



Department
for Culture
Media & Sport

DCMS Grassroots Facilities Evaluation

Interim Evaluation Report

May 2024



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Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities (MSGF) Programme – Emerging Findings To Date (May 2024)



PROGRAMME DELIVERY

2,916

Facilities received funding through the MSGF Programme.

£179.9m

total funding committed from FY21/22 to FY23/24.

£5.80

The highest funding per capita was in the North East, whilst London received the least funding per capita at £0.51 per capita.

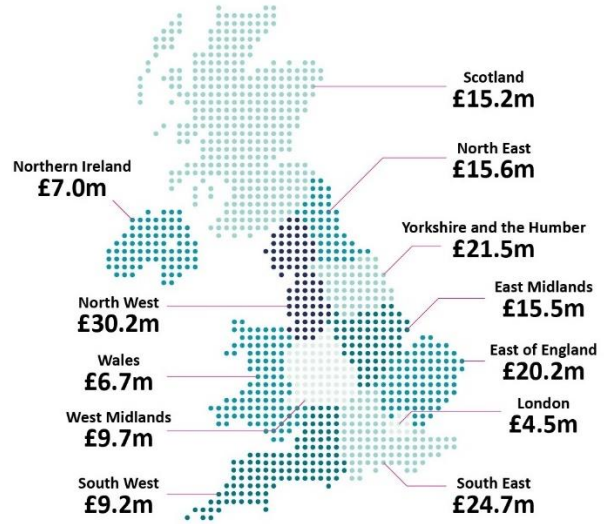
£62,000

Average grant size of the MSGF Programme.

84%
of funding delivered to date outside London and the South-East (over £150m).

59%
of investment in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland delivered to deprived areas.

MSGF Funding Committed between FY21/22 and FY23/24, broken down by region.

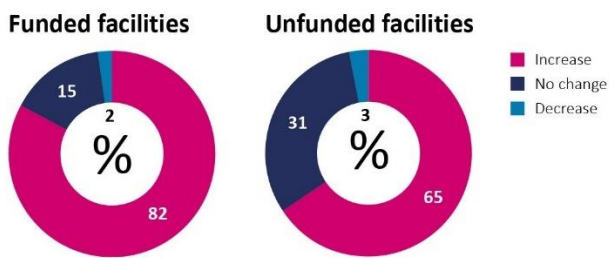


“Funding has been transformational for participation, particularly through the number of new grass pitches and AGPs, which couldn’t have been delivered without this Programme.”

MSGF Delivery Partner

OUTCOMES

Overall Participation Changes.



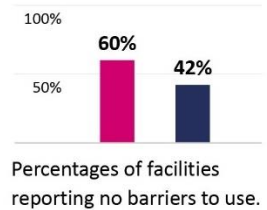
Percentage of facilities reporting an increase in physical activity since April 2021.



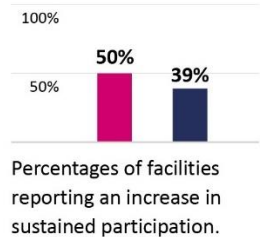
“And particularly for girls, the girls’ game’s exploding. Big numbers wanting to play. So, giving them that opportunity to have a real positive experience on a good quality pitch has been massive.”

MSGF Delivery Partner

Barriers to Regular Use.



Sustained Participation.

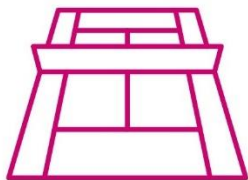


Legend: Funded (Pink), Unfunded (Dark Blue)

Park Tennis Court Renovation (PTCR) Programme – Emerging Findings To Date (May 2024)



PROGRAMME DELIVERY

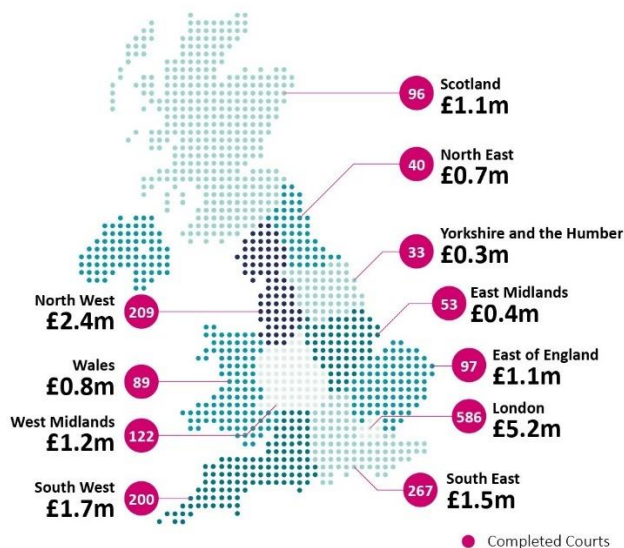


1,817
court renovations had been completed, as of February 2024.

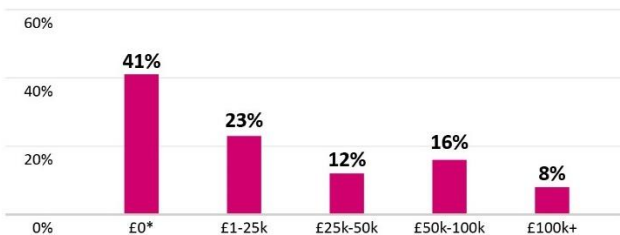
42%
of completed projects were Court refurbishment, gate installation and online booking.

209
Completed courts in the North West.

PTCR – Total Commitment by region.



Grant Size under the PTCR Programme.



* £0 refers to the use of funds or resource other than those allocated to the PTCR Programme. These projects will have associated costs and resource requirements, but since these have no impact on the PTCR Programme's funding allocation, these are reported as £0.

£0.58
The highest funding per capita was in London, whilst Yorkshire and the Humber received the least funding per capita at £0.05 per capita.

586
Completed courts in London.

OUTCOMES

Participation percentage increase in tennis between 2022 and 2023.

↑ 19%
Female participation



↑ 53%
Lower socio-economic groups



“To summarise, this has been a **transformational project** that has been really exciting, fast paced, large scale, hardwork but rewarding. **Without the support of DCMS, we could never had done this.**”

Lawn Tennis Association



“I just think, for us, we are just really grateful that we had that funding to really **bring back to life our courts**, and to **have something in the town that we feel really proud of.**”

Facility Manager



Executive Summary

Introduction and Overview

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (“DCMS”) commissioned Deloitte in August 2023 to conduct an independent assessment of two key funding Programmes implemented and delivered by DCMS, namely the Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities (“MSGF”) and the Park Tennis Court Renovation (“PTCR”) Programmes.

