes.** This section presents the feedback on the outcomes achieved by March 2023 for services, professionals and children and families, and evidence of promise for the future.
- The overall **conclusions** are presented in the final chapter, alongside recommendations for national and local policy and practice for data improvement and transformation.

4. LDAF applications and awards

4.1.1. This chapter draws on interview findings with project teams and policy stakeholders. It explains how LAs approached the LDAF application, their key motivations for applying for the funding and how partnerships were formed. Additionally, this section focuses on LAs and partner agencies' experiences of the application process, including what worked well, challenges encountered and their suggestions for future similar application processes.

4.2. Key findings

4.2.1. LAs (and partner agencies) welcomed the LDAF. The fund provided a 'natural alignment' to existing local data improvement projects and ambitions. The fund was seen as an opportunity to build on existing data projects/work, to improve and support data-informed identification of needs, service provision and outcomes for children and families.

4.2.2. LAs hoped to use the fund to establish or improve data sharing, linkage, and access across partners; scale-up existing data projects/models; and upskill individuals and improve the data maturity of project partners with comparatively lower data maturity.

4.2.3. Forty-one applications were submitted suggesting a high-level of interest in the fund and local appetite for data improvement work. DLUHC and DfE shortlisted ten successful projects, following a scoring and panel review process.

4.2.4. The application process was reported to be clear and straightforward, with clear information about the fund and bidding requirements. However, project leads noted the time for the bidding process was limited, although DLUHC did extend the application deadline somewhat, LA teams said they would have appreciated even more time to prepare and submit their application.

4.2.5. Project partnerships (LAs and partner agencies) had generally been established prior to the bid fund. Building on these existing relationships was beneficial for putting together a partnership bid, at pace.

4.2.6. Project team suggestions to improve future such funds and application processes, included:

- To allow a longer bidding timeframe;
- To fund a different set of LAs (to those funded in this round);
- Allow partnership of less data mature LAs;
- Consider funding alternative data projects to understand the root causes and challenges that the LDAF sought to address;
- To evaluate LDAF project outcomes over a longer period.

4.3. The application process

4.3.1. As detailed in Chapter **Error! Reference source not found.** (Background to the LDAF), the LDAF application was open to all LAs across England. Bids had to include:

- 4.3.2. **Data improvement project:** Proposed projects had to involve sharing or linking data from several agencies to support vulnerable children and/or families, with a focus on sharing data skills and good practice across the partnership. Bids had to meet high ethical and legal standards and have a viable lawful basis for processing personal data.
- 4.3.3. **Partnership structure:** Proposed partnership had to be led by an agency with expertise in use of data and include at least two LAs and one other agency. The lead LA had to have a relatively high level of data maturity; and the partnership had to include an LA with lower data maturity, with a view to support improved data maturity through the project.
- 4.3.4. **Funding:** Each proposal could bid for between £100,000 and £1 million; with no more than 40% proposed spend on IT systems. All other sources of government funding linked to the proposed project had to be declared.
- 4.3.5. The LDAF application process ran for seven weeks, initially from 21 March 2021 to 30 April 2021, but was extended to 10 May 2021. LA leads and partners appreciated the extension as it gave them more time to prepare and submit their bid and obtain internal organisational sign-off(s) on proposed projects and budgets.
- 4.3.6. LAs had access to a prospectus which outlined the scope and aims of the fund, as well as the application and review processes. Additionally, DLUHC hosted a webinar in April 2021 for interested LAs and partner organisations, which gave them an opportunity to hear more about the LDAF and ask questions during a Q&A session³. Each partnership had to complete an application form and submit it to DLUHC via email.
- 4.3.7. DLUHC received a total of 41 applications (3 of which did not meet the eligibility criteria), which were reviewed by a panel made up of policy leads from DLUHC and the DfE using a scoring framework (which had been published in the fund prospectus for transparency). The panel recommended ten successful applications (using a transparent scoring and ranking approach) to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government. Ministers then approved the final decision on how to distribute the fund. The funding awards were initially intended to be announced in June 2021, but was delayed to October 2021.

4.4. Motivations to apply to the fund

- 4.4.1. LA project teams and partners demonstrated a shared understanding of the fund and its aims, during research interviews. Some emphasised that there was a 'natural alignment' between the fund's aims and their existing data projects. They thought that the fund's brief was flexible and enabled them to submit an application that both aligned with the DLUHC's aims and as well as with their proposed project goals.
- 4.4.2. *"It's really forward thinking that it's enabled a partnership across different types of organisations. So as an NHS Trust, we were still able to be involved because the outputs of the work align with the Fund...it's encouraged a collaborative approach and it's hasn't been siloed into just local government."* Project partner

³ More information about the LDAF and the application process can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-data-accelerator-fund-for-children-and-families>

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- 4.4.3. In each project partnership, the lead LA had a high level of data maturity, yet highlighted that prior to the LDAF, they had lacked the funding, capacity and resource needed for their proposed data transformation project. LAs therefore welcomed the opportunity to bid for the funding and expressed that they had ambitions to progress such work.
- 4.4.4. *“It was an opportunity we couldn’t pass up really. We’re data mature, but...we’ve never had the time or the finances to work on. So, this is an ideal opportunity to bid and say, we want to do this.”* LA project lead
- 4.4.5. LAs and partners were driven by a desire to make better use of existing data held across partnerships about children and families. Project teams consistently stressed the value of data acceleration activities to improve information available for services and practitioners, to efficiently identify needs, inform organisation of services and ultimately support positive outcomes for children and families. As such, project partnerships reflected that they easily secured strategic organisational buy-in to submit a proposal to the fund. Having existing successful data projects led by the lead LA, had supported this buy-in across the partnership. Other motivations mentioned by project teams included:
- 4.4.6. LAs with higher data maturity wanted to scale up their existing data projects.
- 4.4.7. *“We felt that the [LDAF] would...invest some capacity, capability, do all the data sharing work necessary, think about how we’re going to use the data, think about the governance between the different organisations, that we were doing, but we were doing on top of the day job. So that’s one of the reasons why we were particularly enthusiastic about doing it.”* LA project lead
- 4.4.8. LAs with lower data maturity were motivated by the prospect of gaining support to accelerate their data maturity, systems and processes (e.g., via peer support).
- 4.4.9. Project partner agencies were motivated by the prospect of developing new data sharing and linkage systems with LAs and partners, and support more consistent data access across partnerships.

4.5. Partnership development

- 4.5.1. The lead LA formed partnerships with other LAs and local agencies including the police, healthcare partners, and academics to bid for the LDAF. Partnership development took place during the early stages of the application process. Lead LAs reported having limited time to put together a partnership. As a result, existing partnerships formed the basis for many bids, with one or two new partners, to meet the fund’s criteria. This was seen as beneficial as it was time-efficient, and partners could build on a foundation of established trusted relationships and ways of working. Partner location and proximity to the lead LA were a key consideration for creating a new partnership.

4.6. Experiences of the LDAF application process

- 4.6.1. Each project was overseen by a lead LA and project team who liaised with colleagues across the partnership to complete the application form. This involved talking with partners about partnership working, the project and how data would be shared,

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exchanged and used. Some project partners also reviewed and signed off on drafts of the application before submission (see boxes **Error! Reference source not found.** and **Error! Reference source not found.** for specific examples of application process approaches). Notably, the application process gave LAs and partners a chance to come together to engage as project partners and reflect on how they could work collaboratively to improve data maturity across the partnership.

- 4.6.2. *“Planning the project allowed us to think: well, actually we can do this all together, and put it so it's a nice sort of start to finish project that we can work on, and also gives us more incentive...we previously struggled with momentum, but having the weight of having a sort of evaluated government fund behind it is really helpful in terms of increasing that engagement, getting people on board.” Project lead*
- 4.6.3. LA leads stated that they found the LDAF application process clear and straightforward. Specifically, they appreciated the webinar hosted by DLUHC, which they attended to learn more about the fund and the application process. The webinar helped to consolidate their understanding of the fund and how to approach the application. LAs also thought that communication from DLUHC about the application was clear, but that they seldom needed to ask clarification questions, suggesting that the prospectus and application form provided a sufficient level of information and guidance.
- 4.6.4. *“Everything was available that we needed to know. It was a good process, they [DLUHC] made it quite clear how it was going to be scored and what they were looking for.” Project lead*
- 4.6.5. LA leads experienced challenges during the application process, and those coordinating bids outlined the following issues:
- The short submission deadline did not consider the time and resources needed to develop a partnership and put together a considered bid. LA leads mentioned that they needed internal sign-off before submitting the bid, which was challenging within the short time for submission. LAs consistently discussed that they struggled with the application timeframe as it coincided with (Easter and May) bank holidays and staff leave. Furthermore, project teams highlighted that it takes time to develop shared project proposals and innovative designs; and therefore, given the short application window, projects were replicated and built on existing data projects known to be successful. However, another LA lead mentioned that they had enough time to put together the bid as they already had an established partnership and could hit the ground running with the application.
 - LA leads noted that there were delays in receiving the confirmation of their successful application, which had a knock-on effect on their project timelines and activities (e.g., recruitment), especially given that the end date for projects remained unchanged.
- 4.6.6. DLUHC and DfE policy stakeholders outlined that an unexpectedly high number of bids were submitted (41 bids). As a result, the selection process was highly competitive and reviewing the bids took longer than expected. It also made the decision-making process via scoring and ranking more challenging as they received a number of high-quality bids.

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To support the decision-making process, the application panel prioritised bids that demonstrated innovative use of data and considered the varying levels of data maturity of project team partners across the bids.

4.6.7. **Doncaster's application approach and building on an existing partnership**

4.6.8. The Doncaster-led LDAF project, Born and Bred In (BaBi) replicates the established Born in Bradford (BiB)⁴ large birth cohort study. BaBi aims to create a network of local intelligence tools from linked local data, including data from mums and babies from routine data sources, with midwives taking consent.

4.6.9. Colleagues involved in BiB collaborated on the LDAF application. A project lead from Bradford was assigned to coordinate the bid with input from others. They received support from the BiB network coordinator with writing the bid and proofreading, and the academic partner also reviewed the bid and provided feedback. Virtual meetings with BaBi partners were used to coordinate the bid.

4.6.10. Whilst they saw the fund as an opportunity to establish data linkages, they did not think the proposed project (establishing an e-cohort for research rather than service delivery) directly matched the fund's aims. The project team noted that the fund's brief was IT and data focused and thought this could be a potential weakness for their project proposal. They spoke to the Head of Digital Informatics and the Research and Innovation Digital Manager at Research and Innovation at Leeds Teaching Hospitals, who understood the fund's requirements and provided helpful suggestions for a successful bid. They suggested they should include a Data Manager in the project team and provided guidance on data storage needs to support the success of the project.

4.6.11. Those working on the bid thought they had sufficient time to complete it, due to their existing partnership established with Wakefield, Bradford, Leeds NHS, and the Academic Research Collaboration. This saved time to dedicate to drafting the bid. One colleague reflected that in comparison to other grant applications, the application process for LDAF was more efficient as it only required financial signoff and signatures from each partner to apply. Additionally, prompt and clear communication from DLUHC meant that they found the application process straightforward.

4.6.12. **Nottingham's application process and developing a new partnership**

4.6.13. The bid was co-led by two colleagues from Nottingham City Council (NCC), who worked closely together to establish a clear delivery plan using an agile project management approach and leveraged expertise in data and technical knowledge to develop a project proposal. NCC attended the webinar hosted by DLUHC which provided additional and useful guidance about how to submit a successful bid.

4.6.14. Together, the NCC colleagues considered how their own project plans aligned with the aims of the fund, and internal LA priorities, for example synergies to the Supporting Families Programme data processes. The fund was in line with what the team had broadly wanted to do, but gave them more focus, and flexibility. Before the LDAF, NCC did not have the resources or capacity to engage in the proposed data project.

⁴ <https://borninbradford.nhs.uk/>

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- 4.6.15. Partnership-working was also a key consideration for NCC during the early stages of the application, as they decided to form a new partnership. They began scoping out potential partners in their region by having discussions with LAs and academics they had previously worked with. NCC formed a new partnership with Leicestershire County Council and Doncaster Metropolitan City Council and as the bid leaders, had conversations with both LAs about the application. This allowed them to reflect on what they could achieve together, in partnership and how to build on previous work. Both LAs also had the opportunity to review the bid to ensure it aligned with their aims before the bid was submitted.
- 4.6.16. NCC project leads reflected that they struggled with the timeline for submission and with keeping to the application wordcount. Nonetheless, they felt well informed about the fund, understood what was required as part of the bid and felt confident in putting proposal together. For example, they felt that they did not need to approach DLUHC with additional questions.
- 4.6.17. After receiving confirmation about their successful application, NCC coordinated with each partner individually, to remind them of the proposal, and ensure all parties understood the project aims and immediate next steps.

4.7. Project team suggestions for future application processes

- 4.7.1. LAs and partners provided suggestions to further enhance the application process for similar projects in the future, including:
- 4.7.2. **A longer application period** to allow sufficient time for partnership development, project design, proposal and budget drafting, review and sign-off.
- 4.7.3. **Realistic timelines for project awards:** the delayed award announcement contributed to project delays. Project teams therefore suggested a need to announce awards on time or reflect delayed announcements to the fund's timeline, so that projects have sufficient time to achieve their aims.
- 4.7.4. **Project evaluation:** Project teams suggested that the evaluation of the fund's outcomes should take place over the long-term, and the outcomes and impacts of projects will take time to be realised.
- 4.7.5. **Future funding:**
- LAs said that they would welcome future funding rounds of the LDAF, which they thought should be open to a different set of lead LAs.
 - Similarly, less data mature LAs suggested a need to allow more funding to be allocated to them, to invest and improve their data infrastructure tools, systems and processes.
 - A further suggestion was to fund less mature LAs to work together (in the absence of mature LAs) to develop data projects that are a closer fit to their starting points and data transformation journeys.
 - Another suggestion was for DLUHC to fund alternative projects in the future, focusing on better using data to understand the root causes and challenges of the problems that the LDAF was trying to address.

5. Project delivery and outputs

- 5.1.1. This chapter outlines project delivery and outputs up to March 2023. It discusses the achievements of each case study project in more detail and provides an overview of non-case study project delivery. This section draws on data from the interviews with project teams, the survey and monitoring information submitted by projects.

5.2. Key findings by project

5.2.1. Avon and Somerset

- 5.2.2. The secure data transfer process had been established between the police and all five LAs. The police were sharing daily data to four LAs. The fifth LA halted data flows until they were ready to manage the data once received. One LA was sharing daily data with the police. Other LAs were developing the information governance to enable this data sharing.

- 5.2.3. One LA had started a local rollout of an App for schools, sharing child-level LA and police data, to support safeguarding. In its first month of rollout it had had over 2600 searches. Another LA had established a similar school app and had completed initial piloting. One LA had secured DfE funding to continue the work they had started as part of the LDAF.

5.2.4. Doncaster & partners

- 5.2.5. The aim was to set up a local electronic birth cohort study tracking the health of children born in Doncaster, Leeds and Wakefield, to inform policy and replicate the model in other LAs. At the time of the interview, the project had recruited 17,000 babies. Long-term funding had been secured to deliver research using the databases established via the LDAF.

5.2.6. East Sussex

- 5.2.7. This project aimed to establish an Early Help benchmarking tool using common nine child-level outcomes. The tool and process was piloted with 20 LAs (with representation across all 9 England regions). The team hoped to roll the tool to all LAs across England over time and had raised the profile of their work among regional and national bodies.

5.2.8. Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA)

- 5.2.9. The project aimed to develop a common data model, data infrastructure and pipelines for the Supporting Families Programme data, in four LAs and deliver modern cloud-based infrastructure to 3 LAs.

- 5.2.10. Testing of the data mesh has been successful with test attendance data successfully shared between Bury and the GMCA in test environments. The project plan was revised following project delays due to staffing gaps, changes to the Supporting Families outcomes framework, information governance processes and permissions to access data. The new phased approach worked with the available data with review points to consider whether and when to move onto the next phase.

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- 5.2.11. The team had delivered an ethical review of the proposed project, were making progress towards using the Digital Economy Act as a legal basis for sharing, and continued to work with LA information governance leads to secure approvals.
- 5.2.12. **Nottingham City**
- 5.2.13. The team were making progress to building an automated data integration platform, bringing together data from a range of partners, and a data visualisation tool to identify families at risk of homelessness to support early help interventions.
- 5.2.14. In Nottingham, a case management gateway with fully designed functionality had been scoped, and a prototype was being built. In Doncaster, the first version of a data warehouse with live data matching had been built.
- 5.2.15. **Hertfordshire & partners**
- 5.2.16. The team had developed a new regional data system platform, enhancing regional data sharing of Supporting Families Programme data alongside new data sources. They had created a data warehouse to consolidate benchmarking, demographic and contextual data.
- 5.2.17. Going forward they were working to: add to the contextual data sources; establish regional data sharing agreements to share child level data e.g., child social care data (903); develop additional data visualisations (geographical representation of data) and correlation analysis; as well as scaling the platform, and explore opportunities to onboard other LAs.
- 5.2.18. **Leeds & Bradford**
- 5.2.19. This project included two strands one on trauma and one on autism. For the trauma model, a data dashboard had been developed with live feeds, joining multiple datasets (e.g., LA involvement, education) to identify and support vulnerable young people or with experience of trauma.
- 5.2.20. For the autism model, health and education data have been linked to provide new insights into the neurodivergent child population. This included disparities in time to diagnosis by ethnicity, gender and place. A new digital screening and profiling tool has been developed 'the Electronic Developmental Profiling Tool (EDPT) for teachers/non-specialists, to use with parents, to identify more precisely the learning and support needs of children with neurodivergent traits. The EDPT was being trialled in 14 primary schools, alongside support and training for schools to be more 'neurodiverse friendly'.
- 5.2.21. The team has held several practice improvement forums bringing together frontline practitioners and data analysts to discuss the data being produced and what this means for identifying child needs, service provision and outcomes achieved for children. Family voice has also been incorporated.
- 5.2.22. Funding has been sourced for research using data from this project.
- 5.2.23. **Pan-London**

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- 5.2.24. Pan-London children's social care placement analysis is now live across all London LAs (including service, education and financial information). Data linkage with health service has been delayed, in part due to NHS integrated care systems reforms. SEND related data linkage work remained ongoing. Early analysis of the available linked data is complete, further analytic work remains ongoing. All 33 LAs have signed the overarching Data Sharing Agreements, following some delays.
- 5.2.25. **Reading & partners**
- 5.2.26. This project developed a data hub and accessible interface providing a whole family view to support frontline service delivery. The team were preparing for deployment of the hub with the LAs. Data matching requirements for the 'hub' remained ongoing with all LAs and services (e.g., police, Department for Work and Pensions, Youth Offending Service). The team have delivered a series of programming language (Dynamic SQL) training to all LAs needed for ongoing use of the hub.
- 5.2.27. **Sunderland**
- 5.2.28. This project related to children with special educational needs. The platform to host data from health, education and social care about children and young people aged 0-25 with SEND had been designed and was ready to go live once information governance was agreed. The data metrics had been identified. The team were in the process of obtaining the NHS Digital and Security Protection (DSP) Toolkit accreditation to progress work to access and link health data. Data analyst colleagues have held workshops to agree design principles for the reports/dashboards. User consultation workshops have also fed into the design.
- 5.2.29. Academic partners were in the process of completing their DSP toolkit accreditation, to then progress the local analysis and evaluation work.
- 5.2.30. Additional funding was sourced for a one-off exercise to identify additional NHS numbers to increase the dataset and matching capability.

