

# Partnerships for People and Place Programme

Evaluation & Learning Report

March 2023





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# 1 Executive Summary

## 1.1 Introduction

The Partnerships for People and Place (PfPP) programme was delivered by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing, and Communities (DLUHC) between February 2021 and March 2023. The programme aimed to test whether closer working between different parts of central and local government can bring measurable benefits to local communities and people. In doing so, the programme piloted a new approach to policy design and delivery by funding 13 local authorities to select a hyper-local challenge in their area they felt could be better tackled through improved central and local government coordination. It brought together 11 central government departments and arms-length bodies who committed to support the programme. The programme Theory of Change (ToC) described two pathways for achieving the intended outcomes:

- **Building understanding** amongst central and local government partners by enabling those involved to develop trusted working relationships and/or providing opportunities to gain new experiences and insights. Participation in the programme intended to improve stakeholders' knowledge and understanding of the extent to which (and if so, why) central government involvement in place-based policy making can improve local outcomes.
- **Delivering effective local interventions** by central government involvement helping to unblock local barriers in a timely manner, and local places iterating their project design. It was hoped that the new ways of working established by the programme would result in the timely removal or resolution of policy, regulatory or information barriers that have impeded successful interventions for residents in the past.

### 1.1.1 Methods

The evaluation was designed to understand the extent to which the programme achieved these outcomes, as well as capture learning about the enablers and barriers to improved collaboration between central and local government. This includes tracking and quantifying the current system of funding from central government into each of the 13 pilot locations and identifying potential "misalignment or duplication" in central government funding streams. The evaluation comprises:

- 1. Outcome and process evaluation** (using contribution analysis, a theory-based evaluation approach) to assess the contribution of the programme's activities to outcomes for local places and central government. Throughout the evaluation, the team drew on developmental evaluation principles to gather and share evidence on a regular basis with DLUHC. The final evaluation report is informed by largely qualitative data collected from stakeholders in central government and project teams between February 2022 to May 2023. This includes data collected through monthly evaluation check-ins with each pilot, semi-structured interviews, and a review of DLUHC and places' monitoring, evaluation, and reporting data.
- 2. Economic evaluation** to estimate the level of change in outcomes in the pilot areas that would be necessary for the programme's benefits to meet costs. We conducted pilot-specific breakeven analysis on eight pilots.

### 3. Spend mapping exercise to map central government funding at a local authority and central government level; and map all funding (government and non-government) to the specific locally-defined priority outcomes of the 13 pilot areas.

Below we describe key learnings about central-local collaboration from the programme, before assessing the extent to which each of the intended outcomes were achieved through the programme, drawing on each step of the Theory of Change (available in Annex 5).

## 1.2 Key learnings about central-local collaboration

The programme tested the extent and influence of central-local collaboration in addressing challenges and improving outcomes in public services within a specific place. Central-local collaboration includes making connections between different central government programmes operating in a place as well as between central government programmes and local authorities and other local actors. The programme emphasised how both local and national systems for delivering public services are currently not designed to facilitate joined-up working, reflecting tensions between the need for central scrutiny to ensure value for money and the flexibilities sought locally to tailor approaches to the needs of a place. This typifies the persistent nature of well-known structural barriers that hinder coordination and result in geographic disparities as highlighted in the [Levelling Up White Paper](#). Learning from the programme highlighted how structural barriers at a national level impact the ability of local authorities to meet the needs of communities including:

- **Organisational barriers** across central, regional and local government that result in a lack of coordination, duplication of efforts and missed opportunities for collaboration. This can limit the integration of services that cut across central government departments including education and employment, health, energy, and multiple disadvantage. In the context of local place systems, this means that interventions targeting specific social problems might be designed and implemented without considering the wider neighbourhood context or potential synergies with other initiatives. This results in local authorities managing multiple programmes, with specific requirements and targets, even within the same policy area.
- **Funding and commissioning processes** that result in duplicated funding flows, with multiple funding flows from central government departments to multiple recipients in a place. This includes 384 different grants to 1,613 recipients in Wakefield, 229 grants to 1,278 recipients in Durham, 197 grants to 953 recipients in Hackney and 153 grants to 513 recipients in Luton. Spend mapping analysis found extensive duplication in funding both within and across departments:
  - Different departments provided multiple awards in the sample policy area. For example, DESNZ and DLUHC both providing business support grants; DLUHC and DHSC providing support in relation to homelessness and rough sleeping; and DESNZ and DCMS providing funding in relation to net-zero and energy efficiency.
  - Single departments providing different grants from the same policy area to multiple recipients. For example, in Cornwall four grant programmes related to net zero went to ten different recipients across the public, private and education sectors.
  - Although there is a need for central accountability, the complexity of funding streams can be a barrier to effective strategy or policy implementation. It also results in significant time investment for local authorities to navigate overlapping streams and meet multiple reporting requirements.

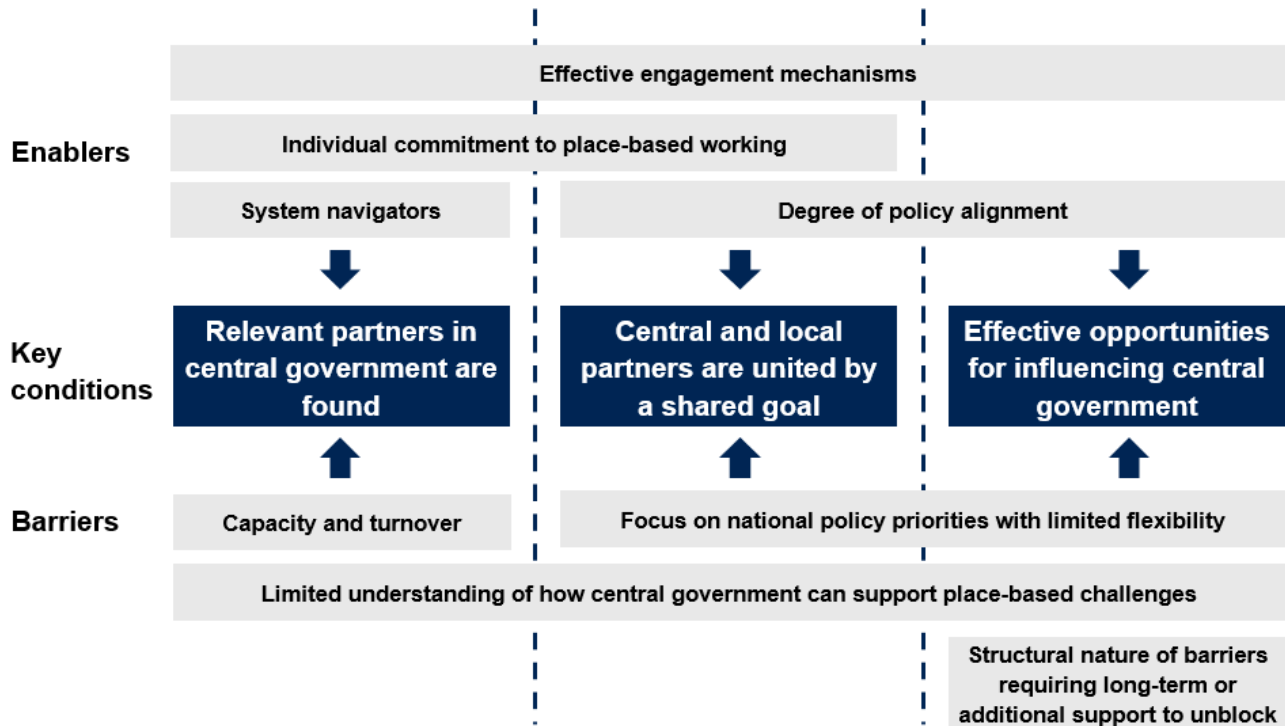
- **Barriers to data sharing** between central government departments, local authorities and other local services which prevent multi-agency working and local coordination. Barriers included constrained capacity locally to work through data protections requirements, aversion to risks associated with sharing personal data, as well as limited understanding of what data is held across all levels of government and service providers.
- **Short-term policy and funding cycles** which affect long-term planning and add administrative burden and complexity. This limits opportunities to adapt programmes based on what works, invest in sustainable programmes that address long-term issues such as regeneration, and conduct adequate evaluation and monitor long-term impacts.

The experiences of those involved in the programme illustrates the deeply ingrained nature of these structures, which limited the ability for pilots and central government partners to unblock barriers within the year available for delivery. This reflects the need for time, social capital and culture change to encourage new ways of working. Despite this challenging context, the evaluation identified three key conditions that can support greater central-local collaboration:

- 1. Identifying relevant partners** within both central and local government. Relevance related to the specific role and remit of individuals including their area of focus, seniority, networks and convening power. This influenced both their willingness to explore options for unblocking barriers and their capabilities to affect change.
- 2. Developing shared goals** that align both with local needs and central government priorities was crucial for incentivising engagement. Aligning what local places required with central government partners' incentives and motivations as per their policy priorities secured central government partners' support for and engagement in the programme's pilots.
- 3. Creating or capitalising on opportunities to influence** central government policy. This involves local or central stakeholders identifying leverage points where collaboration is more likely to be possible due to the timing, topic or stakeholders involved in a policy.

As illustrated in Figure 1, several enablers and barriers identified through the programme underpin each of these conditions and are summarised below.

Figure 1. Diagram summarising the enablers and barriers to achieving key conditions for creating effective collaboration between local and central government.



### 1.3 Enablers of central-local collaboration

Insights from the programme highlighted four enabling factors which supported the conditions of effective central-local collaboration. These applied to places and central government partners to varying extents, helping to explain the differing levels of central-local collaboration achieved. In this way, these enablers were necessary but not sufficient for effective collaboration during the lifetime of the programme. The enablers are listed below from most to least significant:

- **Close policy alignment between local challenges and central government priorities** drove partnership working and opened opportunities for local partners to influence national policy. This factor was key for developing central-local partnerships, capturing new funding opportunities and unblocking barriers in pilots in Durham, Bradford, and East Sussex. Ensuring close policy alignment heightened incentives for central-local collaboration as the reasons for engagement were clear for both parties and there was a shared purpose for working together.
- **Facilitating effective engagement mechanisms** provided opportunities to connect with new central government partners, identify areas where central and local government policy were aligned as well as where central government officials could contribute or add value to pilot teams. Several places facilitated routine and well-structured engagement opportunities that allowed them to meet, share insights and build understanding of how central government partners could contribute to their pilot. This was notably seen in East Sussex, Southwark, Durham, Wakefield and Bradford pilots.
- **System navigators through the DLUHC PfPP team** and key points of contact within departments proved critical to connecting all place teams to central government partners and identifying suitable central-local partnerships. There was a consensus among local place teams that without DLUHC PfPP leads, they would not have been able to identify or engage with central government partners.

- **Individual commitment to place-based working** influenced civil servants' interest in the programme activities and their willingness to prioritise investing in local collaboration despite time and resource constraints. Place teams often engaged with central government partners in roles dedicated to place-based working, who had prior experience collaborating with local government or had a personal interest in the place or policy area. This included members of the Place Working Group, regionally based civil servants from Homes England, DWP, DHSC, and wider central government partners with personal interest in specific places.

#### 1.4 Barriers to central-local collaboration

Evaluation learning highlighted four barriers which applied to most pilots consistently across the programme. The presence of these barriers across nearly all pilots emphasised the difficulties in building new relationships and sustaining collaboration within existing structures and ways of working. Although there is strong evidence of engagement between central and local stakeholders, with over one hundred central government teams linked to places, nearly half of pilots deprioritised efforts to drive central government involvement following early challenges. The barriers are listed below from most to least significant:

- **Limited understanding of *how* central government can support place-based challenges and *who* to engage within a department** amongst all pilot teams at the beginning of the programme. This created challenges to engagement in the initial stages of delivery and restricted the ability of place teams and the DLUHC PfPP team to identify which central government partners were most relevant to their work, beyond the relevant departments. This also impacted how well pilots were able to define 'asks' of central government, influencing engagement opportunities and their ability to align requests in ways that promoted collaboration. For example, providing robust evidence to underpin requests that could be taken forward by central government partners.
- **The focus on national policy priorities with limited flexibility for local adaptations** posed challenges for almost all local places which intended to leverage the programme to influence policy and funding. Precise policy and funding cycles, as well as long approval processes, hindered the ability of places to generate inroads influencing national policy, particularly where these were at a mature stage of development.
- **The time and resources required to unblock structural barriers that need senior sponsorship and culture change to work in a place-based way.** All place teams identified some barriers to local change relating to legislation, ways of working, and processes which could not be addressed in the timeframe or with the resources and activities provided by the programme.
- **Capacity and turnover within central government** was highlighted in some places to have restricted the ability to form relationships and build a shared understanding of an issue without pre-defined outcomes. This made it more difficult to create the space to explore potential areas for collaboration.

#### 1.5 Achieving outcomes : Building Understanding

Participation in the programme was intended to improve stakeholders' knowledge and understanding of the extent to which (and if so, how) central government involvement in place-based policy making can improve local outcomes. As set out in its Theory of Change, the programme assumed that by facilitating —local-central engagement, local and central government participants would develop trusted working



relationships and have opportunities to gain new experiences and insights. This would result in greater understanding of:

- Policy or regulatory changes that could improve local outcomes
- How best to facilitate central government support for improving local outcomes
- Duplication and gaps in funding

**Overall, the programme resulted in increased engagement between central and local government partners with over one hundred central government teams connected to places. This led to central government partners gaining new insights and experiences, as well as local government partners building understanding about how to facilitate central government support.**

#### 1.5.1 The programme facilitated engagement between over a hundred central and local stakeholders.

**Overall, the programme linked 119 central government teams across 17 departments (plus the Policy Lab) to place teams.** 82 central government officials also participated in the Government Place Working Group or Government Place Board.

**However, there was variation in the depth and extent of engagement during the *pilot phase, which was delivered during a significant time of change within government, including periods of time impacted by restrictions or changes to working patterns, travel options and wider ways of working necessitated by the national response (and associated restrictions) related to the Covid-19 pandemic. We believe these factors may have impacted the attendance levels at some of the events described below.*** In total, under half of central government teams involved in the programme in some capacity (39%, 47 out of 119 teams) engaged with a specific pilot more than once. This signals how more sustained central-local engagement did not consistently occur following initial meetings or visits facilitated by the programme. Challenges among pilot teams defining their ask of central government was the primary barrier highlighted by central government partners, the DLUHC PfPP team and pilot leads preventing the continuation of engagement.

Similarly, there was inconsistent attendance from central government partners at the Government Place Board and Working Group. On average each Working Group member attended a total of three out of 16 meetings and only three individuals attended at least half of all meetings. This reflects levels of turnover within central government and the capacity constraints on civil servants, particularly at senior levels. It also highlights the difficulty maintaining engagement in cross-cutting topics or long-term change that is not always perceived as directly relevant to a specific policy remit.

#### 1.5.2 The programme built trusted relationships between central and local government where more sustained engagement took place.

**All pilot leads felt that trusting relationships were developed between DLUHC PfPP leads and pilot teams.** However, there was greater variation in the extent to which trusted relationships were built between pilots and other central government partners. In the seven pilots that established more sustained engagement with central government, there is strong evidence this built trusting relationships. However, this was not reflected in the six areas unable to develop more sustained and regular engagement with central government. This highlights the importance of ongoing communication and touchpoints for establishing trust, through routine and sustained engagement opportunities.

**Engagement activities resulted in central government partners gaining new insights and experiences through the programme.** There was agreement amongst central government partners that they gained:

- A greater understanding of local government functions, structures and priorities.
- Exposure to challenges in local areas, how national policy is applied locally and the diversity of perspectives within a place.
- Networking benefits from attending the programme forums including meeting colleagues both within and outside of their department.

### 1.5.3 Place teams built an understanding of how to engage central government, even if this did not always result in learning how central government can improve local outcomes.

**Pilot activities including engagement with local partners and communities was perceived as a more significant factor improving understanding about how to unblock local barriers amongst pilot teams than engagement with central government partners.** There is only evidence from one pilot (East Sussex) that involvement in the programme resulted in an improved understanding of what regulatory and policy barriers could be alleviated through collaboration. This was achieved through a sustained co-design phase with central government partners before the pilot finalised its delivery approach, suggesting this type of deliberative work could be tested in future programmes intending to support central-local collaboration.

**There is limited evidence that the programme contributed to an improved understanding of duplication or gaps in funding, with no consensus amongst pilot leads or central government partners of the extent to which spend mapping insights improved understanding within the life of the programme.** Spend mapping activities originally planned for the early stages of the programme took longer than anticipated, limiting the ability to explore the implications of the mapping on central government partners or local places. However, there was support for further work to understand the complexity and duplication of funding streams with interest across Cities and Local Growth Area teams, the Cabinet Office grants team and with DESNZ to continue the work.

**In contrast, there is strong evidence that the programme contributed to an improved understanding amongst half of pilot teams about how to best facilitate central government support.** This included the importance of (1) being clear in how to define requests, (2) the need to show high standards of evidence to influence central government policy, and (3) improved understanding of the process for making policy or regulatory changes in central government.

**Despite this, there remain gaps in local place teams' knowledge of central systems and structures, particularly related to how to identify relevant central government partners without a DLUHC PfPP lead acting as a navigator.** In this way, the reliance on the DLUHC PfPP team as navigators may have limited the extent to which local leads gained understanding of how to navigate central government structures or identify policymakers relevant to their needs.

## 1.6 Achieving outcomes : Effective interventions

While the individual interventions funded through the programme focused on a diverse range of policy issues, all looked to achieve improved short-term outcomes for residents by working more closely with central government partners. As set out in the programme Theory of Change, it was hoped the new ways of working established by the programme would result in the timely removal of policy, regulatory or

information barriers that have impeded successful interventions for residents in the past. This would be supported by local places iterating their programme design.

**Overall, although seven pilots achieved the initial short-term outcomes set by teams, there is limited evidence that central government partners supported this by unblocking barriers. This reflects the ingrained nature of current systems which reduced the ability for join-up, as well as the short timeframes and challenge of engaging stakeholders in the programme.**

#### 1.6.1 Central government engagement did not consistently support places to unblock barriers.

**Participation in the programme unblocked informational barriers in nine pilots. However, there is no consensus that this positively influenced delivery where this occurred.** Despite approximately half of pilot leads feeling supported by central government partners to unblock barriers, this only occurred in one pilot (Bradford). Here, participation in the programme connected the pilot team with Homes England officials. The resulting meetings supported the Council to amend an existing Homes England grant agreement to enable better access to transitional housing for people aged under 55. This meant empty housing stock could be used for outpatients, freeing up hospital beds.

**In addition, central government engagement through the programme resulted in two pilots unlocking funding opportunities from DESNZ.** The Horden Together project secured £87,250 to support the establishment of a Mine Water Heating Community Energy project and the East Sussex pilot received £100,000 to continue supporting vulnerable residents to access support for home insulation improvements and advice.

#### 1.6.2 The flexibility of the programme allowed pilots to change their approach during delivery in response to new insights or context, although this was limited by project timeframes.

**There was broad support among pilot leads for the flexibility of the programme, which enabled pilots to iterate without a focus on specific metrics or outcomes.** Overall, there is evidence that nine pilots adapted their approach as a result of engagement with local or central government partners. This includes changing the target beneficiary group, adapting the delivery model, defining project outcomes with local partners or changing the central government partners they worked with. The timeframes of the programme limited the opportunity for the evaluation to capture the net benefits of iterations to pilot interventions.

#### 1.6.3 Strong local engagement was supported by the endorsement of central government partners.

**Central government engagement was not a pre-requisite for successful local delivery.** Even in cases where pilots established sustained engagement or developed improved understanding of what regulatory and policy barriers could be alleviated (such as East Sussex), this did not consistently result in the ability to unblock barriers or achieve short-term outcomes locally. Instead, all seven pilots which attained short-term outcomes attributed this achievement primarily to strong engagement and contributions from local stakeholders.

**There is some evidence that central government backing through the programme helped encourage local actors to take part in the pilots.** This contributed to effective pilot delivery by virtue of central government's sponsorship of the project and highlights the potential value of central-local collaboration.

**Without emerging evidence of person-level outcomes, there is a high degree of uncertainty in the extent to which we can assess the feasibility of pilots achieving economic breakeven.** At the time

of data collection, assessment of person-level outcomes relied only on emerging perspectives from pilot teams, delivery partners as well as preliminary pilot reach and output data.

**The analysis indicates that among the eight pilots undergoing a breakeven analysis, three (Cornwall, Liverpool and Newcastle) have shown some evidence of progress towards achieving outcomes within a range that would yield net economic breakeven.** However, to make the economic breakeven case fully would require data to be collected that evidences the number of beneficiaries who experienced these outcomes, ideally through primary data collection such as quantitative surveys.

## 1.7 Conditions for change and recommendations

The three key conditions for collaboration identified through the programme form the basis for suggested considerations for improving central-local collaboration in the future, reflecting what may be possible within current organisational and financial structures across local and central government. The recommendations included below have been developed in response to findings from the evaluation and several workshops hosted by DLUHC with relevant local and central partners.

To help **build shared goals** between central and local partners:

- Local authorities could develop a peer network to support evidence generation and build understanding across local authorities of approaches to collaboration with central government on place-based policy and programme design. Department leadership and those with place-based roles could encourage a change in perceptions to recognise local engagement and collaboration as a core part of policymaking with regular communication and incentives for policymakers.
- Central government departments could collaborate with local authorities to set clear standards for evidence generation, and guidance for use of existing evidence where available in line with Green Book guidance. This could form a part of bid-making, co-design, or programme 'set-up' phases across central government funded initiatives.
- Central government departments could provide local authorities with greater flexibility to use new and existing funding streams to target local priorities, where this can be balanced against the need for national accountability, monitoring and the requirement to sign detailed funding agreements.
- Central government departments could continue to build an evidence base about the impact of funding complexity and funding short-termism to deepen our understanding of the costs.
- Local authorities could set up processes to track the administrative resource dedicated to grant applications to deepen understanding of the impacts of administrative burdens on bidders including local authorities and VCS organisations.

To help both central government and local government stakeholders **identify relevant partners** to collaborate with:

- Central government could develop new roles or expand existing roles that lead on place-based engagement, including senior level positions.
- Central government could build stronger co-ordination between levels of government by developing cross-departmental networks focused on place-based policymaking.

To help create **effective engagement opportunities**:

- Central government leadership could incentivise, promote and provide permission for policy teams to participate in local projects and recognise this as a key part of their role.
- Local authorities and central government policymakers could embed engagement and co-design phases into project designs, creating a space for central and local partners to come together and shape delivery approaches.

## 2 Introduction

### 2.1 Background

The Partnerships for People and Place (PfPP) programme was delivered by the Department of Levelling Up, Housing, and Communities (DLUHC) between February 2021 and March 2023.

The programme, funded under the HM Treasury Shared Outcomes Fund, was developed based on evidence from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), Local Government Association, insights from the Integration Area Programme and learning from previous place-based programmes such as Total Place.<sup>2</sup> This evidence suggests that there are duplications and inefficiencies in central government funding streams where (1) central government set differing priorities and timelines to those required by communities, (2) department objectives are repeated across multiple programmes targeting similar issues and populations, and that such inefficiencies hinder outcomes for local communities.<sup>3,4,5</sup> Much of the existing literature on place-based working focuses on how to join up services locally, building person-centered approaches that better meet the needs of individuals. However, there is a [gap in evidence exploring the link between central interventions and local coordination capacity](#), or how better central coordination and collaboration with local areas results in improvements for communities.

The programme was established to respond to the ‘cross-cutting challenge’ of joining up within and between central government departments and between central government and local authorities. The programme intended to test new ways of working to further build the evidence and explore different approaches to drive change in the way central and local government work together and engage with individuals to improve outcomes. The programme sought to unblock barriers to partnership working and bring place to the center of policymaking – aiming to deliver better outcomes for local people.

### 2.2 The PfPP approach

The PfPP programme aimed to test whether closer working between different parts of central and local government can bring measurable benefits to local communities and people. In doing so, the programme piloted a new approach to policy design and delivery by funding local authorities to select a hyper-local challenge in their area they felt could be better tackled through improved central and local co-ordination. The programme provided funding for ‘place-based’ working, defined as public policy and programming that:

- Is applied to a geographically-defined area.
- Involves collaboration between central government and local partners to develop inclusive and flexible local solutions rather than centrally directed policies.
- Is defined, informed and delivered locally.

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<sup>2</sup> E.g. ‘Fragmented Funding – report’, Local Government Association, 2020, ‘Local government grants: how effectively do they support communities?’, CIPFA, 2021 as reported in DLUHC (2021). Partnerships for People And Place – Bid Pack – Attachment 3 – Statement of Requirements.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Central government’ refers to national central government departments, Arm’s Length Bodies and regional delivery agencies or teams.

<sup>4</sup> DLUHC (2021). Partnerships for People and Place: Statement of Requirements.

<sup>5</sup> DLUHC (2019). Shared Outcomes Fund proposal.

The key objectives of the programme as set out in the original programme guidance were to:<sup>6</sup>

- **Analyse:** Baseline and analyse place-based funding received in pilot areas and the outcomes that funding seeks to achieve. This was to be done through a ‘spend mapping’ activity, which has been delivered as a joint component of the contract under which this evaluation is also delivered.
- **Test:** For local government and partners to develop and compete for funding (under PfPP) for projects delivered through coordination between central and local government and partners that might address a small set of priority outcomes, or a single outcome, and address local challenges, thus testing a new way of working with central government to improve local outcomes.
- **Connect:** Through the test projects, to establish scalable systems to simplify and streamline central and local government coordination in pilot locations.
- **Learn:** To capture in real-time best practice place-based policy design and develop resources to share learning.
- **Propose:** To describe new ways of working, operating models or structures which could help to tackle the issues uncovered – based on what was observed at central and local levels.

The programme hypothesis was that better coordination within and between government and local places can improve efficiency and outcomes within a place. The programme’s vision was to empower local communities to enable them to develop and deliver solutions to issues important to them, while being supported by central government in a joined-up way. The intended outcomes were complex and exist across multiple levels of government:

- **Within central government (central-central)**– improved coordination within and between government departments, including arm’s length bodies.

**Between central government and local places (central-local)**– improved coordination between central and local government (Birmingham, Bradford, Cornwall, Durham, East Sussex, Hackney, Liverpool, Luton, Newcastle, Northumberland, Southwark, Sunderland and Wakefield).

- **For communities (person level)** – improved outcomes for people as a result of better central and local government coordination.<sup>7</sup>

The DLUHC PfPP team shortlisted 13 local authorities from a total of 33 which were longlisted to participate in the programme. This longlist was identified following a DLUHC-led mapping process of existing place-based initiatives. The 13 pilot teams were given £50,000 initial funding to develop a delivery plan between November 2021 and February 2022. Each delivery plan set out the challenge pilot teams felt greater coordination with central government could address, focusing on hyper-local areas or populations in recognition of the short-timeframes and limited funding available. The 13 pilot interventions are listed in Table 1 below. The pilots focused on a variety of local issues related to multiple and complex needs, employment, welfare and skills, local infrastructure, community cohesion and health and wellbeing.

The DLUHC PfPP delivery team and partner departments assessed the submitted delivery plans. Through this process, it was agreed that a focus on the strongest delivery plans would maximise the

<sup>6</sup> DLUHC (2021). Partnerships for People and Place: Guidance for local expressions of interest.