Both the MSGF and PTCR Programmes provide direct investment to build or upgrade grassroots facilities, aiming to boost activity levels and sports participation amongst local communities. In particular, their focus is on delivering projects that benefit those from under-represented groups and those within communities impacted by higher-than-average levels of deprivation¹ to ensure physical activity is accessible to all, no matter background or location. The Lionesses Futures Fund (LFF) aims to continue to support the growth in female sport participation across England; this funding has also been brought within the scope of the evaluation, and for the purposes of this report is considered a sub-section of the MSGF Programme.

This interim evaluation report builds on the initial feasibility study published by Ipsos UK in May 2023 and an evaluation plan finalised in December 2023. The objective of the overarching evaluation of the Programmes has been to monitor their outputs and outcomes, and assess their impact and Value for Money (VfM). The evaluation comprises:

- **Process Evaluation:** to understand whether Programme activities have been implemented as intended and resulted in the desired outputs in an efficient and effective manner;
- **Impact Evaluation:** to understand the extent to which the Programmes made a difference in the achievement of the expected outcomes; and
- **Economic Evaluation / Value for Money (VfM):** to understand in parallel to the process and impact evaluations, the benefits, and costs of the Programmes, and whether the use of resources over the course of implementation has been efficient, effective, and equitable.

This interim report discusses emerging findings from the first round of fieldwork conducted from January - March 2024, providing particular insights and focus on the process evaluation, as well as early indications of outputs and outcomes as part of the impact evaluation. **Findings will be further reported over the course of the evaluation process, with an additional interim report planned for March 2025 and a final report in March 2026, which will utilise additional data and undertake causal analysis, which has not yet been feasible as part of this interim report.** This will allow a more detailed understanding of outputs and outcomes, which will be explored in more depth based on the findings from the impact and process evaluations, before being assessed as part of an economic evaluation.

The main aims of the evaluation of the Programmes are:

- To monitor the overall performance and progress of the two Programmes.
- To assess how the Programmes are being implemented and the extent to which they are meeting the demand-side and supply-side outcomes and driving sustained impact to understand the Government’s return on investment.
- To investigate the existence of causal links between investment in grassroots sports facilities and improvement in participation and physical activity.
- To identify lessons learned to inform current Programme delivery and potential future Programme design and implementation.

¹ A deprived area is defined as an area that falls within IMD deciles 1-5.

- To demonstrate accountability and transparency in the allocation of public funding by assessing whether the intended impacts of the Programmes have been achieved.
- To assess the VfM that the Programmes are providing to the taxpayer.

Evaluation Questions

It was agreed during the evaluation planning stage that the below overarching research question will be applicable to this evaluation:

“To what extent have the Programmes delivered improvements to facilities in need of investment and created a positive impact on physical activity within these facilities in England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland?”

From this, an evaluation framework has been developed, underpinned by a Theory of Change, to establish a number of evaluation questions that explore this overarching topic in further detail. A range of sub-questions also sit below these questions, but the core evaluation questions are shown below:

- **EQ1:** Have the new / improved facilities resulted in additional participation in sport at the facility and local areas?
- **EQ2:** Does the investment in facilities have an impact on participation levels from underrepresented groups and within deprived areas?
- **EQ3:** Do the new / improved facilities increase awareness of sports, and / or improve the perception of activity in local communities (e.g. quality of life, pride in place, community cohesion) for individuals?
- **EQ4:** Have the Programmes improved collaborative working and available evidence?
- **EQ5:** Has the Lionesses Futures Fund achieved its intended outcomes?
- **EQ6:** Has the Lionesses Futures Fund helped to create safe and welcoming spaces for women and girl users to play?

Methodology, Data and Approach

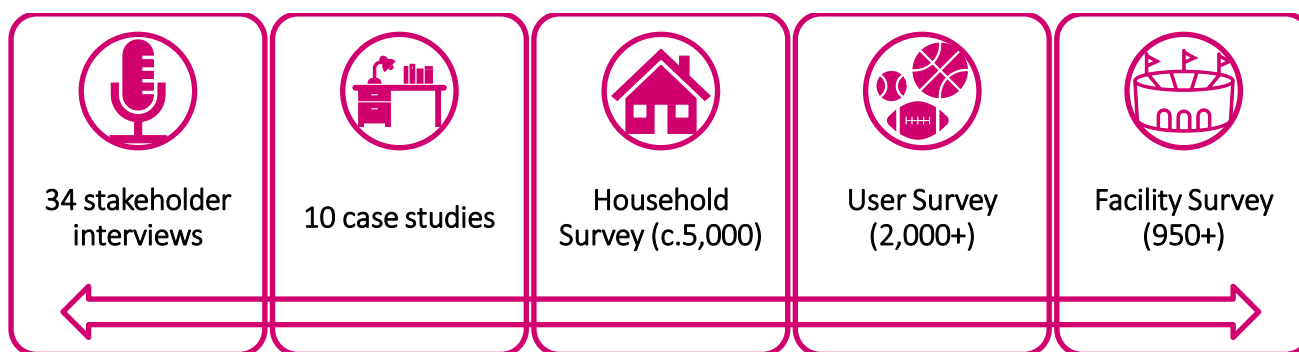
This evaluation uses a mixed-methods approach to evaluate a diverse and representative cross-section of projects. This involves utilising a range of sources to capture comprehensive information for the process, impact and economic evaluation to help understand how the two Programmes have been delivered and achieved their outcomes, outputs and impacts in a value for money way.

This interim report has been supported by only one wave of data collection to date, conducted through February and March 2024. Significant future data collection activity is planned for two further waves in FY24/25 and FY25/26.

Primary Data Collection & Fieldwork

The evaluation of the MSGF and PTCR programmes is underpinned by a range of primary data collection techniques. This has included a comprehensive plan of surveying across facilities, users and households for MSGF, in addition to case studies and interviews with a range of key stakeholders across both Programmes. A summary of primary data sources that have been used to support this evaluation are outlined below, with further detail available in Section 4.1.