5.3. Data-sharing and linkage by project

- 5.3.1. This section first outlines the project delivery of the five case-study projects and then summarises key activity of non-case-study projects.
- 5.3.2. **Avon and Somerset**
- 5.3.3. The Avon and Somerset project had created an infrastructure across the Avon and Somerset Police area for information to flow between the police and the five partner LAs. At the final evaluation interviews, there were daily data feeds from the police to four LAs; the fifth LA had requested the data flow to be halted to establish a clear protocol for how the data would be processed and used, once received. In two of the more data mature LAs, relevant police information was then shared with schools; one LA had established data feeds to schools and in another LA this work was ongoing. A key aim of creating such data feeds was to equip users, across partners, with information to enable better informed decisions to support children and young people at risk of criminal or sexual

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exploitation and those who were at risk of being not in education, employment or training (NEET).

- 5.3.4. Prior to the funding, the police and Bristol LA were already sharing data. This exemplar project provided a blueprint for other LAs to develop similar processes. However, the remaining four LAs had not started sharing data with the police at the time when interviews were conducted. This was in part due to project delays in these LAs, but also due to concerns from senior leaders and information governance teams about the purpose of sharing data with the police and how they intended to use it. These negotiations remained ongoing at the time of interviewing.
- 5.3.5. Information sharing agreements and a secure file transfer protocol (SFTP) were in place across the partners, which enabled secure data transfers that could be used in the future for data-sharing beyond the LDAF project. Common datasets were shared from the police to the LAs. This established two-way data sharing feeds for one LA but remained a project ambition in the others. The police had developed a Safeguarding App with the information shared by the LA, and had gained positive feedback from police staff.
- 5.3.6. The police and the LAs worked together to agree which data would be useful to share.
- 5.3.7. *“What we’ve agreed and we’re implementing now is that common set of information, so the police get the same information from every local authority, so that [they] can then populate the same configuration.... And we’re doing the reverse in a sense, with the police information coming into the local authority. We all agreed what we want to know and in what format. Obviously, it’s configured to the residents of each local authority so no authority gets another authority’s information.”* Project team
- 5.3.8. Data within this project was shared at the individual level. Examples of data shared by the police to the LA included perpetrators and victims of crime. Data shared by one LA (and in the future by the other LAs) to the police included: those accessing drug, alcohol or homelessness services, social care status (e.g., Children in Need, Looked After children), NEET children/young people, domestic violence reports, and mental health information.
- 5.3.9. Two of the more mature LAs in the partnership, had developed place-based Apps (known as the Think Education Database in one LA, and as the Transform Education Dashboard (TED) in the other LA). The Apps share LA and police information with primary, secondary and alternative provision schools. The information shared included chronological involvement from social care and Early Help, current vulnerabilities and school attendance. This work included a discovery phase whereby a workstream lead was appointed to work in pilot schools to map the information school held, received from partner agencies, how data was used, and the key barriers and gaps in the information sharing and use. This work fed into designing the user requirements and developing a prototype for the App, which visualises child-level information relevant to schools. The respective LA schools Apps were piloted in a small number of secondary schools, and then tweaked following user feedback.
- 5.3.10. In one LA, the App was made available to all schools. In March 2023, 71 (of the 180) schools had accepted the invite to apply for the App. In the first month of roll out there have been over 2600 searches on the App. To ensure correct and proper use of the App,

the Head Teacher signed up to a charter and usage agreement, and with the Designated Safeguarding Lead identify which staff required access to the App (typically a Designated Safeguarding Leads, Heads of Year and pastoral leads). Users had to sign up to the information sharing charter and complete e-learning on using the App, before being given access. The App automated recording of users and collected analytics on usage. Rollout of the App in the other LA was in progress, with piloting complete and the App being finalised.

- 5.3.11. Finally, the project team employed a consultant to review the ethical approach to assess the use and sharing of private and sensitive information to ensure that this was done for the 'greater good'. As a result of this work, the team established six principles including transparency, security and public responsibility for this and future data linkage projects. Consultations were also held with parents and children/young people to gather their views.
- 5.3.12. **Doncaster and partners**
- 5.3.13. Doncaster and partners, Leeds and Wakefield, delivered a project recruiting a birth cohort to track participating children over the years to identify a range of health and social risk factors. The aim was to use this to deliver preventative policies and programmes to improve outcomes for children and families. The project was modelled on Born in Bradford⁵, an established birth cohort study, which provided a blueprint and learning opportunities for the LDAF project.
- 5.3.14. A Research Priorities Group was set up, bringing together people from the three partner LAs to map common issues, identify themes and share knowledge, while allowing each LA to tailor the project to its unique needs. Mental health and obesity were selected as crosscutting priority issues.
- 5.3.15. *"We suspected the broad issues are kind of similar across all the sites, which is good because that gives us power as a network that we can work together on some of the bigger themes. But then also locally we're encouraging each site to go away and do what they need to do locally as well, because everything's slightly different, services are commissioned differently, resources are different."* Project team
- 5.3.16. The project established data linkage processes in each area and conducted data usage over time through local level prioritisation. The project involved different stakeholders, such as the Early Years teams and Housing Associations. This was considered essential to obtain different perspectives and insights about how the data could and should be used.
- 5.3.17. Midwives were trained to understand the importance of asking expectant parents for consent to the birth cohort study, as well the best time and place to ask for it during antenatal appointments. Community midwives were trained first, followed by a gradual roll-out of training to hospital midwives. Midwives who have started asking pregnant women for consent, have found the process straightforward.

⁵ Born in Bradford is an internationally-recognised research programme, involving a birth cohort, which aims to find out what keeps families healthy and happy by tracking the lives of over 40,000 children. More information available:

<https://borninbradford.nhs.uk/>

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- 5.3.18. *“[Seeking consent is] easily accessible to the midwives, the responses are just being that it’s basically just another question. It’s quick to fill out, a lot of it is just tick boxes and save. It’s been very well received.”* Project team
- 5.3.19. Information materials about the birth cohort were translated into different languages and efforts were being made to recruit ethnic minority women and their babies, to achieve a representative sample of the local population. The system enabled immediate digital recording of consent and produced an 80% consent rate. At the time of the evaluation interviews, the project had recruited 17,000 babies and therefore had enough data to start analysing the cohort at the local level.
- 5.3.20. The aim was to link the birth cohort’s data to health and LA data. Work was underway to recruit GPs and link data across different systems used across partners. Data sharing agreements between hospitals and Las had been drafted and were in the process of being approved.
- 5.3.21. Finally, a network of e-cohorts was established to inform policy and practice, and a toolkit was developed to replicate the approach. The toolkit details how to set up a birth cohort, focusing on practical elements such as running stakeholder workshops, recording consent from pregnant people, building a database and linking data. It was already being used by other Las across England.
- 5.3.22. **East Sussex**
- 5.3.23. The East Sussex project had identified nine common child-level Early Help indicators that most Las collect and should be able to report on. They had designed a data collection template, and guidance for LA analysts; and piloted the data collection and analysis process with 20 Las (with representation across the 9 England regions). At the time of interviewing the project team were developing a prototype Early Help benchmarking tool for Las, to enable comparison with other LAs.
- 5.3.24. At the project outset, two sets of user testing workshops were conducted, one with practitioners and strategic staff and one with data analysts, to understand how Early Help was defined and delivered in different Las. This research revealed that there was no shared definition of Early Help, with services and delivery models being vastly different, as well as Early Help data collection, recording and processing conventions. The user testing also reinforced the need for the LDAF project, to address these issues and create a common benchmarking framework for these non-statutory interventions and investments.
- 5.3.25. *“There are no spaces for us to go to speak to our peers and discuss what Early Help is and well, we actually can do something about that and we can use this project as a catalyst for starting those conversations and building those relationships and networks.”* Project team
- 5.3.26. Initially, 12 indicators were developed, which were reduced to nine measures (as shown below) following iterative consultations with regional performance groups, commissioning groups, and Early Help director networks.
- 5.3.27. *“There was iterative feedback the whole way through that that helped to shape it...It was kind of a combination of using the themes, and kind of going back to people, and regularly*

getting feedback after the user research that kind of led to the measures being formed.”
Project team

- 5.3.28. The nine child-level Early Help measures identified were considered broad enough to cover a breadth of data necessary to understand the local Early Help system, but also specific enough to be manageable by each LA, including those with lower data maturity. The project expects differences in how individual Las will report, record and calculate the indicators, and some Las might not be able to measure all nine indicators. However, the project team plan to encourage Las to submit as much or little as they can.
- 5.3.29. **Early Help: 9 common outcomes:**
1. Number of initial contacts were received by children in the reporting period.
 2. Number of help episodes that were initiated by those contacts.
 3. Number of help episodes within 12 months of an episode ceasing. This is a proxy measure of how well the need is met the first time.
 4. Number of Early Help assessments completed.
 5. Number of children receiving Early Help services at the end of the reporting period. This measures the actual number of people that were supported.
 6. Number of children that were stepped up to Social Care from Early Help in the reporting period.
 7. Number of children that were stepped down from Social Care to Early Help. Indicators 6 and 7 measure whether Early Help succeed in removing the need for later Social Care intervention.
 8. Number of Early Help episodes that were closed in the reporting period.
 9. Number of Early Help episodes that were closed because the outcome was met. The last four indicators measure how well the services are working and for what proportion of children.
- 5.3.30. The project was drafting a Memorandum of Understanding on how data will be shared and used. Following the initial pilot, the project team were planning a soft launch with a larger number of Las. Participating Las will be asked to clean their data and enter the anonymised, aggregate data into the Excel template provided. Las will then send their data to the project team to collate the data in an Excel tool based on an existing social care tool, for analysis and create visualisations. All Las that provide data will have access to a benchmarking tool and will be able to see their data against the aggregate data from all participating Las. The project team have an ambition to roll the tool out to all Las in England.
- 5.3.31. The project team had promoted the project via attendance at regional performance and Early Help network meetings. Additionally, they had presented to the Association of Directors of Childrens Services (ADCS), who have shared a summary of the measures and definitions via their newsletter. The project team have also used some of their funding for an independent evaluation of the process and tool, to understand and demonstrate its value and areas for refinement.
- 5.3.32. **Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA)**

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- 5.3.33. The GMCA project involved Bury, Trafford, Rochdale and Manchester (which replaced another LA that had to exit the project due to a lack of resources). The project was developing a system to share data between the participating LAs and Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership, Probation Service, Police and Fire and Rescue Service, to improve frontline children's services. The technical infrastructure (for the data mesh approach⁶) was in place in one LA and was expected to be ready in two further LAs by Summer 2023.
- 5.3.34. One of the key elements of the project has been developing automated data models through the data mesh system, to replace processes that LAs would typically do manually. They are using the standard Supporting Families Programme outcomes framework⁷ to look at how individual LAs hold the data, the meta data behind it, and how it needs to be presented to frontline staff. Developing the data models has been an iterative process. At the time of interviewing, the system included a common model for school attendance data across the four LAs, which was used in one LA. Existing data collected via the Supporting Families Programme will be incorporated into the platform, and as access to additional data is obtained it will be added over time.
- 5.3.35. Following project delays, due to staff changes and data access, in February 2023 the project board approved the recommendation to continue to work with stakeholders and develop a revised project plan. Phase 1 of the new plan works with the data that is available to LAs currently (e.g., school attendance, social care data). The team were planning for subsequent phases when additional data becomes available (phase 2: Greater Manchester Police data, phase 3: health data, phase 4: secondary use of that data). Work was ongoing work to ensure the right data processing agreements were in place using the Digital Economy Act in two LAs, with similar work ongoing to two LAs. Information governance discussions remained ongoing, with the GMCA yet to formally define and document how it planned to use the data in a way that met information governance requirements. There will be agreed phases to review the outcomes of each phase of the project.
- 5.3.36. The team were also working on matching data to create a whole family view, using a master data management solution that can match data on set parameters, such as demographics or postcode. The project was already leading to efficiencies in Bury and information could be shared with GMCA easily.
- 5.3.37. **Nottingham City**
- 5.3.38. Nottingham had delivered its project in partnership with Doncaster and Leicestershire. They were developing a data visualisation tool bringing together more than 30 datasets, including from housing, police, LA and schools, to identify risk factors associated with homelessness and develop early intervention measures. The project had four phases:

⁶ A data mesh is an approach to data management, whereby data is more accessible and available to users by directly connecting data owners, data producers, and data users.

⁷ The Supporting Families Programmes is a national programme providing targeted support to vulnerable families with multiple and complex issues such as housing insecurity, poor education attainment and substance misuse. The outcomes framework includes 10 key measures. More information available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/supporting-families-programme-guidance-2022-to-2025/chapter-3-the-national-supporting-families-outcome-framework>

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5.3.39. Phase 1

Developing a partner pathway, to be completed between by August 2023. This work involved creating the right data culture and user behaviour, to make the data portal sustainable by keeping maintenance costs to a minimum.

5.3.40. Phase 2

Data integration, which involved expanding data integration within each LA. Workshops and discussions were held with the three participating LAs to identify the most suitable technology and software to integrate data.

5.3.41. Phase 3

Focused on machine learning, in partnership with Nottingham University. This phase involved feeding data into an algorithm, and (at the time of interviews) was producing promising early results.

5.3.42. Phase 4

The final phase, focused on business intelligence with two strands:

1. Determine how to best visualise data and make it accessible to non-technical users
2. Develop a dashboard as proof of concept. Viable models had been developed and partners feedback was yet to be gathered on whether these met all data visualisation requirements

5.3.43. A Digital Lab was set up to bring together staff from IT, data analysts and policy, to create a data visualisation programme using Power BI (chosen as it is the most common dashboard tool used across services in the LAs).

5.3.44. In Nottingham, a case management gateway with fully designed functionality had been developed and a prototype was being built: the test system had been built and was awaiting management feedback before the live system could be developed. The dashboard and data integration were mostly complete, whilst machine learning and third-party access were still being refined. The team were hoping it would go live in June 2023.

5.3.45. All the ethical and due diligence work had been completed, while more work was needed around information governance and determining what reasonable access would be, finding the balance between making the system user-friendly and having the necessary controls in place.

5.3.46. *“We need to have a certain amount of control, you know, it can't be a free for all, but we need to get that balance, so that the control we need to put in place around requesting that access isn't a barrier to it being successful.”* Project team

5.3.47. Doncaster had generated a first version of a data warehouse, and data matching went live in October 2022 for practitioners working directly with families. The system allowed data for families to be matched, and showed risk and need predictions for families, and when eligibility for support was met. The team expected that the tool will help to identify vulnerable individuals and families, including those that have not previously been identified or reached by LA support services.

5.4. Non-case study projects

5.4.1. This section provides a high-level summary of projects that were not included within the evaluation case studies.

5.4.2. Hertfordshire and partners

5.4.3. Hertfordshire and partners Nottingham, Doncaster and Leicestershire, had built a dedicated platform to semi-automate data collection and sharing for the East of England region, including 7 years' worth of benchmarking data and national level-data. The work also included the creation of a data warehouse to consolidate benchmarking, demographic and contextual data. The process involved a collaboration between data analysts to piece together existing Excel datasets to identify an automated and representative set of data which gave an overview of the performance of the LA.

5.4.4. *“The delivery of our project was about taking it away from Excel, building a platform, building a process whereby we can ingest that data from the authorities, and it hopefully improves the efficiency to collect and then share that information. And also helps address issues around things of like, having one version of the truth, where we were sending Excel spreadsheets back and forth.”* Project lead

5.4.5. The platform had enhanced regional data sharing of Supporting Families Programme data alongside new data sources. The project also allowed the LAs to identify patterns and trends in their data, and contextualise it, with the aim to inform policymaking. Going forward they were working to: add to the contextual data sources; establish regional data sharing agreements to share child level data e.g., child social care data (903); develop additional data visualisations (geographical representation of data) and correlation analysis; as well as scaling the platform, and explore onboarding other LAs.

5.4.6. Leeds and Bradford

5.4.7. Leeds and Bradford linked health and education data to develop dashboards, with live feeds, to identify and understand the experiences of vulnerable young people using longitudinal data, with a particular focus on trauma (adverse childhood experiences) and autism.

- **Trauma model:** A data dashboard has been developed with live feeds, joining multiple datasets (e.g., LA involvement, education) to identify and support vulnerable young people or with experience of trauma.
- **Autism model:** Health and education data have been linked to provide new insights into the neurodivergent child population, including disparities in time to diagnosis by ethnicity, gender and place. Linked to this, the team had developed a new digital screening and profiling tool has been developed 'the Electronic Developmental Profiling Tool (EDPT) for teachers/non-specialists, to use with parents, in school, to identify more precisely the learning and support needs of children with neurodivergent traits. The EDPT was being trialled in 14 primary schools, alongside support and training for schools to be more 'neurodiverse friendly'.

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- 5.4.8. The team has held eleven practice improvement forums, bringing together frontline practitioners and data analysts to discuss the data produced and what this means for identifying child needs, service provision and outcomes achieved for children. Qualitative family voice sessions were delivered to gather family perspectives, to feed into service delivery reflection and improvement changes.
- 5.4.9. *“We were keen that it’s not just a data project. It’s about frontline professionals, using the information, having the right conversations, making the right decisions and helping children and families.”* Project lead
- 5.4.10. The team had secured further funding to enable research and evaluation of children’s and service pathways and outcomes, using data matched through the LDAF project.
- 5.4.11. **Pan-London**
- 5.4.12. The pan-London project emerged from existing work with London Boroughs and from a joint desire for more pan-London planning, commissioning and management of child social care placements. The project brought together data from health, education and police, including financial information, to assess the outcomes of children known to social care compared to the general population. Data linkage with health service has been delayed, in part due to NHS Integrated Care Systems (ICS) reforms. SEND related data linkage work remains ongoing.
- 5.4.13. Outputs included having information governance and data sharing agreements in place, and data available to all London Boroughs, with data linkages from 33 LAs. Placement sufficiency analysis is now live, linking data from 33 LAs and Ofsted, and providing insight into child social care placements, which is a high priority for the DfE and all Directors of Children’s Services. Further analytic work on issues such as workforce, structural inequalities and adolescent mental health will follow.
- 5.4.14. **Reading and partners**
- 5.4.15. Reading and partners Swindon, Wokingham and West Berkshire built on previous work done under the Supporting Families Programme. They have developed a ‘data hub’ product and accessible interface providing a whole family view to support frontline service delivery. It had the following functions:
1. Master records of people across 40 different systems and match at the individual-level;
 2. ‘Family building records’ whereby data is linked on a range of issues across a whole family;
 3. Families are attached to indicators and outcomes under the new Supporting Families Outcomes Framework.
- 5.4.16. The original proposal had to be re-considered, mainly due to the changes to the Supporting Family Programme Outcomes framework. For example, outcomes had to be developed at the family level rather than the individual level. The project lead was

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confident that the changes to the project design would develop a more robust data driven model than originally anticipated.