<sup>7</sup> DLUHC (2021). Partnerships for People And Place – Bid Pack – Attachment 3 – Statement of Requirements.

chances of achieving the programme's objectives. The funding allocation for the 13 local government partners was therefore split into three categories:

- Four local government partners (Birmingham, Cornwall, East Sussex and Southwark) received 95% of funding requested (between £314,000 - £335,000).
- Six local government partners (Bradford, Hackney, Liverpool, Luton, Sunderland and Wakefield) received two-thirds of the funding requested (between £221,000 - £248,000).
- The final three local government partners (Durham, Newcastle and Northumberland) each received £50,000 in addition to the initial funding received to develop a delivery plan (each receiving £100,000 PfPP funding in total).

Funding was confirmed through grant agreements in March 2022, providing a year for delivery from April 2022 to March 2023.

DLUHC commissioned an external evaluation to capture learning from the programme and inform future place-based programmes. Alongside the evaluation, DLUHC commissioned a spend mapping exercise with local places, regional, and central government departments to better understand the scale of duplication and inefficiencies in funding flows to local places.

### 2.2.1 Community collaboration in the programme

Local pilot teams were asked to facilitate collaboration with local stakeholders, residents, and partners to design and deliver their pilots. This was an important element of how the programme defined place-based working and informed guidance on the type of challenges to be identified and proposed by pilot teams. These challenges needed to matter *“locally and [be] informed by the people who are living with the negative effects of that challenge every day.”*<sup>8</sup>

Pilot teams were asked to develop or use existing governance structures to establish a Local Place Board, to provide strategic oversight of the project, and a Local Place Working Group, to deliver the decisions of the Local Place Board and manage the rollout of the intervention. Both forums were intended to widen attendees and represent partners from across the area.<sup>9</sup> Table 1 provides an overview of each pilot intervention, total funding received as well as the central government departments involved.

Table 1: Summary of PfPP pilot projects.

Local Authority	Pilot name	Project focus	Funding	Government Department involved
Birmingham	Student Mentoring Programme	Tackling long term youth unemployment through supporting Year 11 students through a mentoring programme. The pilot aimed to connect young people into work and other opportunities to improve transitions from school to employment.	£335k	DWP, DfE
Bradford	Multi-disciplinary Hubs	The pilot funded two additional multi-disciplinary hubs, providing one single point of contact for people with mental health issues and one or more other disadvantage to access a range of support services.	£248k	DfE, HO, Cabinet Office, NHSEI, DHSC, HE

<sup>8</sup> DLUHC (2021). Partnerships for People & Place Governance Outline.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.



Cornwall	Bodmin Pilot	Creating a joined up and locally defined pathway to employment to improve life quality in Bodmin. The pilot aimed to engage Community Champions to refer individuals who would not have accessed traditional skills and employment pathways to the People Hub to receive free advice and support.	£314k	DWP, DEFRA, DfE, DfT
Durham	Horden Together programme	The pilot aimed to improve meaningful engagement within a highly disaffected community thereby increasing pride in place by building trusting relationships with the community in Horden. This was intended to encourage reporting and information sharing about anti-social behaviour and crime.	£100k	DLUHC, HO, MoJ, DfE, DEFRA, DESNZ, HE, DWP
East Sussex	Tackling fuel poverty and energy inefficiency in Hastings	Tackling fuel poverty and energy inefficiency in the private rental sector in Hastings. The initial approach involved securing 'flexibilities' to existing financial incentives for landlords to implement energy efficiency improvements. The pilot focused on building an evidence base for future policy through conducting home assessments and perception surveys in the area and applying behaviour change techniques to improve local authority communications.	£335k	DESNZ, DLUHC, DHSC
Hackney	Ageing Well	Tackling health inequalities and enabling individuals to age well by making neighbourhood working as effective as possible, co-producing a flexible grants programme and building the capacity and collaboration of the local voluntary sector.	£248k	DLUHC, DCMS, DHSC, HMT, DWP
Liverpool	The Good Help Hub	Creating a single access point for residents in Croxteth who needed support but were not known to services.	£248k	HO, DHSC, MoJ, DWP
Luton	Solving challenges within the town centre	Raising awareness of the challenges around crime, anti-social behaviour and street begging and improve negative perceptions of safety in the town centre among residents by establishing strategic infrastructure and commissioning a research piece. This was used as an evidence base to trial interventions and inform a citizens engagement plan.	£248k	DLUHC, HO, DESNZ, DHSC
Newcastle	Breaking the link between poverty and safeguarding concerns	Improving the accessibility of financial and safeguarding support services for visitors of the West End Foodbank and for volunteers and professionals working in and around the area.	£100k	DWP, DHSC, NHSEI
Northumberland	Hello Hirst	Tackling social deprivation, poverty, crime and disorder in Hirst Housing Estate focusing on family readiness through enrichment activity and household support programmes.	£100k	DWP, DHSC, NHSEI
Southwark	We Walworth	Tackling food insecurity by building social capital in Walworth through community conversations and a model for collaborative decision making. The pilot aimed to engage residents, local businesses, the voluntary sector as well as	£335k	DHSC, DLUHC, DCMS, DEFRA

		central and local government, to co-create new local policy initiatives.		
Sunderland	Sunderland Regeneration Board	Develop a more holistic approach to regeneration in the Sunnyside area.	£238k	DLUHC, HE, DfT, DESNZ, DfE
Wakefield	Tackling Emotionally-Based School Avoidance programme	Reducing the rate of persistent absence caused by emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA) by building a local evidence base.	£221k	DLUHC, DfE, DHSC

### 2.2.2 Central-local government coordination

Each of the 13 pilot interventions had a lead contact within the DLUHC PfPP team (referred to as their ‘**DLUHC PfPP Lead**’) responsible for monitoring and supporting the programme, and working with pilot teams to connect and escalate issues to central government. As well as supporting pilot interventions, the role of DLUHC PfPP Leads was to manage central government input both at a place and programme level. This was implemented by assigning a member of the DLUHC PfPP team as a lead for each of the 11 central government departments involved, sharing learning from the programme with wider stakeholders and ministers, and leading networking events. Additionally, the programme connected with **PfPP central government partners** through central governance structures:

- The **Government Place Working Group** provided a monthly space to co-ordinate activity across participating departments, share learning, and provide an update on delivery. Attendees were working-level contacts involved in linking the programme into their department and co-ordinating activities.
- The **Government Place Board** provided a senior forum attended by Directors from participating departments and chaired by the programme Senior Responsible Officer (SRO). Meetings were held every three months to agree the scope of the programme, oversee and monitor delivery and sign-off key actions.

Central government partners who participated in the central governance structures were responsible for helping DLUHC PfPP leads connect with appropriate contacts within their departments for relevant pilots as well as raise the profile of place-based working, acting as key points of contact. These departmental leads helped coordinate engagement and provided an additional navigation role to support the DLUHC PfPP team. In this way, wider central government partners were involved in the programme through direct engagement with pilots, while sitting outside of central governance structures.

### 2.3 Evaluation and learning aims

The overall aim of the evaluation was to build an understanding of the enablers and barriers to improved government collaboration and the extent to which the programme achieved desired outcomes in pilot locations within the timeframe of the evaluation. The study included tracking and quantifying the current system of funding from central government into each of the 13 pilot locations to identify potential ‘misalignment or duplication’ in central government funding streams. The evaluation was developmental, reflecting the programme emphasis on learning and adaptation. This enabled the continuous sharing of insights to inform programme delivery and update the evaluation team’s understanding of the programme ToC. The evaluation aimed to answer the following questions:

1. How was PfPP implemented in practice?
2. How did implementation vary across local areas and central government partners?
3. To what extent did PfPP achieve its intended outcomes?
4. How do different contextual factors, features/applications of the PfPP approach, policy areas, and different stakeholders influence delivery and outcomes?
5. What can be learned about the PfPP programme for future place-based initiatives, and initiatives to support cross-government collaboration?
6. What cost efficiencies have been introduced compared to previous funding models?

As an innovative programme taking a novel approach to project design and delivery, the evaluation aimed to capture learning and indications of impact while the programme was still ‘in flight.’ We applied a theory-based, qualitative evaluation approach (described further in the next section), grounded in the perspectives of central and local government partners most closely involved in implementation. This was designed to best capture what was working well and less well and identify key learnings in line with the programme’s objectives. Due to delays to project delivery, the short timeframe for the programme and the evaluation, and varied engagement among stakeholders (among other limitations, discussed in sections 2.4.1 and 2.4.2), the evaluation and accompanying spend mapping study were unable to provide robust counterfactual or quantitative estimations of the impact of the programme. However, the evidence produced provides rich insight into the story of the programme, how and under what conditions collaboration across government can be facilitated and sustained, and what can be learned for future initiatives aiming to join up local and central government to deliver place-based change.

## 2.4 Methodology: theory-based outcomes and process evaluation

The evaluation took a theory-based approach to assess the effectiveness of the programme in terms of the processes involved in delivery and the outcomes achieved. Contribution analysis was the primary method used to assess the contribution of the programme activities to outcomes at individual, central-local and central levels. The final evaluation report is informed by largely qualitative methods (including interviews, focus groups, and document analysis). These methods were used with stakeholders in central and local government between February 2022 to May 2023.

### 2.4.1 Pilot-level data collection

The evaluation is evidenced by a series of interview and workshops with pilot teams, activity data and reporting, as well as observations of local governance meetings. Table 2 below provides a summary of all data collected across pilot interventions.

Qualitative data collection with pilot teams and other local stakeholders included:

- **Monthly catch-up calls** with pilot leads undertaken between April 2022 and March 2023. The purpose of these calls was to discuss and track updates on progress as well as any changes to project plans, challenges, and achievements. Each pilot was assigned an ‘evaluation lead’ who carried out all data collection with pilot teams. The evaluation leads also supported pilot teams to refine their Theory of Change (ToC) and data collection plans.
- **ToC workshops** (January – February 2023) with pilots leads and DLUHC PfPP leads in all 13 places to refine their ToCs in line with the overarching programme framework.
- **Systems mapping workshops** with 12 pilot teams in conjunction with initial consultations on the design of local pilots (Sunderland provided written input to their systems map). The aim of this

exercise was to identify and map the key barriers to resolving the issues that local places aimed to tackle through the programme, at local and central government level.

- **Focus groups with residents/beneficiaries** in three places (Birmingham, Durham, Southwark). Focus groups with residents were only undertaken where it was feasible and ethical to contact and engage residents based on discussions with pilot teams.<sup>10</sup>
- **Focus groups or interviews with delivery partners in four places** (East Sussex, Bradford, Hackney, Wakefield). Delivery partners for other pilots joined deliberative workshops as members of the pilot team.<sup>11</sup>
- **Deliberative engagement workshops** (March – April 2023) for ten pilots with pilot teams, DLUHC PfPP leads, and central government partners involved in the project. Our academic partner, Professor Rob Wilson also attended two sessions.

**Pilot-level monitoring data and reporting** included:

- Summarised activity data (Liverpool, East Sussex)
- Interim or other progress reporting (Northumberland, Durham, Bradford)
- End of programme evaluation reporting (Luton, Hackney, Cornwall, Newcastle, Southwark)

**Observations:**

- Observations of local place Working Group and Place Board meetings in six places (Birmingham, Wakefield, Bradford, East Sussex, Hackney, Luton).
- Observations of local activities and events (Birmingham, East Sussex, Liverpool, Southwark, Hackney).

**Limitations**

- **Limited time between pilot inception and evaluation.** Most pilots opted to extend scoping and planning stages which resulted in shorter delivery timetables. Almost half of PfPP pilots (6/13) did not commence delivery until November 2022. This did not yield sufficient time to achieve and measure short-term outcomes by the project completion date in early to mid-2023. This impacted the extent to which the evaluation could assess whether pilots achieved person-level outcomes (the quality of evidence available to assess each pilot is summarised in Table 7.) Due to limited outcomes data, we are unable to make a robust interpretation of breakeven analysis findings and assess the extent to which all pilots were able to achieve net-economic benefits. As a result, we are unable to explore the evaluation question: what cost efficiencies have been introduced compared to previous funding models?
- **Limited local monitoring and evaluation reporting provided to the evaluation team.** The programme allowed pilot teams to operate within a flexible delivery timeframe. Limited evaluation reporting reflects the timeline extensions agreed between pilots and the DLUHC PfPP team which

<sup>10</sup> For this reason, it was decided it was not feasible to engage participants of the Bodmin pilot (Cornwall), visitors of Manningham and Tong Hubs (Bradford), residents referred to safeguarding support (Newcastle), and visitors of the Good Help Hub (Birmingham).

<sup>11</sup> The evaluation team was unable to engage with Community Champions due to local sensitivities. Likewise in Liverpool, partner organisations were unable to participate with the evaluation.

meant project delivery ran until June 2023, beyond programme evaluation timelines. Evaluation findings in some pilots lean on qualitative data collection with pilot teams, DLUHC PfPP leads, and central government partners connected with pilot interventions, as well as pilot monitoring data.

- **Limited data collection with central government stakeholders who had limited or no involvement with pilots.** DLUHC and the evaluation team faced challenges engaging with central government stakeholders who were less consistently involved in supporting the PfPP pilots for interviews, systems mapping workshops, or interim feedback on the programme. Central government perspectives on the programme and enablers and barriers to central-local collaboration thus primarily stem from members of the Government Place Working Group as well as central government partners who had consistent engagement or multiple touchpoints with pilot teams.
- **Varied engagement with evaluation leads by pilot sites.** A cross-cutting challenge for the evaluation was the need to continuously synthesise and triangulate data sources to effectively represent (sometimes differing) perspectives on project progress across the DLUHC PfPP team, central government, and local pilot teams. Over the course of the programme, pilots continued to evolve and change course depending on new insight from central government or community consultations. Monthly catch-ups and written outputs produced by pilot teams (such as Local Place Board / Working Group notes, or briefings) were a useful opportunity to capture this insight. For places which received smaller funding allocations, catch-ups were conducted less frequently to reflect a proportionate evaluation approach. Other pilot sites were less willing or available to engage with the evaluation month-to-month, given delays to project development, implementation, or staff absences. This limited the extent to which decisions around changes to project design, scope, or engagement could be tracked for these areas.
- **Differing perspectives regarding how to define ‘central government’**, with some local pilot teams not considering local representatives of central government departments as ‘central government partners’ (in particular, local DWP representatives or JobCentre Plus colleagues). This may have led to the omission of some instances of pilot teams engaging with central government.

Table 2 highlights the data collection activities conducted as part of the evaluation for each of the 13 pilots. A ✓ signifies that the data collection activity was conducted in that pilot area.

*Table 2. Evaluation pilot-level data collection.*

Pilot	Monthly calls with Pilot leads	System mapping workshop	ToC workshop	Deliberative workshop	1:1 end of programme interview	Focus groups with delivery partners	Focus groups with residents	Internal activity monitoring data	Internal evaluation reporting
Birmingham	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Bradford	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Cornwall	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓
Durham	✓ *	✓	✓	✓					✓
East Sussex	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Hackney	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Liverpool	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	
Luton	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓
Newcastle	✓ *	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓
Northumberland	✓ *	✓	✓		✓			✓	
Southwark	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Sunderland	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	
Wakefield	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	

\*Calls were scheduled every six weeks, from the beginning of delivery to the end of the programme.

## 2.4.2 Programme level data collection

Programme-level data collection consisted of interviews and focus groups with DLUHC PfPP leads, members of the Place Working Group and Place Board, engagement tracking data and reporting, as well as observations of programme governance structures and networking events.

### Qualitative data collection with programme-level stakeholders included:

- **Initial interviews** with 11 members of the Government Place Working Group in April 2022.
- **Programme ToC workshop** with the PfPP DLUHC team in May 2022.
- **Systems mapping discussions** with five individuals from three central government partners (DHSC, DLUHC, and DESNZ).
- **Two focus group discussions** with five members of the **Government Place Working Group** and one deliberative workshop with nine members of the **Place Board** in March 2023.
- **Endline interviews and focus groups** with eight members of the DLUHC PfPP team (April 2023).

### Programme-level activity data and reporting:

- **Central-local engagement tracking data** completed by DLUHC PfPP leads and pilot leads.
- **Review of Working Group and Place Board** attendance records and meeting notes.

### Observations:

- Observations of five Place Board meetings and ten Place Working Group meetings.
- Observations of five networking events (Virtual event July 2022; Presentation of barriers September 2022; Hybrid event in Birmingham November 2022; Sharing learnings event January 2023 and a Showcase event May 2023).

### Limitations

- **Varied monitoring data on engagement:** DLUHC leads and pilot teams were asked to track all engagement activity between pilot teams and central government departments on an ongoing basis. Tracking information included details of central government officials contacted, the engagement activities they were invited to, and those they participated in. There is variation across pilots of the quality and depth of insight recorded in engagement tracking datasheets. For some pilot areas, there are gaps in tracking of stakeholder details including individual names (particularly where multiple officials attended engagement meetings) and team names. As a result, we are unable to accurately calculate the number of central government officials connected to places.
- **Inconsistent attendance records:** There is some inconsistency in attendance records for Working Group meetings. Of 16 meetings, attendance records are not provided for two Working Group meetings. As a result, findings related to the consistency of engagement within the Working Group do not account for attendance in 2 of 16 meetings.

### 2.4.3 Contribution analysis

Contribution analysis was used to assess to what extent outcomes were due to the programme rather than other external factors. Using evidence and data gathered throughout the programme, the evaluation team assembled and assessed contribution narratives connected to outcomes for each of the case studies. The contribution narratives were compared with the hypotheses in the programme ToC to assess whether they followed the logic initially set out, and the relative importance of different assumptions and contextual factors in each case. Achievement of short-term outcomes were compared with outcomes specified in pilot-level ToCs. Additional evidence was sought through end-of-programme interviews and additional documentation, where possible. Finally, we assessed the strength of evidence underpinning each causal claim. An assessment was made against the hypotheses for each case study, alongside consideration of the unintended outcomes and other influences on the programme.

Evidencing outcomes was limited due to the timeframe of the programme and the complexity and long-term nature of the challenges that pilot interventions were aiming to address. Due to the alignment of the timeframe of the evaluation and the pilots, long-term outcomes could not be evidenced. However, some short and medium-term outcomes could be evidenced and assessed in the contribution narratives for each case study.

## 2.5 Methodology: economic evaluation

Breakeven analysis provides an estimate of the level of change in ToC outcomes in the pilot areas that would be necessary for the programme's benefits to meet costs. This aligns with Cost Effectiveness Analysis in HMT Green Book Terms. Pilot-specific breakeven analysis was performed on Bradford, Hackney, Liverpool, Luton, Southwark, Cornwall, Newcastle and Birmingham based on the outcomes of interest set out in the ToCs for each pilot area (pilot areas without measurable outcome indicators in their ToC were excluded from the breakeven analysis<sup>3</sup>). Each pilot-specific breakeven analysis is based on different ranges of certainty, and with deadweight adjustments to account for the counterfactual of how likely these outcomes could have been achieved without the PfPP pilot intervention.<sup>4</sup> Note that a further 20% optimism bias is built into the breakeven analysis (on top of the deadweight) to account for the fact that analysts may overestimate the impact of programmes on the number of beneficiaries.

Breakeven analysis can provide an indication of the number of beneficiaries who would have to experience the personal-level outcomes (such as employment, educational, perceptions of the local community and personal health and wellbeing). However, it cannot provide an indication of how many programme beneficiaries would actually experience an improvement in these personal-level outcomes. This would need to be evidenced through primary surveys of beneficiaries as part of a wider evaluation. The breakeven analysis provides a basis for future analyses at a point of more advanced implementation and full collection of all outcomes data.

## 2.6 Methodology: spend mapping

The spend mapping exercise was split into two strands:

- The first strand sought to map central government funding at a local authority and central government priority level; and
- The second strand focused on mapping all funding (government and non-government) to the specific locally defined priority outcomes of the 13 pilot areas.

The methodological approach revolved around three inter-related workstreams:



1. Analysing central to local funding flows using the HM Treasury's Country and Regional Analysis data for Financial Year 2020-21 (the latest data available). Since the HM Treasury produces the CRA data at the regional level, it was possible to allocate regional spend to a local authority level using population weighting. However, this approach was limited in accuracy due to the range of methodologies used across and within various departments. Given this, and due to other government spend mapping exercises taking place and seeking to source similar data, the decision was made to focus on the Cabinet Office Grant data.
2. Analysing central to local funding flows using the Government Grants Data and Statistics (GGDS) publication for Financial Year 2020-21. This data captures grant funding from all government departments and Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs). There were some limitations to this data, which while mitigated, did have an impact on the findings. These limitations include that the location recorded in the data set is not necessarily reflective of the ultimate beneficiary of grant funding (for example it may be the organisation HQ) and some data was redacted due to data protection or security reasons.
3. Analysing local funding through engagement with the local authorities involved in the programme and other stakeholders. This approach drew on three main sources of data: information on local authority spend related to the programme policy priority; identification of relevant grants within the Cabinet Office data; and locally provided data from the community and voluntary sector, the private sector and other public sector organisations.

## 2.7 The structure and approach of this report

The report is structured into six sections:

- Section 1 is the executive summary which provides a concise overview of the key learnings and main findings of this research.
- Section 2 (this section) provides an overview of the programme, its approach, aims and objectives, as well as the evaluation aims and methodology underpinning the theory-based evaluation, economic evaluation and spend mapping exercise.
- Section 3 presents key learnings from the evaluation and spend mapping exercise to draw out what enables and hinders effective collaboration between central government and local places based on the experiences of those delivering the programme.
- Sections 4 and 5 detail the extent to which the programme achieved the outcomes intended.
- Section 6 presents the conclusions from this research and sets out suggested considerations for future initiatives.

The evaluation team would like to thank Dr Eleanor Carter and Professor Rob Wilson for their contributions, expert guidance, and advice throughout the evaluation.

## 3 Key learnings

The evaluation and spend mapping exercise sought to answer two broad learning questions about what works for strengthening central-local government collaboration for place-based working, as operationalised through the Partnerships for People and Place (PfPP) model:

1. How do different contextual factors, features/applications of the PfPP approach, policy areas, and different stakeholders influence delivery and outcomes?
2. What can be learned about the PfPP programme for future place-based initiatives, and initiatives to support cross-government collaboration?

This section presents learning from the evaluation (including from interviews, focus group discussions, local monitoring and evaluation data, and systems mapping workshops) as well as the spend mapping exercise to answer these questions. It sets out the structural barriers that have limited greater joined-up working that the programme was designed to address. It goes on to draw implications from what was found to enable and hinder effective collaboration between central government and local places based on the experiences of those delivering the programme.

Central-local collaboration was a key distinguishing feature of the programme's design, which had not been explored to the same extent in previous place-based initiatives. Previous partnerships between central and local government have tended to focus on specific policy interventions where understanding effectiveness is prioritised over strengthening collaboration in a structural and lasting way.<sup>12</sup> Reflecting this, the evaluation team in partnership with the DLUHC PfPP team sought to collate learning about what works to support collaboration with those involved in the programme during delivery. Throughout data collection activities, the evaluation team asked those involved about what worked well and less well with respect to central-local collaboration. The evaluation team analysed insights at two interim stages (in October 2022 and February 2023), sharing learning with the DLUHC PfPP team, local places and with the Place Working Group and Place Board to test and help interpret findings.

### 3.1 Structural barriers shaping the PfPP programme

As set out most recently in the [Levelling Up White Paper](#), there have been multiple attempts to improve collaboration between central and local government, support place-based policy making and reduce spatial disparities in the UK over the last century. Learning from the programme illustrates the ingrained nature of the structural and systemic barriers which prevent greater join-up, as well as the tensions between the need for central accountability and local flexibility to meet community needs. This includes organisational barriers, funding and commissioning processes, barriers to data sharing, and short-term policy and funding cycles.

Although the 13 pilots focused on a variety of complex issues, structural barriers were common regardless of pilot teams' policy focus. Even in places which were supported by all or multiple enablers, the structural nature of the barriers they aimed to address meant that opportunities for influencing central government policy through the programme could not be capitalised upon. Ultimately, the programme was unable to influence these structural barriers within the timeframes of its delivery.

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<sup>12</sup> A series of initiatives in the early 2000s were established to explore broader partnerships with local and regional government which included Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs), Local Area Agreements (LAAs) with the associated National Indicator Set which latterly became the Total Place programme.

### 3.1.1 Organisational barriers

Siloed working across central, regional, and local government, and with regulatory bodies was identified as a challenge during systems mapping consultations. Siloed working practices refer to different departments or units within an organisation operating independently and without much interdepartmental interaction or cooperation. This can result in a lack of coordination, duplication of efforts, and missed opportunities for collaboration. A benefit of the programme identified by central government partners was its ability to cut across silos, providing an opportunity to build relationships with civil servants from other departments or within an organisation. However, while these lateral connections strengthened individual understanding and networks, siloed ways of working largely prevented greater co-ordination at a central level.

**“I've met some people in my organisation who I wouldn't have spoken to before who are working on place-based things and are helpful for my role. I will be taking some of the connections I've made through this work forward. It's been interesting to see the breadth of people who are working on place-based issues that I wouldn't have been aware of without the programme.” [Working Group member]**

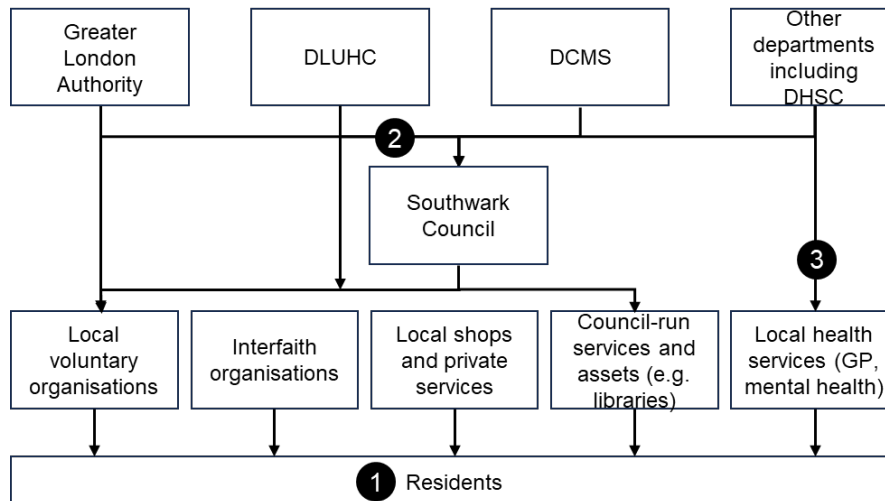
In the context of local place systems, this means that interventions targeting specific social problems might be designed and implemented without considering the wider neighbourhood context or potential synergies with other initiatives. For example, it became evident during the initial set up phase for the Good Help Hub that other similar projects were taking place in Liverpool including DfE's Family Hub model being developed within Liverpool City Council's Children's Services. As a result, the pilot team refined the original scope to better align with existing and emerging initiatives implemented across the local authority. This adjustment could have been made earlier if there had been stronger awareness among the local authority and the PFP DLUHC team of similar ongoing initiatives.