Figure 1: Primary Data Collection – as of May 2024



Programme Overview

The MSGF Programme will invest £320 million between 2021 and 2025. England is allocated £279 million, Scotland £20.1 million, Wales £13.9 million, and Northern Ireland £7.0 million over the lifetime of the Programme. As of February 2024, £176.3 million has been committed so far across the Home Nations. Of this investment, the North-West of England received the most funding per capita at £5.80, with London receiving the least funding per capita at £0.51.

The PTCR Programme will spend £30.3 million over FY22/23 and FY23/24, with DCMS investing £21.9 million with an additional £8.4 million from the LTA. As of April 2024, 1,792 courts across 552 parks have been renovated as part of the Programme in England. The region with the largest number of courts that received funding was London with 586, with Yorkshire and the Humber the region with the fewest funded courts. Additionally, 96 courts in Scotland were refurbished along with 89 courts in Wales.

Process Evaluation Approach

This process evaluation explores whether the Programme interventions have been implemented as intended and resulted in the desired outputs, as well as considering the extent to which the Programmes have been delivered in an efficient and effective manner. This will examine issues including governance, communication, and delivery, with lessons learned for future refinement of the two Programmes and others across DCMS and wider government.

Laying strong foundations for the evaluation across all three aspects (process, impact and economic), through robust design and data collection processes has been the initial focus of activity. Findings around implementation and process are more readily available at this stage due to the status of the Programme's delivery and the data collection that has been undertaken to date. The following data collection activities have supported this to date:

- Review and assessment of **Programme documentation and monitoring data**.
- **34 interviews** with key stakeholders involved in the delivery of the Programmes to help understand how processes and delivery of the Programmes has functioned since launch to present day
- **10 case studies** of facilities in receipt of MSGF or PTCR funding gathering first-hand insights from a range of stakeholders at each facility to investigate the impacts of the funding to address the evaluation questions and assess the degree to which the funding mechanisms functioned as intended and were efficient and effective for these sites.
- Analysis of secondary data including Active Lives, Active Places Power and the Community Lives Survey.
- Analysis of initial wave of data available from three key surveys covering the MSGF Programme:
 - **Facility Survey:** A survey sent to both funded and unfunded facilities across the Home Nations for completion by managers of the facility, and collects self-reported data from facility managers, exploring current and pre-funding levels of participation amongst other outcomes. 259 responses were

received from funded sites (62% response rate), and 288 responses received from unfunded sites (53% response rate).

- **User Survey:** A survey distributed to users by facility managers of funded and unfunded facilities across the Home Nations which explores the perceptions and views of users at an individual level to provide granular descriptive findings to support and supplement the counterfactual impact assessment and other data sources. Facility users were purposively sampled using contact details held by facility managers. 2222 responses were received.
- **Household Survey:** An online survey conducted using YouGov’s panel. Respondents were selected based on proximity to funded and unfunded sites. The purpose of the survey is to help to fill existing data gaps, particularly those that exist around pride in place and social cohesion. In addition to this, the survey covers themes of general wellbeing and physical activity at and outside of funded and unfunded facilities. 5,128 responses were achieved. The data was weighted by age and gender to UK 18+ targets. The data was also weighted by home nation to match the distribution of facilities across England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland.

Impact Evaluation Approach

The chosen methodology for a counterfactual impact evaluation aligns with the methodology set out in the feasibility study². This will seek to utilise quasi-experimental methods to establish if there is evidence of a causal effect from the Programmes, relative to a scenario where funding was not granted toward multi-sport facilities or tennis courts. As part of this evaluation, **a Steering Group has also been established to provide challenge and feedback on the impact evaluation methodology.**

The **primary objective of this evaluation is to investigate the causal effect of Programme funding on sports participation and physical activity**, in an environment where certain facilities or courts have been allocated funding, and others have not. As the MSGF and PTCR Programme designs do not allocate the funding randomly, but instead grant funding based on a structured selection process, **a quasi-experimental method, using a Differences-in-Differences (DiD) model, is best suited to measure the effect** of these policy interventions (termed as the “treatment”). This method seeks to estimate the differences, if any, in the intended outcomes of the Programmes between the “treated” groups (facilities that applied and were awarded the funding) and the “control” groups. (facilities that applied for the funding but were not selected), where both groups were assessed based on the same selection criteria within each nation. This approach aligns with the impact evaluation approaches set out in the Magenta Book³, as well as with the findings of the feasibility study conducted ahead of this evaluation.

Given that **only data collection for Wave 1 has been completed** and the remainder of the survey data collection for the second and third waves is to be conducted in FY 24/25 and FY 25/26 as planned, **the causal impact evaluation methodology outlined above will be applied in the next stage of the evaluation.**

The data currently available from the first wave of data collection in the form of the facilities, user and household surveys as well as the LTA PTCR booking data for investments allocated pre-2022, is assessed descriptively. This includes drawing insights through a pre- and post-Programme comparison for funded and unfunded facilities from self-reported estimates of participation. **Self-reporting was determined to be the most pragmatic and feasible approach in the absence of administrative data on participation.** The data is used to perform exploratory analysis and develop emerging results to provide an initial view on how the Programmes have been performing, whilst awaiting further data collection before conducting the causal analysis.

² Referred to as ‘Option A’ in the feasibility study: [Grassroots Sport Facilities Investment Programme: Impact Evaluation Feasibility Study \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

³ [HMT Magenta Book \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

Process Evaluation: Key Emerging Findings

The key emerging findings below are set out thematically and are broken down by Programme; such grouping aims to clearly convey the extent to which the Programmes have been delivered efficiently and effectively in key areas of design, implementation, and delivery. At this stage, the process evaluation does not consider the Lionesses Futures Fund due to the early phase of development and design that the Fund is still in.