- 5.4.17. Data matching requirements for the 'hub' remained ongoing with all LAs and services (e.g., police, Department for Work and Pensions, Youth Offending Service). The team have delivered a series of programming language (Dynamic SQL) training to all LAs needed for ongoing use of the hub. The team were preparing for deployment of the hub with the LAs.
- 5.4.18. **Sunderland**
- 5.4.19. Sunderland have identified and brought together data from health, education and social care to support children and young people aged 0-25 with SEND, on a platform the project has developed. The platform is on track to go live once the information governance is agreed. The data metrics have been identified. Additional funding was sourced for a one-off exercise to identify additional NHS numbers to increase the dataset and matching capability.
- 5.4.20. The team were in the process of obtaining NHS Digital and Security Protection (DSP) Toolkit accreditation to progress work to access and link health data. Data analyst colleagues have held workshops to agree design principles for the reports/dashboards. User consultation workshops have also fed into the design.
- 5.4.21. Academic partners were in the process of completing their DSP toolkit accreditation, to then progress the local strategic level analysis and evaluation work using the data linked for the LDAF. This work was due later in 2023.

5.5. Staff training & knowledge sharing activities

- 5.5.1. An objective of the fund use was to support knowledge exchange regarding skills and good practice. DLUHC offered all projects information sharing opportunities. Survey respondents said they made use of some of the support provided by DLUHC, including networking opportunities with other funded projects, digital showcases, workshops, Information Governance from Cabinet Office and the Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation.
- 5.5.2. All projects identified staff skills need and provided some level of training for data analysts and non-technical end users. For instance, the lead LA for the Avon and Somerset project ran a consultation to identify staff training requirements, and then commissioned training for analysts across the partnerships, including a self-learning website and courses on software including Python, Power BI, R. They also developed an e-learning training about information sharing agreements for schools signing up to the schools App. They also delivered several knowledge and good practice sharing presentations and workshops with LAs and interested parties about their LDAF work.
- 5.5.3. Some areas, such as Doncaster and Nottingham, recruited people with the technical skills to develop and manage the platforms, and focused their training offer on other aspects of the projects, such as GDPR and information sharing, or training the midwives obtaining consent to recruit the birth cohort. Recruitment of individuals with these technical skills was a common challenge across projects (as discussed in detail in the next chapter).

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- 5.5.4. Project teams had largely planned to deliver shared training and knowledge sharing activities collectively to their partnership teams (and organisations) at the same time. However, they found that it could be more effective and appropriate to deliver tailored activities to each LA team, tailored to their data maturity and technical infrastructure.
- 5.5.5. In terms of shared learning across LDAF projects, some project teams reflected that they wanted more opportunities to share and discuss individual projects and their learning. Whereas other project leads believed this was a 'nice to have' but as each project was fairly unique there would have been little direct benefit to them to hear the progress and reflections of individual projects, especially when the LA had no intention of setting up a similar data linkage system.

5.6. Project sustainability

- 5.6.1. In recognition of the project delays across the fund, DLUHC had approved unspent funding to be carried over beyond March 2023 so that projects could be completed. At the time when interviews were conducted:
- 5.6.2. **Avon and Somerset and Doncaster and partners** were on track to deliver most of their objectives by March 2023. One data mature LA in the Avon and Somerset had secure DfE funding to continue to build on the work they had started as part of the LDAF. Similarly, the Doncaster partnership had secured a five-year NIHR grant to continue their research activity using the BaBi e-cohort and data linkage established through the LDAF.
- 5.6.3. **East Sussex** were planning ongoing quarterly Early Help data collection across LAs, and sharing benchmarking data back with LAs.
- 5.6.4. **GMCA** and **Nottingham** will finish delivering their respective projects in the 2023-24 financial year. Delays in Manchester were due to staffing issues and they expect to achieve their objectives by June 2023. Nottingham experienced a delayed start due to a freeze on recruitment imposed by financial difficulties the LA was going through, and will therefore complete delivery around March 2024.
- 5.6.5. The remaining projects had ongoing plans to complete projects and continue to build on these. **Leeds, London and Sunderland** for example, had planned for research and evaluation using data linked as part of the LDAF work to better understand children and family needs, service pathways and outcomes. While **Hertfordshire and Reading** were working to scale-up products to include further data linkages from other partners or support roll-out in more LAs.
- 5.6.6. Projects emphasised that the LDAF provided the opportunity to develop the technical tools and platforms that would last beyond the timeline of the project and benefit the area in the long-term, with limited running costs.
- 5.6.7. *"This bid was the opportunity to say, put the infrastructure in place and then you'll open up huge opportunities. If you put the infrastructure in place and the funding ends, you're just left with the infrastructure in place. So, then you can carry on and invest in your analytical and visualisations and products and it doesn't cost that much."* Project lead

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- 5.6.8. Projects also said platforms were designed in a way that they would need minimal maintenance. For example, in the Avon and Somerset project, one LA lead explained that they aimed to roll out the education App to as many schools as possible as during the LDAF period, as they did not have the funding for an ongoing management of its rollout.
- 5.6.9. *“We’ve got a business support person, one person who’s kind of managing that whole process [of rolling out the App to schools]. And we knew that the funding would not carry on for that position. So, it was about trying to roll it out to as many schools as we can through this process.”* Project lead
- 5.6.10. Staff upskilling and training during the project, was also described as a mechanism to ensure long-term sustainability of the platforms. This not only supported in-house maintenance of platforms, reducing the need to employ external staff/services. But these skills and competencies could be applied to future data projects and cascaded to other team members.

6. Project challenges and solutions

- 6.1.1. This chapter outlines the key challenges the funded projects encountered, whether and how these were resolved, and learning generated for future similar projects. A key aim of the evaluation was to identify common challenges LAs (and their partners) faced in delivering their data projects and learning about solutions to these. This chapter draws on data from interviews with policy leads, project teams and project team survey responses.

6.2. Key findings

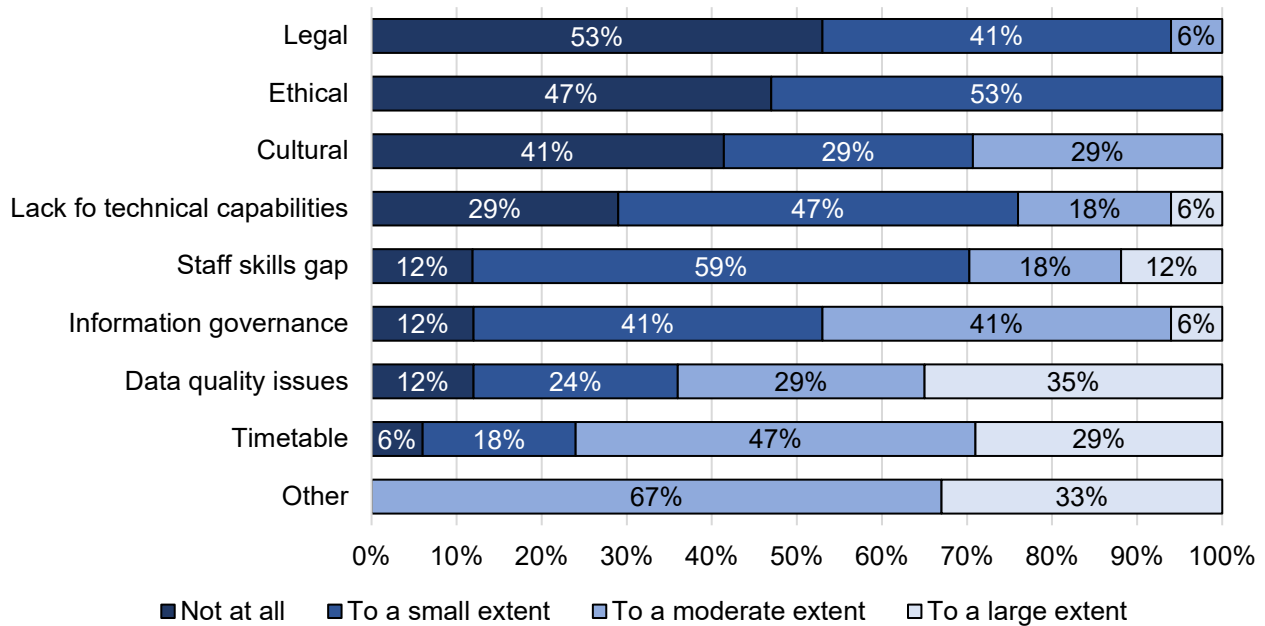
- 6.2.1. All funded projects faced challenges to implementing their proposed projects. The common challenges can be grouped into four broad themes: cultural buy-in, technical tools and skills, ethical and legal consideration and timetabling and competing priorities.
- 6.2.2. **Cultural buy-in:** At the proposal stage, partnerships had secured senior buy-in and approval for the LDAF projects. However, during implementation, project teams encountered blockers to gaining buy-in from wider strategic and operational staff.
- 6.2.3. Project teams invested time and resource into **relationship building and careful, tailored messaging to engage stakeholders** (e.g., information governance leads). To move projects forward, project teams had to allay concerns and resistance to data sharing across partners.
- 6.2.4. **Early consultations and user testing** helped to promote the proposed project to stakeholders and helped to refine project designs through stakeholder feedback on the project priorities, what types of data and outputs needed, and allowed for discussion of ethical and practical concerns (such as, who should have access to the data outputs).
- 6.2.5. There was a **pragmatic acceptance** among project teams that some individuals and organisations, especially those with lower data literacy, may be sceptical and not see the potential benefits of the project, until tangible products had been rolled out.
- 6.2.6. **Technical tools and skills:** Data maturity differed across the partnership. Each LA was working from a different starting point, with different technical infrastructure, hardware, software and tools and staff skills and gaps.
- 6.2.7. While blueprints of successful past data projects were a helpful guide; direct replication was not always possible. Instead, teams took bespoke approaches to data solutions to each partner. Similarly, bespoke skills training and knowledge exchange for each partner, provided staff with information relevant to the available tools and skills level. Project teams used widely available or low-cost tools, like Microsoft Excel or Power BI for data collection, sharing, analysis and visualisation purposes, to make projects workable and accessible to all partners.
- 6.2.8. Some project leads had underestimated the data quality issues they would encounter across partners. They advised those embarking on similar projects in the future, to avoid making assumptions about data quality of partners; and investing in scoping activities to better understand partner data landscapes and gaps from the beginning.

- 6.2.9. **Ethical and legal consideration:** Considering the ethical and legal risks of data sharing, linkage and use was an important component for all projects. The user testing and piloting phases helped to raise and identify ethical risks and considerations specific to each project. The ethical and legal complexities of whether data should be shared, who with and for what purpose were common blockers. Project teams reported variations in interpretation of data protection law and the UK GDPR, and different risk appetites among different Data Protection Officers and senior leaders across partnerships. This was a primary blocker to project delivery and remained an ongoing issue for many.
- 6.2.10. **Timetabling and competing priorities:** All projects experienced delays and most remained ongoing in March 2023 (the end of the funding period). Projects for the most part believed the funding period was too short, and that a further year could have supported projects to meet their intended aims.
- 6.2.11. **Sector-led data improvement projects:** Despite the challenges encountered, project teams advocated for further investment in sector-led data improvements. They strongly believed that they were best placed to develop useful data products and solutions; while strengthening the skills and capabilities of LA workforces.

6.3. Common challenges

- 6.3.1. The Wave 2 survey for project teams identified common challenges project teams faced, as presented in Figure 1. The top five reported challenges were:
- **Other issues**, (reported by 100% of survey respondents) which covered a broad range of challenges from staff changes, recruitment delays to project specific issues such as changes to the Supporting Families Outcomes Framework having implications for project designs
 - **Timetable issues** (reported by 76% of survey respondents)
 - **Data quality issues** (64%)
 - **Information governance barriers** (47%)
 - **Staff skills gaps** (30%)
- 6.3.2. A lack of technical capability, cultural, ethical and legal issues were also reported as blockers to project delivery, but to a lesser extent. Feedback gathered through interviews with project teams corroborated the survey results, displayed in Figure 1. The project challenges and solutions project teams described are detailed below.

Figure 1. Extent to which the Local Data Accelerator project experienced challenges



Source: Wave 2 evaluation survey, Ecorys

(Base sizes: Not at all = 36 responses; To a small extent = 53; To a moderate extent = 34; To a large extent = 16)

6.3.3. All funded projects faced challenges to implementing their proposed projects. The common challenges can be grouped into four broad themes: cultural buy-in, technical tools and skills, ethical and legal consideration and timetabling and competing priorities. These are discussed in detail below.

6.4. Securing cultural buy-in

6.4.1. At the proposal stage, partnerships had secured senior buy-in and approval for the LDAF projects. However, during implementation, project teams encountered blockers to gaining buy-in from wider strategic and operational staff. These barriers are outlined below alongside strategies to secure wider buy-in.

6.4.2. Engaging stakeholders and speaking their language

6.4.3. Helping stakeholders to understand the value of supporting or working on projects at the outset was a common challenge. Relationship building, and careful messaging, was recognised as an important factor for gaining organisational and individual buy-in to data transformation projects.

6.4.4. *“I put a lot of the success and failure [of the project] in local areas...down to people, not necessarily money”.* Project team

6.4.5. Project teams reflected that a wider commitment to data transformation and improvement in LA and partner agencies strategic vision supported buy-in to the LDAF project, but also to wider data initiatives. The endorsement of senior officials helped to prioritise LDAF

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activity in the short-term, and provided reassurance about longer-term, sustained support for such activity, in the face of competing demands and limited budgets.

- 6.4.6. *“The police and crime commissioner has been a real passionate driver and champion for this as well, and is really keen to make sure that this is something that, you know, it’s not ‘done and dusted’, it’s very much a continuation that we will work towards.”* Project team
- 6.4.7. Project teams reflected on the best way to present the project to wider audiences. They explained that the absence of an end product to showcase and demonstrate the potential added-value of investing time in the project was a barrier to stakeholder buy-in, particularly for non-technical audiences. They stressed the need to have a knowledgeable project leadership team, and the importance of tailoring project messaging and language to each organisation or individual’s priorities. The importance of having a project lead or a strand lead who could ‘speak the language of partners’ was a common theme to securing buy-in.
- 6.4.8. *“When you talk to the police, for instance, you need to be able to tell the police what’s in it for them, how it interlinks with their agenda, why they should invest in it, what the benefits will be, impacts and outcomes for them. And then you need to be able to shift across into other partners and be able to tell the story in that partner’s language.”* Project lead
- 6.4.9. Furthermore, project teams described the value of forming a multi-disciplinary project partnership team (e.g., data analysts, service managers and practitioners), including senior service leads within project governance structures, as well as embedding team members within partner organisations (e.g., embedding a team member in a school). This gave teams the right skills-mix, authority and nuanced understanding of different services and professional groups.
- 6.4.10. *“It hasn’t been a hard sell ... in terms of trying to get people engaged ... because I think it’s something that they all see as being an area which has more potential for ... future gains.”* Project lead
- 6.4.11. Project teams recognised the need to tailor communications and descriptions of the data projects and outputs to different stakeholders. Projects had developed tailored communications to engage both technical and non-technical audiences:
- **Data analyst:** Communications took a technical focus and language, to describe the data collection processes, specific metrics, and analysis; alongside instructional information and training on data sharing and analytic requirements.
 - **Service leads:** Communications for this stakeholder group were structured to tell a story about the project with a focus on what could be achieved through the project for their service or daily work. Furthermore, one project team found that non-technical stakeholders were resistant to the concept of using data to run ‘predictive modelling’ however, when reframed to ‘targeted analytics’, they were more receptive.
- 6.4.12. *“The understanding that the project had the potential to highlight gaps in services for families chimed with members.”* Project team

- **Frontline practitioners:** Communications to this group generally centred on practical information and training on how to gain consent for data linkage or use data tools and dashboards. The Manchester-led project team for example were developing an information video for frontline practitioners to encourage buy-in of the project output.
- **The general public:** Communications to this group focused on what information was being shared and why, and reassurances about how it would be used to benefit them or people like them and inform decisions on a range of public services. For instance, the Doncaster BaBi project developed a wide-ranging public communication strategy, from posters, project website, QR codes, and information video (a link can be found at Figure 2) and translated materials into other languages.

Figure 2. Public information video about the Doncaster-led LDAF project



Source: BaBi-D website: <https://www.dbth.nhs.uk/research-and-development/babi-d/>

- 6.4.13. Finally, some projects developed a **brand identity**, with a project name and logo to raise the profile internally within partner organisations and externally, as shown Figure 3. Creating a recognisable, consistent brand was one way in which projects sought to improve awareness of the project.

Figure 3. Examples of LDAF project brands



- 6.4.14. **Engaging stakeholders – examples from Doncaster and Avon and Somerset**

- 6.4.15. The Doncaster-led project was reliant on midwives asking expectant parents for consent to be part of the BaBi birth-cohort. During the early stage of the project, this posed a change to midwives usual working practices, required them to be sufficiently familiar with the BaBi project and consent process, as well as having the confidence to answer patient questions. The consent process was an additional task to complete within their usual appointments. Additionally, by design the project is long-term, requiring a large number of consents before data linkage would be possible and end results could be shared with practitioners, including midwives.

- 6.4.16. *“This is an extra to the normal everyday care that they [midwives] give to the ladies and it's getting them into the habit of it.”* Project team, Doncaster

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- 6.4.17. The project partnership included a research midwife, who led on providing midwives with information and training about the requirement. The project team believed that embedding a midwife in the team ensured the language and messaging was tailored to this professional stakeholder group. Furthermore, learning from the Born in Bradford exemplar project, provided confidence that working with midwives was an effective way to recruit expectant parents to the birth cohort, building on trusted and ongoing relationships with their patients.
- 6.4.18. *“You know, it could well be that they [expectant parents] trusted it [consenting to Babi] because it was a midwife that they were familiar with in a setting that they were familiar with. And, also people think we share [data] much more than we do.”* Project team, Doncaster
- 6.4.19. Comparatively, in the Avon and Somerset-led project, in one LA the school component of the data project, delivered a pupil-level data dashboard of information to support awareness of child needs and safeguarding concerns, which was therefore an ‘easier’ sell to schools, and particularly to school based Designated Safeguarding Leads who hold responsibility for adherence to child safeguarding policies and supporting staff to support vulnerable pupils. However, school staff needed initial training on how to use the tool, interpret the information, and consider how this information would be used and fit within the school’s existing pastoral and early help infrastructure. Similar to the midwives in Doncaster, school staff needed to make logging into the dashboard a daily habit.
- 6.4.20. **Getting the right people in the room**
- 6.4.21. As mentioned, (see Chapter 3: ‘Applications and award’), project partnerships generally pre-dated the fund. Project teams highlighted that building on existing working relationships, facilitated project delivery. It also helped to engage the right people across respective organisations including those outside of the immediate team, such as IT teams and information governance leads. Project teams commonly explained there was a need to involve senior service leads as well as data analysts to ensure buy-in at both levels, and support a shared vision for the project across these key stakeholders.
- 6.4.22. Effective project steering groups with representatives across partnerships, were helpful to develop a shared understanding of the project, trouble-shoot issues as they arose and drive the project forward. Additionally, teams that appointed senior officials to chair project management boards, or had received public support from respected senior officials in the LA and partner agencies, reported this gave the project further status and credibility, supporting wider buy-in.
- 6.4.23. *“If you had somebody [as the project lead] that wasn’t so well-respected or somebody who couldn’t talk with such knowledge and passion, I think that would probably make a difference”* Project team
- 6.4.24. Furthermore, depending on the nature of the project, project teams made use of existing networks and meetings to promote projects, gain project buy-in and support delivery. For instance, attending regional meetings for LA data analysts or Association of Directors of Childrens Services. This was considered a more effective route to engage audiences beyond the core programme team.