**“This is where central government could clearly play a role, to stop layering more and more initiatives on top of one another...it became clear early on, that this was a crowded space, with many organisations working, and often 'competing', to support people with multiple and complex needs.” [Pilot lead]**

Frequently, pilot teams described how central government departments and local authorities do not effectively share information amongst themselves or information sharing is 'one-way' from central government to local authorities. This lack of coordination and transparency often leads to disjointed efforts, information disconnect regarding policy developments, and difficulties in policy implementation and service provision locally.

The Southwark system map (Figure 2 below) demonstrates how central government siloes leads to fragmented services and difficulties in provision at the local level. The pilot aimed to strengthen social capital among residents and engage them in developing better local policies for tackling food insecurity. Across central government departments whose responsibilities relate to social connectedness, health, and food inequality (DLUHC, DCMS, and DHSC, among others), policy interventions are typically directed at specific cohorts, conditions, or social problems, which fall under the remit of different local services, voluntary organisations, and private businesses. This means programmes often do not specifically address issues like food insecurity or building social capital as they do not fit neatly within one department's policy remit, with potential benefits realised across the system. This reduces the incentive to fund or prioritise person-centred approaches and may result in missing key groups of individuals not connected to a funded service. The Southwark pilot team identified this lack of joined-up support as a key part of why levels of deprivation have not changed in Southwark and neighbourhood inequalities remain.

Figure 2. Tackling Food Inequality through Social Connectedness in Southwark - System Map

**Barriers:**

1. Policy interventions are typically directed at specific cohorts, conditions or social problems, with not enough consideration of the neighbourhood context or the role of social capital and relationships in improving local outcomes.
2. Central government funding is often short-term and requires pre-defined activities, outputs and outcome measures. This does not align with investment in social capital as part of community programmes.
3. Local services are often delivered in silos without thinking about the community as a whole, the range of services interacting with individuals and their needs in the round (person-centred).

### 3.1.2 Barriers to data sharing

Siloed working can result in difficulties sharing data between central government departments and local authorities. Participants in systems mapping workshops described how this can cause inefficiencies between local services (such as Children's and Adult Services, local healthcare, schools and the police) and a lack of provision for those who are unable to meet the threshold for support in one service but may benefit from accessing support from another.

Lack of data sharing across agencies was identified as a key barrier to change in six out of 13 pilot areas, including Bradford, Birmingham, Durham, Liverpool, Luton, and Northumberland. Most of these places were focused on supporting people with multiple disadvantage or developing and tracking shared objectives across multiple stakeholders. For example, in Bradford, limited data sharing between the NHS, the local authority and voluntary and community services was highlighted as a key barrier to multi-agency working and supporting people with mental health issues and multiple disadvantage. The programme enabled the pilot team to meet with NHS Digital to learn about how to improve data sharing. However, due to the time constraints of the programme, the pilot team did not have the capacity to continue this engagement, though they are hoping to do so in the future.

The experiences of the Bradford pilot team highlighted the wider barriers related to data sharing that go beyond organisational silos. This includes limited capacity at a local level to work through data protection requirements and complete the analysis or data linkage required to make the most of existing information, as well as the time required to do so. For example, in Birmingham the team sought access to Universal Credit data from DWP but found they already had access to this information within the local authority. The team also engaged with central government partners from DfE to understand more about the data available to track young people's journeys from education into employment. Although it was not possible to complete this analysis during the lifetime of the project due to difficulties sharing anonymised

individual-level data in sufficient detail, the team intends to complete this as part of a four-year research project.

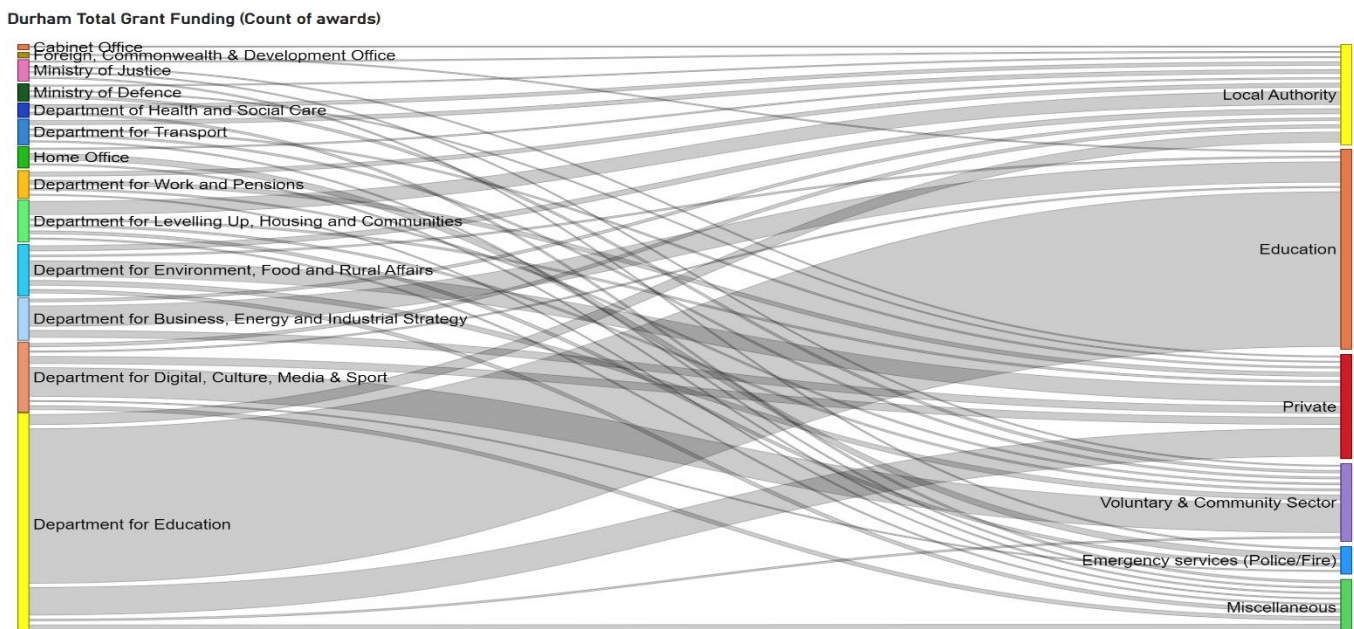
The programme also illustrated some of the misconceptions in the existing understanding of data sharing held by pilot teams. Consultations with central government partners through the programme highlighted a degree of risk aversion at the local level that can prevent places from exploring opportunities for data sharing. Central government partners highlighted there can be a local hesitancy to put in place steps such as data sharing agreements which would allow for data transfer, or limited understanding of what information is held centrally and how this could be used to support local delivery. Pilot teams described the benefit of speaking to central government partners to understand more about existing data sources and how these could be used in the future.

**“The pilot lead said, 'Oh, we can't do this. We can't do that.' Actually, you can, and it's your legal department that's saying that you can't. So, you need to talk to them and here's how some other places have [accessed that data].” [DLUHC lead]**

### 3.1.3 Fragmented funding and commissioning processes

Participants in systems mapping workshops consistently described how fragmented funding mechanisms that reflected organisational silos led to a lack of integration of services including education and employment, health, energy, and multiple disadvantage. This was also reflected in the spend mapping analysis which illustrated the range of different flows of central government funding from departments to multiple recipients within a place. This includes 384 different grants to 1,613 recipients in Wakefield, 229 grants to 1,278 recipients in Durham, 197 grants to 953 recipients in Hackney and 153 grants to 513 recipients in Luton. The Sankey diagram below (Figure 3) provide an example of collective funding flows (by grant volume) across multiple departments into Durham County Council.

Figure 3. Total grant awards from central government department into Durham



A deeper analysis of these funding streams identified examples of duplication, including:

- **Different departments providing multiple awards in the same policy area** such as BEIS and DLUHC providing business support grants; DLUHC and DHSC providing support in relation to

homelessness and rough sleeping; and BEIS and DCMS providing funding in relation to net-zero and energy efficiency.<sup>13</sup>

- Different grants being funded by **one department for the same policy area to multiple recipients**, such as in Birmingham where DLUHC awarded 11 housing grants to the Council, the Combined Authority and to various housing organisations.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, in Cornwall four grant programmes related to net zero went to ten different recipients across the public, private and education sectors.

Complex funding streams can be a significant barrier to effective strategy or policy implementation. Some common issues mentioned by systems and spend mapping participants included the complexity and time-consuming aspects of navigating multiple overlapping funding streams, each with its own unique requirements for monitoring and reporting. This can hamper efforts of local authorities to better align funding streams to strategic priorities.

For example, in Sunderland, achieving place-based regeneration required joining up over ten funding streams from central government – many of which cannot be used flexibly to spend on objectives outside of specific directives. These funding streams include housing and regeneration funds (e.g. Brownfield Land Release Fund), people base funds (e.g. UKSPF and Multiply), and funds for green infrastructure (many of which are accessed through the North East Community Forest partnership from DEFRA). Often these funds are tied to delivery against specific objectives, which comes at the expense of focusing on the bigger strategic vision for the place. For the Sunderland pilot, needing to manage these multiple separate funds and meet their contractual requirements has detracted from their ability to pursue a strategic vision for regeneration, particularly since failure to deliver on one element could have implications for others. Greater flexibility to deliver funds, or greater join-up in how funding was initially administered, could enable a more pragmatic and less time-consuming approach to delivery.

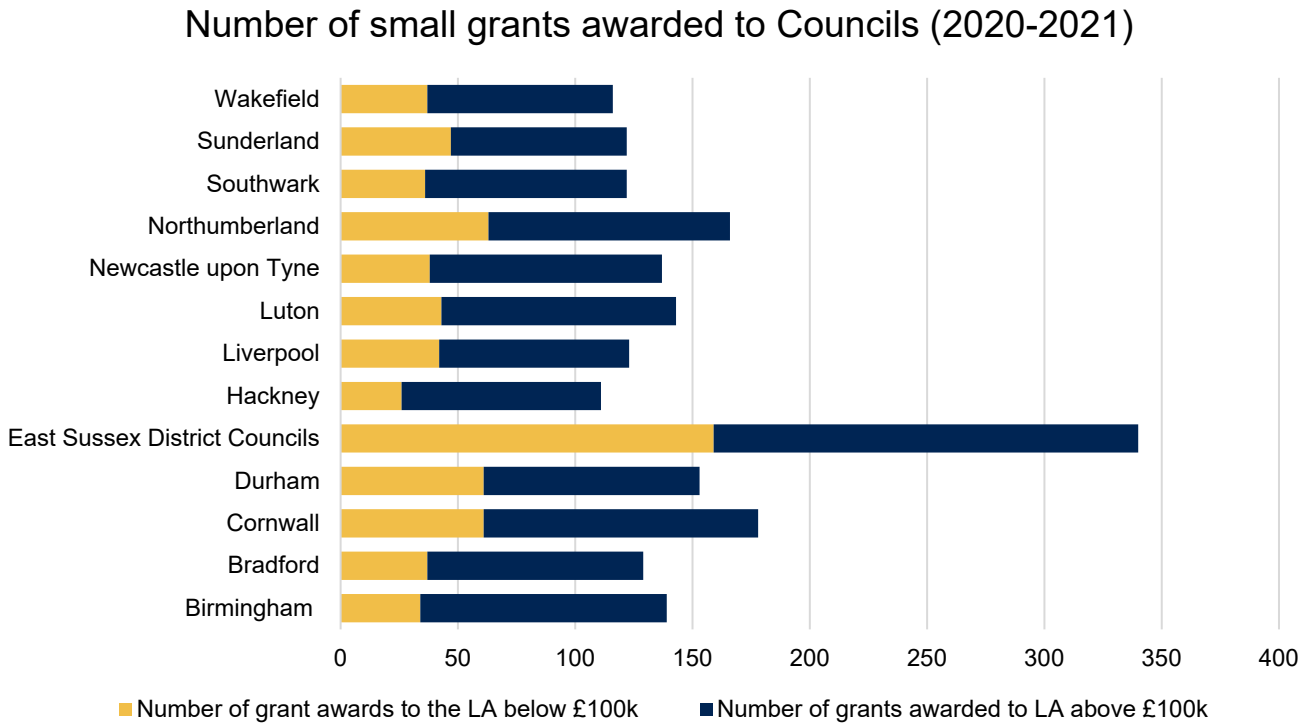
Looking at the scale of awards to local places brings this challenge into sharp focus. Across the 13 pilot areas 70% of the grants received by all bodies were less than £100,000. The picture is less extreme when looking only at grants awarded to the local authority. However, in one year a single authority is administering over hundred – and in some cases close to two hundred – individual grants of which around a third (33%) are less than £100,000. This is illustrated in Figure 4 which shows the number of small grants awarded to pilot local authorities in 2020-2021.

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<sup>13</sup> Spend mapping analysis drew on 2021 data, meaning the departments listed do not reflect subsequent machinery of government changes.

<sup>14</sup> It is important to note that this analysis draws no conclusions about the necessity of this complexity in terms of ensuring either that funding pots are ring fenced for specific activity or organisation types, or that this complexity is a trade-off for ensuring that there are robust governance processes in place to limit fraud, ensure the monies are used for the purpose they were intended and that value for money is maximised.

Figure 4. Number of grants awarded to Council (all PfPP grant recipients)<sup>15</sup>



Systems mapping participants described how this creates compartmentalised services whereby issues requiring a coordinated approach, or individuals requiring multiple forms of support from different local services, often cannot be addressed. This is especially acute for programmes looking to tackle multiple complex needs or address local challenges as a system. For example, the Bradford team described how DHSC investment and funding as part of the NHS plan are often attached to prescribed models of care and support. This can be at odds with the team’s efforts to invest in local and neighbourhood working which integrates health and other social care responses. Likewise, in Newcastle the pilot team identified examples of similar fundings streams related to substance abuse including Project ADDER, PH Grant, Homelessness Prevention Funding, ICB funding and the Social Care Grant. As each of these grants can go into different parts of a local authority, it relies on individual officers knowing about each other’s funding and having a continual conversation about them as they evolve.

While there was an acknowledgement that some funds will always need to be ringfenced, there was consensus across central government partners about the potential for departments to identify natural synergies and combine funding streams with a broad range of examples cited. This includes substance misuse, housing and regeneration, green infrastructure, career pathways and funding for 14-19 year olds, fuel poverty and energy efficiency, community safety and crime and adult learning and skills.

#### 3.1.4 Short-term policy and funding cycles

Systems mapping participants emphasised how short-term funding disrupted long-term planning, increased administrative burden, and added to the complexity of the system by increasing staff turnover and continuous changes to support services. This was seen to limit local authorities’ ability to plan and implement long-term solutions or demonstrate impact.

<sup>15</sup> It should be noted that East Sussex is a two-tier local authority area and therefore comprises five district or borough councils (Eastbourne, Hastings, Lewes, Rother and Wealden). The figures for the ‘East Sussex District Councils’ line shows all of the awards made to those five councils in aggregate. All of the other PfPP councils were single tier authorities.

Several pilot teams emphasised the significant impact of short-term funding on the ability of local authorities to assess the effectiveness of their programmes. Pilot teams routinely referred to the structure of PfPP funding as an example of this. Pilot teams highlighted how they require more time and resource to work towards and measure person-level outcomes, beyond six-to-twelve-month delivery timetables. This includes greater flexibility to adapt outcome measures during programme delivery, so approaches can reflect local needs.

**“Timescales and inflexible funding models requiring hard data measurements are a particular barrier when trying to achieve system change. In order for change to be embedded and genuine impact to be achieved, advanced communication and extended application procedures need to be considered along with flexible reporting measurements.” [Pilot lead]**

Several pilot teams acknowledged the advantages of longer-term initiatives which allow for more efficient and meaningful learning. Funding is often executed within a limited timeframe and defined by a set of predetermined outcomes. One pilot lead acknowledged that project teams often transition to the next project with varying outcome measures, before the prior work has fully completed. They described how the lack of certainty about future funding risks the sustainability of further progress.

**“The PfPP programme is an example of many of the problems identified by Local Authorities such as short-term funding, set up time too short and insufficient delivery time to generate any meaningful or measurable outcomes.” [Working Group member]**

Uncertainty over future funding can also delay significant project initiatives as local authorities and agencies might be hesitant to initiate a project without guarantees of sufficient resources to see it through to completion. For places focused on long-term issues like local regeneration, the stop and start nature of central government funding limited their ability to plan long-term or meet central government requirements for demonstrating short-term progress. This has created disillusionment and perpetuated negative perceptions among local people about the ability of local government to support them. This is a finding reiterated in spend mapping consultations and the programme’s interim reporting where multiple pilot leads described how short-term funding results in mistrust and further strains relationships with communities and other public sector or voluntary organisations.

### 3.2 Key conditions for success

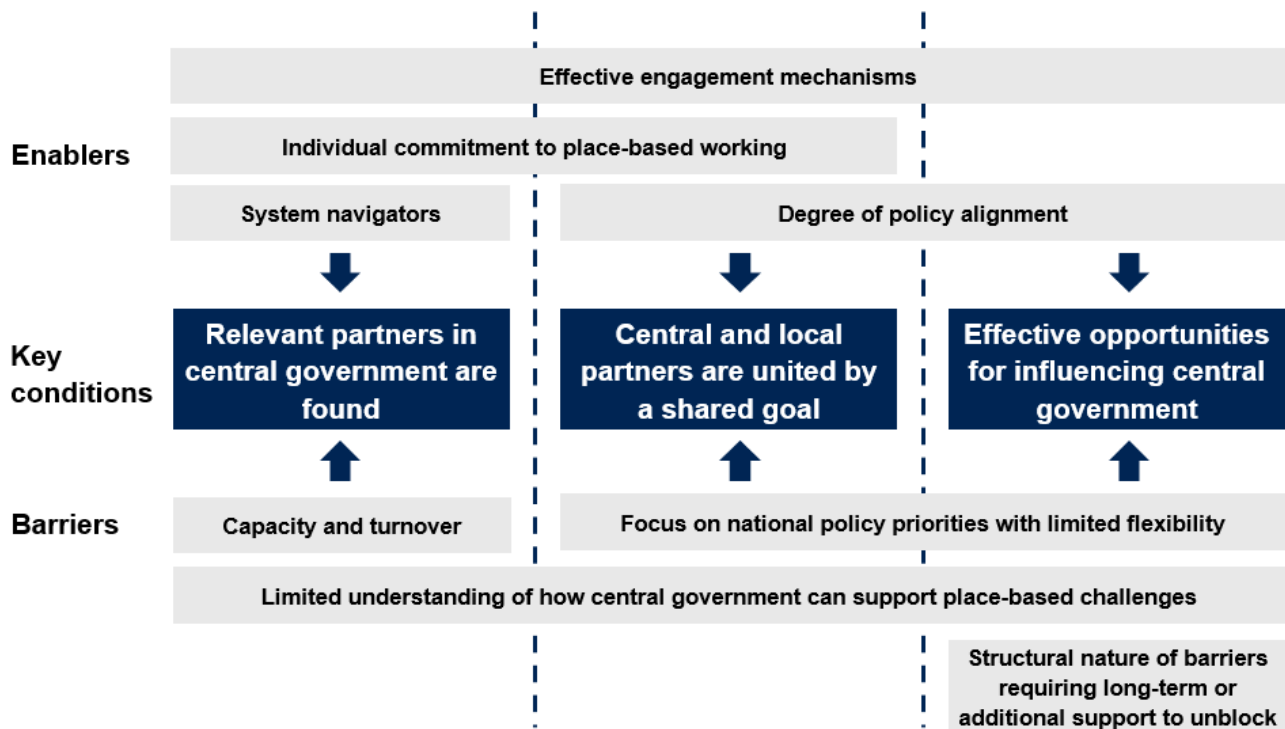
Learning from the evaluation highlighted three key conditions for creating effective collaboration between local and central government:

1. **Identifying relevant partners** within both central and local government. Relevance related to the specific role and remit of individuals including their area of focus, seniority, networks and convening power. This influenced both their willingness to explore options for unblocking barriers and their capabilities to affect change.
2. **Developing shared goals** that align both with local needs and central government priorities was crucial for incentivising engagement. Aligning what local places required with central government partners’ incentives and motivations as per their policy priorities secured central government partners’ support for and engagement in the pilots.
3. **Creating or capitalising on opportunities to influence** central government policy. This involves local or central stakeholders identifying leverage points where collaboration is more likely to be possible due to the timing, topic or stakeholders involved in a policy.



Achieving these conditions in the programme was influenced by several enabling and inhibiting factors as outlined in Figure 5 and described further in Section 3.3 and 3.4 below. In each section, the enablers and barriers are described in order of significance, recognising that they hold true to different extents depending on the context for central-local collaboration.

Figure 5. Enablers and barriers to achieving the key conditions for creating effective collaboration between local and central government.



### 3.3 What factors enabled local-central collaboration through the PfPP programme?

#### 3.3.1 System navigators

There is strong evidence and consensus across local place teams and central government partners that the DLUHC PfPP team's role as 'system navigators' was a critical enabling factor for securing central government engagement. Pilot leads and other stakeholders connected with 12 out of 13 pilots agreed that the DLUHC PfPP team's role in facilitating communications with central government partners was a key enabler, without which, they would not have been able to identify or engage with central government partners. The significance of the DLUHC PfPP team acting as navigators was highlighted in evidence from regular check-ins with place teams, minutes from Local Place Boards and Working Groups, interviews, and reviews of the DLUHC PfPP team's central government engagement tracker.

**“I think that the strength in PfPP for me is the [DLUHC lead] ...we've discussed what the issues are and she's gone right, I know the person to go to, not just in DLUHC, but in the various different departments...if we were to lose that, that would be a deficit because you don't know what you don't know.” [Pilot lead]**

The DLUHC PfPP team supported engagement by:

- **Identifying relevant contacts within central government**, often via members of the Working Group who acted as navigators within departments. This required an understanding of the focus and approach of the pilots, as DLUHC leads would often have initial meetings without local places

due to diary constraints, and a network across central government to support initial approaches to officials.

- **Facilitating engagement activities.** This included setting up meetings between pilot projects and central government partners, encouraging central government participation in local place visits, and following up on requests for information from departments. This helped to support local places to connect effectively with central government partners, including by:
  - Helping to shape their approach to sharing local information in a way that was relevant to civil servants.
  - Identifying potential flexibilities or levers available to central government that local places were not aware of.
  - Understanding how to influence decisions e.g., how to communicate effectively with central government civil servants, how to involve decision-makers, or make suggestions for next steps.
- **Promoting the programme** to support engagement activities and strengthen their network across central government.

Central government partners and local place teams attributed the **responsiveness** of the DLUHC PfPP team as enabling positive connections between local and central stakeholders. Members of the Working Group and other central government partners emphasised the availability of the DLUHC PfPP team and the benefits of having dedicated resources to navigate between local and central government. This included establishing regular catch-ups to discuss opportunities for departmental involvement in places, as well as any barriers to engagement. Without this dedicated resource, local place teams expressed concern about their ability to reach central government partners after the programme.

**“[The DLUHC lead] really pushed forward the agenda and kept pestering you to drive forward the delivery of things or what [they] wanted for the programme as well. I think often it just takes one person who’s got a bit of time to do things.” [Central government partner]**

### 3.3.2 Degree of policy alignment

While central government partners did not support most pilots to unblock policy and regulatory barriers as initially intended (see Section 5.2.1), engagement did result in three pilots gaining access to new opportunities (Durham, East Sussex and Bradford). These local pilot teams attributed their success to connecting with other pre-existing central government programmes being piloted outside of the programme or in the early stages of development. In these cases, central government partners were already looking to gather information or local expertise to inform policy design or delivery.

- Following conversations with the Cabinet Office, the Bradford pilot agreed to use a new national grants application portal (‘Find a Grant’). The project, focused on administering grants for local organisations to work with vulnerable people in their community, advertised its tender for partners on the grant’s portal. This support was somewhat significant for the Bradford team because it saved its new Wellbeing Hub time by using existing infrastructure and enabling them to reach a wider audience. The Bradford team commissioned £9,000 of funding from advertising on the grant’s portal. At the same time, partners from the Cabinet Office felt the opportunity to support Bradford helped them to demonstrate the value of the new portal internally.

- In Durham the Horden pilot was connected to a Home Office partner setting up a new programme (Clear Hold Build) involving multi-agency approaches to improve areas affected by organised crime. The new scheme was piloted as part of the programme, with the pilot focused on improving engagement and communication with the community to encourage reporting and information sharing about anti-social behaviour and crime. The pilot team noted that while “it was likely [the Clear Hold Build programme] would have happened anyway”, the PfPP programme “put it on fast forward.” This ensured Clear Hold Build was delivered through Horden Together rather than through other initiatives, teams, or departments across the Council or the wider community. The Durham pilot also secured additional investment of £87,250 from the Northeast Local Net Zero Hub Board to support the establishment of a Mine Water Heating Community Energy project. Representatives from DESNZ and the Northeast Local Net Zero Hub attended a visit in Horden, after which they worked with the East Durham Trust to make a funding decision.
- For the East Sussex project focused on improving policy for tackling fuel poverty in the private rental sector, central government partners from DLUHC suggested that the research findings from the pilot could be used to inform updates to national guidance for tenants and landlords (currently being initiated and developed), ahead of the Renters Reform Bill. Additionally, East Sussex was added to a group of local authorities that DLUHC will consult on the reforms. This means that East Sussex will have the opportunity to play a larger role in influencing national guidance than previously.

Connecting with these initiatives provided opportunities for places to inform national policy and for central government to pilot new approaches locally. These opportunities incentivised local-central collaboration as the reasons for engagement were clear for both parties and there was a shared purpose for working together. Similarly, policy alignment resulted in both the Durham and East Sussex pilots securing additional funding from DESNZ. In these cases, central government partners identified a local opportunity and used funding flexibilities, for example through a budget underspend, to provide additional resources to local projects.

### 3.3.3 Effective engagement opportunities.

Creating routine and well-structured engagement mechanisms provided opportunities to share knowledge, identify areas where central and local government policy were aligned, and where central government officials could contribute or add value to pilot teams. In interviews, DLUHC PfPP leads, pilot leads and central government partners emphasised several factors which contributed to effective engagement mechanisms:

- **Commitment among local authority teams to building relationships with central government.** DLUHC PfPP leads felt the extent to which place teams committed to central government engagement varied, with some places “not embracing wider engagement as well as they could have” compared to others that invested heavily to provide opportunities for central government involvement. This was supported by central government partners attending the end-of-programme showcase discussions, who described how the “licence” to engage goes two ways and valued the invitations from pilot teams to visit their local areas.
- **Integrating sustained or regular engagement and relationship-building with central government into delivery** helped central government partners to understand how they could support local pilot teams. This improved clarity around roles in the programme. For example:

- The Southwark pilot developed a programme of community engagement activities using a [Working Group](#) model. This included an explicit role for central government partners as equals to local residents, business owners, and representatives of Southwark Council.
- The East Sussex team also integrated opportunities for central government partners to support the project, including through extensive one-to-one meetings over a period of six months to explain the background of the project and why central government involvement was important. This enabled the pilot to identify central government partners who understood the value of the project and were willing to consistently support them in their co-design phase.
- In Bradford, the team felt sustained engagement enabled central government stakeholders to develop stronger knowledge of local assets, systems, and issues, while also giving local government stakeholders a clearer understanding of the strategic priorities within different areas of central government. This was considered by the pilot lead to provide opportunities for legacy governance arrangements and communication channels after the programme.