The emerging findings from the process evaluation for the MSGF Programme should be considered by all Delivery Partners and DCMS, although there are instances where particular observations may be more relevant to specific Delivery Partners. These instances are highlighted below.⁴

Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme

- **Early Programme Development:** Despite limited capacity and experience of delivering similar Programmes initially, DCMS launched the Programme with allocations of funding in FY21/22, quickly developing key relationships with stakeholders and progressing design and delivery of the Programme to enable funding allocations. (DCMS & E/S/W/NI)
- **Funding KPIs:** KPIs used as part of the assessment criteria for awarding funding were perceived as a facilitator in driving the right behaviour from applicants and Delivery Partners; generally understood and accepted; and encouraged funding to be delivered in focus areas to benefit those from under-represented groups and those within communities impacted by higher-than-average levels of deprivation. (DCMS & E/S/W/NI)
- **Deprivation and Multi-Sport:** However, the KPIs related to deprivation and multi-sport could have been more clearly defined: for example, the level of granularity on which deprivation is defined sometimes caused issues for selection of appropriate projects; clarity around what constitutes a ‘multi-sport’ project, and whether there is to be differentiation between ‘sport’ and ‘physical activity’ has similarly impacted potential project selection. (DCMS & S/W/NI)
- **Application Process:** Application processes for funding were unique to each Delivery Partner, which led to a lack of consistency and comparability across nations, although a standardised approach could present practical challenges given the differences between nations and Delivery Partners in terms of levels of resource, nation size and the total amount of funding to deliver. Processes also substantially differed in complexity and length. In some cases, during the early phases of the Programme, this meant applicants (particularly volunteers) felt they faced a burdensome application process. (S/W/NI)
- **Application Process:** Iterations and improvements have been made to application processes over time, with key learnings and insights shared effectively across Delivery Partners. (E/S/W/NI)
- **Panel Representation:** Decisions to award funding and the distribution of the funding have been conducted in different ways across nations. Whilst grant panels have iteratively improved in terms of transparency and diversity of membership, some Delivery Partners felt that more could be done to improve representation by ensuring greater inclusion of a wide range of perspectives and experiences in the decision-making process in all nations. (S/W/NI)
- **Collaboration:** Overall, there has been strong communication and collaboration from all parties, and a clear willingness and enthusiasm to work together to achieve the best possible outcomes. Asks of Delivery Partners have been stretching at times, but stakeholders have been professional, polite, and proactive in rising to the challenge. (DCMS & E/S/W/NI)

⁴ The initials referred to in each bullet point are the initials of the nation of the relevant Delivery Partner. E = England, S = Scotland, W = Wales, NI = Northern Ireland.

- **Project Delivery:** Project delivery has been perceived to be effective, but improvements focused on **additional technical expertise and flexibility around the allocation of funding** could help improve the efficiency of future delivery. (DCMS & S/W/NI)
- **Programme Monitoring Data:** Programme monitoring has significantly improved since the Programme launched, and stakeholders engage with the regular processes of reporting and monitoring key updates in Programme delivery. However, there are still **ongoing issues with the quality and timeliness of data submission from Delivery Partners to DCMS**, with consequences for the value and usability of this data for stakeholders, as well as creating an additional burden for DCMS and Delivery Partner staff in resolving data issues. (DCMS & E/S/W/NI)
- **Stakeholder Relationships:** Relationships with facilities and local communities have been improved and strengthened by the Programme, and Delivery Partners have **widened their networks** and understanding of sports participation across the UK. (E/S/W/NI)
- **Achievement of Outcomes:** Stakeholders universally agree that **participation and physical activity has increased at funded facilities**, although acknowledge that further causal analysis is required to determine additionality. For example, some DCMS and Delivery Partner staff suggested that the **impacts may have been more significant for existing players**, rather than encouraging new players. Funding to date has sometimes **focused on clubs with existing facilities as opposed to areas where no facilities previously existed**, the latter potentially being a significant aspect of further growth in participation to ensure that those in areas with limited sports provision can get involved in physical activity and sport. (DCMS & E/S/W/NI)
- **Overall:** Overall, whilst recognising this is an interim evaluation, the **evidence suggests delivery of the Programme has become iteratively more efficient** from FY21/22 to date, with many key learnings and improvements implemented. Evidence also suggests effective delivery of the Programme, but the extent to which this continues and improves is **subject to ongoing delivery through the final Programme phases during FY24/25**. (DCMS & E/S/W/NI)

Park Tennis Court Renovation Programme

- **Early Programme Development:** The initial development and design of the PTCR Programme was **less efficient than it might have been**, internal collaboration with commercial colleagues in particular created delays. DCMS has now overcome these issues and improved processes and planning subsequently.
- **Funding KPIs:** The LTA utilised an **appropriate process with relevant KPIs for identification and selection of sites** to be renovated, with input from a range of stakeholders. **Technical assessments of projects and associated cost estimates underestimated the extent of required work and funding on a number of occasions**. However, the **LTA and DCMS were effective in appointing a new third party** to manage the risks from inaccurate technical assessments to overall delivery. **A funding shortfall remains for the Programme**, and talks are ongoing on how to rectify this funding gap.
- **Collaboration:** **Communication and collaboration across stakeholders was a core strength of the Programme's delivery** right from inception, and dedicated resource for the Programme from both the LTA and DCMS has significantly improved the efficiency and effectiveness of delivery. Officials have also been **professional, polite and proactive** amongst often stretching asks.
- **Project Delivery:** Project delivery has been perceived to be efficient and effective, with a **high volume of court renovations completed within a constrained period of time**. The LTA have utilised their experience and knowledge and adapted quickly to issues that have arisen. **Delays have often resulted from stakeholders external to delivery of the Programme and outside of DCMS' or the LTA's control**.

- **Programme Monitoring Data:** Programme monitoring has been **straightforward and positive**, and stakeholders have agreed on the **accuracy and timeliness of data being shared**. Whilst there have been issues in funding allocation and reporting against targets and allocations for funding, these have been dealt with appropriately.
- **Stakeholder Relationships:** LTA and DCMS staff believed **relationships with a broad range of stakeholders had improved** as a result of this funding, largely due to **proactive communication and a transparent approach to decision-making**.
- **Achievement of Outcomes:** Sentiment amongst stakeholders acknowledged the **positive effect on achieving an uptick in participation** at the courts in receipt of this funding, whilst **acknowledging the causal link between the Programme and overall participation impacts will be more challenging to determine**. There was an appreciation that the **Programme may need to go further than solely renovations**, also acknowledging that **further proactive initiatives, such as Free Park Tennis, would be key** to sustaining this uptick long-term.
- **Overall:** Overall, whilst recognising this is an interim evaluation, the **evidence suggests initial challenges were overcome** and the **Programme has been efficiently delivered**. The effectiveness of the Programme will be better understood with greater booking data collection and analysis.