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- 6.4.25. In a few cases, some partners minimised their involvement in projects or withdrew completely. This was for a range of reasons, including competing demands, and relationship breakdown and cultural working practices and differences in opinion to data sharing processes. Project teams remained flexible in their project management approaches, by allowing different partners to have differential inputs, and progress at different paces.
- 6.4.26. **User consultation and discovery phases**
- 6.4.27. Project teams described how their initial consultations and user testing phases with professional stakeholders were helpful to engage buy-in from an early stage. The consultation and user testing activities provided two main benefits:
- firstly, it promoted the proposed project to stakeholders
 - secondly, it helped to refine project designs through stakeholder feedback on the project priorities, what types of data and outputs they wanted/needed, raised ethical and practical concerns about the project (such as, who should have access to the data outputs).
- 6.4.28. Project teams recommended running separate feedback sessions for different stakeholder groups (e.g., data analysts, senior leads, or frontline practitioners, general public) to help them understand the different needs and priorities of each group. Furthermore, it supported better understanding of the potential barriers faced by 'less technically capable' LAs and staff, and the support needs to engage with data collection, sharing, interpretation and use.
- 6.4.29. User testing phases highlighted how different organisations and professional groups had different definitions, language and interpretation of similar concepts and data metrics. For example, the East Sussex-led project found that LAs had different definitions for Early Help, service structures and maturity of data collection and outcome frameworks. Such findings highlighted a need to identify common metrics and provide clear definitions and guidance to support correct data submissions across partners.
- 6.4.30. *"It turned out that it's not just that the terminology is different...what people are delivering is completely different...Even just doing a definition, it can be vastly different from one authority to the next"* Project team
- 6.4.31. In terms of public consultations, project teams found it difficult to engage people ad hoc to discuss the topic of data linkage and sharing. Project teams instead found it was more efficient to consult established children and families participation groups hosted by the LA and partner agencies. For example, one project consulted an LA youth forum to gauge youth perspectives on the proposal for sharing child and family-level data between different services. Feedback from public consultations, across projects, identified that:
- Individuals expected different services and agencies to have access to shared data systems
 - Individuals were comfortable with data sharing across services and agencies providing this was done to help, and not used against them in any way.

6.4.32. **Supporting culture change over the long-term**

6.4.33. There was a pragmatic acceptance among project teams that some individuals and organisations, especially those with lower data literacy, may be sceptical and not see the potential benefits of the project, initially. They recognised that involvement in non-statutory data collection and sharing would be a difficult ask, posing a barrier to participation. Project teams believed that these groups may be more inclined to trust the project, once tangible outputs were delivered and through word-of-mouth from trusted peers who had positive experiences of the project and its outputs. Some project teams invested some of their allocated funding to independent evaluations to demonstrate the value of the project and outcomes for different stakeholders. They did this in part to understand and demonstrate the value of the project to others.

6.4.34. *“The other problem is just trust in the process and whether it's valuable...they'll always be one or two people who are very sceptical of the value of anything that they can't exactly specify, and the people that see the value in this work we're doing are the ones that are a little bit more comfortable with it.”* Project team

6.4.35. Project teams thought that the LDAF had helped to create further interest in making better use of existing data within their respective organisations. One project lead believed that the LDAF project had supported a shift locally from using data to measure 'performance' to seeing its potential to support *'understanding needs, targeting services, [and] evaluating impact'*.

6.5. Technical infrastructure and skills

6.5.1. The LDAF projects were seen as a mechanism to building LA and partner organisations' technical infrastructure and skills. The projects provided the funding and resource to do so. However, projects encountered several technical challenges.

6.5.2. **Different maturity, tools and capabilities**

6.5.3. Project teams reported that data maturity differed across the partnership. They explained that it was not simply the case that some partners had better data maturity and others had lower maturity. Rather, each LA was working from a different starting point. Within partnerships, organisations had different technical infrastructure, hardware, software and tools. LAs within partnerships used different case management systems and analytic tools. One project lead described how, even when partners used the same software, they had different versions, depending on when the LA had invested in the latest updates. Furthermore, they had different internal conventions for data collection, matching and naming variables. For example, LAs and partner agencies with lower data maturity had manual data matching processes, due to a lack of technical tools and skills. There was also evidence of service information sometimes being held in Excel files, rather than in case management systems. All these variations posed barriers to common working practices.

6.5.4. LAs that had outsourced IT departments, experienced time delays and cost implications for data projects. Teams stated that progress of outsourced IT teams was slower compared with in-house IT teams. Additionally, outsourced IT services charged extra for each change request, that was outside of their specified contract.

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- 6.5.5. During the two-year LDAF period, some LAs delivered organisation-wide data transformation projects, for example, migrating to data warehouses or new case management systems. Although these changes supported improved overall data maturity for these LAs, it caused delays to the LDAF project. LDAF work had to be put on hold until these broader transformation projects were complete.
- 6.5.6. Project teams described taking pragmatic work-around solutions to the technical variations across partners. Project teams explained that due to the wide variation in technical tools and skills, blue-prints of successful data projects were a helpful guide but direct replication was not always possible. Instead, they had to take bespoke approaches to data solutions to each partner. This extended to training activity; all projects included a 'sharing skills and good practice' component. Project leads had generally planned to deliver technical partnership-wide training in particular systems and processes. However, they opted to take a bespoke approach for each partner, to provide trainees with information relevant to the available tools and skills level.
- 6.5.7. Alternative solutions included using the available or low-cost tools, like Microsoft Excel for data collection, sharing and analysis purposes, as most had access and sufficient familiarity and skills to use this tool. The Hertfordshire-led project partnership opted to use Power BI⁸, as a low-cost option. One project team explained that their preferred programme tool was Python⁹; although, it is an open source, free-to-use tool, some LA IT and Information Governance teams did not permit its use, and therefore was not a viable tool for the project. Another project saved their analytic code on Github¹⁰ to share it easily with partners.
- 6.5.8. *"You can't just run ahead and say ... you have to have [name of data visualisation tool] to participate because that creates this paywall, that people either they have to build it into their infrastructure and pay for these licenses separately, otherwise they can't collaborate or contribute. And often those decisions around the technology are completely outside of the hands of the analysts that sit within children services."* Project lead
- 6.5.9. **Data access and quality**
- 6.5.10. As mentioned above, partners collected different data and managed it different ways. Therefore, project teams recommended a discovery phase at the start of future data transformation projects. An important practical first step of projects was to map what data partners collected, how data variables were defined, and how data was processed. Project teams explained that this needed to be an iterative process, to reach a consensus on the important (common) metrics, whilst being a manageable task for data analysts and helpful to end-users.
- 6.5.11. *"We can't capture every single code across every single database. So, what is it? What's important so you know, working through the process to sort of agree between all of the sites. What's important? Have you even got the data? How's it coded? And to harmonise it and then then start thinking about the management of that ... So that's the one thing that I would say I wish we had that we didn't have."* Project lead

⁸ Power Bi is a data visualisation tool: <https://powerbi.microsoft.com/en-gb/>

⁹ Python is a programming language that can be used for data management and analysis. <https://www.python.org/>

¹⁰ Github is a secure code hosting platform: <https://github.com/>

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- 6.5.12. Some projects developed common data templates, with definitions and instructions, to support consistent data sharing across partners. Projects that did not insist on common data templates, reported receiving data in a slightly different format from each organisation, which then required more data cleaning time. However, analysts reported this to be a minor issue. They also suggested piloting the approach initially to then refine processes and troubleshoot any arising issues. For instance, one project reflected that freetext data was not always relevant, and needed to be addressed going forward.
- 6.5.13. Data quality and accuracy was raised as an ongoing issue within some projects. One project reported that data from different organisations could have conflicting information about individuals. For instance, an individual recorded with different demographic data across partners (e.g., logged with a different ethnicity, across partners). Furthermore, when LAs matched in data from commissioned services, this could introduce potential data quality issues as this data was collected and recorded differently to LA conventions.
- 6.5.14. *“They’re using all sorts of different ways of getting that information, and it’s really challenging the further you get away from those core local authority delivered services, it gets really messy and kind of harder and harder to get accurate data.”* Project lead
- 6.5.15. Some project leads reflected that they had underestimated the data quality issues they encountered across partners. They advised for those embarking on similar projects in the future, to avoid making assumptions about data quality of partners. They suggested investing time in scoping activities to better understand partner data landscapes and gaps from the beginning.
- 6.5.16. **Ethical and legal considerations**
- 6.5.17. Considering the ethical and legal risks of data sharing, linkage and use was an important component for all projects. As mentioned above, the initial user testing, discovery and piloting phases of projects helped to raise and identify ethical risks and considerations specific to each project. It raised questions about *What data should and should not be shared? Who should have access to what levels of data? And how the data will be used?*
- 6.5.18. For instance, in Avon and Somerset-led project, it was envisaged that data being shared with schools would be accessible to all staff. However, during the initial scoping activity, schools fed-back that this was not appropriate or necessary. Instead, they stated a preference for restricted access to key staff such as the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Heads of Year, who hold safeguarding and pastoral responsibilities. They stated a preference for cascading information to other school staff on a need-to-know basis. Furthermore, some schools decided to restrict the level of information teachers received about incidents and notification about the child or their families, The teacher was simply informed there had been an incident affecting a child in their class, without disclosing the details.
- 6.5.19. *“Just because something is legal, it doesn’t necessarily mean that you should be doing it. So, we want to make sure that we get a professional relevance and proportionality around it, and it’s a big consideration of ours in all the sharing we do. It’s about making sure all those risks are considered, which is why we’re not going down this route of everyone gets everything. It’s all got to be very carefully thought through.”* Project lead

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- 6.5.20. A further ethical question for project teams and recipients of data was regarding use of it. Project teams were not always sure about whether the data being shared was being used by recipients. They understood that there were barriers to using new data tools and forming habits and processes around new data flows. Mature LAs across different projects, had set up automated emails to intended data users (e.g., LA key workers), to alert them about new information about families in their caseload and to encourage use of the new data flows. In the Reading-led project, all partners have been trained in Dynamic SQL to ensure that they are able to use the end product.
- 6.5.21. Recipients of new data flows also raised questions of how best to use it. For instance, where additional needs were identified there was not always a clear service or support pathway for them. One LA paused the receipt of new data flows from partner agencies due to a concern that they had not fully considered how they would use the data, and who would be responsible for it.
- 6.5.22. LAs that had developed an ethical framework encouraged this step in future similar projects. One LA employed a consultant to develop an ethical framework with key guiding principles that could be applied to the LDAF project as well as wider data projects.
- 6.5.23. Some, but not all projects reported working with the Information Governance team from the Cabinet Office and the Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation. Projects that had signed up to use the Digital Economy Act (DEA, 2017)¹¹ to support their LDAF project reported this to be a slow process. One LA that was an early adopter of the DEA, shared their documentation and insights on the process with others, which was beneficial. Nevertheless, this process took longer than expected.
- 6.5.24. Engaging information governance leads early, supported project implementation. Project leads reported that information governance leads across partner organisations could have different interpretations of the same legislation, including the UK GDPR. These differences in opinions could create blockers and delays to LDAF project progress. Project teams speculated that this would continue to block data-sharing across public service partners in the future too.
- 6.5.25. *“You can’t have such a disparity from one [statutory agency] to another when you’ve got exactly the same legislation and the same business requirements. Our local authority, we’ve won their hearts and minds, they’re willing to send up the information, but then you’ve got others that won’t and it seems to boil down to this middle stroke of senior leaders personal beliefs on whether you should do or you shouldn’t....It’s a major partnership integration piece around public services and it cannot surely be just down to individual managers”* Project lead
- 6.5.26. Project leads reflected that they had underestimated the time it would take to have final data sharing agreements between partners, and agreements on issues of secure data transfers, storage and retention. A common issue raised across projects, was the

¹¹ The Digital Economy Act 2017 provides a framework for sharing personal data, for defined purposes across specific parts of the public sector. The aim is to improve public services through the better use of data, while ensuring privacy, clarity and consistency in how the public sector shares data. More information available at: <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/uk-gdpr-guidance-and-resources/data-sharing/data-sharing-a-code-of-practice/data-sharing-across-the-public-sector-the-digital-economy-act-codes/>

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particular challenge of data sharing with health services, due to data governance concerns.

- 6.5.27. Projects that were building on previous successful data transformation initiatives provided teams with templates to build on; using past examples to draft project specific data sharing agreements and privacy notices. Referencing successful past projects could provide reassurances to information governance leads on the legal basis for data sharing and processing, and supported approval processes.
- 6.5.28. *“Though we quite freely give our personal data away to lots of things, we worry when it's Departments of state or local government or the police. It's been helpful, I think to do this in conjunction with other people as well, to see some of the good ideas that others have.”* Project lead
- 6.5.29. Some projects and partners experienced gaps in support from information governance teams, due to a lack of staff, capacity or expertise for innovative data sharing and linkage projects. Having joint meetings with all information governance leads/ data protection officers across the partnership, rather than individual organisation specific meetings was recommended as an efficient way to develop joint scrutiny models, progress approvals and delivery. An ongoing concern for some project leads was whether all partners have appropriate checks and balances in place to ensure their staff adhere to the terms of the data sharing agreements.
- 6.5.30. **Timetabling issues and project delays**
- 6.5.31. All projects experienced project delays and most remained ongoing in March 2023 (the end of the funding period). Project leads explained that the funding was awarded later than expected but the deadline for completion was not extended. Projects for the most part, believed the funding period was too short, and that a further year could have supported projects to meet their intended aims.
- 6.5.32. **Team recruitment and capacity**
- 6.5.33. Initially projects experienced delays to staffing projects. Projects experienced delays due to lengthy recruitment processes. Project leads explained that LA processes for the creation of new posts and job descriptions can take several months. Projects reported challenges in recruiting technical data vacancies. They speculated that this was due to higher paid roles in the private tech sector and offering a fixed term role (as opposed to a permanent position). Some projects seconded technical staff into posts, but this left vacancies within other teams of their LA.
- 6.5.34. *“It's definitely a national thing, there's a shortage of these kind of specialist roles ... we don't pay as competitively as other sectors”* Project team
- 6.5.35. Most project team members had other duties and responsibilities alongside the LDAF project. These sometimes took priority over the LDAF. Over the funded period, changes in staff caused some disruptions and delays to project continuity too.

6.6. Project management

- 6.6.1. Dedicated senior project leads were needed to drive projects forward and keep the momentum going over time. One project reported taking an Agile project management approach, working in two weekly 'sprints' to achieve agreed milestones. As mentioned above, regular working groups (for project teams) and steering group (for leadership across the partnership) were required for project delivery and governance.
- 6.6.2. Planned activity could be delayed or deprioritised, depending on wider organisational demands. For example, one LA that had an Ofsted inspection during the funding period, said that they had to focus on the inspection for a three week period, during which time they did not deliver LDAF work. Similarly, changes to the Supporting Families Outcomes Framework, affected plans of projects linked to this data outcome model. However, it also meant that data analysts across LA Children's Services had to invest time in delivering this requirement, over work on the LDAF. At times, project leads had to escalate requests to ensure the LDAF work was seen as a priority and work was delivered.
- 6.6.3. *"Some of those significant changes that have been going on - the technologies...in the personnel and the governance structures mean we're probably not as far as we want to be...at this point."* Project lead
- 6.6.4. Reaching a consensus among all partners could take time, or simply getting all partners to review and sign-off on materials could take far longer than expected. Therefore, project leads reported encouraging meetings where helpful to reach agreements, rather than going back and forth on emails. One project lead explained that delayed decision-making had knock on effects for project sequencing; they had data analysts ready to do the work, but were stalled because decision-makers had not reached a consensus on the priority data.
- 6.6.5. *"All those things that are quick but slow down just due to red tape and different businesses interacting".* Project lead
- 6.6.6. Having access to a dedicated funding pot supported projects to buy-in expertise and resources to support project delivery. In terms of finances, project lead reflected that the requirement to spend the fund within a short period was a challenge and did not align to LA financial systems and processes. LA procurement processes to purchase systems and tools took longer than expected, as did simply the process of receiving quotes for such items.
- 6.6.7. *"You need some budget responsibility and ability to spend to be able to oil the wheels of what is needed."* Project lead
- 6.6.8. One suggestion to improve buy-in and speed up delivery of further such projects was to introduce a payment by results approach, whereby partners receive payment on completion of agreement milestones.
- 6.6.9. **LA-sector-led data transformation**
- 6.6.10. Despite the challenges projects faced, there was a consensus that LAs are best placed to lead such data transformation projects. LAs were open to bringing in external consultants for specific technical expertise, but believed by leading projects they could

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design and deliver projects and products to meet the needs of the service, while building in-house expertise of staff. As such LAs, would welcome future funding for data improvement projects. One suggestion was for LAs with less data maturity to receive more funding to support basic improvements to their technical infrastructure to support ongoing data improvement journeys.

- 6.6.11. *“Having local knowledge of people who are working in the service, who know how things run, know what software is being used, what the systems can do, what the systems are within the local authority...if you’ve got the right people in the authority, then stick with them. I think outsourcing it can be a bit of a recipe for disaster because you’ve got people come in, they have to do the analysis, so much for them to understand...it’s almost like they’re coming from on top and they’re putting it on the service, whereas you need it to be organic, from within.”* Project team
- 6.6.12. Furthermore, working in a partnership structure offered efficiencies and economies of scale, whereby LAs and local partners could pool resources and skills to develop and refine needed data for longer-term benefits.
- 6.6.13. *“Join up. Do it together. Build once, use many times.”* Project team

7. Early project outcomes

7.1.1. This chapter outlines the outcomes achieved across projects to date (March 2023) and draws on feedback from interviews and survey findings. Outcomes, particularly those relating to changes in LA data maturity, were specific to the context of each project. As such, this section presents key themes as well as specific outcomes relating to individual projects. At the time of final data collection and reporting, organisations were in the process of completing their projects and therefore this section reports on early and anticipated outcomes. At the point of the final evaluation data collection not all outcomes had been realised.