**“They [East Sussex] provided lots of different ways for central government colleagues to get involved with visits, [and] with co-design workshops. They put in a lot of time and effort in getting people to go along [and] to explain the background and why it was important central government were there.” [DLUHC PfPP lead]**

Local places organised visits for central government as platforms to generate wider engagement. Nine out of the 13 pilots facilitated at least one local visit, with five of these attended by at least three central government departments. DLUHC leads and central government partners described how the visits provided a valuable opportunity for learning, to better understand how national policy is presented and delivered locally while also providing visitors with clearer insight into the pilot’s aims and objectives. This supported collaboration by creating an opportunity to build (or strengthen) relationships, understand shared goals and identify how central government partners could support the pilot.

**However, central government partners and local places emphasised how visits were not sufficient for long-term collaboration.** In interviews, pilot leads felt the visits were less significant for the success of their collaboration than more sustained engagement with central government partners through regular meetings. Central government partners also questioned the potential for long-term impact resulting from a one-off visit. In this way, stakeholders argued that effective collaboration required more sustained relationship building and commitment to unblock barriers.

**“I don’t think I’d want to say six hours in Horden and working on this project is going to really influence how I develop and design policy in the future... it was an interesting one-off experience.” [Central government partner]**

#### 3.3.4 Individual commitment to place-based working.

Civil servants’ existing interest and commitment to place-based working encouraged them to participate in engagement activities and prioritise collaboration with pilot teams despite time and resource constraints. In interviews, central government partners reported several reasons behind their motivation to take part:

- **Roles dedicated to place-based working.** Several members of the programme Working Group had positions focused on collaboration or working in-place. Members included a policy advisor focused on Places in the Department for Works and Pensions (DWP), a Place and Levelling Up Lead in the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS), and a Local Engagement Lead in the Home Office. For these individuals, engaging with activities in local places had direct

relevance to their departmental position. Likewise, there was alignment between their role objectives and the objectives of the programme. Working Group members described their interest in learning from the programme as a key motivating factor for their involvement.

- **Clear alignment between a local pilot and central government partners' remit.** Interest in a policy area motivated central government partners to engage in local activities over a sustained period as there was a direct relevance to their role and greater opportunity for them to influence change. For example, a civil servant from DESNZ helped the Horden Together pilot to secure an additional £87,250 of funding from the Northeast Local Net Zero Hub Board to establish a Mine Water Heating Community Energy project. The central government partner described how the model had “captured their interest” and indicated potential benefits to the community. This alignment of local and central government vision helped overcome perceptions that local pilots were not directly relevant to individual civil servants' roles. This was often a barrier to engagement with some central government partners, as reported by local pilot leads and described further below (Section 3.3.2). Similarly, one central government partner decided not to get more involved in the Southwark pilot as they felt the focus on collectively deciding the future of the barbecue area in Burgess Park did not directly align with their policy priority of reducing obesity.
- **Prior experience or interest collaborating with local government or in community engagement.** Central government partners who at the time were not working in a place-based role but had prior experience or hoped to work on similar policies in the future were more likely to invest time in pilot projects, seeing the programme as a development opportunity.
- **Personal interest in a place.** Several central government partners in interviews described a personal connection with a pilot location, such as having relatives based in the area or living nearby. This supported engagement by motivating central government partners to participate in activities, even where this had limited relevance to their professional role. A personal connection to a place also helped to overcome geographical barriers and make visits or meetings more accessible.

These motivational factors were often present in **regional teams** where individuals had an existing interest in a place, there was clear organisational alignment, and individuals were based closer to an area geographically. This supported relationship building by making it easier to facilitate face-to-face meetings and establish greater alignment around shared local goals. One central government partner from DWP highlighted how local colleagues from JobCentre Plus had sustained engagement with pilots including in Liverpool, Cornwall, and Newcastle, suggesting this was easier to achieve than sustained engagement with central policy or commercial teams. However, the focus of many regional teams on delivery rather than policymaking made it harder to unblock local barriers relating to central government policy, even where strong relationships were built.

**“The regional structure enables them to be there and know and have that interaction, but it also doesn't empower them to make the changes that they so clearly can see need to be done.” [DLUHC PfPP lead]**

In interviews, DLUHC PfPP leads, local place teams and central government partners highlighted the need to give civil servants **permission to work in a new place-based way**, particularly if place-based programmes like PfPP seek to reach beyond central government officials who have an existing interest or commitment to place-based working. Interviewees described how this may be especially relevant where outcomes are not specifically defined or where there is less clear alignment with policy roles.

For example, the Southwark pilot team recognised how linking engagement in the Pilot Working Group to professional development opportunities was an effective way of capturing central government partners' interest. The DLUHC PfPP lead and central government partners from DLUHC involved in the first Working Group presented learning from the pilot during a departmental development week. Stakeholders attributed subsequent engagement in the pilot to this activity alongside an email from a senior member of DLUHC staff encouraging teams to participate. This highlights the value of role-modelling behaviours related to central-local collaboration and the potential requirement for culture change to encourage new ways of working.

### 3.4 What factors hindered local-central collaboration during the PfPP programme?

#### 3.4.1 Limited understanding of how central government can support place-based challenges.

There is strong evidence the programme built understanding amongst the local and central government stakeholders involved and helped address informational barriers in nine projects (described further in Section 4). However, limited understanding amongst those involved at the beginning of the programme created challenges to engagement in the initial stages of delivery and restricted the ability of the programme to unblock barriers.

Both central government partners and pilot leads interviewed at the beginning of the programme described having limited knowledge of how each other worked. This made it more challenging to build a shared understanding of how or why to collaborate and resulted in early engagement activities with limited follow up.

**“Central government has a lack of understanding about how local government operates and what their priorities are and vice versa. Local government has a lack of understanding about central government, how it works, where it’s headed and how they can influence it. That does cause tensions particularly when it comes to performance and setting priorities – whether you are working to a nationally set goal or a locally set priority.” [Working Group member]**

These early challenges made it difficult for pilot teams to:

- **Identify which departments, or teams,** might be able to support them to unblock barriers. Pilot teams reflected on having limited previous experience directly collaborating with central government departments relevant to their policy areas, and limited understanding of departmental remits and structures, in particular where issues crossed departments or teams. Pilot leads highlighted a reliance on DLUHC PfPP leads to navigate central government structures. This impacted the efficiency of identifying central government teams early in the programme when DLUHC leads highlighted having fewer departmental connections.
- **Articulate the support they required** from central government. Several Working Group members and other central government partners in interviews highlighted challenges identifying how to support local pilot teams when they lacked clarity on their objectives or the reasons for central government being involved. Equally, central government partners struggled to proactively identify how they could support local places without a specific request. Without a clear understanding of next steps or the specific mutual benefits of partnership working, engagement activities such as ToC workshops or visits failed to generate momentum.

**“I don’t think the local teams know exactly what they want from us, which is why I think this is going to be more opportunistic than planned.” [Central government partner]**

- **Generate interest without having robust evidence underpinning their approach.** In Northumberland, the pilot engaged regional leads from NHS England (NHSE), DfE, and DWP in initial ToC development. However, central government partners in DfE felt there was a lack of supporting evidence to make the changes Northumberland suggested to policy and guidance. This was exacerbated by limited awareness among DfE colleagues of the implications of the Holiday Activities and Food programme (HAF) on related issues like safeguarding and elective home education.

Local places addressed this limited knowledge about who to engage, how to define their requests and demonstrate underpinning evidence in several ways:

- Completing research or co-design processes to develop a better understanding of the local challenge before defining an ‘ask’ for central government support.
- Working with DLUHC PfPP leads to identify relevant civil servants and build knowledge of how to approach central government stakeholders.
- Taking a flexible approach to collaborating with central government by maximising available opportunities such as willing central government partners or early-stage initiatives with potentially less relevance to a pilot project or local barriers.

**“The expectation that a series of meetings would start unlocking things for individuals probably wasn’t quite right.... Whereas if they [central government partners] had maybe come later on, then there would have been that clear evidence of ‘we’re actually seeing person after person saying this is an issue to them’, is there a solution longer term for that?” [Pilot lead]**

Despite the intention of the programme to foster greater collaboration between central and local government to improve outcomes for local communities, early experiences of initial engagements resulted in three pilot teams prioritising local delivery without central government partners (Birmingham, Cornwall, Newcastle). This unintended consequence reflects the importance of building effective engagement mechanisms to highlight how the time and resource commitment required for collaboration can bring mutual benefits.

#### 3.4.2 A focus on national policy priorities with limited flexibility for local adaptations.

Structured policy and funding cycles and at times, long approval processes reduced the ability for local pilot teams to influence national policy or achieve the flexibility required to work in a place-based way. In some cases, this was exacerbated by a hyper-local focus which contrasted with central government partners’ national and often strategic emphasis.

Analysis of the drivers of central government spend highlighted the lack of an overarching policy driver to spending priorities. It explored the correlation between spending and measures that could be expected to align most closely with departmental priorities. This found the single biggest driver for the amount of money flowing into a place is the number of people who live there, irrespective of departmental priorities. This suggests that **funding may not be driven by specific needs within local authorities** – an emerging finding that should continue to be tested. For example, across all departments there was little to no correlation between grants made and a single overarching socio-economic factor that aligns to the

policy priority for that department. While it is highly unlikely that there will be a single measure that encapsulates all that a department does, the analysis explored correlation between DLUHC and deprivation, DCMS and the presence of cultural assets and amenities, DBT and business formation rates, Home Office and crime rates, DfE and the number of young people. The only exception to this trend was DEFRA, where the size of the area was more strongly correlated to the funding allocation than population, reflecting their largely rural policy remit.<sup>16</sup>

Central government partners (including DLUHC, DHSC, and DESNZ) who took part in systems mapping discussions also described how current policymaking structures restrict their ability to enact local demands for flexibilities, including through:

- **The focus on achieving aims that align with value for money appraisals and national targets.** This contributes to the patchwork of narrow funding streams that sit within departmental boundaries, and ultimately, results in unmet local needs. For example, DHSC central government partners described how funding for diabetes and heart disease is ringfenced to enable national stakeholders (including the NHS and to a lesser extent, DHSC) to account for how it is spent against specific targets. These requirements mean that local healthcare providers are unable to use this funding flexibly to address specific needs relating to obesity. This is a cross-cutting issue with greater individual and local relevancy in many contexts, and patterns of disadvantage and unequal access to appropriate care remain.

Central government partners including Working Group members highlighted the importance of value for money assessments in the context of fiscal constraints where there is high spending scrutiny. Several central government partners referred to the importance of value for money outputs in demonstrating and communicating the impact of a programme, which can be used to influence spending or policy decisions.

**“A programme that has got a really good cost-benefit analysis, that is your golden ticket to that systemic change in government. Maybe that’s a slightly cynical approach, but it is, especially when the fiscal envelope is so tight... but that’s probably the only way you get real change.” [Central government partner]**

- **Lack of clarity among partners working at the regional level about national priorities or changes in duties affecting local places,** despite playing a key role in delivery. For example, DHSC central government partners described how abrupt changes in funding provision for weight management and obesity limited regional DHSC colleagues’ ability to support local government to make sense of the national resources available for local Integrated Care Boards to tackle obesity. This lack of communication on changes to national policy also hindered the relationship between regional and national government colleagues.
- **Shifting political landscapes and uncertainty** can delay policy change in areas where key trade-offs must be made by ministers. For example, central government partners spoke about the need to balance trade-offs between pursuing energy efficiency standards and the potential costs to businesses. This balance often shifts on evolving political and ideological grounds. This means that national policies which help unblock local barriers can be delayed or ended. For example, legislation to strengthen the Decent Homes Standard so that it applies to private rental properties was significantly delayed during delivery of the programme.

<sup>16</sup> Refer to Annex 1.5 for further analysis of the drivers of spend.



- **Time and difficulty unblocking policy or regulatory barriers which require passing new legislation**, and relatedly, the political clout of departmental ministers to spearhead legislation. For example, central government partners described how legislation like the Renters Reform Bill is important for helping local government partners engage landlords on their responsibilities for improving energy efficiency and reducing fuel poverty. Local authorities do not have the power to enforce these standards without national legislation in place. However, this legislation takes time to pass due to political delays as well as the need to prioritise legislation across government.

This lack of national flexibility reduced the extent of central-local collaboration through the programme as a result of:

- **Limited opportunities within existing policies for local adaptation.** Where policies were already at a mature stage of development (for example, in the process of being introduced as legislation or being implemented) central government partners noted it was difficult to resource or justify engaging with local places even where central and local policies aligned.<sup>17</sup> Local pilot leads and finance teams involved in spend mapping analysis also described how funding is often too prescriptive, limiting the ability to adapt to meet specific place-based needs. This was felt to be particularly the case with DHSC funding.
  - In Cornwall, the pilot team wanted to test how skills programmes and funding could be better commissioned at the local level. Although they had initial meetings with central government partners, this did not result in further conversations or more sustained engagement. One central government partner from DfE who met with the team described how it was more difficult to support the pilot with greater funding flexibility due to the County Deal in place, which already provides greater autonomy over how they use funding. However, the Cornwall team suggested they did not believe the County Deal should have been a barrier and felt this represented a misunderstanding of the project goals. In contrast, the same civil servant, who engaged with Wakefield on emotionally-based school avoidance, described how the project’s focus aligned well with departmental interests and emerging work around families with multiple complex issues.
  - In Durham, uncertainty about whether funding for the Horden Masterplan would become available via Levelling Up funding delayed the pilot team’s ability to finalise an ‘ask’ for central government support from Homes England, as the support may have become available through the existing scheme.

**“It’s almost what they want to do is slightly run ahead of the natural direction of policy travel. And that’s proving a bit more difficult to both resource and justify.” [Central Government Partner]**

- **Risk associated with promoting local flexibilities.** In interviews, DLUHC PfPP leads noted there was sometimes a sense of discomfort during meetings with central government partners which limited the scope for open, transparent conversations about what could be done to support local places. Central government partners also described a hesitancy around ‘cherry-picking’ places or unblocking barriers for individual locations as a result of relationships rather than taking a consistent approach across the country.

<sup>17</sup> While pilots were unable to leverage opportunities which existed in initiatives at a mature stage of development, those that were new, in a scoping or establishment phase were easier to connect with. This is explored in Section 3.2.4.

**“We can’t [only] prioritise a certain number of places. . . Because [national policy] is a blanket one size fits all, therefore we have to be seen to do everything everywhere.”**  
[PfPP Working Group member]

Although ten places in their delivery plans reported an intention to influence broader policy and funding, pilot teams had limited success achieving this within the timeframes of the programme. While pilot leads highlighted opportunities to share how policy and regulatory barriers influenced local service delivery and outcomes with central government departments, there is no evidence that these discussions have yet influenced departmental systems, processes or policymaking. This reflects the systemic nature of the barriers to greater central-local collaboration or involvement in policymaking, as well as the cultural resistance to new ways of working.

**“I’ve had some conversations with individuals in central government where they’ve said the findings would be really useful, but in order for it to be robust at a central government level, we would need to have that in multiple places across the country, and different regions.”** [DLUHC PfPP lead]

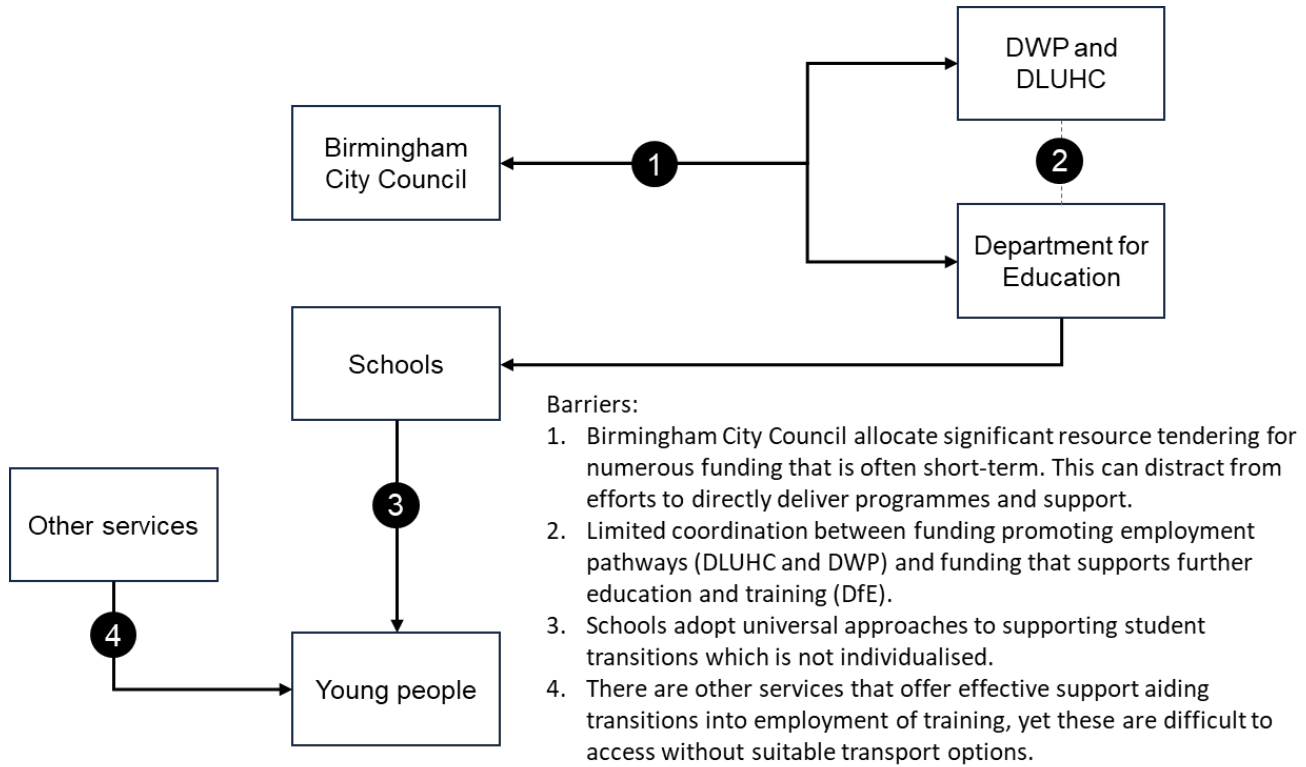
### 3.4.3 The time and resources required to unblock structural barriers.

The ingrained nature of the structural barriers preventing greater collaboration requires significant time, resources and social capital to unblock. Systems mapping workshops with each local place and central government partners emphasised the cross-cutting and long-term nature of these barriers that spans public service delivery across sectors in the UK. The programme aimed to unblock these barriers through greater collaboration. However, the short timeframes involved – with local delivery lasting twelve months – and the lack of additional resources available for central government partners outside of the DLUHC PfPP delivery team limited this. Section 3.1 provides a fuller overview of the insights gained from the spend and systems mapping analysis, which demonstrates the ways in which systemic and structural factors interrelate with and contribute to the issues the pilots aimed to tackle.

**“I think some commitment around funding. There’s got to be longer-term a greater funding pot, which can be used strategically that [different civil servants] could use to work on the components that are going to tackle the challenge that we’re facing. So, just a more flexible, cross-government funding pot.”** [PfPP Working Group member]

The system map developed with the Birmingham team provides an example of how organisational siloes and other structural issues relating to data sharing and short-term funding were identified as key barriers to tackling the issues local places wanted to resolve, but which could not be unblocked in full in the timeframe of the programme. The Birmingham system map focuses on their objective of reducing long-term youth unemployment and illustrates how DfE, DWP and DLUHC connect to local delivery through funding for further education and support for young people facing unemployment.

Figure 6. Birmingham – Reducing Long-term Youth Unemployment System Map Excerpt



Within this system, most funding comes from the DfE and is focused on further education and academic progression. Universal approaches to supporting young people in education are not personalised enough to young people’s needs, and many support services are focused on further education rather than on the transition to employment. There is a gap in funding to support young people to consider vocational pathway options, and a disconnect between young people and employers who could help them explore these options. The Birmingham project aimed to solve this, with a specific focus on Year 11 students who tend to miss out from support. Existing services are often outside of school settings, causing issues with transportation and limiting young people’s knowledge of the support available. Secondly, limited capacity or support to strengthen data sharing between local partners and between local and central government also causes inefficiencies and information gaps such as between Children’s and Adult services. These services are unable to share the information they have on what support young people may require as they transition into adulthood. Finally, short-term, competitive funding from central government means that Birmingham council officers dedicate significant resources to funding applications and reporting rather than on strategy, planning, or providing services.

The Birmingham project team identified barriers around data sharing as one possible area central government partners could support them with through the programme. They met with the DfE to discuss the possibilities for obtaining data to link to personal records that would enable the team to track students’ progress and career pathways from school to further/higher education and employment. However, the team reported how current data sharing legislation does not allow institutions or data holders to share personal records with the local authority on an ongoing basis. This impeded further collaboration between central government partners and the Birmingham project team, which struggled to identify other ways central government could support their project. Although the team described how it was useful to understand data sharing processes and availability within central government.

### 3.4.4 Capacity and turnover within central government.

Delivery of the programme required central government partners outside of the DLUHC PfPP team to spend time participating in activities without any additional funding or resource. Limited capacity within central government created a barrier to engagement by increasing the need for activities to be directly relevant to a role or with a clear purpose. This restricted the ability to form relationships and build a shared understanding of an issue without pre-defined outcomes, making it more difficult to create the space to explore potential areas for collaboration.

In monthly check-ins and interviews with pilot leads, there was often frustration about the extent to which they were able to engage with central government partners and limited follow-up after initial meetings. This was acknowledged by some central government partners who highlighted a limited ability to engage with places due to time pressures. One central government stakeholder highlighted the extent of their engagement to “reading emails with interest” following initial engagements rather than a deeper form of collaboration. Likewise, one Working Group member acting as a departmental point of contact highlighted how capacity constraints influenced the willingness to buy-in to work without clear evidence and rationale to support the approach. This meant individual willingness or interest played a key role in motivating central government partners to spend time with a place, enabling both parties to build the understanding required to identify common goals.

**“I have been highly motivated to support the programme because it is meeting a particular professional development need. But in terms of engagement with NHSE more generally I suspect there is reducing capacity for involvement with work that is not very directly in scope for our delivery outcomes. It may be increasingly difficult to make these links as capacity is stretched during a period of substantial internal organisational change.” [Central government partner]**

Capacity constraints were particularly acute at a senior level, with limited senior engagement in the programme or local pilots outside of the PfPP Place Board. Place Board attendance also lacked consistency across the duration of the programme. Only 10% (3) of the 28 central government officials involved with the Government Place Board, attended at least three out of five meetings.

**“When everyone is very stretched, it’s very hard to do that added value. So, that evidence around, ‘What are the benefits of doing this?’ has to be really clear to make the case to use capacity in that way.” [PfPP Working Group member]**

This had an impact on the ability of central government partners to unblock barriers, as those involved in local places often did not have the influence required, especially in response to structural barriers. In interviews with the DLUHC PfPP team, this lack of senior engagement was attributed as a key factor limiting the results of engagement activities. Several central government partners highlighted that they lacked seniority to commit to actions or decisions in meetings with pilot teams without referring to department leadership. This meant that discussions with places were more discursive, often focused on sharing knowledge rather than making decisions. In several cases, this created difficulties generating momentum if not backed by leadership or policy teams that “think in a place-based way”.

**“The challenge of the local government – central government relationship is that a lot of it was trying to unlock barriers that have been identified at the local level and unlocking any barriers that relate to changing law or changing policy require senior level buy-in in central government.” [Central government partner]**

Turnover of DLUHC leads was identified by several pilot leads as a factor that hindered progress in connecting with central government. Half of DLUHC PfPP leads (three out of the six-person DLUHC PfPP engagement team) changed roles partway through implementation, with one lead leaving during

the delivery plan development stage and another two halfway through delivery. While not unusual for any programme, staff turnover and absence were particularly challenging in the context of the short timeframes, and the important role DLUHC PfPP leads played supporting relationship development between place teams and central government. In the same way, turnover of central government partners stalled places' ability to engage with teams. For example, connections between the Hackney pilot and the DCMS Loneliness Team were lost when the person they were in contact with moved and there were difficulties engaging the replacement.

### 3.4.5 Summary of findings

- The programme represented a novel way of working between central and local government that promoted bottom-up programme design and communication. However, structural barriers, embedded cultures and gaps in understanding created challenges for central-local collaboration. In order of significance, this included:
  - **Limited understanding among local and central government** of how to best collaborate to support place-based goals. Especially in the early stages of delivery, pilot teams found it difficult to identify which central government stakeholders could help to unblock barriers and articulate the support required. This was particularly challenging for places that did not have a strong grasp of their approach and clear evidence of the need for support. Without clear asks, central government partners often highlighted a lack of clarity about how to support places.
  - Central government focus on **national policy priorities with limited flexibility** for local adaptation prevented the unlocking of local barriers – a key objective of the programme. Although the programme increased engagement between central and local government, there were limited opportunities to embed local flexibilities and influence policies already at a mature stage of development. Central government partners noted it was difficult to resource or justify engaging with local places even where central and local policies aligned.
  - The **structural nature of the barriers identified required long-term support** and could not be addressed within the timeframes and resources of the programme. This included barriers to sharing data across organisations, requirements for legislative changes, or short programme timeframes that limit the opportunity for places to generate robust evidence of impact.
  - **Capacity and turnover within central government** restricted the ability to form relationships and build a shared understanding of an issue in some places.
- The programme linked over one hundred central government teams to places, and saw success in building relationships, increasing understanding, and unblocking informational barriers. Several key enablers were highlighted in places where central-local collaboration proved more effective. In order of significance, this included:
  - **Navigation support** was integral to supporting the identification of potential partners across central and local government. There was consensus across stakeholders that connections would not have been made without the strategic and coordinated support provided by the programme leads and points of contact based within departments.
  - There was clear and distinguishable **alignment between local challenges and central government initiatives**. Where there were clear reasons for engagement and a shared

purpose for working together, places were able to inform national policy and central government was able to pilot new approaches in local settings.

- Some pilot teams built effective ongoing engagement opportunities through **routine and well-structured meetings**. This helped build relationships with central government while importantly, improve understanding of how central government partners could add value and contribute to pilot projects.
- **Existing interest in place-based initiatives** also encouraged civil servants to participate in engagement activities and invest in local collaboration despite time and resource constraints. Pilot teams more often engaged with central government partners in roles dedicated to place-based working, who had prior experience collaborating with local government or who had a personal interest in the place or policy area.