Observations for further Programme delivery and future Programmes:

As included at the end of each section of the process evaluation, key observations for both the remaining period of these specific Programmes, and for prospective Programmes of this type in the future, are as follows:

Table 1: Key considerations from the process evaluation

#	Observations	Applicability
1	Continue to champion and enable knowledge sharing amongst Delivery Partners; reviewing DCMS internal delivery processes, communication, and resourcing, to enable teams to be empowered and with the appropriate skills and experience.	MSGF (DCMS & E/S/W/NI), PTCR & future Programmes
2	Review the suitability of the deprivation KPI and its geographical granularity; this could potentially better account for socio-economic variations within local authorities.	MSGF (DCMS) & future Programmes
3	Provide greater guidance to Delivery Partners and potential funding applicants on what constitutes as a ‘multi-sport’ project, to give more clarity on what can be delivered.	MSGF (S/W/NI)
4	Continue early engagement with future applicants, providing accessible and open feedback on potential applications and projects.	MSGF (E/S/W/NI), PTCR & future Programmes
5	Consider a standardised application process and additional assessment guidance for future Programmes, to enable consistent and comparable processes across nations.	Future Programmes
6	Discuss required resourcing for delivery of Programmes at an earlier stage and agree sufficient budget and resource allocation for stakeholders to deliver Programme requirements effectively and efficiently.	Future Programmes
7	Share guidance with stakeholders on ‘what good looks like’ with regards to the diversity of panel representation, as set out by relevant sports councils; encourage regular review and refinement of panel membership to facilitate this.	MSGF (DCMS & S/W/NI) & future Programmes
8	Where possible, manage expectations around short-term asks, working with stakeholders to prepare common breakdowns and splits of data. Require stakeholders	MSGF (DCMS & E/S/W/NI), PTCR & future Programmes

#	Observations	Applicability
	to improve internal reporting and quality assurance processes so that shared data is accurate, timely, and complete.	
9	Early engagement with Delivery Partners to agree the resourcing, skills and experience needed to deliver internally, also continuing the Lessons Learned sessions and championing knowledge sharing amongst Delivery Partners to improve delivery across all nations.	MSGF (DCMS & E/S/W/NI), PTCR & future Programmes
10	Review and streamline data capture, analysis and reporting practises , and consider the platform through which Delivery Partners and DCMS manage and oversee funding with efficiency and effectiveness of delivery at the core .	MSGF (DCMS & E/S/W/NI), PTCR & future Programmes
11	Continue to conduct final assessments and decision-making via panel processes to ensure a diverse range of views and opinions consider the merits of applications.	MSGF (E/S/W/NI) & future Programmes
12	Maintain close relationships with beneficiaries of funding through Delivery Partners and other stakeholders , to support longer-term understanding of impacts and outcomes of funding.	MSGF (DCMS & E/S/W/NI), PTCR & future Programmes
13	Establish more consistent and comprehensive post-award assurance with beneficiaries of funding to enable better understanding of the achievement of intended objectives, outcomes, and impacts.	MSGF (DCMS & E/S/W/NI), PTCR & future Programmes
14	Review approach to in-year allocations of funding and the ability to finance longer-term, larger projects that may proportionately benefit key under-represented target groups (e.g. women and girls)	Future Programmes
15	Improve training and knowledge of the Programme team staff in business case processes . Facilitate regular check-ins for staff across teams, particularly for new joiners and those with less experience of DCMS as an organisation.	MSGF (DCMS), PTCR & future Programmes
16	Review the way in which technical resource is involved in capital investment Programmes , and how to effectively manage and oversee third party procurements where relevant.	MSGF (S/W/NI), PTCR & future Programmes
17	Earlier engagement with Local Authorities and local government stakeholders to facilitate early buy-in, and identify potential risks and blockers to project delivery.	PTCR & future Programmes
18	Upskill and train staff in equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) matters to enable them to effectively maximise the impact of these projects by engaging broader user bases.	MSGF (DCMS & E/S/W/NI), PTCR & future Programmes

Impact Evaluation: Progress Update and Key Emerging Findings

This section provides a **summary of the progress made in the evaluation of the MSGF and PTCR Programmes and the quantity of evidence collected up to March 2024**. This section also summarises the key emerging findings based on analysis of the available data with regards to the impacts of the MSGF and PTCR Programmes to date. This includes descriptive analysis of the impacts of the Programme on participation, both overall and sustained, as well as wider the outcomes and impacts across local communities, such as mental and physical wellbeing and community cohesion. Given the current stage of the evaluation and this being an interim report, **further causal analysis will be undertaken once additional evidence is collected as part of the subsequent waves of primary data collection**.

Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme

Progress Update

- **Good facility survey response rates achieved:** The facility survey conducted achieved good response rates for both funded (62%) and unfunded (53%) facilities, enabling descriptive comparisons across key participation measures. **Funded facilities have reported higher overall participation and sustained participation rates** than unfunded facilities.
- **Good response rates also achieved to the user survey:** The user survey achieved 2,222 responses across the **sample period** across all nations, a substantial improvement on previous user survey activity. This was likely assisted by the **integration of a prize draw** into the surveys to incentivise responses. Responses provided important **contextual understanding of participation, accessibility, and physical wellbeing** of users at facilities.
- **Useful insights for wider impacts gathered from household survey:** The first wave of a panel sample of 5,000 households near to funded and unfunded facilities has provided **important findings for local community and wider impacts**, including physical and mental wellbeing, community cohesion, social networks and pride in place.
- **Case studies highlighted some the positives of the Programme but also some of challenges funded sites experienced:** Case studies of eight facilities in receipt of funding gave **depth and insight into the views of facility managers and the real-world impacts of funding**, although **challenges arose in maximising participation** of a wider range of facility stakeholders in this process.