7.2. Key findings

7.2.1. Improvements in LA (and partner) data maturity

7.2.2. There was evidence across all projects that the LDAF had progressed the data maturity of LAs and partners. Data maturity was realised in different ways depending on the nature of the project. Project teams stressed that the changes achieved to data maturity were specific to the given project (e.g., access to linked police data, education data, or consent for data linkage) rather than achieving wholesale data improvements across the LA or Children's Services.

7.2.3. Although information governance processes had been a major blocker to project delivery, survey respondents (75%) reported that data sharing agreements had improved over the last twelve months (between 2022 and 2023).

7.2.4. Survey respondents rated their top achievements/outcomes from the LDAF project as:

- Building networks with other analysts and data leads;
- Improved internal use of data for analytics to intervene and support families earlier; and
- Building data sharing pathways with LAs, agencies, and other organisations.
- Wider outcomes included producing infrastructure and analytical capabilities to support LA data journeys beyond the LDAF, providing the capability to create more extensive data linkage.

7.2.5. Outcomes for LA workforces

7.2.6. Where services and frontline staff had access to new data or data presented in new ways (as a result of the LDAF), practitioners had a better understanding of children and families and their wider contexts, circumstances and events they had experienced. This was reported to have led to:

- Better informed decision making around resource allocation and the appropriateness of engagement with vulnerable groups.

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- Strategic staff and data analysts reported time saving and efficiencies of automated data-sharing and linkage.
- Some LAs reported that workforces had benefited from upskilling or training, for example in using software such as Microsoft Power BI.

7.2.7. LA teams described how the LDAF supported shifts in cultural attitudes and buy-in to more data-driven approaches, including attitudes towards using data for research, evaluation and predictive analytics, which they hoped would further support continued data improvement journeys. Projects successfully provided proof of concept for wider data improvement work, for example linking datasets or replicating data models established in other local areas. LA teams were confident that the LDAF further reinforced the value of service-led improvements to central government, and that excellence exists in local government. They hoped there would be further investment in data transformation at a local level.

7.2.8. **Outcomes for partners**

7.2.9. Projects demonstrated how datasets can be successfully linked and two-way data feeds can be established, between the LA and partners. Where data was being shared with partners, they reported having access to high quality data that could help them understand the whole picture of a family's situation, and not have to rely on what the family had told them. This streamlined processes such as referrals, enhanced reporting, and eased capacity and demand in relevant teams such as safeguarding through having access to key information.

7.2.10. Partnerships largely reported positive working relationships, which was anticipated to make future data sharing plans and implementation easier. The projects created community of practice systems and models that could be replicated for future data maturity projects or in other geographical areas.

7.2.11. **Outcomes for children and families**

7.2.12. Where data linkage and/or flows were in place, projects had equipped practitioners with new and more holistic, high-quality, information about the children and families they work with. This had the potential to inform service organisation, commissioning and the support offered to children and families. Projects that were closer to conclusion reported positive outcomes. This included the production of data to help practitioners understand underlying factors contributing to children's and families' behaviours and circumstances; inform safeguarding concerns; and improve whole family working.

7.2.13. A further anticipated benefit was having better join-up of information sharing between services and professionals, and minimising frustration for children and families having 'to share their story multiple times'.

7.3. **Outcomes for LA data maturity**

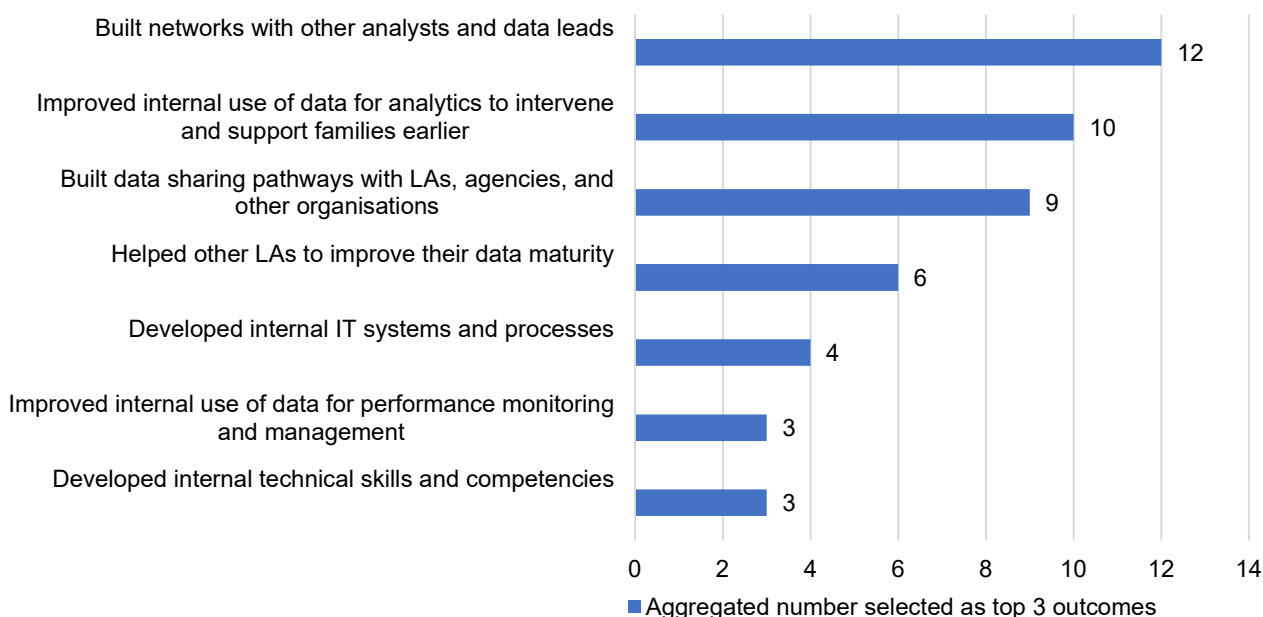
7.3.1. Improving LA data maturity, particularly for LAs with lower levels of data maturity, was an objective of the fund. All funded projects reported some level of improvements to data maturity for both LAs and partner agencies. Data maturity was realised in different ways

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depending on the nature of the project. Project teams stressed that the changes achieved to data maturity were specific to the given project (e.g., access to linked police data, education data, or consent for data linkage) rather than achieving wholesale data improvements across the LA or Children's Services.

- 7.3.2. As a result of the LDAF, LAs were collecting and had access to better quality data which was useable at a local level. Generally, LAs were collecting, receiving or sending data (specific to the LDAF project) in a more consistent and standardised manner, particularly for the least data mature LAs. In the Nottingham-led project, interviews suggested that data (e.g., data relating to housing, welfare rights, youth justice and adult and child social care) will be easier to collect and there will be a high level of data quality for end-users, as a result of the LDAF project. In the East Sussex-led project, project leads noted that a key anticipated outcome they were working towards for all participating LAs was the ability to observe Early Help data (at the child level) through a visual tool which will be used to monitor trends over time and enable benchmarking with other LAs.
- 7.3.3. Survey respondents were asked to rate their top three achievements/outcomes from the LDAF project (see Figure 4). In order of ratings, respondents selected built networks with other analysts and data leads, improved internal use of data for analytics to intervene and support families earlier, and built data sharing pathways with LAs, agencies, and other organisations as the highest rated achievements/outcomes.

Figure 4. Top three outcomes/achievements from the LDAF project



Source: Wave 2 evaluation survey, Ecorys (Base n=14)

- 7.3.4. Most (75%) of the survey respondents reported that generally data sharing agreements had improved over the last twelve months preceding the survey¹². For those that reported improvements, these were generally modest, stating that data sharing is 'a little better'. For the respondents that stated data sharing is 'a lot better', they expected to achieve very high levels of dataset matching using automated processes. For those who reported

¹² The survey took place in March-May 2023 so this covers the twelve month period preceding this.

modest improvements, there was a general trend towards lower levels of automation. The LAs and partner organisations that experienced no improvement in data sharing over the past 12 months generally had fully automated processes prior to the LDAF.

- 7.3.5. Survey respondents listed project achievements and outcomes that bolstered organisational data maturity beyond the LDAF project by producing the data infrastructure (e.g., data sharing agreements, systems and processes) and analytical capabilities. These LDAF outputs provided the foundational capability to support data sharing and linkages beyond the life of the project. This was supported by evidence gathered through interviews which suggested that LAs had refined data sharing and linkage practices ready to use for future data transformation projects. In the Doncaster-led project, interviewees noted that the LDAF project had led to the improvement of existing data linkages, through the inclusion of new technical expertise, algorithms and software. Furthermore, the partnership working approach had supported a realisation that data sharing and linkage can be tackled collaboratively, through generic pipelines rather than project specific analytic code.
- 7.3.6. *“It's about creating code that's flexible to work across multiple projects so when another data maturity type project comes in, we're ready and we've got a lot of those data linkage practices ready to go. So, I think it is sparking conversations about how we manage multiple data maturity projects, how we prepare for them for the future.”* Project lead
- 7.3.7. In the East Sussex-led project, the project leads described how the Early Help benchmarking project was anticipated to improve the data maturity of LA Early Help teams at both the strategic and operational level, by having a better understanding of how their investments and outcomes compare with other LAs.
- 7.3.8. *“It gives at least an idea of a direction to go in, which is more than anyone has in Early Help... it gives you an idea of what's good and bad because even the local authorities that are tracking at the minute don't have a sense of what good or bad is. They just have a number.”* Project stakeholder
- 7.3.9. When asked whether these outcomes could have been achieved without the LDAF, a strong theme from interviews was that the work may have happened eventually, but this funding accelerated the process, or enabled the project to involve a greater number of LAs and/or partners.
- 7.3.10. *“Through this project we've been able to build a bigger ambition and it's sped up bringing partners involved because we've been able to tell a story around why this makes a difference or could make a difference.”* Project stakeholder

7.4. Outcomes for LA workforces

- 7.4.1. At the time of final data collection projects were still ongoing, and therefore most reported outcomes relating to LA strategic staff and data analysts who had been involved in projects to date. Outputs of most projects were not at a stage to be used by or directly support the work of frontline staff, and therefore only a few project teams were able to report on achieved outcomes for operational staff.

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- 7.4.2. Where frontline staff had access to data products and outputs, a clear message was that this additional data gave practitioners a better understanding of children, young people and families, their situations and events that take place around them. This supported decision making around resource allocation, appropriate engagement and support. For example, in the Avon and Somerset project, the police were providing LAs with a daily data-feed of callouts and incidents involving children and families in their area (e.g., missing child reports).
- 7.4.3. Each LA operated local systems and processes for making best use of this data. For example, in one LA, the lead professional (e.g., an Early Help lead or social worker) received an automated email to notify them of relevant police incidents, which sped up practitioner's awareness of incidents in real-time. Furthermore, permitted LA staff could also use live feeds shared by partner schools to look up families in a database to see a range of education information, to provide them with wider context of family circumstances and needs, such as school attendance information.
- 7.4.4. In the Nottingham project, the LA had developed an effective relationship with the LA Revenues and Benefits team which enabled them to gather data around financial exclusion and risk of homelessness. This had streamlined the process from the initial referral to establishing what the issues were, helping to monitor case work, and making the management of claim verification quicker.
- 7.4.5. A key outcome for strategic staff and data analysts was realising time efficiency savings. For example, Bristol, a data mature LA leading the Avon and Somerset project, commissioned evaluations of their Think Family Database, used by a range of practitioners within the LAs Children Services teams. and found that it was getting around 5,000 searches a month inside Bristol City Council¹³. Staff fed back that each search saved them at least five minutes, which equates to 13,000 hours of staff time saved per year and c.£0.5million in staff wages through reduced retrieval burden. This cannot be fully attributed to the LDAF as the database was in place before the programme, but the LDAF was believed to have contributed to these savings..
- 7.4.6. In the GMCA project, analysts previously struggled to do calculations around school attendance data as these checks would require manual linking, matching and calculating across multiple large datasets. Through the common data model created for all localities as part of the LDAF project, they have been able to use a cloud data platform to perform these tasks. Specifically, Greater Manchester are using Civica's cloud enabled Master Data Management (MDM) software, MultiVue, which helps local authorities to match, merge, and master data from many sources, ensuring a complete, accurate and shareable view of citizen and household records¹⁴. They were building on that by introducing social care data. Anecdotally, one LA reported that this process saved three days of staff time compared to doing it manually. They were also able to share attendance and social care data easily between the GMCA and the test environment.

¹³ The Think Family Database (TFD) supports and connects safeguarding professionals from Bristol City Council and other public sector organisations. The TFD pulls together data from several public sector sources including Bristol City Council (Children Social care, Early Help, Education), Avon and Somerset Police, Department for Education, Department for Work and Pensions, and South West Commissioning Support Unit (SWCSU).

¹⁴ <https://www.civica.com/en-gb/product-pages/master-data-management-software/mdm-for-local-government/>

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- 7.4.7. Project teams also described how the LDAF projects supported cultural change and staff buy-in regarding data collection, sharing, linkage and use. For example, in the Doncaster-led project, interviewees suggested that cultural change has occurred in terms of attitudes towards collecting data to inform research. Stakeholders noted that there has been a realisation that frontline practitioners can be part of research and investigation. The robust manner in which GDPR was exercised eased traditional fears around data security and the linkage of identifiable data. This gave a voice to departments which would not usually participate in research. An enabler for this was the way the project was described to different stakeholders; as a research project rather than focusing on monitoring service delivery or evaluation.
- 7.4.8. *“Because this has been pitched as a research data project, not just about monitoring service delivery or for evaluation, we’ve had a lot of buy in from stakeholders we wouldn’t necessarily traditionally have buy-in from. It’s almost generated excitement especially amongst some of the early years practitioners in terms of where they think their knowledge is weaker and what they’d like to know. And it’s revitalised the idea of using data. It’s not just for evaluation and monitoring, it’s for something new and exciting.”* Project team
- 7.4.9. In the GMCA-led project, interviewees highlighted a keenness from LAs to continue to improve their data maturity across the GMCA but particularly from those LAs identified as less mature as they saw the benefits gained through this project. The project lead noted that it was key to secure buy-in from frontline staff, as well as those in technical roles, to make sure that processes work for them. To achieve this, time and resource was allocated to engaging frontline staff, for example the team produced a video which explained why the project was taking place. It was also important for senior staff to push and champion the work, this included the Chief Executive and research and intelligence leads.
- 7.4.10. In the Nottingham-led project, buy-in was secured from Early Help practitioners by demonstrating how the tool would allow them to be fully informed about family’s issues during conversations which will help build relationships with families and ensure no criteria is missed.
- 7.4.11. *“People we’ve shown...were really excited about using it and what they could use it for...from the triage team’s point of view...they’re out in the localities or communities ... they might have people come to them and ask for advice and guidance...they use this tool to understand the wider dynamics of the family or individual, and it’s been really useful in that part.”* Project team
- 7.4.12. LAs identified sustainable outcomes, which they expected to lead to change beyond the funding period. In the GMCA-led project, interviewees suggested that the project had successfully proved the concept for further data improvement work, for example creating linkages between LA Children’s Services data with other datasets such as health. In the Nottingham project, stakeholders highlighted the value of involving multiple LA teams in generating a shared understanding of the best way of creating data visualisation and developing best practices locally.
- 7.4.13. *“[The project generates] real insights that can inform future service delivery.”* Project stakeholder

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- 7.4.14. In the East Sussex-led project, stakeholders were confident that the Early Help data and benchmarking tool would support LA strategic staff; especially, given that there is no unified national data collection or statutory return requirement. When the project is complete, it was anticipated to offer LAs a better way to understand how their investments in Early Help provision support outcomes for children and families compared to other LAs. A partner LA described the value of the project in terms of having a national picture of Early Help to inform funding decisions.
- 7.4.15. *“I think it's very much needed. Having a national picture of Early Help and recognising the importance that Early Help plays in avoiding families being escalated to more costly statutory services. Early Help is an area where financially there's pressures. It gets cut, and then that puts more pressure on the statutory services. So, I think it's really good that we're going to have better intelligence around our Early Help data.”* Project stakeholder
- 7.4.16. Secondly, the output will provide useful insights for central government departments too. The project output was thought to potentially support a case for change, advocated by those in Early Help leadership roles. For instance, collating LA Early Help data would help identify which LAs achieve more (or better child outcomes) with the same resources by comparing and contrasting different Early Help service configurations, models and results. This has the potential to lead to real changes in delivery approaches (and outcomes) for the lower performing LAs. Finally, stakeholders saw the project as a clear demonstration to central government of the excellence that exists at local government level.
- 7.4.17. *“I hope it really demonstrates to national government the local activity here ... that it really shines a light on local excellence and just how advanced some of their thinking is.”* Project team
- 7.4.18. A minor theme was that some staff teams, particularly data analysts, had benefited from formal and informal training opportunities created through the LDAF projects, and had been upskilled, for example in using data visualisation software such as Microsoft Power BI. Knowledge exchange was also highlighted as an outcome, where LA data analysts were able to make connections across LAs.
- 7.4.19. *“We've benefited through the LDAF programme by working closely with Bristol and understanding how they've done stuff, which we can then implement back here. Where there were greater opportunities for open communications between LAs, that's been really beneficial.”* Project lead

7.5. Outcomes for partner organisations

- 7.5.1. All projects were required to partner with at least one agency that was not an LA. Project teams had partnered with a range of agencies including the police, education settings, academic institutions, and data specialist organisations. Project teams consistently reported (in the survey and interviews) that relationships with partners and relationship building capabilities were improved, and this would make it easier for future collaborations, including data sharing to be agreed and implemented.
- 7.5.2. External partners differed depending on the nature of the project but a key theme was that LAs and partners had access to data that could help services and staff to understand

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a more holistic picture of a family's situation, not just what the family had told them. For example, in the Avon and Somerset-led project, Bristol City Council have developed the Think Family Education app which provides a daily flow of LA and police data to schools at the pupil-level regarding wellbeing, safeguarding and vulnerability. Participating schools and their staff receive overnight notifications of events and critical issues for their pupil population. The police also received daily data flows from the LA about families, including education information, such as school attendance.