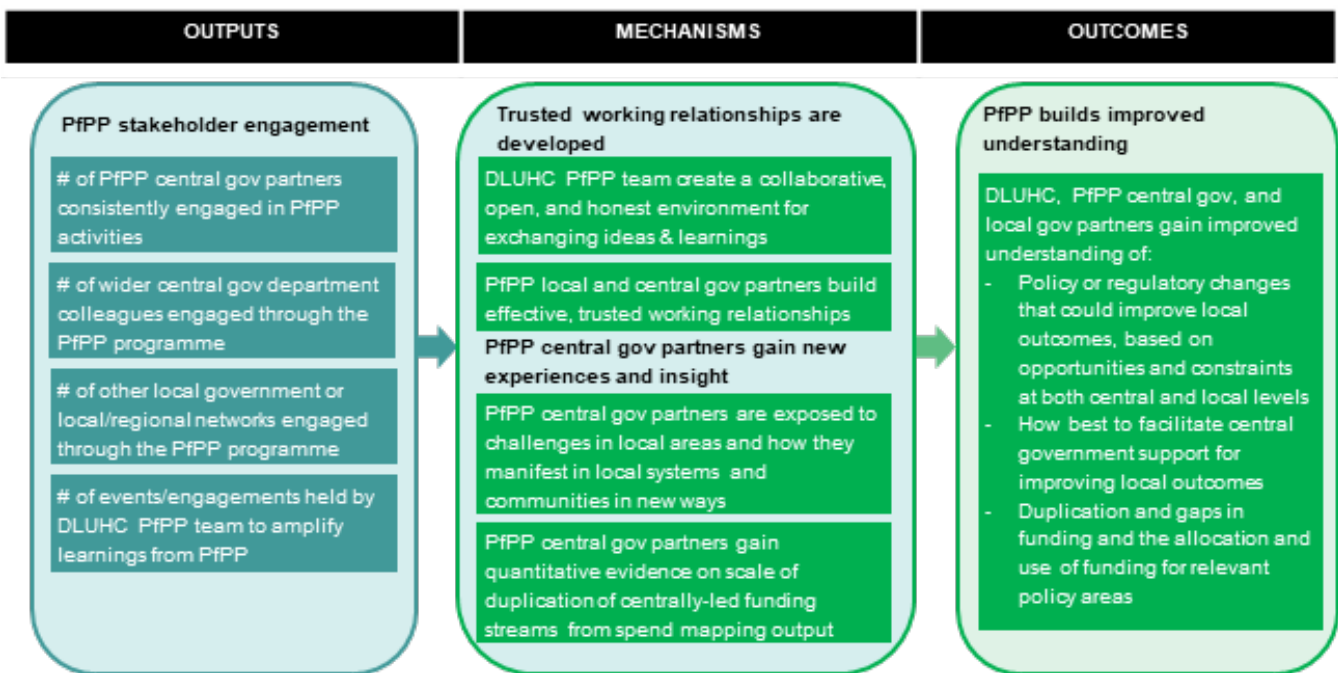
# 4 Building Understanding

This section assesses the extent to which Partnerships for People and Place (PfPP) improved understanding amongst central and local government partners, a key outcome of the programme, in line with the evaluation questions in Section 1.3. It explores whether involvement in the programme enabled these parties to develop trusted working relationships and/or provided opportunities to gain new experiences and insights. These factors were identified as mechanisms of the programme ToC, summarised in the diagram below. Through these mechanisms, it was assumed participation in the programme would result in greater understanding of:

- Policy or regulatory changes that could improve local outcomes
- How best to facilitate central government support for improving local outcomes
- Duplication and gaps in funding

To receive funding, project teams were required to set out their rationale for how greater collaboration with central government departments would overcome local barriers and support service delivery. This understanding was tested and built upon during the life of the programme. **PfPP intended to improve stakeholders’ knowledge and understanding of the extent to which (and if so, why) central government involvement in place-based policy making can improve local outcomes.**

Figure 7. PfPP Theory of Change – Building Understanding pathway.



Evidence has been assessed against the criteria in Table 3, which describes how an **S** signifies that the evidence has been rated 'strong', and **M** signifies that there was 'medium' evidence. An absence of symbols signifies that there was limited evidence.

Table 3. Strength of evidence criteria – Building Understanding pathway.

Rating	Description
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<b>S</b>	Strong evidence	Multiple lines of evidence from multiple sources, corroborate the connection between the intervention and the mechanism or outcomes, in at least 50% of pilots.
<b>M</b>	Medium evidence	Multiple lines of evidence from a single source corroborate the connection between the intervention and the mechanism or outcomes, in at least 50% of pilots. Alternative explanations are identified and plausible.
	Limited evidence	Evidence from a single source corroborate the connection between the intervention and mechanism or outcomes in less than 50% of pilots.

Table 4 below summarises the evidence against each step of the Building Understanding hypothesis (or the extent to which activities led to intended mechanisms and outcomes) across the programme. The evidence is described further in the remaining chapter.



Table 4. Summary of evidence – Building Understanding Outcome.

Mechanism/outcome	Evidence	Summary of evidence
Implementation: Were stakeholders engaged?	<b>S</b>	<p><b>There is strong evidence</b> of engagement from central and local stakeholders in the programme, although the quality of engagement ranged across different partners and forums. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consensus among pilot leads that the programme connected pilot teams to a range of departments and central government stakeholders (Source: interviews with pilot leads, DLUHC leads, Working Group members).</li> <li>• 119 central government teams across 17 departments (plus the Policy Lab) were linked with place teams through the programme. 47 central government teams were engaged with place teams on more than one occasion (Source: engagement tracking data).</li> <li>• 54 central government officials participated in the Government Place Working Group, 20 participated in Government Place Board meetings, and eight attended both the Working Group and the Government Place Board (Source: attendance data).</li> </ul>
Mechanism (1a): Were trusted working relationships developed?	<b>M</b>	<p><b>There is some evidence</b> that the programme's central and local partners developed trusting relationships, albeit perspectives differed. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consensus that trusting relationships were developed between DLUHC PfPP leads and pilot teams across all pilots (Source: interviews with DLUHC PfPP leads and pilot leads).</li> <li>• Strong evidence that trusting relationships between pilot teams and wider central government officials developed in the seven areas where pilots were able to generate regular engagement and multiple touchpoints with these individuals. This was not reflected in the six areas that were unable to develop relationships (Source: Interviews with pilot leads, focus groups with Working Group members).</li> <li>• No central government partners connected with places referred to relationships with local areas as 'trusting' (Source: central government partners, Working Group members).</li> </ul>

<p>Mechanism (1b): Did central government partners gain new experiences and insight?</p>	<p><b>S</b></p>	<p><b>There is strong evidence</b> that central government partners gained new insight and experiences through the programme. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreement that central government partners connected with places were exposed to challenges in local areas and engaged with local government and communities (e.g. through place visits) in ways that were not readily available outside of the programme (Source: Focus groups with Working Group, deliberative workshops with central government partners, interviews with DLUHC leads).</li> <li>• Several central government partners reported benefits from understanding new perspectives on policy from attending forums and highlighting the networking benefits of participating in the programme (Source: Focus groups with Working Group, deliberative workshops with central government partners, interviews with DLUHC PfPP leads).</li> </ul>
<p>Outcome (1c): Did PfPP build improved understanding of policy or regulatory change?</p>		<p><b>There is limited evidence</b> that the programme contributed to improved understanding of policy or regulatory barriers that could improve local outcomes. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wide agreement among pilot leads that the programme led to an improved understanding of the key issues underpinning pilot interventions, but that this was a result of local project activities rather than input from central government partners (Source: interviews with pilot leads).</li> <li>• There is evidence from one pilot (East Sussex) that a sustained co-design phase with central government led to improved understanding of what regulatory and policy barriers could be alleviated (Source: interviews with pilot leads, deliberative workshops with pilot stakeholders, interviews with DLUHC PfPP leads).</li> </ul>
<p>Outcome (1d): Did PfPP build improved understanding of how to best facilitate central government support?</p>	<p><b>S</b></p>	<p><b>There is strong evidence</b> that the programme contributed to an improved understanding of how to best facilitate central government support. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DLUHC PfPP leads and pilot teams agreed that local teams have a greater understanding of how to engage with central government partners than at the beginning of the programme (Source: interviews with pilot leads and DLUHC PfPP leads).</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of improved understanding among pilot leads included the importance of (1) being clear in how to define requests, the need to (2) show high standards of evidence to influence central government policy, and (3) improved understanding of the process for making policy or regulatory changes in central government (Source: interviews with pilot leads).</li> <li>• However, there is limited evidence that local pilots will be able to facilitate future central government support without the structures provided by the programme, including the central DLUHC PfPP team and departmental points of contact.</li> </ul>
Outcome (1e): Did PfPP build improved understanding of duplication and gaps in funding?		<p><b>There is limited evidence</b> that the programme contributed to an improved understanding of duplication of gaps in funding.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no consensus among pilot leads or central government partners of the extent to which spend mapping insights improved understanding of the duplication in funding flows. There is agreement that insights provided evidence behind what was already recognised, particularly within local authorities and that further investment to understand the complexity and duplication of funding is welcomed (Source: Interviews with pilot leads, focus groups with Working Group members, interviews with DLUHC leads).</li> </ul>

## 4.1 Evidence of implementation

As described in the ToC, the programme intended to effectively facilitate and promote knowledge sharing and learning between central and local government partners through 1) engagement activities, including facilitating engagement and knowledge exchange between central and local government partners, the regular Government Place Board and Working Group meetings, and knowledge sharing and networking events; and 2) the development of learning products, in particular from the spend mapping exercise. These are described in turn along with the evidence behind the quality and extent of central government engagement in these activities.

### 4.1.1 Facilitating engagement and knowledge exchange between central and local government partners

A review of engagement tracking information compiled by DLUHC and pilot leads highlights that **the programme connected places with 17 central government departments as well as the Policy Lab**. All pilot teams connected with a minimum of five departments in total on at least one occasion. Key stakeholders pointed to the success of the navigator model in bringing central and local partners together. There was consensus amongst pilot leads that the DLUHC PfPP team played a critical role supporting places to define requests for central government support and link places to relevant central government partners. Particularly in the early phases of the project, DLUHC PfPP leads were active in identifying central government stakeholders to take part in early ToC sessions, attend meetings with place teams and arrange visits. Working Group members and other central government partners also routinely praised the work of the DLUHC PfPP leads and other departmental PfPP points of contact in their efforts supporting cross-government engagement.

**There was variation in the depth and extent to which central government stakeholders engaged consistently with pilot interventions.** Where data is recorded, it is estimated that in total 119 central government teams engaged with pilot teams through the programme, with each pilot team connecting with an average of eight central government teams.<sup>18</sup> Of the 119 teams connected with pilots, approximately 47 teams (across 12 departments and Policy Lab) were recorded to have engaged with a specific pilot more than once, signalling more sustained engagement.

Tracking data highlights how **co-design workshops, participating in local place governance meetings and acting as joint delivery partners** typically involved a smaller number of central government partners who were more consistently engaged in pilot delivery. This compares to visits or meetings where pilot engagement often did not result in further activities or more sustained relationship building. In total 40 individuals across seven departments were recorded as participating in **co-design, local governance or joint-delivery** with pilots.

Central government partners, the DLUHC PfPP team, and local places agreed that partners in regionally-based teams were easier to communicate with and engage on their pilots than those in national policy roles. Stakeholders felt that pre-existing knowledge of local issues among staff with regional remits who were based locally, combined with often greater experience working with local government enabled easier communication and early engagement with pilot teams. However, of the 40 individuals who more consistently engaged with pilot areas (as defined by their involvement in delivery, local governance or co-design), 25 were identified as being in national teams and 15 in regional teams. The Southwark and East Sussex pilots in particular engaged larger groups of central government stakeholders in roles with a national remit. Removing Southwark and East Sussex from the data shows a more even split with ten partners engaged in delivery, local governance or co-design from national

<sup>18</sup> Due to gaps in engagement tracking recording we are unable to calculate the total number of central government staff that connected with places. Places and DLUHC leads in some places were unable to identify the names of all individuals identified.

teams, compared with 13 partners in regional positions. This suggests that while regional stakeholders may have been easier to connect with, they did not make more regular contributions to pilot intervention activity.

#### 4.1.2 Central government participation in the Government Place Board and Working Group

Between June 2021 and March 2023, the DLUHC PfPP team facilitated 16 Working Group meetings and five Government Place Board meetings with a total of 82 central government officials.

*Table 5. Central government participation in the Government Place Board and Working Group.*

Governance Forum	Government Place Working Group	Government Place Board	Individual attended both Working Group and Board
Total number of central government officials attending at least one meeting	54	20	8
Departments represented	DLUHC, DEFRA, CLGU <sup>19</sup> , DHSC, DfT, DWP, DCMS, HO, NHSE/I, DfE, DESNZ, MoJ, HMT, Policy Lab	DLUHC, DEFRA, DHSC, DfT, DWP, DCMS, HO, NHSE/I, DfE, DESNZ, MoJ, CO	DLUHC, DHSC, DWP, DCMS, HO, DfE

**Although there was engagement from across government in both the Working Group and Place Board, individual membership lacked consistency.** Ten percent (3) of the 28 central government officials involved with the Government Place Board, attended at least three out of five meetings.

Within the Government Place Working Group, three individuals attended at least half of all Working Group meetings (eight or more meetings in total) for which data is recorded, equal to 5% of all attendees.<sup>20</sup> On average each Working Group member attended a total of three out of 16 meetings. This reflects the high turnover of staff within departments and the changing remits of central government teams which meant that key contacts assigned to the Working Group varied over time. Although individual membership varied, the balance of attendees between central government partners and the DLUHC PfPP team remained consistent with new central government officials joining on behalf of colleagues to maintain departmental representation. Working Group attendance data shows only a slight reduction in the average number of non-DLUHC PfPP team attendees between the first twelve months of the programme (12 attendees per meeting), and the final seven months of the programme (11 attendees per meeting).<sup>21</sup>

While the Place Board was designed to bring together senior stakeholders, members of the DLUHC PfPP team highlighted how more junior colleagues often stood in to represent some departments.

<sup>19</sup> Cities and Local Growth unit is made of officials from DLUHC and DESNZ

<sup>20</sup> Attendance data is unavailable for two of 16 Working Group meetings. These are not incorporated into the analysis.

<sup>21</sup> Members of the DLUHC PfPP team who attended these meetings are not included in these figures.

'Stand-in' attendees were less able to make active contributions to Place Boards meetings, lacking familiarity with the programme.

In interviews and focus groups, members of both the Working Group and Place Board described how these forums were an opportunity to learn more about the programme. The structure of meetings was regarded as heavily focused on providing updates rather than facilitating conversations, particularly at the Working Group level. Working Group members valued these meetings as they acquired information about the programme to share with colleagues and support their navigator role, connecting pilots with teams across their department. However, they also acknowledged that these meetings were not platforms for in-depth deliberation. One Place Board member highlighted a Government Place Board meeting held at the Southwark pilot in June 2022 as especially valuable, emphasising the opportunity this gave to hear directly from those involved in local programme delivery.

**“I think that might be something we could have done more of, to have more of that local voice around the table. [The Board meeting held in Southwark] felt like it became more interesting because we had people there who were dealing with issues on the local level. So maybe that would've led to a slightly more energetic discussion.”**  
[DLUHC PfPP team]

The diversity of the pilot projects was also felt to reduce the relevance to some Working Group members where interventions did not correspond to their policy remit. This made it harder to coalesce the group around a specific challenge or for members to see how they could feed into unblocking barriers outside of their specialism. One suggestion from Working Group members was to focus on a specific theme at each meeting, circulated in advance, to support them to understand who was best placed to attend.

4.1.3 “We started off with quite a consistent group of people in the Working Group, and I think I expected, maybe naively, more consistent engagement, both at a working level and at the Place Board. . . . If it wasn't specifically related to their policy area that sometimes made engagement drop.” [DLUHC PfPP team] Development and sharing of learning from the spend mapping and the evaluation

This research provided a means of facilitating engagement and knowledge sharing across central government and between central and local government. The DLUHC PfPP team presented findings at multiple forums across government as a way of:

- **Raising awareness across central government.** Findings were presented in a broad range of forums including:
  - Large scale events such as the Civil Service Live conference in Newcastle, Cardiff and London in collaboration with local pilots, and in an interactive workshop at the Policy Profession conference. Some Civil Service Live audience members highlighted capturing valuable insights into the barriers of central-local coordination and partnership working.
  - Presentations at team meetings such as the Cities and Local Growth Unit area team meetings, the Levelling Up Taskforce team meeting, the Anti-Social Behaviour Taskforce team meeting, DESNZ research analyst forum, DWP Labour Market Strategy and discussions with officials in individual departments including HMT, DEFRA and DCMS. The DLUHC PfPP team described how these meetings provided a valuable opportunity to shape and refine the analysis as well as share learning.
  - Contribution to the Policy Profession blog.

- **Providing insight to local government.** Findings were presented to several local government audiences via programme specific events and presentations at sector body events such as meetings of the District Council Network. These presentations were perceived by the DLUHC PfPP team as having the added benefit of validating the data with experiences ‘on the ground’, particularly in relation to the complexity and resource requirements that result.
- **Developing a policy response.** The DLUHC PfPP team shared findings to inform and influence a policy response in parallel to work on the Levelling Up White Paper. This included regular presentations and updates to DLUHC’s Local Government Finance Team, Spatial Data Unit and Funding Simplification team (with the latter using findings from the analysis in their final report) as well as the government wide Policy Professional Network.

The DLUHC PfPP team facilitated a series of learning events and activities with pilot project teams to share interim evaluation findings as well as give places an opportunity to network and connect. This included:

- A virtual networking event to introduce the evaluation framework to pilot areas and other partners in July 2022.
- The DLUHC PfPP team presented barriers identified in the evaluation at a networking event in September 2022.
- A hybrid networking event in Birmingham in November 2022. This enabled areas to discuss the interim evaluation findings and further identify barriers that they have experienced.
- A DLUHC final programme showcase in May 2023 bringing together 70 PfPP partners (local pilots, central government partners and academics) to share initial findings and receive feedback on early policy recommendations.
- A PfPP Hub Showcase networking event in Liverpool in April 2023 showcasing three pilot programmes as well as insights from the evaluation.

Almost all (11/13) pilot teams found learning events useful. They described how these events provided an opportunity to gain inspiration, learn from other projects, understand common challenges and build relationships. Some pilot leads highlighted learning about how other pilot teams collaborated with central government. The events provided an opportunity for cross-pilot collaboration, which local leads felt was not widely offered across other programmes. Several pilot leads highlighted the desire to attend more events that promoted knowledge exchange, collaboration and facilitated continuous conversations and learning.

Pilot leads in end of programme interviews identified diary constraints and capacity challenges as reasons for limited participation in knowledge sharing events. In some cases, leads suggested an in-person format could have improved the opportunities for networking. However, they also acknowledged the challenges of attending events in-person across the country and the need to balance learning opportunities against wider responsibilities.

## 4.2 Evidence of mechanisms

### 4.2.1 Quality of and extent to which trusted working relationships were developed

As described in the ToC, the programme was designed to develop trusted working relationships between place teams and central government partners through consistent engagement. In interviews, pilot leads distinguished between the development of working relationships with the DLUHC PfPP team and wider central government partners.

**Almost all pilot leads highlighted their relationship with their DLUHC PfPP lead as one of trust and reciprocity.** Pilot leads referred to the conducive space and environment created by the DLUHC team that fostered honest and open conversations. For local areas, DLUHC PfPP leads represented reliable, and trusted partners, active in their role as ‘advisors’, ‘conduits’ or ‘navigators’ of cross government coordination. DLUHC PfPP leads were routinely praised by pilot leads for their commitment to pilots and their endeavour to connect local teams with central government stakeholders, platforms and funding opportunities. Pilot leads attributed their ability to connect with central government partners to guidance and support from the DLUHC PfPP team. They highlighted that they would not have been as successful in developing relationships with wider central government officials without this support.

**“I’ve found it refreshing that you can form working relationships with central government colleagues who seem to genuinely ‘get it’ and are focussed on enabling and supporting the place-based approach.” [Pilot lead]**

**While new connections were formed between local and central government partners, there were mixed views on whether the programme led to the development of trusted working relationships with wider central government partners.** This was largely reflective of the degree of success pilot teams had connecting with central government partners in a consistent and ongoing manner. Seven pilot leads reported developing relationships with central partners introduced through the programme that they feel they can refer to in the future. Sustained engagement took place through:

- Participation in local governance structures (Bradford, Wakefield, East Sussex, Sunderland)
- Project delivery (Southwark, Northumberland)
- Newly formed partnerships on other initiatives (Durham)

These sustained engagement mechanisms promoted improved central government partner understanding of places and the ways in which they could contribute to local challenges. They also created the space for ongoing relationship building.

**“I think that it’s been a refreshing situation and relationship from the point of view of local authorities, and I’d like to think that going forward, that would empower them to push for more of that type of relationship.” [DLUHC PfPP team]**

Six of 13 pilot leads felt they were generally unable to develop strong or sustained relationships with national central government stakeholders (Liverpool, Birmingham, Hackney, Luton, Newcastle, Cornwall). This was attributed to structural barriers, including the flexibility of national policy and funding mechanisms limiting opportunities for collaboration, as well as the time and resource constraints described in Section 3.4.3.

While pilot leads in interviews and monthly calls recognised that not all engagements can yield working partnerships or change, two places (Newcastle and Hackney) highlighted disillusionment where some central government engagement did not yield follow-up. Several pilot leads described how they felt



central government partners were “not up-to-speed” on the basics of their project or were “paying lip service” to their work resulting in limited follow up after an initial meeting. However, PfPP DLUHC leads and central government partners including members of the Working Group suggested that challenges resulted from a misalignment of central and local priorities and local difficulties defining the ‘ask’ of central government policy teams. This highlights an unintended consequence of the programme. Some pilot teams associated their challenges connecting central government with a “reduced willingness” of central government officials to engage in local projects. In certain cases, this entrenched existing attitudes about the difficulties of building central-local collaboration.

#### 4.2.2 The extent to which central government partners gained new experiences and insight

As described in the ToC, the programme intended to provide an avenue for central government partners to gain new experiences and insight as a result of consistent engagement with the programme activities. In interviews and focus groups with Working Group members, as well as deliberative engagement sessions with central government partners involved with pilots, there was a consensus that the programme provided new experiences and insight about how national policy is applied locally and the diversity of perspectives within a place. New insights were developed through:

**1. Participation in the PfPP Working Group:** Central government partners reported that they benefited from understanding new perspectives on policy and attending forums that connected them to different areas of government through the Place Working Group. They referred to the networking benefits of participating in the programme and described how they gained exposure to people within their own department as well as across other central government partners connected to pilots or involved in programme governance.

**“I think the good thing about the PfPP is that it’s encouraged us to work with other government departments outside of my own policy area, which I think is a valuable thing that I otherwise wouldn’t have done without the programme instigating it.”**  
[Central government partner]

However, there is limited evidence to assess the extent to which improved knowledge and understanding is sustainable or has been harnessed in behaviour changes or ways of working across government. Working Group members in focus groups described how they did not expect their participation in the programme to result in changes to their own behaviour or how their team works. This was often attributed to already having a place-based role or a strong understanding of the benefits place-based working, as well as the perceived challenges of influencing organisational structures and culture. Working Group members outside of DLUHC highlighted that there is a growing interest in place-based working and referred to their desire to feed the programme’s learnings into the development of departmental place strategies in the longer term.

**2. Engagement with pilot areas:** PfPP central government partners highlighted that they were exposed to challenges in local areas and how they manifest in communities in new ways. In interviews, almost all DLUHC PfPP leads reported improved understanding of local authority roles, structures and processes including the associated local issues relevant to each pilot. Likewise, broader central government partners described improved knowledge of places, albeit this was constrained to only those directly engaged with pilots in substantial way.

“I think you get a real sense of the number of different roles that all these people have . . . It definitely has for me made a big difference in terms of understanding how Local Authorities work and also some of the delivery challenges that they face.” [Central government partner]

### 4.3 Evidence of outcomes

As described in the ToC, developing trusted working relationships between central government partners and place teams, and central government partners gaining new experiences and insight through engagement in the programme was intended to result in an improved understanding of:

- Policy or regulatory changes that could improve local outcomes
- How best to facilitate central government support for improving local outcomes
- Duplication and gaps in funding and the allocation and use of funding for relevant policy areas

#### 4.3.1 Improved understanding of policy or regulatory changes that could improve local outcomes

**Pilot leads referred to an improved understanding of the key issues underpinning pilot interventions and the broader policy landscape.** This was in part driven by pilot team engagement with central government partners and also attributed to local project activities such as community engagement and embedded research. This was particularly relevant for pilot teams that adopted more exploratory models which involved capturing insights early in the programme to define the delivery approach.

“Though we haven’t seen any tangible results as such from the OGD conversations to date, we have a much better understanding of the issues at hand from the perspectives of OGDs as well as our own which has been very helpful already. The next step is to see whether we can broker some actual change.” [Pilot lead]

**There is evidence from one pilot (East Sussex) that a sustained co-design phase with central government led to improved understanding of what regulatory and policy barriers could be alleviated.** Collaborative discussion and consistent engagement by several central government departments in the co-design workshops led to productive discussions about what the project could achieve in the timeframe of the programme, and how East Sussex should design its research to ensure insights and learnings could be applied by central government. Other features of the East Sussex project (such as the clear definition of ‘asks’ for central government; the commitment, mindset, and capacity of the East Sussex delivery team; the individuals in central government they engaged with; and having a central government representative on their Local Place Board) likely also contributed to making the co-design phase effective in sustaining central government collaboration.

While central government supported places to understand the broader policy agenda and landscape, there is limited evidence that collaboration with central government partners identified policy or regulatory changes that could improve local outcomes. Feedback from pilot teams as well as engagement activity tracking information suggests that central government engagement was instead geared towards sharing ideas and exploring alignment between local and central government.

There is some evidence that pilots which tackled ‘cross-cutting’ policies (Southwark, Durham, Bradford, Hackney) promoted broader and deeper thinking on **the drivers of local issues and how they are influenced by varying yet interconnected policy portfolios**. Central government partners felt participating in the Durham Horden Together ToC sessions enabled them to understand more about how

differing policies interact in the area. One central government partner highlighted that it was an opportunity to consider relevant policy issues through a different lens.

#### 4.3.2 Improved understanding of how best to facilitate central government support for improving local outcomes

**Around half of pilot leads (7/13) highlighted improved understanding of how to best facilitate central government engagement in local programme delivery.** Pilot leads emphasised that the programme provided a valuable opportunity to connect and engage with central government, which was often a new experience. They highlighted that going through the process of seeking central government support improved their understanding of the enablers and challenges associated with collaborating with central government including:

- **Being clear in how places define their requests.** Pilot leads reflected on the importance of being clear on how central government can contribute to local projects, and articulate alignment between issues locally and those experienced nationally.
- **Evidence standards** requiring the need to be systematic and robust to generate attention and effectively advocate. Several pilot leads highlighted gaining a better understanding of the required elements to influence decision making including standards, form, scope and timing of evidence that can maximise interest and change within central government.
- **The process for making or influencing policy in central government.** Several pilot leads highlighted improved understanding of ways of working in central government, such as the importance of synchronising evidence with spending reviews, and clarity about what levers central government partners have to drive changes.

**“I think the thing that we probably learned more than anything is it's about having a really clear ask that just makes it easier to make the right connection.” [Pilot lead]**

This was reiterated by DLUHC PfPP leads who highlighted at the end of the programme that pilot leads were better prepared and equipped to facilitate central government support than at the beginning of the programme.