Key Emerging Findings

- **82% of funded facilities reported an increase in participation in both direction and magnitude, compared with 65% of unfunded sites since April 2021.** Furthermore, a higher proportion of funded users across each of the nations reported an overall participation increase, with higher multi-sport participation too. **This suggests evidence of strong participation at funded facilities.** However, we do not yet know whether funding to date has supported participation at sites with existing facilities to a greater degree than those without any facility provision, or if selection of sites for early investment by Delivery Partners prioritised facilities with an existing user base. These are important points and will be tested through **further analysis to understand the additionality of participation and the extent to which funding has impacted new and existing users of facilities.**
- **A higher proportion of funded facilities (50%) reported an increase in sustained participation since April 2021 relative to unfunded sites (39%).** Additionally, findings from the user survey suggest there has been a significant uplift in sustained participation among users of funded facilities (90%) relative to unfunded facilities (79%). **This suggests users at funded sites are increasingly maintaining their use of their local facility over the medium-term.** Multiple future waves of data collection will also help assess the degree to which participation has remained sustained over time.
- **Case studies of funded facilities across all nations surveyed showed significant uplifts in participation, particularly from younger people and women and girls, and presented numerous improvements in wider impacts and outcomes such as ‘pride in place’.** This suggests the Programme is **generating positive impacts for under-represented groups and local communities.** Facility managers also believed that **rising participation will be sustained** and presented numerous examples of how Programme funding has **improved accessibility for underrepresented groups and improved education and environmental outcomes.**
- **Additional future data collection aims to allow the generation of more granular insights regarding participation.** After one wave of data collection, comprehensive conclusions regarding impacts and outcomes are limited, **particularly when analysing breakdowns of participation, primarily due to limited**

sample sizes available at this stage given funding is still ongoing. Additional data collection plans are in place to inform future evaluation analysis and reports.

- Further detail on the data sources analysed and evidence against evaluation questions is provided in the matrix below (Table 12).

Next Steps

- **Further understanding of attribution and causality in future reporting:** The analysis presented in this interim report is descriptive in nature as outlined above. Future evaluation reports will look to assess whether the Programme's funding has had a statistically significant impact on participation. This is subject to future survey response rates and having sufficient quantity and quality of data across future waves to facilitate the Difference-in-Difference approach, but indications from the first wave of response rates and data collection are positive.
- **Additional data collection plans are in place:** The data collected on the impacts of the Programme in further waves of quantitative and qualitative data collection will be used to inform future evaluation analysis and reports. Plans for future data collection activities include how to prevent survey response attrition as well as how to maximise survey response rates through various incentive mechanisms to encourage survey participation.

Park Tennis Court Renovation Programme

Progress Update

- **More data to be shared over Summer 2024:** In booking data shared, only one facility of 78 has undergone court renovation, and less than 20% of the court bookings provided have occurred since 2022. The LTA expects significantly more data to become available over Summer 2024 as courts finalise renovations and weather conditions improve.
- **Case studies qualitatively detailed the impacts of the funding on participation and wider impacts:** Qualitative case study fieldwork covered two sites, one in Wales and one in England. Both sites reported positive impacts of funding on participation and wider anecdotal qualitative impacts. Challenges were encountered, especially in engaging with users of the funded park tennis court sites selected.

Key Emerging Findings

- **Insufficient data to highlight participation impacts of the Programme at this stage:** Booking data available at this stage contains insufficient observations to descriptively analyse participation impacts of the Programme. This is due to grants for court renovations under the PTCR Programme only commencing in Q2 2023, and therefore, the required 12-month pre- and post- intervention dataset is not yet available. Causal analysis is not feasible at this stage, and given limitations of booking data, caution should be taken in inferring impacts and outcomes. Future reporting will aim to utilise a larger booking dataset to provide additional descriptive insights and enable causal inference.
- **A focus of future reporting is to cover the Programme's wider impacts:** There is less readily available information on wider impacts of the Programme at this stage; for example anecdotal evidence of environmental, educational or health outcomes, but this will be a focus of future evaluation reports and activity. Secondary data sources have provided contextual understanding of tennis participation more

generally, through sources such as the Actives Lives Survey and the LTA’s participation tracker, but the **proportion of respondents participating in park tennis is limited.**

- Further detail on the data sources analysed and evidence against evaluation questions is provided in the matrix below (Table 13)

The matrices below (Table 2 and Table 3) set out the key data sources used to demonstrate impacts across both Programmes, and provides a high-level summary of the emerging findings of each data source against the key evaluation themes related to the evaluation questions in Section 3. These matrices show what this evaluation is able to understand about impacts at this stage, but also where data gaps currently exist and where further analysis and activity should focus in order to holistically assess the Programme’s impacts and outcomes.

Table 2: MSGF Key Emerging Findings Matrix – Early Stage Impact Evaluation

MSGF Data Source	Overall Participation	Sustained Participation	Breakdowns of Participation	Local Community Impacts	Other Impacts
Facility Survey	82% of funded facilities reported an increase in participation in both direction and magnitude, compared with 65% of unfunded sites since April 2021. Artificial Grass Pitch investments drove the highest reported increase in participation.	A higher proportion of funded facilities (50%) reported an increase in sustained participation since April 2021 relative to unfunded sites (39%).	No clear trends yet on differences between funded and unfunded facilities across gender, geography, ethnic minority groups or disabled individuals. Further analysis will be undertaken as sample sizes increase through additional planned data collection.	No clear trends yet between funding and its impacts on accessibility, both in terms of access by different groups or sports and operating hours of facilities.	The Programme aligns with HMG’s intention to address regional inequalities. Facility managers reported anecdotal evidence of improved environmental outcomes.
User Survey	User survey findings will not inform causal analysis, but descriptive analysis suggests a similar proportion of funded users (98%) visiting their local facility at least once a month relative to unfunded users (96%).	There was a significant uplift in sustained participation among users of funded facilities (90%) relative to unfunded facilities (79%).	A higher proportion of funded users across each of the nations reported an overall participation increase, with higher multi-sport participation too.	N/A	N/A
Household Survey	Household survey findings will not inform causal analysis, and the sample size of respondents using the facilities was small (<20%) and therefore comparative descriptive analysis was not presented.	N/A	N/A	Households near funded and unfunded sites reported similar levels of wellbeing. Older and wealthier users tend to have better wellbeing and higher levels of life satisfaction.	N/A
Case Studies	Funded sites reported experiencing or expecting to experience significant uplifts in participation.	Facility managers suggested participation was expected to be sustained at their site, and that demand was increasing over time.	Facility managers across all nations reported anecdotal growth in participation, particularly from younger people and women and girls.	Facility managers presented numerous examples of funding improving ‘pride in place’ in the local community and improved accessibility for underrepresented groups.	Facility managers gave anecdotal evidence that funding had facilitated improvements in educational and environmental outcomes.
Interviews	Interviewees were confident that participation had improved, particularly those ‘closest to the pitch’. Significant uplifts in the women and girls’ game were also emphasised. Further work is needed to understand the additionality of this participation however.	Mixed views were shared by stakeholders, although most generally were confident that the Programme had led to increases in participation that would be sustained over the medium to long term.	N/A	Benefits to the community through improvements made to local clubs and facilities were anecdotally iterated by interviewees across Delivery Partners as a significant positive of the Programme.	Improvement of inter-organisational relationships with DCMS, between the Delivery Partners, and between Delivery Partners and the local facilities and clubs.
Secondary Data Sources	In the Active Lives Survey 22/23, participation in football and general activity levels have remained stable over the last 12 months in England.	N/A	The Active Lives Survey indicates that the regional divide in activity levels is increasing in England.	The Active Lives Survey shows no change in the measures of mental wellbeing in the last 12 months.	N/A