- 7.5.3. The project team have received positive feedback from schools and the police about the data they receive to provide information that they otherwise would not have had. This was used to inform the identification of child needs and safeguarding interventions. Secondary schools also received transition information for their new Year 7 cohorts via the app, for example if a child is known to social services and has a social worker. This information is now provided in a consistent way for the full year group, which helped schools to know the needs of their new cohorts and plan accordingly.
- 7.5.4. A further outcome was the streamlining of processes, such as referrals and reporting by having access to partner information. For example, in the Avon and Somerset-led project, the police valued receiving information about the lead LA professional for families, as this meant they could more easily make contact and jointly discuss vulnerable victims or witnesses of crime. Bristol's data flows to the police had eased capacity and demand in the police's safeguarding team. Prior to the data flows, there was allocated resource for police staff to manually check each referral to see if there was LA involvement (and to identify the lead LA professional), which is now no longer needed.
- 7.5.5. Avon and Somerset police hoped that similar data flows and efficiencies could be achieved for the other LAs across the county over time by making the Safeguarding App force-wide. Conversations are taking place about other teams who could potentially benefit from having access to the data, for example Violence Reduction Units or using the information to enhance their existing model for identifying risk and vulnerability scores for people going missing or at risk of other victimisation.
- 7.5.6. *"Our biggest question at the moment is what else do we do with it, the information."* Project team
- 7.5.7. In the Doncaster-led project, interviews revealed an unintended outcome with participation in the project raising the research profile of the hospitals involved in the project partnership, which has created an ongoing incentive to recruit participants to the BaBi birth cohort study and continue data linkage.
- 7.5.8. In the long-term, projects had demonstrated how other datasets can be successfully and securely incorporated into the LA, and set a benchmark for multi-agency partnerships and information sharing. The projects had created community of practice systems and models that could be continued over time.
- 7.5.9. *"I don't think we need to convince areas that data maturity is a good thing anymore. I think that we've done that, and I think what we need to do is show them lots of different ideas now about how to use that maturity effectively and to develop it further. I think that's where these projects, the louder we can shout about them, the more we can inspire other areas to try and emulate them and come up with their own fantastic ideas."* Policy lead

7.6. Outcomes for children and families

- 7.6.1. As described in the above section about outcomes for LA workforces, where data flows are in place, projects have equipped practitioners with more, better quality, and more holistic information about the children and families they work with, which informs the identification of needs and support offered. This was reported to have a direct impact for children and young people, although for most projects it is too early to evidence outcomes for children and families.
- 7.6.2. In the Avon and Somerset-led project, the project team had received positive feedback from schools in one LA that had access to the schools App. Schools said they have a better understanding of the underlying reasons and factors contributing to pupil behaviour; improved data to inform safeguarding concerns by being able to check who a pupil's housing provider was; improved whole family working by being able to access data relating to siblings, especially when siblings attended different schools in the LA; and access to information they did not previously have, such as historical involvements with the police. The project also helped the schools to make referrals to Early Help family information service as schools were better equipped with the data to inform decision making.
- 7.6.3. In the Nottingham-led project, access to a richer data set will enable more detailed conversations between users of the data which is hoped to improve safeguarding and other outcomes for children and families. They anticipated that process will also be smoother for children and their families as the data will be easier to collect, which could remove frustration for families having to 'share their story multiple times' because of system errors and gaps in data capture across agencies and LA departments.

8. Conclusions

- 8.1.1. This report has presented the process evaluation findings of the Local Data Accelerator Fund (LDAF), detailing project delivery and outputs across the ten funded partnerships. The final wave of data collection for the evaluation took place before all projects had fully concluded, and therefore this report tells the story of how the projects performed by March 2023, and the lessons learnt about effective data initiatives for LAs and partner agencies.
- 8.1.2. In this final chapter, we draw together and conclude on the main findings from the evaluation. We start by reflecting on key messages relating to the design, set-up and delivery of projects, and the evidence for achieved outcomes and anticipated future impact. We then go on to consider the implications for the future data improvement projects, before finishing with a set of recommendations for policy and practice.

8.2. Investing in local data improvement journeys

- 8.2.1. LA Children's Services and partner agencies across England routinely collect data about the children and family populations they service. Aside from the statutory data returns to central government (e.g., social care, and schools and college data), the way that data is organised, managed and used is determined locally. DLUHC's Early Help System Guide (including the data maturity model) and Supporting Families Programme have been important drivers for LA Children's Services to adopt consistent, data-driven approaches for efficient and effective multi-agency public service delivery; from the identification of needs and risks for populations to the evaluation of the outcomes achieved for children and families. These initiatives have provided a framework for LA's and local partners to establish and improve data sharing and linkage; and simultaneously support organisational data maturity improvements.
- 8.2.2. Cross-governmental data improvement initiatives acknowledge that mature data systems are a key part of the infrastructure needed to support families and practice, provide a reliable evidence base to help families receive timely support, and the commissioning of appropriate services. The LDAF was launched within this context. It fostered sector-led data improvement pilot projects, and facilitated opportunities for peer-support, whereby more data-mature LAs collaborated with those with lower maturity. The fund sought to develop practical information and tools to better understand and assist vulnerable families and children while levelling up the data maturity of LAs with comparatively less sophisticated data systems.

8.3. Project mobilisation and implementation

- 8.3.1. The LDAF funded ten local partnership data projects. The scope and nature of each project varied, projects shared a common aim to improve the access and use of existing data held about vulnerable children and families across LAs and partner agencies. The funding supported dedicated partnership teams to plan, refine and implement data transformation projects over eighteen months. In the absence of the LDAF, these projects may not have been possible or would have been implemented at a slower rate.
- 8.3.2. Two of the more mature LAs (in two separate projects) had delivered most of their intended outputs within 2022/23, while others in their partnerships had outstanding work

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to deliver. All funded projects faced challenges to implementing their proposed projects. In recognition of this, DLUHC had approved unspent funding to be carried over beyond March 2023 so that projects could be completed. So, while the funded projects did not meet the entirety of their proposals within 2022/23, they achieved this within 2023/24.

- 8.3.3. . As expected at the outset of the fund, and in line with past data linkage projects, the blockers to achieving project aims centred on: information governance approval delays due to ethical and legal concerns; staff skills and capacity to deliver the required work to timetable, exacerbated by competing demands; data quality issues; and cultural buy-in to projects from strategic decision-makers and operational end users of products. These barriers were inter-locking and compounded one another. Furthermore, there was a consensus among project leads that attracting and recruiting suitably skilled data analysts and scientists was difficult for public agencies, who could not compete with private sector pay and benefits.
- 8.3.4. Project leads found themselves having to justify the importance, value and ethics of the planned projects multiple times. The evidence gathered suggests there were different interpretations of the same legal frameworks (e.g., UK GDPR) across organisations, and differing levels of risk appetite for data sharing and linkage across senior leaders within project partnerships. User testing phases threw up questions of whether data should be shared, who with and for what purpose, requiring project teams to reflect and redefine project plans. A lack of trust in partner organisations making appropriate uses of the data being shared was a further reason for project delays. These issues were (and some remained) a significant blocker for projects to progress their work. Despite these setbacks, projects consistently reported that as a competitive government opportunity, the LDAF was a high-profile and high-value project, and supported conversations about data sharing with senior leaders and non-technical audiences. Project teams believed that the LDAF reinforced cultural shifts in better understanding and trust in such work.
- 8.3.5. Less data mature LAs faced particular challenges, related to the technical skills and capacity of data teams, and balancing the demands of their regular workloads. They lacked the technical infrastructure and people resource to keep up with the LDAF project demands at the required pace. Although they valued working with more data-mature LAs, exemplar projects could not always be directly replicated in their LA due to different technical systems and processes. These LAs were in the process of wider improvement journeys and reflected that they were not likely going to reach the same maturity levels of the higher LAs, who had been well funded and resourced over multiple years to achieve their advanced status. Although progress could be slower in these LAs, they reported benefits from involvement in the LDAF, which improved aspects of their data maturity.
- 8.3.6. Projects were transparent in their underspend on projects, in line with the project delays they had experienced. The flexibility of the fund to allow funding to continue to be used to complete projects beyond March 2023, was expected to help projects to produce their planned deliverables and reach their intended outcomes for data maturity, services and children and families. Project teams were committed to their projects and were motivated by delivering end products to improve access and use of information for services and professionals.

8.4. Supporting better data use and data-informed practice

- 8.4.1. All data projects had either delivered or were making progress to increasing the sharing and matching of data across multiple agencies on a range of interlinked social problems. As such, there was evidence of promise that the LDAF was supporting improvements to local data systems and maturity. Project teams consistently reported that through the work delivered to date, the LDAF had strengthened their data infrastructure and provided lasting legacies for further data projects. The LDAF established secure transfer portals, data sharing agreements with partners, and better equipped staff with the skills and knowledge for secure and ethical data sharing, management and analysis.
- 8.4.2. Once data-sharing and linkage had been established, the next hurdle was to support end users, typically, practice staff (rather than technical/data staff) to understand and use the new information provided. Information, training and automated reminders, and practice discussion forums supported the practical application of data outputs. Projects required engagement by senior service managers and practice leads to shape project designs and also to launch and encourage use of LDAF products and output. The use of the new information flows could not be determined by data teams who lack practice experience. One successful approach was to embed practitioners within the LDAF project team to help translate data products into daily practice among peers. However, the evidence on this aspect of projects was limited, reflecting that rollout of tools had not yet taken place for most projects.
- 8.4.3. Each LA and partner organisation was operating from a unique starting point, both in terms of their self-rated data maturity, and systems for data collection, processing and use, but also the local technical infrastructure available to them. All project teams reported improvements in their data maturity levels, however, progress was made at different paces. With the more data mature LAs achieving more by March 2023 than the least data mature partners. The projects had strengthened networks for the sharing of good practice across LAs among local and regional data analysts, and for some projects also among practitioners, and raised the profile of their data initiatives to senior stakeholder networks for example the Associate of Directors of Children's Services.
- 8.4.4. Aside from one or two more advanced projects who had delivered LA-specific outputs, it was too early for the evaluation to evidence whether projects had increased the use of data to improve operational delivery and strategic commissioning decisions or whether it delivered direct benefits for frontline services, and vulnerable children and families. Where products had been delivered, the feedback from practitioners was largely positive. The new data flows or combination of information had supported their work and given them useful and timely information about children and families. There was evidence from frontline practitioners that getting used to new data systems could be a challenging transition initially, and took time to become familiar with what the data meant and how they should best use it. There were reports of the new data flows identifying needs for children and families, but appropriate or timely support may not be available or frontline staff were unclear on the service pathway.
- 8.4.5. The LDAF and its outputs have the potential to support a wide range of LA and multi-agency projects and initiatives beyond those specified in their initial bids. Strengthening data infrastructure, analytic capabilities and maturity will support local and national policy

directives. For example, many of the LDAF projects and outputs are directly applicable to, and facilitate, data needs to help inform the development of family hubs¹⁵; respond to data needs and gaps set out in the Independent Review of Children's Social Care¹⁶ and support the ongoing reforms for children and young people with SEND and alternative provision¹⁷.

8.5. Evaluating long-term outcomes and impacts

To assess the impact of projects over time, DLUHC may wish to evaluate how frontline practitioners use end products, and whether projects deliver social and economic outcomes and impacts over the longer-term. A feasibility study may be required to assess the viability of impact evaluations to measure the changes delivered for children, families and systems, for specific projects, which are more advanced in their implementation.

8.6. Recommendations for policy and practice

- 8.6.1. Evaluation participants provided suggestions and recommendations for policy and practice to inform future funds and data projects. These are outlined below.

8.7. Policy considerations for future data transformation funds

- 8.7.1. **As with the LDAF, allow scope for sector-led data transformation initiatives:** To support local systems and priorities to be addressed through national funding programmes.
- 8.7.2. **Timeframes for data improvement journeys:** Projects struggled to deliver within the eighteen-month window, suggesting a need to allow more time, for example 2 to 3 years for projects to be set-up and implemented in full.
- 8.7.3. **Funding model:** A payment by results model was suggested to help to keep data projects a priority alongside other demands. However, there may be drawbacks to this approach.
- 8.7.4. **Data maturity and innovation:** A differential funding approach was suggested for less data mature LAs; one suggestion was to provide the funding for foundational technical infrastructure, to improve data maturity; providing the right conditions to support data innovation work. Furthermore, there was a call to allow less data mature LAs to partner and support one another on similar data improvement journeys, and share learning with peers at a similar pace.
- 8.7.5. **Legal and ethical frameworks:** Support shared understandings of legal and ethical boundaries for data sharing and linkage across LA Information Governance teams and Data Protection Officers.

¹⁵ Family hubs: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/family-hubs-and-start-for-life-programme-local-authority-guide>

¹⁶ Independent Review of Children's Social Care: <https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/independent-review-of-childrens-social-care>

¹⁷ SEND and Alternative Provision reforms: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-and-alternative-provision-improvement-plan>

- 8.7.6. **Evaluation:** To capture the full LDAF project processes and outcomes, longer-term evaluation is recommended. Project leads also recommended funding alternative data projects and research to understand the root causes and challenges that the LDAF sought to address

8.8. Practice considerations for future data transformation projects

- 8.8.1. **A dedicated project team** that is knowledgeable about both public services ways of working and data linkage to maintain project momentum and drive the project forward across the partnership.
- 8.8.2. **Appropriate resource and funding:** To help projects get off the ground, financial investment is required in technical solutions and expertise, and dedicated time from in-house data analyst and IT teams.
- 8.8.3. **Project set-up and an early mobilisation** period of around a year was suggested to appoint a project team, governance structures and carry out data mapping and user testing work to refine project designs, and be fully aware of data maturity and gaps of all partners to understand and evaluate data quality. Furthermore, projects suggested early engagement and partnership meetings with all information governance leads to develop a shared understanding of the project and necessary paperwork documenting the legal basis for data sharing and use.
- 8.8.4. **Getting the right people in the room:** For data projects to be successful and have real-world application, the project team needs to garner interest, support and feedback from strategic and operational staff across partnerships to support buy-in, co-design a viable product that end users will engage with and use.
- 8.8.5. **Improving data maturity** goes beyond establishing local data systems and is closely linked to readiness of organisations and staff to have the necessary skills and knowhow to make use of any new information and tools. Information, training, meetings, reminders and feedback loops were important mechanisms to support data literacy, competence, behaviour and culture change.

Appendix 1. Funded projects

This table provides an overview of the ten LDAF projects, including the partnership structure, aims and funding.

Overview of LDAF projects

Project	Partners	Aims	Funding
Avon & Somerset	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bristol City Council (Higher data maturity) Somerset County Council (Higher data maturity) North Somerset Council (Lower data mature) South Gloucestershire Council (Lower data mature) Bath & North East Somerset Council (Lower data maturity) Avon and Somerset Police University of Bristol ARC West, NHS South Central and West Commissioning Support Unit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scale up the 'Insights Bristol' multiagency analytics hub across all LAs, to establish (or increase) two-way data sharing between LAs and the police. In two LAs, establish place-based data sharing to schools from the LA (including police data), with evaluation by ARC West. This work was intended to help identify children at risk of sexual exploitation, criminal exploitation and being not in employment, education or training (NEET). And support police safeguarding decisions. 	£997, 022
East Sussex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> East Sussex County Council (Higher data maturity) Data to Insight (D2I) South East Sector Led Improvement Programme; East Midlands Data Leads Group; Association of Directors of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop LA Early Help data recording and reporting standards for children and family services. This work was intended to support all LAs nationally to better understand their Early Help data and efficiently compare outcomes data with other LAs. There is currently no 	£280, 000

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	<p>Children's Services North West and North East; Eastern Region Early Help Assistant Directors Group; London Borough of Waltham Forest; Wandsworth Borough Council</p>	<p>statutory data return on Early Help provision/outcomes and therefore no common data standards.</p>	
<p>Doncaster & Partners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doncaster Council (Higher data maturity) • Wakefield Council (Lower data maturity) • Leeds Teaching Hospital NHS Trust • Doncaster & Bassetlaw Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust • Bradford Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust • Born in Bradford; University of York; MidYorks Hospitals Trust; Leeds Academic Health Partnership; NIHR Applied Research Collaboration (ARC) Yorkshire and Humber 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up of a Born and Bred In (BaBi) electronic birth cohort programme in 3 local areas (Doncaster, Leeds and Wakefield). This study replicates the well-established Born in Bradford (BiB) birth cohort. • The aim of the study is to gain consent from expectant parents, and then link a range of health and LA held data to track the health of children longitudinally with a view to inform policy and practice for children and families. • A further aim was to spread the birth cohort study model to new areas. 	<p>£810, 363</p>
<p>Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater Manchester Combined Authority (10 LAs; mixed maturity levels) • Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership; Greater Manchester Police; Manchester 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds on the local Discovery Project to improve data sharing using Supporting Families Programme data across GMCA; with an initial focus on crime, education, safeguarding, financial exclusions, 	<p>£950, 000</p>

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	<p>Metropolitan University</p>	<p>domestic abuse and health issues data.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project aimed to develop skills and system capacity across the partnership, to improve data maturity and better data sharing for frontline children’s services. • The project was going to be delivered in four LAs (with lower data maturity) before being rolled out to all ten LAs. 	
<p>Nottingham City</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nottingham City Council (Higher Data Maturity) • Leicestershire County Council (Mid-level Data Maturity) • Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council (Lower Data Maturity) • University of Nottingham, East Midlands Department of Work and Pensions, Association of Directors of Childrens Services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop data warehouses for ‘risk’ and ‘need’ predictions – identifying families requiring Early Help support/services, with a focus on financial problems and homelessness; and create a secure dashboard for practitioners. • Making use of data existing data across Support Families Programme, Youth Justice, education, social care, and Index of Multiple Deprivation; and linking in new data streams on homelessness, rent arrears, welfare rights and council tax. • The aim was to use machine learning to develop predictive models to identify families at risk of financial crisis and offer data driven early intervention to prevent 	<p>£525, 500</p>

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		families from reaching crisis point.	
Hertfordshire & Partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hertfordshire County Council (Mid-level Data Maturity) • Essex Country Council (Mid-level Data Maturity) • Suffolk County Council (Mid-level Data Maturity) • University of Essex 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a new regional data system to accelerate data sharing across eastern region LAs, whereby loading of data is automated; explore if a similar approach is viable for regional public sector partners. • Creation of a data warehouse to consolidate demographic and other contextual data e.g., population trends, DWP, education, public health. • Develop a system for analysis of intelligence across the region, to facilitate a better understanding of demand and need. • 	£1,000,000
Leeds & Bradford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leeds City Council (Mid-level Data Maturity) • Bradford Metropolitan District Council (Lower Data Maturity) • Safer Leeds; NHS Leeds Clinical Commissioning Group; Bradford District Care Foundation Trust; University of Leeds; University of 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve data linkage systems, focusing on children with trauma (adverse childhood experiences) and autism. Join education, health, police, early help/years and housing datasets, to get a longitudinal view of child journeys across Leeds and Bradford, in terms of needs, intervention and outcomes. Alongside this the 	£991, 826

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	Bradford; Bradford Teaching Hospitals Foundation Trust	<p>project delivered family and practitioner consultation to inform practice improvement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This project aimed to support data-informed practice and improvement, so that children and families get the right support at the right time. 	
Pan-London partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All 33 London LAs (Mixed Data Maturity) The Metropolitan Police NHS North West London ICS London Information Exchange Group; London Office of Technology and Innovation; Information Governance for London; Commissioning Alliance; London Office of Technology Initiatives; Imperial College; Oxford University Rees Centre; Social Finance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use data from LA, police and health, to plan and manage child social care placements. Develop an automated data system with a live feed to inform service planning to inform individual children's placements and enable intelligent service planning and commissioning for the children in LA care. Starting with 5 LAs, before rollout to all LAs. The aim was to develop a London sufficiency statement to underpin reform of the social care placements, delivering improved outcomes for children at improved cost for LAs. 	£996, 082
Reading & Berkshire (Better Together) partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading Borough Council and Brighter Futures for Children (Higher Data Maturity) West Berkshire Council (Lower Data Maturity) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Replicating Reading's successful data hub (developed for the Supporting Families Programme) in Swindon, Wokingham and West Berkshire; and develop an accessible interface (single-family view) for frontline practitioners, 	£915, 886

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wokingham Borough Council (Lower Data Maturity) • Swindon Borough Council (Lower Data Maturity) • Solent NHS; Department of Work & Pensions West Berks Cluster; Thames Valley Police 	<p>and protocols on use of data.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project aimed to collate data sources within each LA, to create family profiles, track outcomes for whole families, automate data processes and deliver bespoke reporting. 	
Sunderland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sunderland City Council • South Tyneside Local Authority (Mid-level Data Maturity) • North East Commissioning Support Unit (Higher Data Maturity) • Together for Children • South Tyneside and Sunderland NHS Foundation Trust; Sunderland Clinical Commissioning Group; Harrogate Foundation Trust; Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust; University of Sunderland; Sunderland College; Sunderland Carers Centre; SEND Parent Participation Partnership; Houghton Community Nursery School and Mill Hill Nursery School; Mosaic Federation; Epinay Business and Enterprise School; Gentoo Housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating a self-sustaining innovative a Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) data platform (called Lifestart) which connects data across social care, health and education data, to be used across agencies. • The project aimed to improved decision making and commissioning and outcomes in education, health and social outcomes for children and young people with SEND (age 0-25). 	£453, 029

Appendix 2. Social network analysis

An intention of the evaluation was to measure changes in the types of data flows within project partnerships over the period of the LDAF, through a social network analysis of survey responses to questions about data feeds. However, the low survey response at Wave 2 limited the ability to conduct analysis. We therefore provide the network analysis visuals in the appendix for information but cannot use it to support evidence claims in the main body of the report. A social network analysis was performed for all LDAF project partnerships (where survey data was available). Analysis was not possible for East Sussex and Sunderland projects due to insufficient survey data.