**“I think that all our 13 areas know how to navigate central government a lot better than they did [when the programme started]. Which means central government should be working their way into making sure local authorities have a much better understanding of them.” [DLUHC PfPP lead]**

While there is some evidence from interviews to suggest an overall improvement in local area understanding of the challenges and methods to facilitate central government support, **there remain gaps in local place teams' knowledge of central government systems and structures.** Central government's scale and complexity was routinely referred to as a source of uncertainty for pilot leads during monthly calls and in interviews at the end of the programme. In particular, pilot leads described how they remain uncertain about how to identify relevant central government partners without a DLUHC PfPP lead. In this way, the reliance on the DLUHC PfPP team as navigators may have limited the extent to which local leads gained an understanding of how to navigate central government structures or identify relevant policymakers.

#### 4.3.3 Improved understanding of duplication and gaps in funding

**There is limited evidence to suggest that the programme improved understanding of the duplication and gaps in the allocation of funding across relevant policy areas.** Spend mapping

insights have generated significant interest among both local and central government partners, and there is significant appetite to continue building understanding in this area through more systematic spend mapping at both local and central government layers. Pilot teams highlighted how the programme supported them to raise awareness of the complexity of current funding approaches through meetings and workshops with central government teams, as well as the spend mapping outputs.

**“What has been valuable is the ability to highlight to central government offices, (from a local perspective) that duplication, gaps and ongoing difficulties with accessing funding streams do exist. The success of the PfPP programme will be in how this feedback from local communities and service providers is used to inform future policy and funding opportunities.” [Pilot lead]**

However, there is limited evidence of the extent to which insights have improved or changed understanding of duplication or gaps in funding. This is a result of:

- **Pilot leads’ existing understanding of duplication and funding gaps.** In interviews, some pilot leads referred to spend mapping insights as “interesting” yet broadly confirming pre-existing understanding of the extent of duplication across funding streams. Pilot leads highlighted how they already had a depth of knowledge about the “patchwork of funding” yet recognised the value of evidencing this duplication to inform continued discussion.
- **Variation in the time spent engaging with spend mapping data across place teams.** Engagement in spend mapping data was not a significant part of pilot delivery or engagement with the programme as highlighted in monthly calls with leads. Pilot leads often referred Grant Thornton to other staff to contribute to spend mapping insights with stronger understanding of grant administration and funding process within local authorities. For several pilot leads, understanding of duplication and gaps in allocation of funding was driven by participating in programme-wide events and presentations from Grant Thornton.
- **Central government partner requirements for further analysis.** Central government partners in interviews described how they considered the analysis a “start” to further explore what cost duplication and complexity has on different layers of government. They pointed to the need to explore the mapping of departmental spend in the context of appropriate governance structures and accountability for funding. There is interest in the continuation of the spend mapping work across DLUHC’s Cities and Local Growth Area teams, as well as with DESNZ. There is also ongoing work across DLUHC on funding simplification.<sup>22</sup> This highlights interest in this work as well as the potential for further improvements in understanding beyond the programme.

**“The fact that you’ve got multiple pots of funding using the same categories, leaving departments to go to places, and potentially duplication across departments in the type of funding that they’re issuing is now clearer. It’s very obvious to see it, and also it begs the question, ‘Why is this happening?’” [Central government partner]**

#### 4.3.4 Summary of findings

- The programme successfully connected pilots to 119 central government teams across 17 departments (plus the Policy Lab). All pilot teams connected with a minimum of five departments in total on at least one occasion. This points to the success of the navigator model in bringing central and local partners together.

<sup>22</sup> See [Simplifying the funding landscape for local - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

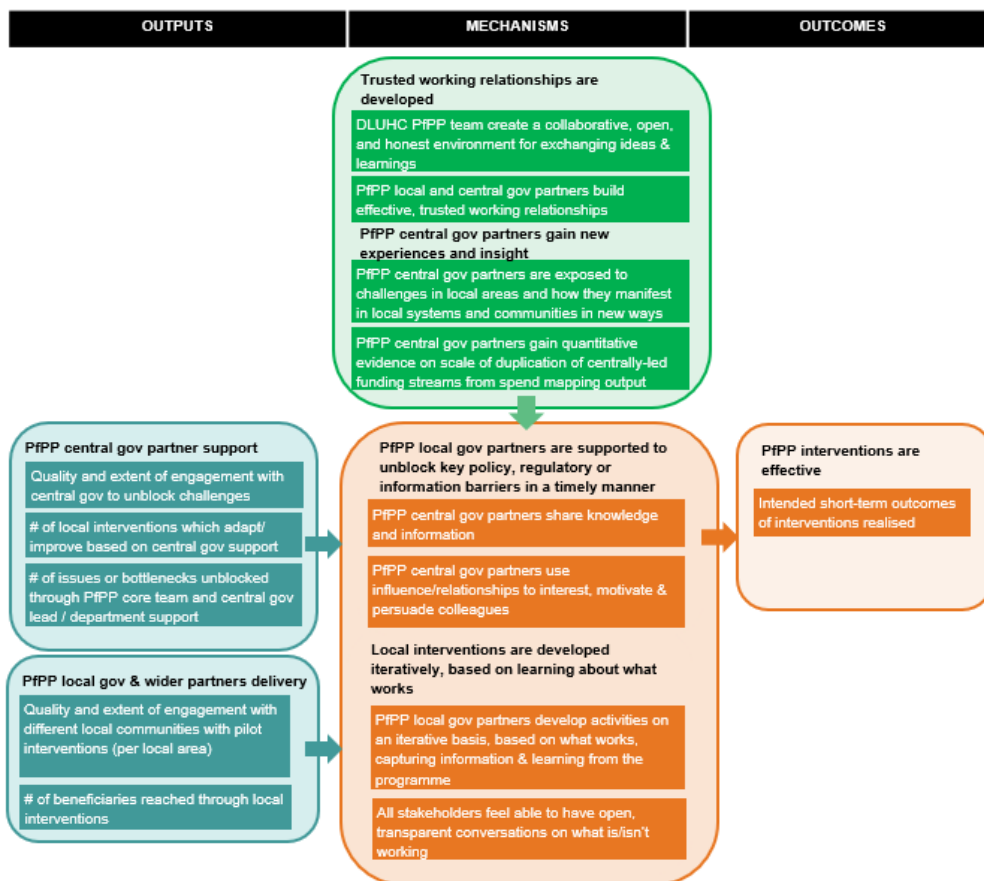
- The programme provided new experiences for central government partners regularly involved with pilots to learn about how national policy is applied locally, the diversity of perspectives within a place, and the unique challenges facing local communities. Central government partners highlighted the programme as a unique opportunity to connect with communities in a way that they had not routinely done before.
- There is strong evidence that the programme contributed to an improved understanding amongst half of local pilot teams about how to best facilitate central government support. This included the importance of (1) being clear in how to define requests, (2) the need to show high standards of evidence to influence central government policy, and (3) improved understanding of the process for making policy or regulatory changes in central government.
- While the programme generated wide involvement among central government, there was variation in the depth and extent of this engagement. In total, under half of central government teams involved in the programme in some capacity (39%, 47 out of 119 teams), engaged with a specific pilot more than once. Within the timeframes of the programme, pilot teams faced challenges articulating requests from central government officials, particularly in earlier phases of the programme. Without strong and robust evidence to demonstrate the effectiveness and value-add of local approaches, there were difficulties justifying additional and/or continued central government investment.
- There was significant support for further investment to understand the duplication of funding streams, how this complexity impacts local authority resourcing as well as the integration and quality of local programmes. Pilot teams and central government partners found spend mapping analysis a helpful provocation, and acknowledged the challenges for local authorities that funding duplication and complexity brings.

# 5 Effective interventions

This section assesses the extent to which Partnerships for People and Place (PfPP) led to effective interventions in local places, in line with the evaluation questions in Section 1.3. It explores the extent to which central government involvement helped to unblock local barriers in a timely manner and how significant this was to the effectiveness of interventions. It also assesses how local places iterated their programme design and the ways this influenced delivery.

While the individual interventions funded through the programme focused on a diverse range of policy issues, all looked to **achieve improved outcomes for residents by working more closely with central government partners**. It was hoped that new ways of working established by the programme would result in the timely removal or resolution of policy, regulatory or information barriers that have impeded successful interventions for residents in the past. The evaluation assessed whether pilot interventions achieved short-term outcomes as defined by individual pilot-level ToCs within the timeframes of the programme.

Figure 8. PfPP Theory of Change - Effective Interventions pathway.



As with the Building Understanding strand, the strength of evidence was assessed against each step of the Effective Interventions pathway set out in Figure 8 above. Each hypothesis was assessed using the available evidence against short-term outcomes and its strength as described in Table 6. A more detailed summary of individual outcome achievement is set out in Annex 3.

Table 6: Strength of evidence criteria.

	Rating	Description
<b>S</b>	Strong evidence	Multiple lines of evidence from multiple sources, corroborate the connection between the intervention and the mechanism or outcome. <sup>23</sup>
<b>M</b>	Medium evidence	Multiple lines of evidence from a single source corroborate the connection between the intervention and the mechanism or outcome.
	Limited evidence	A single line of evidence from a single source, or there is no source, that corroborates the connection between the intervention and the mechanism or outcome.

We defined five categories of ‘success’ ranging from **implementation success** (e.g. pilot interventions which failed to implement fully) to **full success** (pilot interventions achieved every step of the hypothesis including programme outcomes). Pilots were assessed against these categories to reflect their achievements as set out in Table 7 below.

- **Full success:** There is evidence at every step of the pathway as defined by the original programme theory. The programme theory highlights that pilot interventions would be well implemented, connected with central government, develop iteratively based on engagement with central government, successfully unblock barriers as well as achieve short-term outcomes. No pilots demonstrated evidence of all aspects of this outcome pathway.
- **PfPP outcomes success:** Pilot interventions were well implemented, unblocked barriers and achieved outcomes, yet did not iterate based on new knowledge co-developed with central government – a key tenet of the programme. The Bradford pilot achieved PfPP outcomes successfully and was the most consistent with the programme theory of change.
- **Local outcomes success:** Pilot interventions were well implemented, achieved sufficient reach and engagement with target beneficiaries, and achieved initial short-term outcomes. However, some pilots did not engage regularly with central government, and thus central government had a limited influence on activity (Birmingham and Liverpool). Other pilots within this category did not iterate their model based on what works (Newcastle). A final group was able to regularly engage central government but was unsuccessful in securing their support to unblock local barriers (Southwark, Durham, and Northumberland). Overall, this category reflects how several pilot teams focused on achieving initial local outcomes within the timeframe of the programme, despite challenges securing support from central government.

<sup>23</sup> For evidence to be assessed as ‘strong’ for pilot-level short term outcomes, multiple lines of evidence must corroborate the connection between the intervention and most (50%+) short term outcomes. For evidence to be assessed as ‘medium’ for pilot-level short term outcomes, a single source of evidence must corroborate the connection between the intervention and most (50%+) short term outcomes or multiple sources of evidence corroborate the connection between the intervention and some (less than 50%) short term outcomes.

- **Central government engagement success:** Pilot interventions were well implemented, and generated regular engagement with central government, but did not achieve intended short-term outcomes (East Sussex and Wakefield)
- **Implementation success:** Pilots implemented and attained sufficient uptake with target beneficiaries, but did not regularly engage central government, and likewise were unable to achieve intended short-term outcomes. Implementation success is categorised into two sub-groups: those that iterated based on what works (Cornwall, Luton) and those that did not iterate (Hackney, Sunderland).



Table 7: Summary of evidence against key mechanisms and outcomes outlined in the PfPP programme ToC.

Was the intervention well implemented?	Was there sufficient engagement or uptake by target beneficiaries?	Was there regular engagement with central government partners?	Were pilots developed iteratively based on what works?	Were central government able to unblock barriers that improved delivery?	Were (initial) outcomes achieved?	Different types of success	Places
<b>S</b>	<b>S</b>					<b>Implementation success</b> (Pilot/s delivered and beneficiaries reacted as intended)	<b>Hackney, Sunderland</b>
<b>S</b>	<b>S</b>		<b>S</b>			<b>Implementation success</b> , with iteration (Pilot teams learned along the way, and beneficiaries reacted as intended)	<b>Luton, Cornwall</b>
<b>S</b>		<b>S</b>	<b>S</b>			<b>Central government engagement success</b> (Pilot/s delivered, learned along the way, and central government partners were engaged in the pilot/s)	<b>East Sussex, Wakefield</b>
<b>S</b>	<b>S</b>				<b>M</b>	<b>Local outcomes success</b> , without iteration (Beneficiaries reacted as intended and pilot/s achieved local outcomes)	<b>Newcastle</b>
<b>S</b>	<b>S</b>		<b>S</b>		<b>M</b>	<b>Local outcomes success</b> , without engagement (Beneficiaries reacted as intended, pilot/s learned along the way, and achieved local outcomes)	<b>Birmingham, Liverpool</b>
<b>S</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>S</b>		<b>M</b>	<b>Local outcomes success</b> (Beneficiaries reacted as intended, and outcomes were achieved with the support of central government partners)	<b>Southwark, Durham, Northumberland</b>
<b>S</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>S</b>		<b>S</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>PfPP outcomes success</b> (Beneficiaries reacted as intended, barriers were unblocked, and outcomes were achieved with the support of central government partners)	<b>Bradford</b>
<b>S</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>S</b>	<b>Full success</b>	

Table 8. Summary of evidence

Mechanism/outcome	Summary of evidence
<p>Implementation: Was the intervention well implemented? <b>And</b> was there sufficient engagement or uptake by target beneficiaries?</p>	<p><b>There is some evidence</b> that most pilots were effectively implemented and achieved sufficient engagement with target beneficiaries.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implementation of the pilots was initially influenced by delays in almost half of projects. Six out of 13 pilots were still in scoping phases in November 2022 (Source: Interviews with pilot leads, DLUHC leads).</li> <li>Most pilot projects generated strong local engagement with residents, VCS and other local organisations. Almost all pilot teams were satisfied with the extent of community engagement with projects.<sup>24</sup> (Source: Interviews with pilot leads, DLUHC leads, focus groups with Working Group members, engagement tracking data, activity and monitoring data).</li> </ul>
<p>Implementation: Were central government stakeholders engaged?<sup>25</sup></p>	<p><b>There is strong evidence</b> of engagement from central government stakeholders in the programme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is consensus among pilot leads that the programme connected teams to a range of departments and stakeholders (Source: interviews with pilot leads, DLUHC leads, Working Group members).</li> <li>119 teams across 17 departments (plus Policy Lab) were linked with places through the programme. 47 teams were engaged with place teams on more than one occasion (Source: engagement tracking data).</li> <li>54 individuals participated in the Working Group, 20 participated in Government Place Board meetings, and eight attended both the Working Group and the Government Place Board (Source: attendance data).</li> </ul>
<p>Mechanism (2a): Were central government partners able to unblock barriers that improved delivery?</p>	<p>There is <b>limited evidence</b> that central government partners unblocked barriers that improved delivery.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is strong evidence and agreement that central government partners were more effective in supporting places to unblock information, rather than policy or regulatory barriers. Central government partners unblocked information barriers in nine out of 13 pilots (Source: Interviews with pilot leads, DLUHC PfPP leads, focus groups with Working Group members, engagement tracking data).</li> </ul>

<sup>24</sup> Not all pilots set reach or output targets. Some pilots set targets which were not deemed relevant at the end of the programme following changes to intervention scope. This was a key feature of the PfPP programme which was designed to enable interventions to be fully tailored to local needs. However, this does mean that we cannot assess to what extent pilots achieved initially intended targets at a programme-wide level.

<sup>25</sup> As described in Section 4 – Building Understanding

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is no agreement or consensus that unblocking information barriers contributed to or positively influenced delivery in the nine pilot interventions where this occurred (Source: Interviews with pilot leads, DLUHC leads).</li> <li>• The programme enabled the unblocking of regulatory or policy barriers in only one pilot, Bradford (Source: Interviews with pilot leads, DLUHC leads).</li> </ul>
<p>Mechanism (2b): Were pilots developed iteratively based on what works?</p>	<p><b>There is evidence</b> that pilots iterated over the course of the programme.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is broad support for the flexibility of the programme among pilot leads and DHLUC PfPP leads (Source: Interviews with pilot leads, DLUHC leads).</li> <li>• Overall, there is evidence that nine of 13 pilots iterated as a result of engagement with local or central government partners. However, there is little agreement that these iterations resulted in improved delivery or effectiveness (Source: Interviews with pilot leads, DLUHC PfPP leads).</li> </ul>
<p>Outcome (2c): Were short-term outcomes achieved?</p>	<p><b>Evidence of achieved short-term outcomes is varied across pilot interventions.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seven of 13 pilots achieved the initial, short-term outcomes set by place teams within individual ToCs (Source: Interviews with pilot leads, DLUHC PfPP leads, pilot level monitoring and reporting).</li> <li>• There is agreement among pilot leads that working with existing networks and developing new local partnerships was the primary driver of local progress (Source: interviews with pilot leads).</li> <li>• Measurement of short-term outcomes is limited by the availability of person-level outcomes data (in all places), and variable access to finalised internal evaluation reporting (see Section 2.4).</li> </ul>

## 5.1 Evidence of implementation

As described in the ToC, the programme was implemented by pilots designing and delivering interventions in line with the intended aims and engaging central government partners to support interventions. These are described in turn along with the evidence behind the quality and extent of central government engagement in these activities.

### Local governance

As part of the programme, pilot areas were asked to establish a Local Place Board or use existing governance structures, to provide strategic oversight of the project. Eight places established pilot-level Strategic Local Place Boards upon commencement of the programme. Several highlighted how establishing successful and reliable strategic governance structures provided oversight and guidance to local delivery teams. Three of eight places with newly established Local Place Boards sustained a consistent frequency of meetings across the course of the programme:

- The Luton pilot team found that the Town Centre Strategic Board was helpful in setting the overall direction and priorities for Luton Town Centre and ensuring buy-in from all key partners, not just those delivering interventions.
- The Birmingham pilot team used monthly governance meetings as a forum to continue improving and adapting the pilot as needed. They found this structure promoted open communication between partners and worked well to build trust.
- The East Sussex Place Board was attended by the East Sussex Programme, PfPP staff and a DESNZ representative. The Board had representatives from the Borough and County Councils (including Public Health teams), together with a representative from the voluntary sector (CA1066). The Board also included the Finance and Data Leads (or their representatives) to ensure appropriate oversight. The Board received regular reports from the Local Place Working Group to inform them of progress and ensure that key decisions and expenditure were taken into consideration.

The remaining pilots either reduced the frequency of meetings or saw a drop off in attendance (Liverpool), disbanded governance arrangements during delivery (Cornwall), used pre-existing structures (Hackney, Sunderland, Wakefield and Bradford) or did not use a formal governance structure for the programme to provide Place Board oversight beyond delivery team meetings (Southwark).

#### 5.1.1 Delivery of local interventions in line with programme aims

As part of the programme, places were asked to deliver interventions that enhanced existing work focused on challenges agreed collectively with local communities. As set out in the programme aims, this process was intended to test and promote a more joined-up approach between central and local partners to improving community outcomes. Table 9 provides a summary of pilot reach and local achievements. Monthly consultations with pilot leads as well as interviews with DLUHC leads highlighted consensus around the drivers of successful local implementation:

- 1. Narrow and clearly defined scope of delivery:** DLUHC leads highlighted that places with clearly defined delivery models such as Newcastle, Liverpool, Birmingham and Bradford (who all achieved local outcomes or PfPP outcomes success) generated greater momentum following the launch of their project. Other pilot teams ( Hackney and East Sussex) who adopted more exploratory delivery models, for example those that embedded co-design or extended consultation phases, invested heavily in early phases of the programme to design activities and define project scope.
- 2. Healthy local partnerships** with other organisations and residents: Pilot leads from Hackney, Southwark, Luton and Birmingham referred to the strength of connections to the community and wider VCS organisations as a key driver of implementation. Strong connections with local organisations enabled wider participation in events, forums and Working Groups (Luton and Southwark), as well as directed participation in delivery (Birmingham and Hackney).
- 3. Use of existing delivery models:** The only pilot to achieve ‘PfPP outcomes success’, demonstrating consistency with the programme ToC, was the Bradford Manningham and Tong Hubs which used an existing delivery model established prior to the programme. The pilot benefitted from using existing systems, governance and partnerships to mobilise quickly during the set-up phase.

Almost half of projects were impacted by early delays. Six out of 13 pilots were still in scoping phases in November 2022, spending a significant proportion of the project preparing for delivery before the end of the programme in March 2023. For some pilots, extended scoping phases were set out in the initial delivery plans (Hackney, East Sussex, Durham, Wakefield and Cornwall) with projects intending to co-create approaches with local communities before designing and delivering an intervention. While this reduced the time available to deliver interventions and realise individual-level outcomes, there is some evidence from interviews with DLUHC PfPP leads that this supported engagement with central government partners.

Other areas did not undertake significant scoping research but experienced initial delays establishing new models, project management functions, governance, or partnerships, which also resulted in challenges for delivering within programme timeframes. For example:

- The Sunderland project team was unable to set up a Regeneration Board by programme end, influenced by pilot team capacity, early difficulties identifying the right people to participate and finalise the terms of reference.
- The Cornwall pilot experienced difficulties recruiting a project manager, a role which was not filled until July 2022 following three cycles of advertising. Challenges onboarding a partner organisation, Cornwall Neighbourhoods for Change (CN4C), and recruiting community champions resulted in the People Hub only receiving referrals from January 2023.
- The Hackney pilot did not finalise the grant allocation process until November 2022, giving grant recipients between two and four months to deliver interventions.
- In Liverpool, challenges within the local authority affected recruitment and contracting for the project. This delayed the establishment of the Good Help Hub which was only operational from January 2023. This followed a 12-week set up period to bring together local services through training and learning workshops, which was seen as critical for building the new relationships required for joint-working.

In some cases, activities resulting from engagement with central government partners directly supported implementation by aligning with existing initiatives. In this way, the programme contributed to implementation by making pilots aware of opportunities. This included:

- Bradford connected with the Cabinet Office to pilot a national grants application portal, enabling pilot leads to successfully administer £9,000 of the £10,000 total awarded to local organisations.
- Central government partners from the Home Office connected with the Horden Together project (Durham) to deliver the Clear Hold Build framework. This formed part of the pilot by sharing learning on place-based approaches to building trust in local areas dealing with crime. Home Office partners identified the Horden Together pilot as an approach that demonstrated strong partnership, connectivity and collaboration, specifically between Council teams and the Community Safety Partnership.

Table 9. Implementation snapshot – Summary of reach, central government engagement and high-level pilot-level achievements

Pilot	Reach (by April 2023)	Dept' engaged	Overview of achievements
<b>Birmingham</b>	215 students in six schools (target – 150-200)	DfE, DWP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A programme of mentoring and employer-led activities with Year 11 students culminated in a reverse mentoring event on the 20<sup>th</sup> January 2023 that brought students together with employers in a neutral and safe space. The event created a space for students and employers to talk about what young people were looking for in work experience opportunities, future employment and how employers might engage younger prospective employees.</li> <li>Evidence of what works to support young people through education to employment transitions has been built (but not yet disseminated). The findings will be shared during an event in East Birmingham in March 2024. The Birmingham team aims to generate a proposal for a much larger four-year formal research project involving more schools.</li> </ul>
<b>Bradford</b>	330 people accessed hub services in Manningham and Tong (Target 539)	DfE, Bradford District Care Trust, HO, DWP, DHSC, NHSEI, CO, HE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tong and Manningham Hubs have been operationalised. The focus of support has been in relation to domestic abuse, welfare benefits, mental health, substance misuse, carers, and physical health as well as targeted support to refugees and asylum seekers.</li> <li>Bradford piloted a national grants application portal through the SOF Grants Application team in the Cabinet Office, which was an efficient way for the Hubs to provide grants to local community organisations. The 'Find a Grant Portal' was used for £9,000 of the £10,000 total awarded to local organisations.</li> <li>VCS Alliance worked closely with system partners to develop referral routes across health and care providers. This has involved over 50 individual organisations and services, with most referrals to voluntary and community service specialists in housing, welfare advice or drug/alcohol use. Each visitor at the Hub has led to between three and four service referrals or interventions on average.</li> <li>The programme supported the pilot to amend an existing Homes England grant agreement which enabled better access to transitional housing for people under the age of 55. This enabled empty housing stock to be used for outpatients, freeing up hospital beds.</li> </ul>

			The DLUHC lead contacted Homes England and commenced an engagement process between them and Bradford.
<b>Cornwall</b>	37 (out of a target of 50) referred to the People Hub	DWP, DfE, DfT, DEFRA, DLUHC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The project worked with seven Community Champions to refer residents to the People Hub. As of the end of March 2023, 37 referrals had led to seven job starts and eight people accessing in-work support.</li> <li>▪ The project involved a social media campaign to raise local awareness of the People Hub. The Liskeard landing page received 1,308 page views by 992 users between November 2022 and February 2023. The Bodmin page received 304 views by 247 users between January 2023 and February 2023. The number of enquiries to the People Hub during the paid media strategy was 265, compared to 167 during the same period the previous year.</li> </ul>
<b>Durham</b>	ToC workshops engaged 177 partners	HE, HO, DESNZ, OHID	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Horden Together facilitated a series of ToC workshops titled 'Connecting the Dots'. This led to the creation of a three-point action plan around the themes of People, Place and Community. A further eight sessions and meetings between 15 local services and community groups were held following the initial workshops.</li> <li>▪ Horden Together secured an additional £87,250 from the Northeast Local Net Zero Hub Board to support the establishment of a Mine Water Heating Community Energy project. This was a result of the Northeast Local Net Zero Hub Board representatives visiting Durham in May 2022, and identifying an opportunity. The visit was organised by DLUHC, which included several other central government representatives.</li> <li>▪ Horden Together produced a community newspaper to raise awareness of project activities and supported in disseminating information for the Council such as the existence of local Warm Hubs.</li> </ul>
<b>East Sussex</b>	15 tenants and 17 landlords took part in focus group	DLUHC, DESNZ, DHSC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The project commissioned Citizens Advice 1066 to conduct community consultations with landlords and tenants on the barriers to installing energy efficiency improvements and generate evidence to inform delivery.</li> </ul>

	<p>discussions and 21 tenants completed surveys as part of the Citizens Advice 1066 community consultations.</p> <p>Retrofit Works visited over 2,300 properties in the target wards and completed 150 home assessments. 99 residents also completed attitudinal surveys.</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A senior DESNZ representative was engaged in Local Place Board meetings, providing an effective and collaborative governance model for the project.</li> <li>▪ Representatives from DESNZ, DHSC, DLUHC took part in four three-hour co-design workshops to explore potential flexibilities to current national policies for promoting energy efficiency improvements in private rental housing. DESNZ partners also participated in two initial and three follow-up behaviour change workshops, facilitated with support from the UCL Centre for Behaviour Change.</li> <li>▪ The team commissioned Retrofit Works to deliver a research project to generate insights for central government policy teams to influence national policy on addressing fuel poverty and energy efficiency.</li> <li>▪ DESNZ identified £100,000 to enable a continuation of the work being undertaken by Citizen's Advice 1066 in the local community. This is intended to provide advice and direct support for residents experiencing fuel poverty.</li> <li>▪ The team developed new leaflets to raise awareness of the Warm Home Check Service among residents, working collaboratively with local tenants, landlords, partners from central government, local government, the VCSE sector, and behaviour change experts from UCL. A new letter is being finalised encouraging landlords to take part and provide the necessary contributions to home improvements. The letters will be used as part of East Sussex's autumn campaign.</li> </ul>
<b>Hackney</b>	<p>Approximately 200 residents have been supported through PfPP funded projects in the King's Park area</p>	<p>DHSC, DWP, DCMS, DLUHC</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Seven organisations received funding (between £7,000 and £15,000 each) with the aim of delivering a variety of activities to support aging well. Approximately 200 people have been supported through projects in the King's Park area since November 2022. Three projects received an additional three months of funding to further develop the local offer for older people (Our Place Hackney Marshes, the Carers Support and Information Sessions, and the Exercise sessions and Social Trips initiative).</li> <li>▪ One of the aims of the programme was greater collaboration between community organisations, local communities and statutory providers. The Council held a roundtable in</li> </ul>