Table 3: PTCR Key Findings Matrix – Early Stage Impact Evaluation

PTCR Data Source	Overall Participation	Sustained Participation	Breakdowns of Participation	Local Community Impacts	Other Impacts
LTA Booking Data	<p>Available data covers a limited time period, for a limited number of court renovation types. However, the number of bookings at funded and unfunded sites has increased since the Programme began: 40% for funded courts, and a much higher increase in the unfunded courts (due to a much lower baseline position). The number of players at funded courts is 300% higher than at unfunded courts potentially driven by the larger capacity at funded sites.</p> <p>It is not possible at this stage given data quality to determine indicative emerging impacts and outcomes of the Programme. Further data collection is critical to improve this analysis.</p>	<p>Sustained participation in terms of growth in total visitation was highest in 2020. The average number of sustained visits were however similar across 2020 to 2023. Further data collection is critical to improve the understanding of these impacts.</p>	<p>Bookings at funded sites by region are most concentrated in London, and within least deprived areas. Unfunded courts registered a higher rate of increase in female bookings than funded courts.</p> <p>Again, the above characteristics are likely as a result of the skewed sample distribution of the available data to date, that limits the ability to compare impacts.</p>	N/A	N/A
Case Studies	<p>Facility managers from case study sites reported significant increases in participation in tennis at the sites, including rapid growth driven significantly by the ability to offer an expanded coaching offering.</p>	<p>Participation outcomes are believed to be sustained by stakeholders, although some uncertainty was noted due to poor weather at the sites.</p>	<p>Case study activity covered a site in England and a site in Wales, and both reported similar positive impacts.</p>	N/A	<p>Funding has enabled an increase in coaching capacity and increased usage by local schools.</p>
Interviews	<p>Stakeholders reported a positive effect of the Programme on achieving increased participation at funded courts, whilst acknowledging the causal link between the Programme and overall participation impacts will be more challenging to determine.</p>	<p>LTA and DCMS staff were confident that the Programme has encouraged both new and existing users to become regular users. Additional analysis is required on a larger dataset to understand this further.</p>	N/A	N/A	N/A
Secondary Data Sources	<p>The latest Active Lives Survey (November 22/23) indicates no significant change in the number of people playing tennis or in general physical activity levels over the last 12 months.</p>	N/A	N/A	<p>LTA surveys have found park facilities to be more popular among female participants, therefore PTCR is expected to have long-term impact in addressing the current gender gap in tennis</p>	N/A

Overall Interim Conclusions & Next Steps

Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme

Overall, as outlined above, additional primary data collection is still required to increase the amount of data available for analysis, primarily through surveys and Programme monitoring data, in order to enable robust causal analysis of the impacts of the Programme in future evaluation reports. The findings and conclusions of the evaluation at this stage are limited in how far they can conclusively demonstrate the overall impacts and outcomes of the Programme; however, the available evidence does imply positive impacts of the Programme on overall participation, sustained participation and participation of under-represented groups.

There are clear differences between funded facilities and unfunded facilities in comparative descriptive analysis, and this aligns with qualitative reporting from stakeholders on the impacts and benefits of this funding. Overall participation is notably higher when comparing funded and unfunded facilities, and women and girls are likely to be the group that have benefitted most from this. There will need to be significant work to understand these impacts in more detail, particularly the additionality of participation and the extent to which users are now attending facilities in receipt of funding, who were not doing so prior to investment. There will also be a continued focus on sustained participation, and quantitatively understanding the extent to which funded facilities have been able to retain the participation of existing users above and beyond that of unfunded facilities.

Park Tennis Court Renovation Programme

Overall, as outlined above, the key dataset (LTA booking data) that is mainly used to understand participation at funded and unfunded facilities contains insufficient observations at this stage to descriptively analyse participation impacts of the Programme. Whilst some analysis and breakdowns of data have been presented within this report, there is a lack of data available in a number of critical dimensions that will allow assessment of the Programme. This includes types of project (the current dataset is made up of almost exclusively online booking and gate installation projects, with very few court renovations), a small number of projects since 2022 (only 10% of projects at the 287 courts were completed since 2022) and a smaller number of booking observations occurring since 2022 (less than 20% of the provided sample), as well as a limited number of facilities with available data (51 funded sites and 28 unfunded sites).

Case studies and interviews with key programme stakeholders have suggested positive impacts of the Programme and effective targeting of courts in need of renovation, which aligns with other assessments conducted by the LTA on tennis participation and activity at facilities. There is less readily available information on wider impacts of the Programme at this stage; for example anecdotal evidence of environmental, educational or health outcomes, but this will be a focus of future evaluation reports and activity.

In conclusion, in order to both descriptively and causally analyse participation impacts of the PTCR Programme, additional data is critical, across more project types, more recent time periods and at more courts. The LTA has plans in place to capture additional data and many more sites are expected to offer booking data in the coming months for use in future analysis.

Next Steps

Focus of future evaluation activity

Future evaluation activity will primarily focus on improving the availability of data. This larger dataset can then be used to assess the key metrics that help capture and understand the impacts and outcomes of both Programmes with the intention of completing a robust impact evaluation. This will help in informing a more causal assessment of the Programmes' impacts on participation and assist in assessing the degree of 'additionality' resulting from the funding. Understanding these impacts, including those beyond participation, in greater detail will also be critical for informing the economic evaluation which will be covered in future reporting, enabling a comprehensive and robust overall assessment. In addition to the collection of quantitative

data across future waves of survey activity, further qualitative data from stakeholders following the completion of both Programme's delivery schedules will also be collected, including additional case studies and depth interviews. Finally, activity related to evaluation of the Lionesses Futures Fund will begin, from designing and developing additional primary data collection, through to qualitative data collection and analysis ahead of the next planned interim report.