The network visualisations consist of LDAF partnerships (who responded to the survey), and their connections to different data repositories. We have aggregated these into single categories to identify whether partners are sending and/or receiving data, capturing all types of data flows. The data flows include:

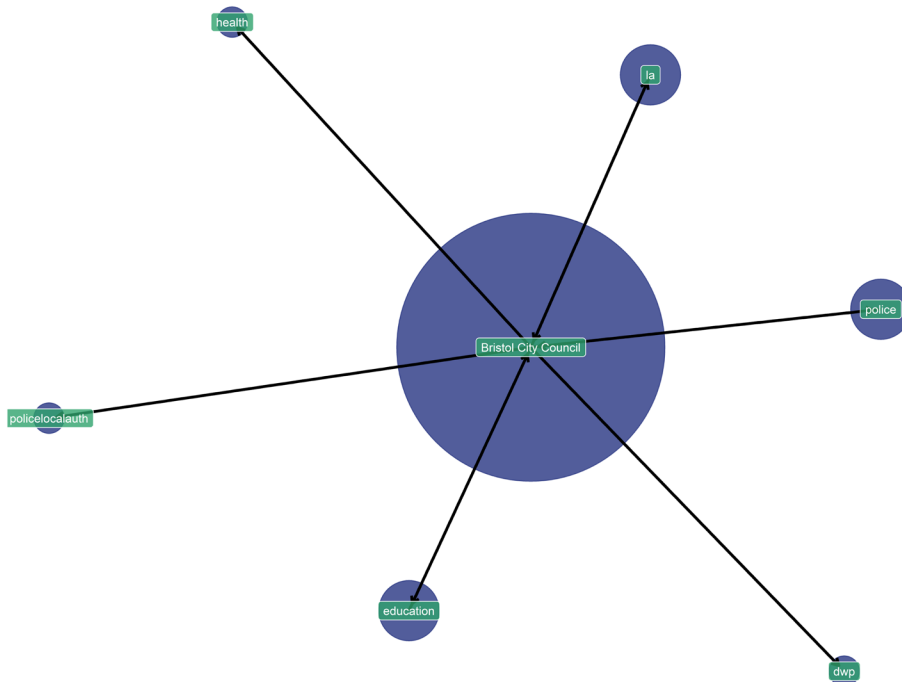
Organisation/ Data source	Data may include...	
Police	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth offending • Adult offending • Domestic abuse 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missing persons • Domestic abuse • Gangs dataset
Local authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Missing persons • Child in need/Child protection/Looked after children • Special Educational Needs and Disability data • Homelessness / risk of homelessness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council tax • Housing data • Early help data • Supporting Families data • Youth offending
Police / local authority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children at risk of sexual exploitation (CSE) 	
NEET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) 	
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Live data (not census) • Exclusions • Attainment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children missing education • Free School Meals data • Children’s centres
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substance misuse • Physical health • Mental health • Dentist records 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patient demographics (e.g. age) • Children’s centres

LOCAL DATA ACCELERATOR FUND PROCESS EVALUATION

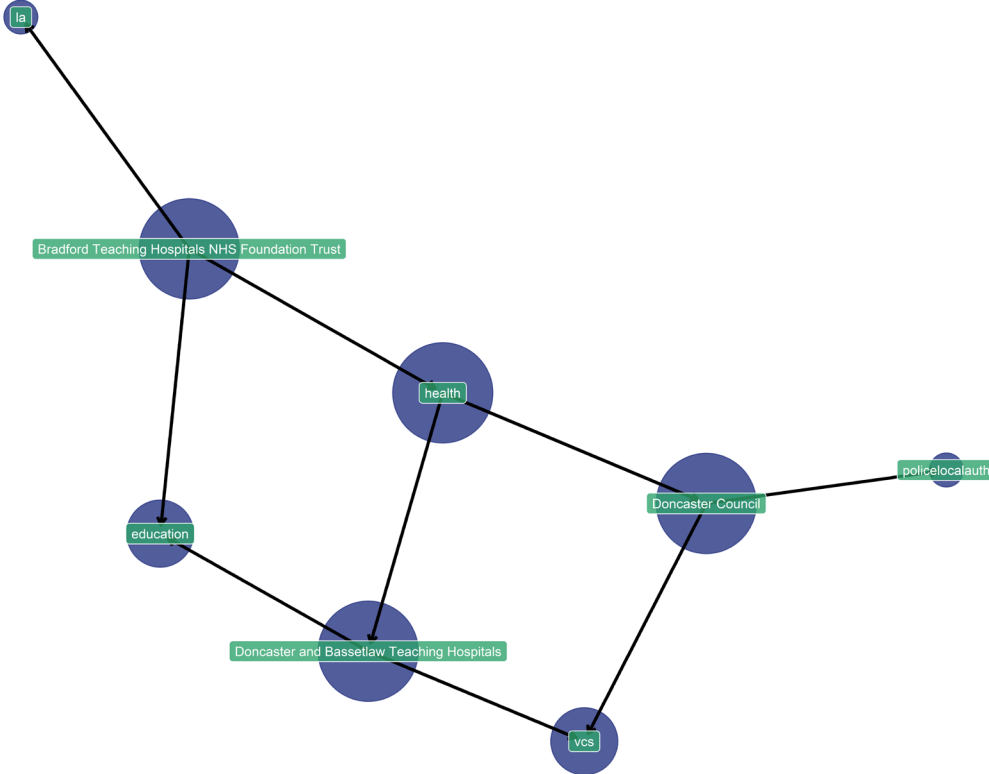
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Child Measurement Programme Integrated Care System data
Department for Work and Pensions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Automated Data Matching Service (ADMS) 	
Voluntary and Community Sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Various data 	
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other (please specify) 	

Avon and Somerset (Bristol)

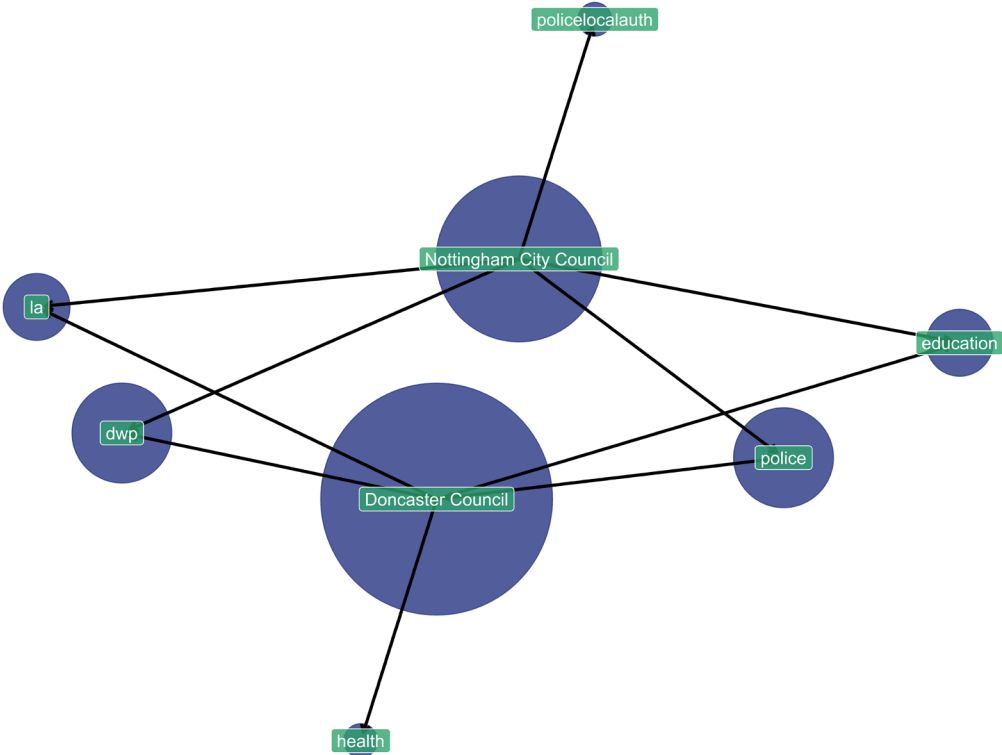
Please note the only survey data was available for one LA in this partnership.