			<p>February 2023 on the topic of 'Helping older workers into good work' which was attended by 35 attendees including residents, elected members, local services (DWP, employment support providers, adult learning, health) and representatives from DHSC and the DWP nationally. The output of this roundtable has formed the basis of further discussions with DWP locally about their approach to supporting older workers into employment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An external consultant developed a framework for assessing the long-term viability of Council-owned community buildings and created proposals for social infrastructure assets. Two proposals for upgrading facilities in line with community need have been identified and Council funding has been allocated to support implementation.</li> </ul>
<b>Liverpool</b>	700 visitors to the Good Help Hub (target 100)	DWP, MoJ, HO, DHSC, DfE, DCMS, NHSEI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Good Help Hub became operational in January 2023. The extended set-up period and team working once the Hub officially opened has established a new culture of cooperation between the public service teams involved from local DWP, schools and education services, Croxteth housing associations and Merseyside Police.</li> <li>By the end of March 2023, over 550 individuals used the Good Help Hub to enquire about accessing public services. The team were active in community outreach to make residents aware of the Hub by going door-to-door, visiting community centres and organisations, and having public service centres tell their beneficiaries about the Hub.</li> <li>An internal evaluation conducted a small survey with beneficiaries of the Hub asking them to rate its usefulness. When asked, on a scale of 1-10 how useful has the Good Help Hub been, the mean score overall was 9.6. While the survey was only completed by 21 users, and therefore lacks representativeness, this shows emerging evidence of high satisfaction with the service provision and advice offered through the Hub.</li> <li>Hub visitor tracking data highlights that 10% of residents attended the Hub for additional help accessing employment. During the project duration, three individuals secured work following support provided through the Hub.</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The organisations involved all committed to their staff spending an additional three months co-located at the Hub after the programme ended in March 2023.</li> </ul>
<b>Luton</b>	N/A	HO, DESNZ, DHSC, OHID, HE, DLUHC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Research commissioned from Bedfordshire University provided 57 recommendations for future interventions, policy change and partnership working to reduce harm to the street community, improve safety and increase positive perceptions of the town centre.</li> <li>The team developed a communications plan to help improve perceptions of the town centre among residents. This resulted in a large-scale campaign to educate residents and change behaviour to reduce the number of people asking for money on the street. The communications campaign promoted alternative giving through the Big Change Luton Scheme, which has reached an estimated 150,000 residents and resulted in a 110% increase in touchpoint donations.</li> <li>The project funded additional enforcement activity coordinated by local police and enforcement teams with Home Office planning input. This involved increased enforcement presence in the town centre for three weeks between October 2022 and February 2023.</li> </ul>
<b>Newcastle</b>	50 referrals made for foodbank visitors	OHID, DWP, NHSE, DESNZ, DHSC, MoJ, CO, DLUHC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Newcastle deployed a Community Link/Engagement Officer with expertise in safeguarding adults to work closely with the foodbank and other key stakeholders in Elswick, Benwell and Scotswood. This, alongside the training undertaken for foodbank volunteers and employees, has improved the foodbank's capacity to make safeguarding referrals. Of the 50 referrals made for foodbank visitors, at least 25 have led to further investigation by the safeguarding team in the Council.</li> <li>The pilot team collaborated with local GP practices to establish a presence within the foodbank and assist users to register with their GP and to get on-site medical advice and support via an Advanced Nurse Practitioner (ANP). In a four-week period, the ANP was able to support 23 people without the need for a follow up GP appointment. The Newcastle team believes this support can enable better access to healthcare services as limited digital literacy levels among foodbank users has been found to exacerbate health inequalities in the West End area of the city.</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Working with the Foodbank, the team has developed a mobile pantry offer which provides a low-cost subscription model, alongside on-site wraparound support from financial inclusion support workers, safeguarding support and advice, and clinical support (in development). To date, two pantry sites have been opened with a further two planned to open in the coming months.</li> </ul>
<b>Northumberland</b>	Varied per event (see achievements)	DWP, DfE, DESNZ, DLUHC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Hello Hirst achieved wide reach with schools, parents and students across Northumberland. The project team organised group sessions involving parents, children, schools, and other partners in the Hirst area to address concerns related to food solutions, school readiness and toilet training. These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– School readiness events (Summer 2022) engaged 150 families, Halloween Breakfast event engaged 48 families and the Happy Christmas event engaged 208 families. 35 teenagers attended Teen Fridays. 24 families attended Fun Foodies sessions for supporting food solutions and 12-15 families attended Slow Cooker sessions.</li> <li>– Imagination sessions with 148 families over eight weeks attending FunFridays, a programme for imagining Hirst. The project team worked with local parents to create a journal and storybook that encourages toilet training.</li> <li>– Toilet training sessions with five families and four stakeholders, and 84 attendees at the Toilet Training launch event. Additionally, Hello Hirst has been actively promoting the significance of toilet aids in local community venues and businesses.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ The project team engaged DfE to take part in their HAF+ sprint involving 14 young people across Northumberland. They collaborated with central government partners from DfE to co-design a teen programme for the Government’s National HAF+ programme. Participants visited London to meet with key dignitaries and speak with groups from other parts of the UK.</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The project team provided fishing equipment and permits for residents. This was in response to feedback from the HAF+ design sprint that residents were unable to easily participate in these activities.</li> <li>▪ The project team developed a new local commissioning model which has brought in over £2 million investment into Northumberland through HAF funding, the Health Inequalities/Population Health Management Fund and the NHCT Wellbeing Fund. The VCS commissioning model aims to provide flexible, robust local commissioning while maintaining proportionate governance and outcomes reporting.</li> </ul>
<b>Southwark</b>	<p>112 residents engaging in the project more intensively through mass engagement activities.</p> <p>1000 in-person conversations with residents (target 4,240).</p>	Policy Lab, DHSC, DEFRA, DLUHC, DIT, DCMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The project team co-created a new approach to community engagement, bringing together a diverse group of residents, local businesses, representatives from Southwark Council and central government to understand a local issue and develop solutions to take to decision-makers.</li> <li>▪ The project delivered engagement activities through two Working Groups focused on outdoor eating in Burgess Park and creating a collective vision for East Street Market. The groups brought together 38 people in total including twelve residents, two Southwark Councillors, ten Southwark Council officers, five local organisations, two East Street Market traders and seven central government representatives from DLUHC, DIT and DCMS.</li> <li>▪ The project documented progress through an <a href="#">online learning log</a>, providing a resource to share insights from their work with a wider audience.</li> </ul>
<b>Sunderland</b>	N/A not yet operational	HE, DLUHC, HMT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The Sunderland project team developed a 'Vision and Strategy for Change' for Sunnyside with the support of central government partners. The action plan is a working document that will be iteratively developed by stakeholders through ongoing engagement and will act as a programme management tool that will support the delivery of a pipeline of projects and interventions with milestones over a ten-year period.</li> </ul>

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Local community and individual level stakeholder engagement was used to prepare a Place Analysis Report that set out the baseline of understanding to inform the future strategy for change.</li> <li>▪ Through the pilot, the Council established a close and trusted working relationship with Homes England around an ambition to unlock the housing ecosystem in a coordinated and effective manner. This is the result of both clear strategic alignment between the two organisations and the strength of the relationships between those involved.</li> <li>▪ A structure of strategic themed working groups has been established to bring together local partnerships. At an action delivery level, the working groups are the Property Working Group, Awareness Working Group and the SAIL (Sunderland Altogether Saving Lives) Group.</li> </ul>
<b>Wakefield</b>	Semi-structured interviews completed with three parents and two young people	DfE, ADAS, DHSC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Research activities led to a greater understanding of emotionally based school avoidance (EBSA) amongst the pilot team, local delivery partners and schools and enabled refinement of existing local interventions. The research was informed by three focus groups with local stakeholders to gather understanding and experiences of existing support.</li> <li>▪ Findings led to the development of EBSA toolkits for local schools and additional lived experience support for families and children impacted by EBSA, delivered by St Giles Trust. It also informed a wider review of approaches to ESBA across Wakefield Council.</li> <li>▪ The team created new Working Groups bringing together key local stakeholders, including schools, government departments and local charities to better co-ordinate activity and support.</li> </ul>

## 5.2 Evidence of mechanisms

### 5.2.1 Support from central government partners to unblock key barriers in a timely manner

As described in the ToC, the programme was designed to support local places to unblock key barriers and deliver interventions by:

- PfPP central government partners participating in the programme and providing support to local areas
- PfPP local places and wider partners designing interventions in line with PfPP aims

Approximately half of pilot leads (7/13) felt supported by central government partners to unblock key barriers and deliver interventions. Despite the active involvement of DLUHC PfPP leads in supporting places to identify and address barriers, collaborative attempts with central government partners to remove these barriers yielded mixed results. There is agreement among pilot leads, DLUHC PfPP leads, and central government partners connected with pilots that the programme achieved greater success in addressing information barriers. In contrast, regulatory and policy barriers proved more challenging to overcome. Central government stakeholders felt that addressing these barriers would require additional time, nationally representative evidence, and commitment from senior departmental leadership.

#### Unblocking information barriers

A review of central government engagement tracking data alongside interviews with pilot leads, DLUHC PfPP leads and central government partners suggests that central government engagement helped to address information barriers in nine out of 13 pilot projects. Central government stakeholders supported place teams to:

- **Identify how to access data and other information held by central government departments.** DLUHC PfPP leads referred to instances where central government partners informed local area teams about the viability of access to specific information and datasets. Advice and information provided through conversations clarified the feasibility of data sharing, albeit data was not used by any of the pilots due to wider barriers.
  - The Birmingham team had several discussions with both DWP and DfE about available datasets including the use of Universal Credit data (DWP) and personalised educational outcomes data (DfE). While in both cases, this was not used by the pilot to track outcomes, the Birmingham lead highlighted gaining a stronger understanding of data processes, data availability and in what ways data can inform future initiatives aimed at reducing NEET outcomes among young people.
- **Improve understanding of central government programmes.** Central government partners in interviews described how they responded to local concerns about departmental processes or discussed eligibility for current programmes.
  - In visits facilitated in Cornwall and Newcastle, one DLUHC PfPP lead referred to examples of DWP representatives being asked to inform local partners on broader DWP programme eligibility, welfare and other benefit structures, correcting information about programmes and services. It was felt that these interactions enabled ‘myth-busting’ with local communities.
  - The Bradford team was connected to a civil servant from the Home Office to explore how they could better liaise with the department when supporting Asylum Seekers. The pilot team

highlighted significant wait times on current Migrant Help support lines and sought clarity on alternative avenues for support. However, the Bradford pilot team reported that engagement did not yield actionable insights and were referred to other individuals within the Home Office.

### Unblocking regulatory and policy barriers

The programme enabled the unblocking of regulatory or policy barriers in only one pilot, Bradford. Participation in the programme supported the Council to capture flexibilities within an existing grant agreement with Homes England. The DLUHC PfPP lead connected the pilot team with Homes England to discuss amending a housing agreement that previously restricted access to transitional housing for only those over the age of 55. These conversations led to Homes England adjusting the agreement on the basis that any amendment would not affect the overall purpose of who the accommodation was attempting to support. The central government partner involved described how this was an example of knowing how to convene the right people to find a solution.

**“What it really needed was just someone to grab the bull by the horns and pull the right people together and say, ‘Is this possible or not?’ Invariably it was possible, people just weren’t looking at it hard enough to get there and having the conversation.” [Central government partner]**

### Unlocking new funding

Although not identified as a mechanism in the programme ToC, central government engagement in pilots unlocked funding opportunities by raising awareness amongst place teams or supporting pilots to access funding sources. This was an unintended benefit of the programme, as pilots did not identify funding barriers in initial delivery planning as key challenges they sought to unblock through central government engagement. Nevertheless, two pilots accessed additional funding directly as a result of engagement with central government partners connected to through the programme:

- In Durham, Horden Together secured an additional £87,250 from the Northeast Local Net Zero Hub Board to support the establishment of a Mine Water Heating Community Energy project. Horden connected with DESNEZ through their DLUHC PfPP lead to explore opportunities which existed in local sustainability and energy production.
- In East Sussex, a member of the local Place Board from DESNZ facilitated £100,000 for the pilot to support a continuation of the work being undertaken by Citizen’s Advice 1066 and enable home visits with vulnerable residents who cannot access support online or in the Citizens Advice offices.

#### 5.2.2 Interventions are developed iteratively based on learning about what works

A key component of the programme was to *encourage local flexibility and creativity in delivery*.<sup>26</sup> As described in the ToC, the programme suggested that pilots would be effectively delivered if interventions were developed iteratively, based on what works.

There was broad support among pilot leads for the flexibility of the programme, which enabled pilots to iterate without a precise focus on specific metrics or outcomes. This often took place during the scoping stages of projects, for example through planned co-creation or research phases, or as pilots assessed

<sup>26</sup> Partnerships for People and Place: guidance for local expressions of interest: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/partnerships-for-people-and-place/partnerships-for-people-and-place-guidance-for-local-expressions-of-interest>

the feasibility of their delivery plans. Overall, there is evidence that nine of the 13 pilots iterated because of engagement with local or central government partners. This took the form of:

- **Changing the target beneficiaries of the project.**

- The Birmingham pilot adapted its target cohort from Year 13 to Year 11 students due to feedback from schools which reported that this age group receive less support and would benefit from earlier intervention. While the pilot lead did not directly attribute the success of pilot delivery to the change in the target year level, the pilot achieved higher than anticipated reach and strong buy-in from schools.
- Liverpool refined the original project scope to work with one hundred of the most complex individuals or families within Croxteth after the pilot team identified overlap with existing initiatives such as DfE’s Family Hub model.

- **Adapting the delivery model.**

- The Cornwall project changed its approach from using Council-held data to working through Community Champions to identify individuals who can be referred to a Community Hub. While this approach delayed timelines, the efficiency with which Community Champions referred individuals into the People Hub highlights the strong potential of the model and the benefits to leveraging community members to connect residents to support provision.
- The Durham Horden Together project redesigned their approach to use a ToC model to guide workshops with local communities. This approach was a new form of delivery for the project team, which they became aware of through the programme. The pilot lead highlighted that a key barrier to previous engagement had been the lack of knowledge sharing and understanding between community partners. This was overcome through the ToC sessions which provided a place where groups could collaborate. This was reiterated by the DLUHC PfPP lead who referred to using the ToC model as an innovative and logical method of engagement.

**“In Horden, they went from being very suspicious of this theory of change, ‘What on Earth is this?’ To going, ‘Oh hang on, let’s use this as the base of all the conversations we’re having with residents about their experience of living here.’”**  
**[DLUHC PfPP lead]**

- **Defining outcomes with local partners.**

- The East Sussex pilot team developed their approach through a series of co-creation workshops with central and local government partners, using this engagement to understand local needs and the feasibility of different approaches.
- The Southwark WeWalworth project identified local needs through a mass engagement process with the community, using this to select the topic of focus for each Working Group Challenge. In this way, the project defined outcomes with residents instead of selecting what to focus on at the beginning of the project.

- **Focusing on different central government stakeholders.**

- As part of the Luton project, research from the University of Bedfordshire provided a detailed evidence-base and recommendations with which to engage central government stakeholders.



While the Luton pilot team originally planned engagement with the Ministry of Justice, findings from their research highlighted the need to focus on different problem drivers, and direct engagement activities towards other areas of government such as DHSC.

The programme provided flexibility for place teams to iterate by not mandating specific outcomes or requiring the collection of monitoring data. However, this was restricted by the timeframes involved in the programme, which shortened the opportunity for pilot teams to implement learnings from earlier stages of delivery or test learning about what works from similar projects.

### 5.3 Evidence of outcomes

As described in the ToC, pilots being supported to (1) unblock key barriers in a timely manner and (2) develop interventions iteratively based on learning about what works was intended to result in the effective delivery of interventions where intended outcomes are achieved. This evaluation set out to assess to what extent short-term outcomes were achieved by pilots by the programme end in March 2023.<sup>27</sup> Seven of 13 pilots achieved the short-term outcomes set by place teams within individual ToCs. Development of strong local partnerships was considered the primary driver of progress among pilots achieving short-term outcomes.

There is medium strength of evidence among all seven pilots identified to have achieved outcomes as highlighted in Table 7. A full summary of the achievement of outcomes as defined by each pilot ToC is provided in Annex 3. Evidence of short-term outcomes is variable across all places and restricted by:

- Limited person-level outcomes. Only one pilot (Newcastle) reliably reported on person-level outcomes by May 2023.
- Limited access to internal evaluation reporting. Evaluation reporting was completed in six pilots (Birmingham, Cornwall, Hackney, Luton, Newcastle, Southwark). Other pilots shared progress updates, snapshots and/or internal monitoring data.<sup>28</sup>

#### 5.3.1 Interventions benefitted from strong local partnerships

All seven pilots which attained local outcomes success or PfPP outcomes success, demonstrating consistency with the programme ToC, attributed this to strong engagement and contributions from local stakeholders. A review of consultations with place teams and central government stakeholders involved with places shows that local engagement was the primary driver of pilot success rather than engagement with central government partners as set out in the programme ToC.

In systems mapping workshops, pilot leads identified that their local authorities often work in 'organisational silos.' They described how there are often missed opportunities to involve local stakeholders in the design of programmes, policy and strategy, as well as a lack of communication with communities on new developments. Several pilot leads noted that influencing stakeholders within local government was as important, if not more so, than influencing central government partners for effectively implementing their pilots. They described challenges around trust, communication, and shared understanding among local stakeholders and communities. This was exacerbated by a resistance to new

<sup>27</sup> Due the timing of the evaluation, only short-term outcomes were in scope. It is intended short-term outcomes on the basis that they are likely to lead to positive longer-term outcomes.

<sup>28</sup> Additionally, other internal evaluations were not specific to the whole PfPP programme intervention but rather a broader suite of programmes/interventions (Bradford, Durham).

ways of working within Councils or concerns about taking a different approach to addressing a local issue such as engaging or listening to communities in a new way.

In Newcastle and Liverpool, pilot leads highlighted that a strong understanding of local issues among the pilot team and local partners eased the process of generating wider buy-in. In particular, the Newcastle pilot lead highlighted that there was a shared understanding of local issues, which helped to generate involvement from partners. In these areas, the programme was highlighted to have contributed to the development of new local partnerships by enabling Councils to implement place-based initiatives that were recognised as having a clear local need.

**“We knew the issues we wanted to focus on before the programme, so we were able to get started quickly. The issue was at the forefront of the city’s minds, so we didn’t have to convince any partners to get on board.” [Pilot lead]**

In Durham, ToC workshops with local communities were considered an integral part of successful engagement, enabling the local authority to generate insights around the biggest concerns among residents. The project has built a strategy and framework to alleviate the barriers identified to connecting with residents and helped create multiple links between the community and the Council.

In Birmingham and Bradford, success was attributed to buy-in from stakeholders that had existing relationships with relevant local authorities. This enabled both pilots to offer coordinated responses to local problems.

- In Birmingham, the extensive networks of project partners at a local level and relationships with schools held by the project lead, made it easier to gain access to working with young people and supported the partnership to collaborate towards a common goal. By focusing on a locally defined issue, the project had relevance to local partners and built buy-in across the team.
- Strong relationships with the health and social care system and VCS in Bradford, combined with the strategic knowledge of the local authority lead enabled the pilot to make use of established community assets. The project has supported efficient delivery of the Hub model by building on the existing assets within place. The Wellbeing Network collaborated with partners and updated local steering groups and boards in the area to share learning and connect services. This helped to develop referral routes across health and care providers including incorporating the Hubs into system planning such as Community Mental Health Transformation and Urgent & Emergency Care.

There is some evidence that central government backing through the programme helped encourage local actors to take part in pilots, contributing to effective delivery by virtue of their perceived endorsement of the project. In five pilots (Bradford, Wakefield, Liverpool, Northumberland, Newcastle), local leads highlighted how central government sponsorship helped draw in greater local engagement providing projects with extra “reverence”. In particular, central government involvement was highlighted to increase “confidence” among local partners in the quality, impact and direction of pilots. This supported implementation as well as the efficiency of partner onboarding. For example:

- In Wakefield, the pilot lead attributed significant improvements in the level of engagement among school principals with the Council to central government sponsorship of the programme. The pilot lead perceived that central government sponsorship helped the project secure buy-in from local headteachers who had previously been more difficult to engage. This substantially strengthened the evidence base for the project and the reach of the Strategic Working Group.

- The Northumberland project team highlighted how the programme legitimised efforts to access further funding by attracting local partners to new projects and investments. Northumberland used programme funding to further build on and implement a new local commissioning model which has since attracted investment within Northumberland of over £2 million. The project lead described how they benefited from the “sounding board and professional senate [of the programme], confidence building around stepping into unknown, and the brand gravitas.”

**“[PfPP has] brought a focus that supports local delivery, it brings partners in where there's been sometimes not as much engagement.” [Pilot lead]**

It was anecdotally highlighted by pilots leads that central government sponsorship of pilots drew greater attention among local authority leadership. However, there is little evidence that this influenced pilot implementation or delivery within timescales of the programme.

### 5.3.2 Engagement with central government was not identified as a driver to achieving outcomes

There is little evidence from pilot leads that central government had an influence on delivery or outcomes in most pilots. While there was variability in the extent to which central government partners contributed to pilot delivery (in terms of time and role), central government contributions to pilots were largely not an integral aspect to delivery nor heavily influenced the effectiveness of pilots. This reflects the limited contribution of central government partners to support local places to unblock key policy, regulatory or information barriers in a timely manner.

In some cases, this may result from the timelines of the programme which constrained pilot teams from building the evidence base needed to identify and successfully engage central government partners. For example, Liverpool’s pilot lead highlighted that while central government attendance to their Hub showcase event was positive, the pilot was still in its infancy. This meant the pilot team was not yet able to define and demonstrate their needs from central government.

An analysis of engagement tracking data identified that of the 17 information barriers unblocked by central government stakeholders across nine pilot areas, none were identified to have influenced delivery outcomes during the timeframes of the programme.

In some places, there is evidence of a trade-off between delivering locally and allocating resources towards building local-central relationships. Pilot leads in Cornwall and Newcastle prioritised delivery during the later stages of the programme at the expense of continued efforts connecting with relevant central government departments and teams. This highlights the limited resource available in some pilots that constrained the time required for engaging with central government partners.

### 5.3.3 Some interventions are showing signs of achieving longer-term economic value, however the evidence is limited without person-level outcomes data

Pilot-specific breakeven analysis was performed on eight pilots where data was available based on the outcomes of interest set out in the ToC for each pilot area.<sup>29</sup> These included outcomes related to personal wellbeing such as employment, loneliness and confidence, and outcomes related to the local community such as a sense of belonging to their neighbourhood, how often they speak to neighbours, their sense of living in a good neighbourhood and the sense that they can obtain advice locally if required.

<sup>29</sup> Analysis was carried out for the following pilots: Bradford, Hackney, Liverpool, Luton, Southwark, Cornwall, Newcastle, Birmingham. Pilot areas without measurable outcome indicators in their ToC were excluded from breakeven analysis.

Breakeven analysis provides an estimate of the level of change in monetisable outcomes within each of the pilot areas that would be necessary for the pilot's benefits to meet costs. Where there is an absence of medium- or long-term person-level outcomes data, a breakeven analysis can provide an indication of how many beneficiaries would be needed for the programme to achieve a net positive economic value.

Monetisable outcomes only include those which are associated with outcomes measured within the Understanding Society survey. As a result, not all short-term outcomes within each pilot's ToC are included in this analysis as we are unable to associate a robust economic value to the outcomes achieved. Where a pilot does not breakeven, it does not definitely imply cost-inefficiency given that there is value or other outcomes achieved that are unaccounted for.

A breakeven analysis can be calculated in the absence of person-level outcome measures. However, without emerging evidence of outcomes, there is a high degree of uncertainty in the extent to which we can assess the feasibility of pilots achieving breakeven. At the time of data collection, assessment of person-level outcomes relies only on emerging perspectives from pilot teams, delivery partners as well as preliminary pilot reach/output data. The analysis indicates that among the eight pilots undergoing a breakeven analysis, three (Cornwall, Liverpool, Newcastle) have shown evidence of progress towards achieving outcomes within a range that would yield net economic breakeven i.e. where a sufficient number of beneficiaries have been reached to meet the pilot costs. For example:

- Should the Bodmin pilot in Cornwall result in 22 target beneficiaries finding employment, the pilot's costs would equal the economic benefit. To date, the Bodmin pilot has received 37 referrals into the Hub, of which seven individuals have accessed employment. This 19% conversion rate should not be seen as an impact estimate since it does not account for the counterfactual that some of these individuals may have found work anyway. If we assume this 'deadweight' to be approximately 20%,<sup>30</sup> this would give a conversion rate of 15%, meaning that the Bodmin pilot would have to reach 147 beneficiaries to achieve breakeven.<sup>31</sup> While the pilot will not achieve breakeven within the life of the programme, outcomes were achieved through 37 referrals during only three months of delivery. Assuming similar levels of referrals across the year, we would expect 148 referrals if the Bodmin pilot had remain operational for 12 months of delivery as originally planned. This would have resulted in around 22 individuals accessing employment (at a 15% conversion rate), which is just at the threshold of the breakeven target of 22.
- In Liverpool, it is estimated the Good Help Hub would achieve breakeven if 364 visitors report having experienced welfare improvements associated with being 'able to obtain advice locally'. The Good Help Hub has reached over 550 individuals across a three-month delivery period. Evidence does not exist on the conversion rates for people being provided advice locally taking up that advice in a way that benefits them (this would have to be collected through follow-up surveys). If we assume a constant rate of take up and that 17% of beneficiaries make use of the advice obtained at the Hub, then it is possible this intervention may produce social welfare benefits equal to the costs of the pilot. Noting that to achieve breakeven, only around half of the individuals reached in this period would be required to exhibit improvements in their belief they are able to obtain advice locally.
- Newcastle commissioned Northumbria University to analyse changed outcomes for 192 foodbank users at two time points, on pilot entry and exit. The research found the pilot contributed to self-

<sup>30</sup> HCA Additionality Guidance 2014 Table 3.4:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/378177/additionality\\_guide\\_2014\\_full.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/378177/additionality_guide_2014_full.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> Note, that it is likely that conversation will increase over time, as participant receive training and continued support from the pilot.

reported improvements in financial security, increased confidence in money management, enhanced knowledge of where to find help for financial concerns and reduced levels of financial stress. It is estimated that if 28 users report 'not being in a financially difficult position', the pilot would breakeven. While the total number of foodbank users accessing the pilot has not been captured in internal evaluation reporting, local evaluation data shows a notable shift in surveyed foodbank users' attitudes towards money-related stress, and their own financial security. At the beginning of the programme, respondents generally agreed that they felt stressed due to money worries (score = 3.86). By the end of the programme, they mainly disagreed with this statement (score = 2.38). Likewise, on average, respondents 'disagreed' that they 'could afford to pay for food bills and housing' prior to participating in the pilot (score = 2.21).<sup>32</sup> At the end of the pilot, on average, respondents were 'neutral' in their ability to afford to pay for food and housing (score = 3.47).<sup>33</sup> It is therefore plausible that the pilot has resulted in a reduction of financial difficulty for more than 28 participants.