Doncaster & Partners

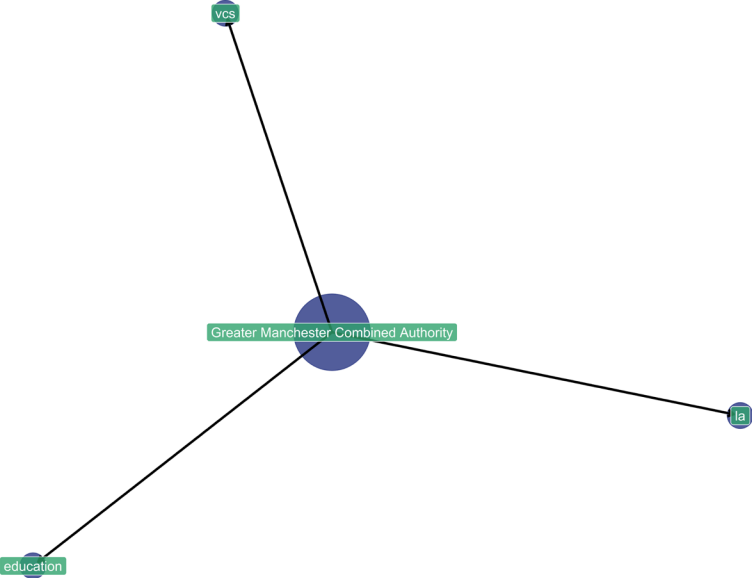


Nottingham City



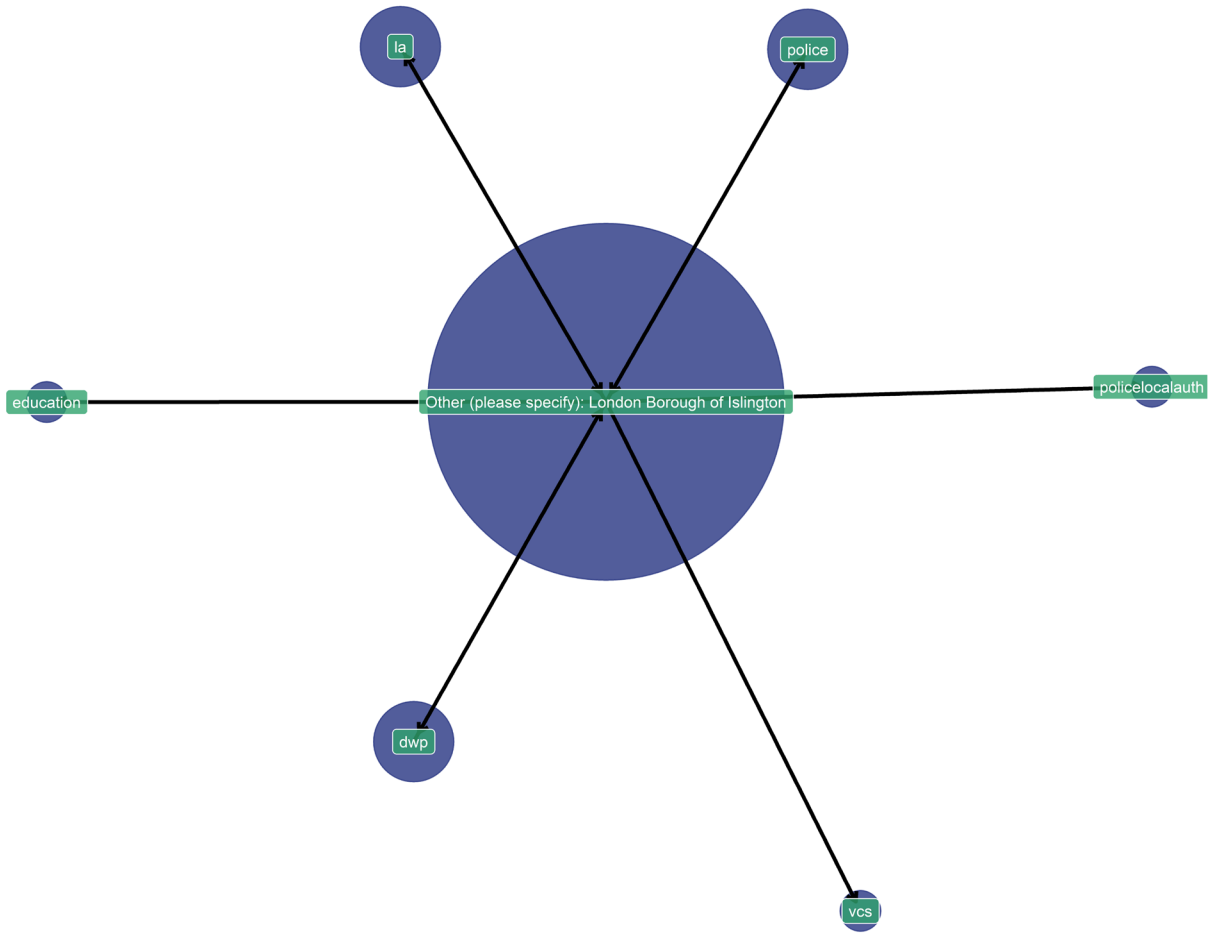
Greater Manchester Combined Authority

Please note the only survey data was available for one LA in this partnership

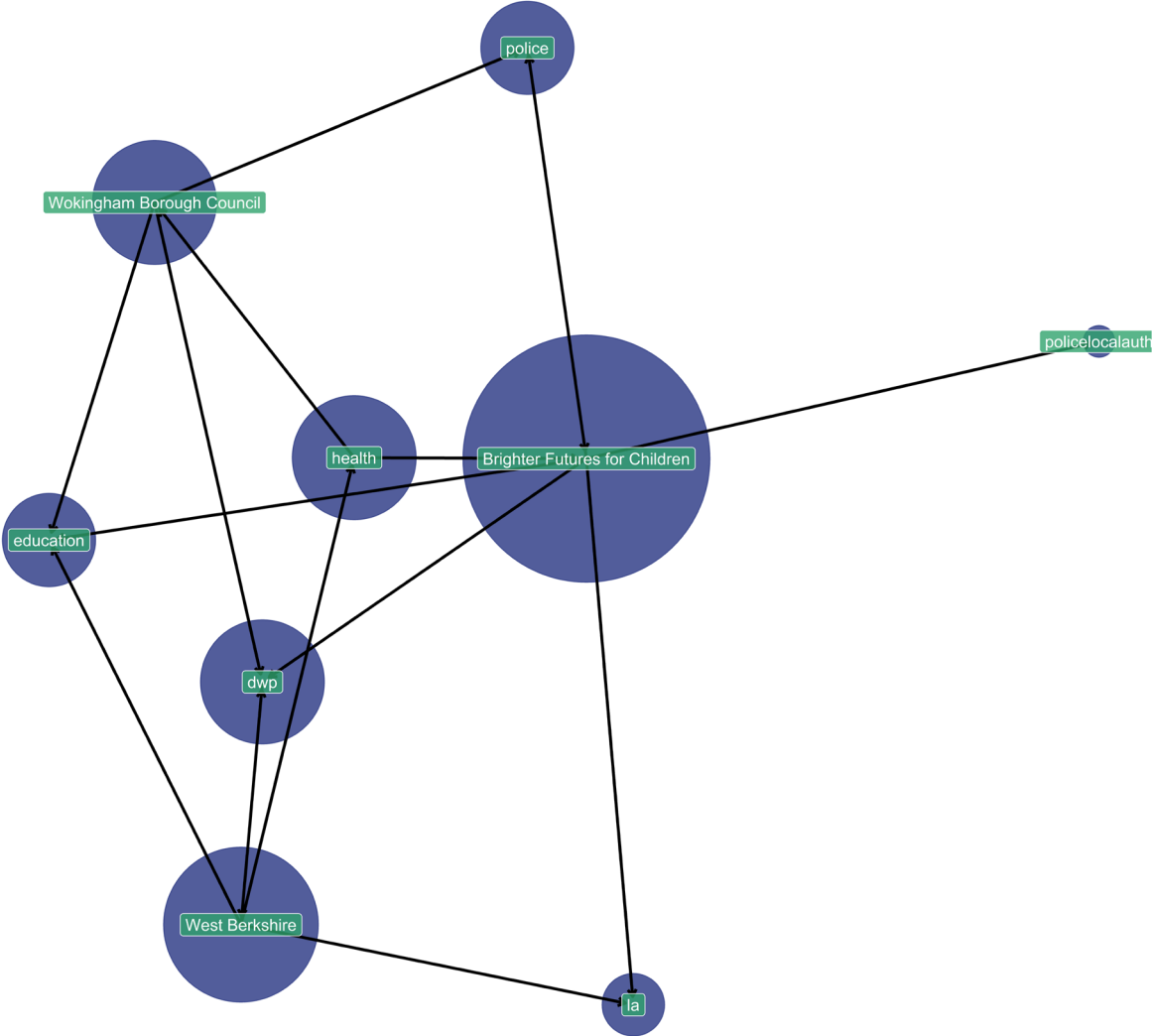


Pan-London

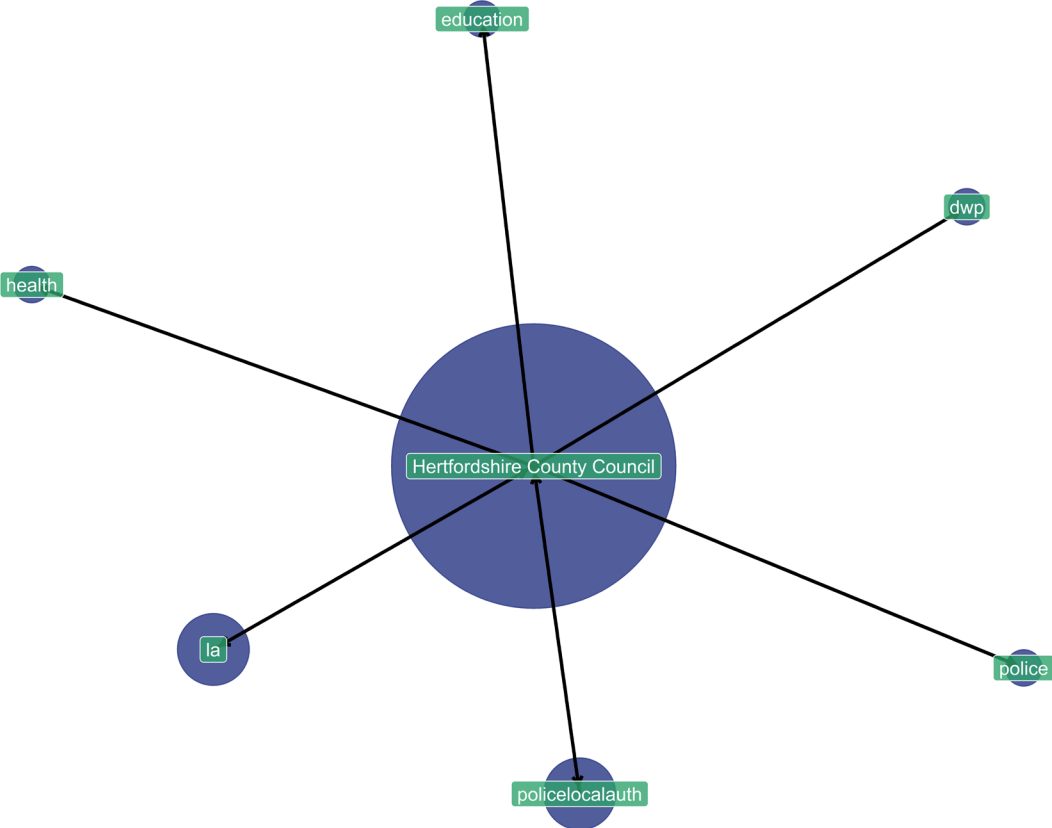
Please note the only survey data was available for one LA in this partnership



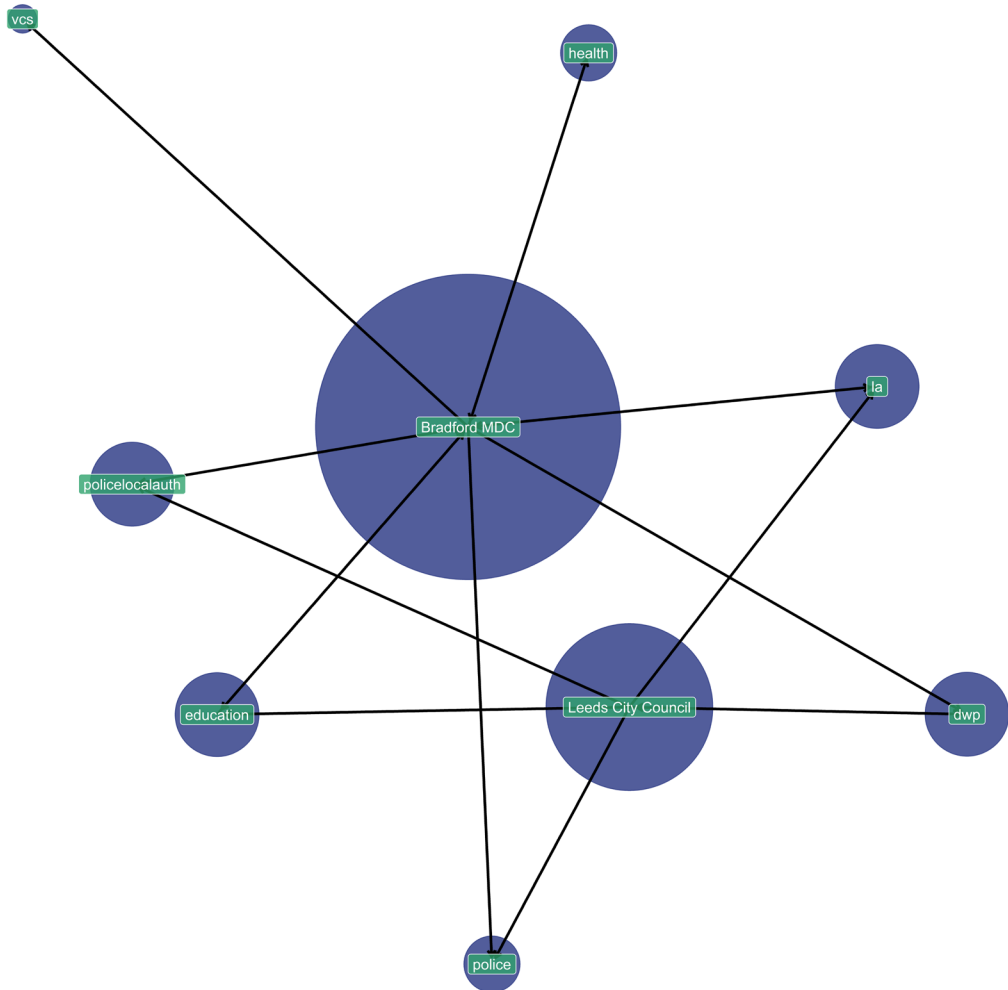
Reading and Berkshire (Better Together)



Hertfordshire & Partners



Leeds and Bradford



Appendix 3: Evaluation tool examples

Survey (Wave 2)

1. Please select the project your organisation is part of.

If your organisation is a part of more than one projects, please select all projects that apply.

Bristol (Avon and Somerset)	<input type="checkbox"/>
East Sussex	<input type="checkbox"/>
Doncaster and partners	<input type="checkbox"/>
Greater Manchester Combined Authority	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hertfordshire and partners	<input type="checkbox"/>
Leeds and Bradford	<input type="checkbox"/>
Nottingham City	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pan- London partnership	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reading and Berkshire Better together	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sunderland	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Please enter the name of your organisation.

3. Please select the category that best describes your organisation.

Local Authority	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health	<input type="checkbox"/>
Research partner (academic)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Police	<input type="checkbox"/>
Education (school, college)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)	[Open text]

4. Which of the following data feeds do you receive or share?

LOCAL DATA ACCELERATOR FUND PROCESS EVALUATION

Please select all data feeds which you currently receive from or share with other organisations. For all data feeds you select, please also indicate whether the feed that you receive is open and/or live.

By **'data feed'** we mean a large quantitative data set which provides data at an individual level which you can use to match data and identify needs.

By **'open'** feed we mean that you receive the data for all people in your local authority. A 'closed' feed would be where you supply a list and they supply the data for those specific people. These are data feeds which provide data at an individual level which you can use to match and identify needs.

By **'live'** feed, we mean data are exchanged with another system in an automated way, providing daily or real time updates, with no human intervention. This would be through the use of automated data feeds or APIs.

We acknowledge that not all data sources will be relevant to every project. You may also receive feeds which are not listed below – you will have the opportunity to list these in the next question.

Organisation	Data type	Receive data	Send data	Open feed	Live feed
Police	Youth offending	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Police	Adult offending	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Police	Domestic abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Police	Missing persons	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Police	Domestic abuse notifications – from Mash / Triage / Front Door	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Police	Gangs dataset	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local authority	Missing persons	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local authority	Child protection/ Child in need / Looked after children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local authority	Special Educational Needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

LOCAL DATA ACCELERATOR FUND PROCESS EVALUATION

	and Disability (SEND) data				
Local authority	Homelessness / risk of homelessness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local authority	Council tax	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local authority	Housing data	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local authority	Early help data	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local authority	Supporting families data	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Local authority	Youth offending	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Police / local authority	Children at risk of sexual exploitation (CSE)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Education	Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Education	Live data (not census)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Education	Exclusions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Education	Attainment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Education	Children missing education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Education	Free School Meals data	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Education	Children's centres	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health	Substance misuse	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health	Physical health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health	Mental health	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health	Dentist records	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

LOCAL DATA ACCELERATOR FUND PROCESS EVALUATION

Health	Patient demographics (e.g. age)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health	Children's centres	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health	National Child Measurement Programme	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health	Integrated Care System data	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Department for Work and Pensions	Automated Data Matching Service (ADMS)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Voluntary and Community Sector	Various data	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Are there any other organisations which you currently receive data from or send data to?

This may include other organisations in your partnership, or other services not listed above. Please enter the name of the organisation and the type of data provided.

Organisation	Data type	Receive data	Send data	Open feed	Live feed
[Enter organisation:]	[Enter data type:]	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

6. Generally, have data sharing arrangements improved, stayed the same or got worse over the last 12 months?

A lot better	<input type="checkbox"/>
A little better	<input type="checkbox"/>
Stayed the same	<input type="checkbox"/>
A little worse	<input type="checkbox"/>
A lot worse	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Please estimate what percentage of your datasets are currently matched using an automated process?

LOCAL DATA ACCELERATOR FUND PROCESS EVALUATION

We understand that any automated system is likely to require some manual resolution of match conflicts.

Automated	0-100% [sliding bar response option]
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8. Do you have and use data warehouses or data lakes?

Data warehouse and data lakes are both widely used for storing big data.

Data lake: vast pool of raw data, the purpose for which is not yet defined.

Data warehouse: repository for structured, filtered data already processed for a specific purpose.

	Do not have	Have but use occasionally / for minimal data	Have and use sometimes / for some data	Have and use frequently / for most data	Have and use all the time / for all data	Don't know
Data warehouse	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Data lake	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

9. If you use system(s) for processing and calculating data, please can you tell us which system that is?

By processing we mean, data management processes e.g., data cleaning, deriving new variables, and matching data. By calculating data, we mean analysing and summarising data. If you use more than one system please select all those that apply.

No system	<input type="checkbox"/>
Excel	<input type="checkbox"/>
Access	<input type="checkbox"/>
SQL database (externally purchased)	<input type="checkbox"/>
SQL database (internally developed)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Programming languages (e.g., R, Python)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other specialised data processing software	<input type="checkbox"/>

LOCAL DATA ACCELERATOR FUND PROCESS EVALUATION

10. Which system(s) do you use for data visualisations/reporting?

Please tell us which systems you would usually use to display data at a strategic and/or operational level, for example in dashboards and displaying analytics. Please select all that apply.

No system	<input type="checkbox"/>
Excel/Access	<input type="checkbox"/>
Specialised data visualisation/reporting software (PowerBI, Tableau, Google Data Studio, QlikView)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Programming languages (e.g., R, Python, SQL)	<input type="checkbox"/>

11. For each statement, please indicate to what extent data is used to inform strategic and operational planning and activities.

We acknowledge that there will be variation depending on data source, thematic area, etc. Therefore, please select the option which best reflects your organisation's overall data usage for each statement.

	Not applicable / No data is used	Using some data, with potential to incorporate lots of additional relevant data	Using good amount of data, with potential to incorporate some additional relevant data	Comprehensive data coverage, with all relevant data being used
Operational reporting for practitioners	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Regular hard data updates for workers at family/individual levels	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strategic reporting showing needs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Strategic reporting showing outputs and outcomes achieved	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

LOCAL DATA ACCELERATOR FUND PROCESS EVALUATION

Strategic reporting projecting future outcomes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Joint partnership reporting (e.g. gang matrices, joint needs assessments)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Needs analysis – multiple issue individuals/families across the authority	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Risk analysis – showing those vulnerable to particular issues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Predictive modelling (e.g. to inform risk/needs analysis)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

12. Please identify which of these models is the closest fit to how you are using data in your organisation.

If you feel that you are between two models, please place the slider accordingly.

Model 1: Receiving hard data from other partners. Stored in separate files, not matched.	<p>[11-point slider from 1 to 6 at 0.5 intervals]</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Model 1</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Between models 1 and 2</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Model 2</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Between models 2 and 3</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Model 3</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Between models 3 and 4</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Model 4</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Between models 4 and 5</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Model 5</p>
Model 2: Bringing some or all data sources together, in Excel/Access and using this to match and store, identify attachments and monitor progress. Receive data reports for outcomes and key indicators such as dates.	
Model 3: Bringing most data sources together. Use of VBA/Access or SQL. Use of fuzzy matcher. Data visible to relevant stakeholders (strategic, operational, practitioners), spreadsheet or form, only provided once or twice during case.	

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<p>Model 4: Using data warehouse/lake, data are accessible to relevant stakeholders automatically and updated when new feeds are received. Automated matching and outcome calculations are built in. Likely to be some open feeds.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/> Between models 5 and 6 <input type="checkbox"/> Model 6
<p>Model 5: As model 4 but primarily open feeds and using the data to conduct needs analysis.</p>	
<p>Model 6: As model 5, but expanded across the whole team / Local Authority / organisation solution</p>	

13. To what extent has your Local Data Accelerator project experienced the following challenges:

	Not at all	To a small extent	To a moderate extent	To a large extent	To an extremely large extent
Cultural (e.g., lack of buy-in from staff, lack of trust, don't see the benefit)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Data quality issues	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ethical	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Informational governance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of technical capabilities (e.g., systems)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Legal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staff skill gaps	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Timetable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

LOCAL DATA ACCELERATOR FUND PROCESS EVALUATION

Other [specify open text]	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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14. Has your project experienced any other challenges?

Please describe them below and tell us what impact they had on your project.

15. Has your project made use of any of the following support offers provided by DLUHC?

Networking opportunities with other funded projects	<input type="checkbox"/>
Slack channel for support for data leads	<input type="checkbox"/>
Information governance (legal compliance) from Cabinet Office	<input type="checkbox"/>
Centre for Data Ethics and Innovation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Digital showcases	
Workshops	
Other [specify open text]	<input type="checkbox"/>
Don't know	<input type="checkbox"/>
We have not made use of any support offers provided by DLUHC	<input type="checkbox"/>

16. Please rate your top three achievements/outcomes from the Data Accelerator Fund project.

	First outcome	Second outcome	Third outcome
Improved internal use of data for performance monitoring and management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Improved internal use of data for analytics to intervene and support families earlier	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Built data sharing pathways with Local Authorities, agencies, and other organisations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Developed internal technical skills and competencies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Developed internal IT systems and processes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Built networks with other analysts and data leads	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Helped other LAs to improve their data maturity			

17. Does your project have any other key achievements or outcomes beyond those listed above?

Please describe them below.

18. Please rate your organisational skills for the following competencies.

	None	Basic	Intermediate	Advanced
Data ingestion, cleaning, sorting and preparation for matching and analysis	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Descriptive statistical analysis	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Inferential statistical analysis	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Machine learning / modelling / classification	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Predictive analysis	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Data visualisation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

19. If you would like to share any comments or feedback about your experience of the Local Data Accelerator fund, please type them below.

Case Study interview topic guide (Wave 2 abridged version)

Roles and responsibilities

- Job role, organisation
- Brief outline of responsibilities
- Involvement in the Local Data Accelerator Fund project

Understanding of the fund, project and partnership

- Understanding of the Fund's aim
- Brief overview of how project came about
 - Rationale - what problem it seeks to address and why
 - Overview - project aims and scope
 - Did the project exist already/how far along were they – what is new or different about it
 - Whether alternative projects were considered/ruled out and why
- Who are the project partners – LA and other partners
 - Varying levels of data maturity
- How partnership was formed – new or existing
- Roles and responsibilities – are some more / less involved

Project implementation / progress

- Project progress – where is the project up to
 - What have been the key milestones
 - Has the project made the level of progress anticipated, if not what issues there have been
 - Explore any changes to project plan since proposal stage and reasons for this
- What has worked well and less well
 - The partnership – any changes to partners, roles/responsibilities/buy-in
 - Technical capabilities – systems used, data quality or data standards
 - Skills development/gaps
 - Informational governance
 - Legal consideration
 - Ethical consideration
 - Cultural e.g., buy-in from LA staff / practitioners
 - Timetable
- How issues have been resolved/ which remain
 - What support is in place for resolving issues and who from
 - How effective is this support
- Will project be completed by March 23
 - Explore where they will be up to and alternative arrangements, if not
 - Funding sources
 - Sustainability / plans

LOCAL DATA ACCELERATOR FUND PROCESS EVALUATION

- Have the planned knowledge exchange / skills sharing activities set out in the proposal been delivered
 - What activities has the project team run to support skills sharing and good practice with other LAs
 - Producing / sharing products, guidance and templates
 - Skills and training
 - Advising other areas
 - Create networks
 - Agile ceremonies, sprint reviews, show and tells, weeknotes, blogs
 - What has helped or made it harder to deliver the planned activities
- How well have these been received
 - Which audiences have been reached
 - Which audiences haven't been reached
- What's your learning on how to deliver effective knowledge exchange / skills sharing
- Overall lessons learnt
 - Practical advice for other LAs trying to something similar
 - Practical advice for national government funding data transformation projects
 - What would you like others (e.g., LA leadership or stakeholders) to know about this work
 - What plans they have to spread the word about their project to support learning for other organisations – which audiences, forums, format

Project outcomes to-date

- What are the project outcomes/key successes to-date
 - What has been achieved for whom
 - Senior leaders, frontline practitioners, children and families - *seek examples*
 - What has changed as a result of the project output [name project / output/ data] – *seek examples*
 - Changes to policy or procedures
 - Ways of working or culture within the organisation
 - Access to/ use of data
 - Data informed decisions
 - Changes to identification of family needs
 - Changes to service delivery
 - Changes in outcomes for families
 - Is there any evidence to support this
 - Can outcomes be attributed to the funded project
 - Are there other explanations for outcomes (aside from the funded project)
 - What would further enhance its benefit for frontline use
- Has the project supported improved data maturity for LAs and partners
 - Extent to which the fund has supported improvements to data maturity
 - How is this known

LOCAL DATA ACCELERATOR FUND PROCESS EVALUATION

- What alternative explanations are there for data maturity changes (aside from the fund)
- What will be the legacy of the project
 - Would this project have been started / possible without this funding
 - Sustainability of projects going forward

Any other comments

- Check if there is anything else they would like to add