There is less evidence to reliably assess progress towards achieving levels of engagement that align with breakeven estimates. More specifically, there was not yet consistent and sufficient outcome data to assess the feasibility of breakeven estimates for the pilots in Bradford, Birmingham, Hackney, Luton. In these areas, it was concluded that it was generally too early to capture the overall impact of the pilots on targeted outcomes. For Southwark, an assessment of the breakeven and progress against monetisable outcomes (such as improved community networks, participant sense of connection and belonging to community) revealed that it was unlikely that the pilot would achieve breakeven within the timeframes of the programme.<sup>34</sup>

#### 5.3.4 Summary of findings

- Central government partners actively shared information about wider government programmes and supported the efforts of pilot teams to access and use central government held data. However, the extent to which engagements led to improvements in process or outcomes for pilot interventions is limited. As such, central government engagement **was not found to have significantly influenced local delivery** within the timescales of the programme.
- Pilot teams did not often attribute the achievement of short-term pilot-level outcomes or other successes to contributions made by central government partners. **Even when pilots achieved sustained engagement or gained a better understanding of regulatory and policy barriers that could be alleviated, this did not consistently result in the removal of these barriers.** This reiterates the challenges of overcoming structural barriers which made it difficult for places to influence policy and practice outside of funding cycles, identify ways to share or access data held across government, make sustained commitments to local problems and evidence impact. These structural barriers are explored in more depth in Section 3.1.

<sup>32</sup> Outcomes were presented via Likert scale of 1 = extremely poor/ completely disagree; 3 = neutral; 5 = excellent / completely agree. Scores are a total average of each individual response to the question; To what extent do you agree/disagree - I feel stressed because of my money worries.

<sup>33</sup> Outcomes were presented via Likert scale of 1 = extremely poor/ completely disagree; 3 = neutral; 5 = excellent / completely agree. Scores are a total average of each individual response to the question; To what extent do you agree/disagree - I can afford to pay for food bills and housing

<sup>34</sup> WeWalworth (Southwark) breakeven analysis did not account for intended outcomes which could not be monetised including outcomes related to improved understanding among central and local government staff of neighbourhood working, inner city diverse neighbourhoods, and how social capital supports neighbourhoods. WeWalworth's key objectives are part of a longer-term vision to improve trust and belonging in neighbourhood among residents which are not yet captured by the time this analysis was conducted.

- **Central government backing through the programme helped encourage local actors to take part in some pilots**, contributing to effective delivery by virtue of their perceived endorsement of the project. This enhanced the legitimacy of pilot activity and at times encouraged the involvement of senior local leadership. In some pilots, this led to improved local relationships and breakthroughs connecting with historically lower engaged stakeholders.
- In some areas, where there was clear alignment in central and local goals, **engagement facilitated through the programme resulted in pilot teams accessing additional funding or participating in central government initiatives**. Local places unlocked funding opportunities from DESNZ as a result of central-local connections facilitated by the programme. The Horden Together project secured £87,250 to support the establishment of a Mine Water Heating Community Energy project and the East Sussex pilot received £100,000 to continue supporting vulnerable residents to access support through Citizen's Advice 1066.
- **There was broad support among pilot leads for the flexibility of the programme, which enabled pilots to iterate without a precise focus on specific metrics or outcomes**. Several pilots iterated and adapted their model in response to evolving needs and emerging barriers. However, the timeframes of the programme limited the opportunity for pilot teams to learn from earlier stages of delivery or about 'what works' from similar projects.

# Conclusions

The Partnerships for People and Place (PfPP) programme tested the extent to which, and how, central-local collaboration could help address challenges and improve outcomes within a place. The programme changed 'business as usual' by giving pilot teams a broad scope to shape and design their interventions and discuss issues in their communities with central government policy and delivery teams, convening multiple departments together over similar issues. This was viewed as the programme's key value add. Despite not achieving all its aims in the desired timeframes, the relationships that were formed and understanding that was built may lead to greater collaboration and influence by local places in national policy in the future.

The programme highlighted how the systems for delivering public services are not yet designed for greater joined-up working, adding friction to attempts at collaboration and reflecting the tensions between the need for central accountability for value for money and local flexibilities to meet community outcomes. In contrast with the programme's ToC, the extent to which central government stakeholders engaged in the programme varied across local pilots. Where central government partners did engage, there was limited evidence of collaboration leading to 'unblocking barriers' or providing significant added value for achieving local short-term outcomes. Implementation varied across local areas and central government partners depending on a variety of factors – many of which are structural and could not be changed in the lifetime of the programme.

The programme thus illustrates the perennial nature of well-known structural barriers which hinder coordination and result in the geographic disparities highlighted most recently in the Levelling Up White Paper. Learning highlighted how structural barriers at a national level impact the ability of local authorities to meet the needs of local communities including:

- **Organisational barriers** across central, regional and local government that results in a lack of coordination, duplication of efforts and missed opportunities for collaboration. This can limit the integration of services that cut across central government departments including education and employment, health, energy, and multiple disadvantage. In the context of local systems, this means that interventions targeting specific social problems might be designed and implemented without considering the wider neighbourhood context or potential synergies with other initiatives. This results in local authorities managing multiple programmes, with specific requirements and targets, even within the same policy area.
- **Funding and commissioning processes** that result in duplicated funding flows, with multiple funding flows from central government departments to multiple recipients in a place. This includes 384 different grants to 1,613 recipients in Wakefield, 229 grants to 1,278 recipients in Durham, 197 grants to 953 recipients in Hackney and 153 grants to 513 recipients in Luton. Spend mapping analysis found extensive duplication in funding both within and across departments:
  - Different departments provided multiple awards in the sample policy area. For example, BEIS and DLUHC both providing business support grants; DLUHC and DHSC providing support in relation to homelessness and rough sleeping; and BEIS and DCMS providing funding in relation to net-zero and energy efficiency.

- Single departments providing different grants from the same policy area to multiple recipients. For example, in Cornwall four grant programmes related to net zero went to ten different recipients across the public, private and education sectors.
- Although there is a need for central accountability, the complexity of funding streams can be a barrier to effective strategy or policy implementation. It also results in significant time investment for local authorities to navigate overlapping streams and meet multiple reporting requirements.
- **Barriers to data sharing** between central government departments, local authorities and other local services which prevent multi-agency working and local coordination. Barriers included constrained capacity locally to work through data protections requirements, aversion to risks associated with sharing personal data, as well as limited understanding of what data is held across all levels of government and service providers.
- **Short-term policy and funding cycles** which affect long-term planning and add administrative burden and complexity. This limits opportunities to adapt programmes based on what works, invest in sustainable programmes that address long-term issues such as regeneration, and conduct adequate evaluation and monitor long-term impacts.

The experiences of those involved in the programme illustrates the deeply-ingrained nature of these structures which limited the ability to unblock barriers within the twelve-month timeframe for pilot delivery. **It points to the time, social capital, and culture change required to encourage new ways of working.** Below we describe key learnings from the evaluation related to the enablers and barriers to central-local collaboration, as well as suggestions for how to further embed the conditions for change.

## 5.4 Key learnings from the evaluation

### 5.4.1 Gaps in understanding how central government can support place-based challenges means longer timeframes are required to build knowledge and relationships.

The programme differed from other place-based initiatives by providing local authorities with the agency and resources to define a local issue and deliver a pilot with direct central government support. This was often highlighted as a first for many pilot teams who described limited and inconsistent engagement with central government partners in previous programmes. This bottom-up approach to central-local collaboration was met with enthusiasm by central government partners who highlighted the programme as an innovative and relevant way to explore barriers in specific places.

However, pilot teams and central government partners were found to have limited understanding of how central government can help unblock barriers within a place. This included having limited knowledge about how each other worked which made it challenging to build a shared understanding of how or why to collaborate. For pilots, this resulted in significant challenges:

- **Defining their ‘ask’ of central government** with requests lacking specificity, clarity, or sufficient evidence to generate ongoing investment from central government teams. The short duration of the programme and the need for pilot teams to generate engagement with central government early in implementation meant that pilot teams did not have a sufficient grasp of their approach or evidence around what value it would bring to a place. As a result, central government partners struggled to proactively identify how they could support local places. This led to some pilots pausing central-local engagement efforts until latter stages of the programme, when it became too late for central government to support delivery within the timeframes.



- **Identifying which departments or teams** could support them to unblock barriers. For several pilots, engagement with central government often involved multiple departments, representing the complex structure of central government and the differences in the scope of responsibilities between local authority officers and national policy teams. This is most starkly highlighted by East Sussex's engagement with 19 individuals across seven teams in DESNZ and five individuals across four teams in DLUHC, all with overlapping interest in tackling fuel poverty and energy inefficiency in the private rental sector.

#### 5.4.2 Navigation support is critical to identifying and connecting local and central partners.

The role of system navigators was integral to overcoming knowledge gaps and stimulating engagement between pilot and central government teams. The DLUHC PfPP team supported engagement by identifying relevant contacts within central government, facilitating engagement activities, and promoting the programme. This was consistently seen as the primary driver of central-local collaboration across stakeholders. In particular, pilot leads highlighted that without this navigation support, they would not have been able to identify or engage with central government partners. Overall, over one hundred central government teams participated in the programme in some capacity. Some pilots were able to leverage existing relationships with central government stakeholders, however these cases were generally isolated.

#### 5.4.3 The benefits of central-local collaboration are maximised where engagement is routine over time.

Throughout the programme, places worked to build and understand how their approaches aligned with central government by facilitating routine and well-structure engagement opportunities. This not only allowed pilot teams to meet with central government but share insights and build understanding of how they could contribute to their intervention. For example, in Bradford it was felt sustained engagement enabled central government stakeholders to have a strong knowledge of local assets, systems, and issues, while also giving local government stakeholders a clearer understanding of the strategic priorities within different areas of central government.

Although one-off visits provided an opportunity to share knowledge and build relationships, both central and local government partners felt that engagement needed to be sustained over time to bring meaningful benefits. This could include creating space to co-design a programme in the early stages of delivery as in East Sussex or Southwark, or involvement in local governance meetings such as in Wakefield and Bradford. More sustained and routine approaches enabled partners to build relationships and generated a shared understanding of a programme and a place. Reflecting this, pilot teams emphasised the importance of developing platforms for continued engagement including legacy governance arrangements and communication channels.

#### 5.4.4 Strengthening support for place-based policy requires engagement beyond existing advocates, particularly among senior civil servants and policy teams.

Central government officials that had existing interest in place-based working were more likely to prioritise engagement with pilot teams. Central government partners reported a range of motivational influences including:

- Roles dedicated to place-based working
- Alignment between the focus of a local pilot and their policy remit
- Prior experience in local government or community engagement

- Personal interest in the specific location e.g. living nearby or having connections there

These motivational factors were often present in **regional teams** where individuals had an existing interest in a place, there was clear organisational alignment and individuals were based closer to an area geographically.

There remain some questions about how to better engage central government officials beyond existing advocates of place-based working as well as civil servants with greater influence to unblock barriers. While pilot teams and DLUHC leads had success connecting pilots with individuals in regional roles, the focus of regional divisions on delivery rather than policy-making made it harder to unblock local barriers even where strong relationships were built.

Likewise, central government partners highlighted significant challenges maintaining engagement in the context of wider capacity constraints. This was particularly prominent for senior civil servants and created barriers where the reasons for engagement were not clear. This is significant as senior leaders are likely to hold the social capital, relationships, and influence required to unblock ingrained structural barriers that limit collaboration. It also has relevance for strengthening join-up and collaboration at a local level, as the **programme highlighted how central government involvement helped to encourage local actors** to take part. This highlights the convening power of central government which has the potential to bring immediate value to places within the constraints of long-term structural barriers.

#### 5.4.5 Close alignment between local challenges and central government priorities supported partnership working and created opportunities to influence national policy.

Policy alignment between local and central government partners was a key factor present in pilots that developed ongoing relationships, captured new funding opportunities or unblocked barriers (Durham, Bradford and East Sussex). In these cases, policy alignment was supported by linking with programmes:

- **In the early stages of development** where civil servants were looking to gather information or local expertise to inform initiatives or policy design.
- **Without the need for national consistency** in delivery. Programmes that were being piloted in a small number of places or that had flexibility built into the design were more likely to have the capability to address the changes sought by pilot teams.

Connecting with initiatives provided a platform for pilots to influence national policy and for central government to pilot new approaches locally. However, central government partners described a hesitancy around “cherry-picking” places or unblocking barriers for individual locations rather than taking a consistent approach across the country. This emphasises the importance of identifying opportunities for collaboration from the early stages of the policy cycle.

## 5.5 Looking forward: conditions for change

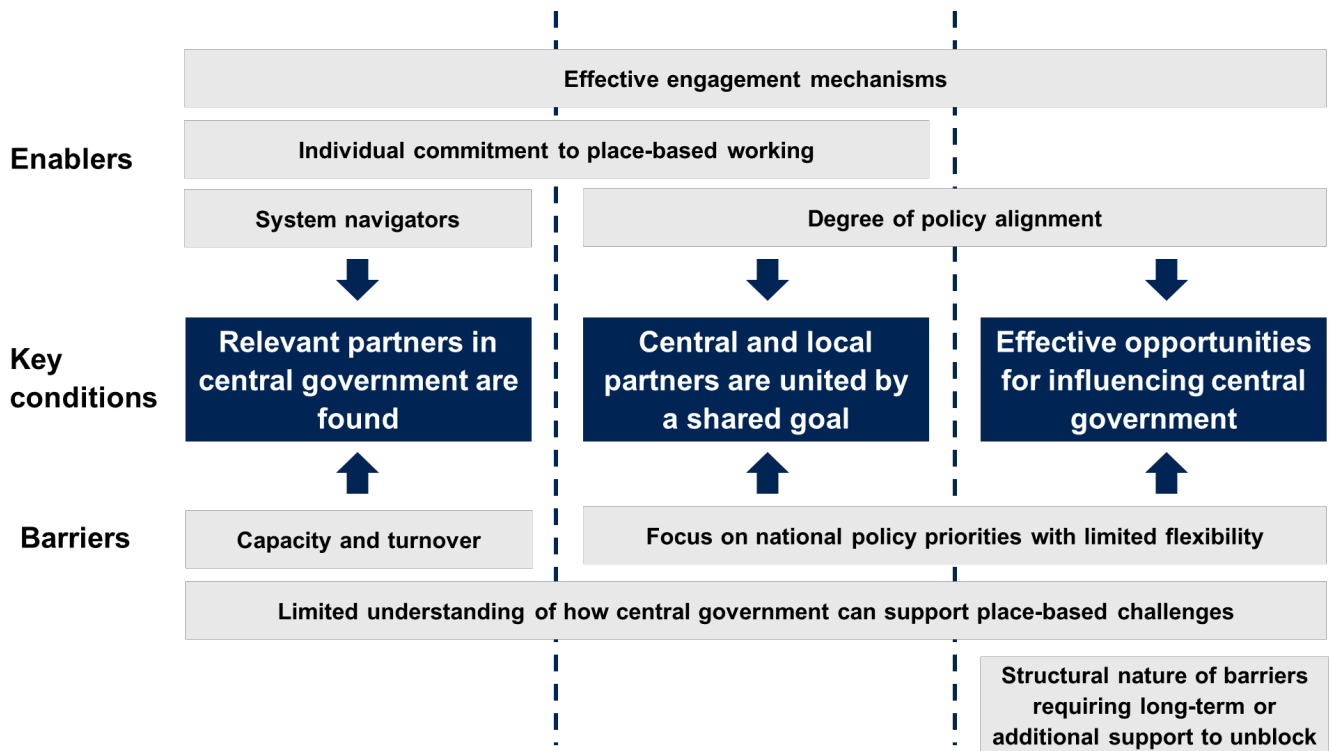
As highlighted in Section 3.1, three key conditions identified through the PfPP programme underpinned effective collaboration between local and central government:

1. **Identifying relevant partners** within central and local government. Relevance related to the specific role and remit of individuals including their area of focus, seniority, networks and convening power. This influenced both their willingness to explore options for unblocking barriers and their capabilities to affect change.

2. **Developing shared goals** that align with local needs and central government priorities was crucial for incentivising engagement. Aligning what local places required with central government partners’ incentives and motivations as per their policy priorities secured central government partners’ support for and engagement in the pilots.
3. **Creating or capitalising on opportunities to influence** central government policy. This involves local or central stakeholders identifying leverage points where collaboration is more likely to be possible due to the timing, topic or stakeholders involved in a policy.

These form the basis for suggested considerations for improving central-local collaboration in the future, reflecting what may be possible within current organisational and financial structures across local and central government. The recommendations included below have been developed in response to findings from the evaluation and several workshops hosted by DLUHC with relevant local and central partners.

Figure 9. Enablers and barriers to achieving the key conditions for creating effective collaboration between local and central government.



### 5.5.1 Central and local partners are united by a shared goal.

Engagement was more likely to be sustained where there was clear alignment between pilot and central government partner roles and the reasons for engagement were clear. Developing shared goals that align both with local needs and central government priorities was important for incentivising engagement. This could include:

- Incentivising collaboration as part of **professional development opportunities**, with increased recognition of the importance of knowledge, relationships and skills in working with local government and communities.
- Increasing **awareness** of the varied ways that national programmes and policies are delivered in place, the benefits of working with local places to effect policymaking and maximising opportunities to adapt initiatives to better reflect local contexts.

- Improving **how knowledge is captured and shared** between central and local stakeholders, including developing a shared language and norms around the use of evidence to make it easier for local insights to inform central government.

<p><b>Central government could...</b></p>	<p>Department leadership and those with place-based roles could encourage a change in perceptions to recognise local engagement and collaboration as a core part of policymaking with regular communication and incentives for policymakers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Shared narratives could be developed and promoted by senior leaders across all departments to encourage civil servants to recognise the benefits of place-based working to their role and normalise relationship building. Shared narratives could form case studies that demonstrate the impact of joined-up working and embedded flexibilities for local delivery within policy.</li> <li>▪ Central government leadership could provide opportunities and space for officials in place-lead roles to act as ‘change-makers’, test ideas and promote new ways of working in partnership with the department leadership.</li> <li>▪ Officials within place-lead roles could develop and distribute case studies of positive change, and reward teams that build in greater flexibilities and engagement with local stakeholders.</li> <li>▪ Leaders could also encourage joint development of funding streams. This could include cross-departmental bids for spending such as through the Shared Outcomes Fund as well as joint contributions to fiscal events.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Local authorities could...</b></p>	<p>Local authorities could develop a peer network to support evidence generation and build understanding across local authorities of approaches to collaboration with central government on place-based policy and programme design.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Local authorities could work with delivery bodies (e.g. VCS organisations) to build an evidence base, share learning and bring together insights from similar approaches building on existing work from the LGA and others. This could also draw on existing national evaluations, bringing data together to compare areas.</li> <li>▪ Local authorities could have direct regular engagement with central government place leads (or equivalent roles) to promote cross-government learning and enable central government to communicate on strategic changes in place-based policymaking.</li> </ul>

Reflecting the need for culture change, the evaluation highlighted the importance of demonstrating systematic and robust evidence to effectively articulate the value of central government involvement.

Where funding to local authorities is short-term, this can present a ‘catch-22’ scenario as places are less able to implement long-term solutions and demonstrate impact. This points to the need to generate further evidence, building on the insights from the programme, into the quantifiable impact of misaligned and duplicative funding streams.

<p><b>Central government could...</b></p>	<p>Central government departments could collaborate with local authorities to set clear standards for evidence generation, and guidance for use of existing evidence where available in line with Green Book guidance. This could form a part of bid-making, co-design, or programme ‘set-up’ phases across central government funded initiatives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Evidence and monitoring arrangements for programmes funded by central government could be developed in collaboration with delivery partners. This could help to ensure data collection is feasible for delivery teams, adds value and is structured to maximise dissemination and impact. This could include capturing evidence from the early design stages of a programme including what was learnt and why decisions were made, as well as the resulting outcomes and impacts.</li> <li>▪ Pursuing collaborative approaches to developing evidence and monitoring approaches can identify at the earliest possible stage:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Requirements for additional capacity building or specialist support to enhance monitoring and evaluation.</li> <li>– Duplication in data collection across levels of government, and opportunities for local authorities to leverage existing sources of data.</li> <li>– Ways to support local authorities to capture ‘impact’, often only measurable beyond funding timeframes. This could better position local places to effectively capture and communicate the value of place-based interventions, and the influence of barriers to local outcomes more effectively and in line with central government standards.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<p><b>Central government could...</b></p>	<p>Central government departments could provide local authorities with greater flexibility to use new and existing funding streams to target local priorities, where this can be balanced against the need for national accountability, monitoring and the requirement to sign detailed funding agreements. This could facilitate place-based delivery, provide ‘test case’ opportunities to enable deeper exploration of the administrative burden of funding complexity, and the social benefits of enhanced flexible funding provision.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ This could include the ability to merge funding sources from multiple departments, where seeking to tackle cross-cutting challenges or long-term prevention. Standard clauses could be developed for all funding agreements that enable local authorities to raise this option with the sponsoring government department.</li> <li>▪ Central government could provide clarity regarding the flexibilities accessible to local authorities. This may involve setting explicit criteria or objectives that must be achieved for flexibilities to be authorised. Similarly, central government departments may set limits or boundaries on the degree to which these flexibilities can be permitted (such as setting a cap on the proportion of total funding that can be utilised in a flexible manner).</li> </ul>
<p><b>Central government could...</b></p>	<p>Central government could continue to build an evidence base about the impact of funding complexity and funding short-termism to deepen our understanding of the costs. This could be done by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Repeating the methodology designed around the Cabinet Office grant data when the new data is available. This will remove some of the Covid noise that exists in the data used as part of the analysis for this programme and begin to enable tracking over time.</li> <li>▪ Enhance the HM Treasury Country and Regional Analysis (CRA) so that over time this can be presented at a local authority area and not just a regional level. This is because the HM Treasury CRA data is a robust data set that controls for many of the criteria that are important in spend mapping exercises. It was identified through the consultations with different government departments that this data – and its importance – has different levels of understanding across different departments. A first exercise would therefore be around raising the profile of this data.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Local authorities could...</b></p>	<p>Local authorities could set up processes to track the administrative resource dedicated to grant applications to deepen understanding of the impacts of administrative burdens on bidders including local authorities and VCS organisations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Central government could include as part of the grant application criteria a record of total administrative resource allocated by local authority, delivery partner or other organisations involved in providing a response.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ It may be beneficial for central government to set-up a clear and distinct process to collecting this data which is de-identified and anonymous. This could de-incentivise strategically motivated inputs in cases where grant applications are competitive.</li> </ul>
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**5.5.2 Condition 2: Identifying relevant partners.**

Navigation support was the primary enabler of central-local collaboration in the programme, and critical to helping places identify, maintain and continue to build connections. The model consisted of providing intensive navigation support to local teams to generate insights into the extent to which and how central-local collaboration can improve outcomes for communities. Although this model is not scalable, the programme highlighted the importance of identifying relevant individuals and directorates within central and local government, and the likely support needed for local areas to do so effectively. It also points to the importance of culture and building a network of advocates who want to encourage new ways of working.

<b>Central government could...</b>	<p>Central government could develop new roles or expand existing roles that lead on place-based engagement, including senior level positions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Roles could form specialised positions that have strong connections and knowledge of departmental teams (including regionally based teams) and their associated remits.</li> <li>▪ Place-based positions could focus on developing structured and coordinated connections with regional place leads and delivery teams, as well as promoting opportunities for development of both place-based engagement and partnerships with local government and wider local stakeholders.</li> <li>▪ Departments could consider increasing the commitment to place-based activities to a minimum of 50% of the time involved in existing place-based roles.</li> <li>▪ This could help to enable easier identification of suitable contacts to kick start engagement activities at the right time in a policy cycle and ensure dedicated resource to support collaboration is available to both central and local stakeholders.</li> </ul>
<b>Central government could...</b>	<p>Central government could build stronger co-ordination between levels of government by developing cross-departmental networks focused on place-based policymaking.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Networks could include both policy and delivery teams across central government initiatives implemented within specific local authorities. Policy teams could initiate and maintain connections with delivery teams and create open platforms to share learning</li> </ul>

	<p>related to policy implementation and ways of embedding local flexibilities that can add value to local delivery.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Strengthened networks could raise awareness about the benefits of place-based working, provide a forum for sharing good practice and take responsibility for wider communications and dissemination of case studies across government.</li> <li>▪ Networks could be underpinned by consistent and regular engagement channels and ensure resilience if an individual moves on, with information about relevant roles made available to local authorities and government departments.</li> </ul>
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**5.5.3 Condition 3: Creating effective engagement opportunities.**

Effective and routine engagement opportunities supported relationship building between central and local government through the programme. The evaluation found that where central-local collaboration is sustained and ongoing, there are mutual information sharing and learning benefits. Representation by senior central and local authority stakeholders can draw-in wider participation and yield positive outcomes due to their capacity to authorise and affect change. This points to the value of promoting engagement opportunities that foster consistent interactions between local and central government and instil confidence in the equality of relationships.

<b>Central government could...</b>	<p>Central government leadership could incentivise, promote and provide permission for policy teams to participate in local projects (e.g. through visits, co-design, contributing to events) and recognise this as a key part of their role. This is an important aspect of building understanding among policy teams about the breadth of ways in which central government initiatives can add value to existing local systems and communities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Departmental leadership could be active in promoting the importance of ongoing central-local engagement amongst officials including senior leaders. This also involves providing officials in place-based roles with a licence to design, promote and communicate opportunities within and across departments.</li> <li>▪ Training and development, role modelling by senior leaders and embedding local engagement in the Policy Profession to encourage place-based working could support the normalisation of going on visits, attending meetings or working more closely with local authorities.</li> </ul>
<b>Local authorities and central government could...</b>	<p>Local authorities and central government departments could embed engagement and co-design phases into project designs,</p>



	<p>creating a space for central and local partners to come together and shape delivery approaches.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ This could help to develop a shared understanding of the local challenges being addressed by a programme as well as the potential regulatory and policy barriers that could be alleviated. It would help to avoid duplication with other schemes and give local places a voice to consider how approaches will work in practice.</li><li>▪ Examples of good practice in the co-design of funding and programmes could be developed with local authorities and central government to promote the value of these approaches. Central government stakeholders could look to existing work including within the UKSPF to identify suitable examples of effective partnerships. These could form case studies which focus on effective ways of collaborative working and the benefits this brings.</li></ul>
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# Our standards and accreditations

Ipsos' standards and accreditations provide our clients with the peace of mind that they can always depend on us to deliver reliable, sustainable findings. Our focus on quality and continuous improvement means we have embedded a "right first time" approach throughout our organisation.



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## ISO 9001

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