Additional evidence and analysis required

Additional primary data collection and secondary data analysis ahead of the next interim report includes:

- **Surveys:** a second iteration of facility, user and household surveys will be undertaken. The appropriateness of particular questions and wording, as well as incentives and distribution methods, will be refined and reviewed ahead of distribution
- **Case Studies:** a further 8 case studies will be conducted across MSGF and PTCR Programmes.
- **Interviews:** further process evaluation interviews will take place with stakeholders from across both Programmes, as they near and pass the completion points of delivery
- **Programme monitoring data:** significantly more Programme monitoring data is expected to be available ahead of the next evaluation report, particularly for the PTCR Programme, and this will heavily inform future impact analysis.

1. Introduction & Background

1.1. Introduction

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport (“DCMS”) commissioned Deloitte in August 2023, to conduct an independent assessment of two key funding Programmes implemented and delivered by DCMS, namely the Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities (“MSGF”) and the Park Tennis Court Renovation (“PTCR”) Programmes. Both the MSGF and PTCR Programmes provide direct investment to build or upgrade grassroots facilities, aiming to boost activity levels and sports participation amongst local communities. In particular, their focus is on delivering projects that benefit those from under-represented groups and those within communities impacted by higher-than-average levels of deprivation to ensure physical activity is accessible to all, no matter background or location.

The scope of this commission includes undertaking a comprehensive process, impact, and economic evaluation of the two Programmes. This interim evaluation report builds on the initial feasibility study published by Ipsos UK in May 2023 and an evaluation plan finalised in December 2023.

While the two Programmes have been evaluated concurrently, given the differences in their funding allocation and duration, the assessments have been carried out independently and will be presented as such over the course of this report. In addition, following announcement of the Lionesses Futures Fund (“LFF”) on 29th November 2023⁵, DCMS subsequently commissioned Deloitte to include this funding within the scope of this evaluation, and is treated as a sub-set of the Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme going forwards.

This interim report discusses emerging findings from the first round of fieldwork conducted from January - March 2024, providing particular insights and focus on the process evaluation, as well as early indications of outputs and outcomes as part of the impact evaluation. **Findings will be further reported over the course of the evaluation process, with an additional interim report planned for March 2025 and a final report in March 2026, which will utilise additional data and undertake causal analysis, which has not yet been feasible as part of this interim report.** This will allow a more detailed understanding of outputs and outcomes, which will be explored in more depth based on the findings from the impact and process evaluations, before being assessed as part of an economic evaluation.

1.2. Context of the Evaluation

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, falling activity levels have been seen across many regions in the UK⁶. As outlined in the feasibility study conducted ahead of this evaluation⁷, these changes have affected individuals across a wide variety of demographics. This, combined with the fact that women, ethnically diverse communities, those living in more deprived areas, disabled people and people with long-term health conditions are less likely to be active than others, sets out a clear policy rationale for the establishment of the Programmes in scope of this evaluation.

The Programmes also form part of the UK Government’s wider sport strategy to set a long-term policy direction for sport in the UK, with the aim of reducing inactivity and boosting sport participation levels across the country.

⁵ [Lionesses trailblazing success recognised with £30 million fund - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/lionesses-trailblazing-success-recognised-with-£30-million-fund)

⁶ [Active Lives data tables | Sport England](https://www.sportengland.org/active-lives-data-tables)

⁷ [Grassroots Sport Facilities Investment Programme: Impact Evaluation Feasibility Study \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115444/grassroots-sport-facilities-investment-programme-impact-evaluation-feasibility-study)

This includes the Get Active Strategy, with the aim to get 3.5 million more people active by 2030, and specifically, 1.25 million more women.⁸

On 31st July 2022, England’s women’s national football team, the Lionesses, lifted the UEFA EURO 2022 trophy at Wembley Stadium in front of 87,192 fans. By November of the same year, awareness of the Lionesses by girls aged 5-16 in England had increased by 32% and interest in women’s football was up 12% compared to before the tournament, according to the FA.⁹ It has also been estimated that there has been a 196% increase in women’s and girls’ football session bookings through the England Football ‘FindFootball’ tool. The Programmes, specifically the Lionesses Futures Fund (LFF), aim to further build on and support growth in the women’s game.

Through the evaluation process, DCMS aims to assess the effectiveness of the Programmes and ensure policy intervention and investment is directed towards Programmes offering the highest social return on investment (“SROI”) and to make the biggest difference in providing participation opportunities to all communities.

As capital grant investment Programmes, a key intervention focus area is restoring a balance in the investment in grassroots facilities. DCMS aims to achieve the following through this intervention:

- Provide both environmentally and financially sustainable facilities, and facilities that meet the needs of the local area;
- Reduce geographic imbalances in provision and access to facilities;
- Reduce geographic imbalances in activity levels;
- Increase participation and activity levels in impacted regions;
- Increase participation across underrepresented demographics¹⁰;
- Sustain participation, including from underrepresented groups; and
- Provide accessible and inclusive facilities.

1.2.1. Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme

The Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities (MGSF) Programme aims to increase sports participation and physical activity levels through the redevelopment of multi-sport grassroots facilities across the four Home Nations. The funding was initially announced as part of the 2021-22 Spring Budget, where DCMS committed £25m for 2021-22 and £50m for 2022-23 towards the Programme. Following subsequent announcements, the total funding available has increased to over £320m across a four-year period from 2021 to 2025. This reflects the additional £25m investment for 2024-25 announced in November 2023¹¹.

In addition to the DCMS funding, the Programme also receives partner funding from the Premier League and the English Football Association and is delivered through the Scottish Football Association, Cymru Football Foundation, the Irish Football Association, and the Football Foundation (England) across each of the four Home Nations. The strategic objectives of the Programme include:¹²

- Supporting the delivery of pitches that every community, across the UK, needs by 2030, helping to tackle inactivity;
- Creating spaces for people to play sport and get active wherever they are in the UK and remove the current postcode lottery for decent facilities; and
- Providing community benefits and addressing regional inequalities, as well as delivering tangible benefits across the Union and aligning with wider government aims in public health, major sporting events legacy, and regeneration.

⁸ [Get Active: a strategy for the future of sport and physical activity - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/get-active-a-strategy-for-the-future-of-sport-and-physical-activity)

⁹ [FA's women's and girls' football strategy update - November 2022 \(thefa.com\)](https://www.thefa.com/press-releases/2022/11/16/fa-women-and-girls-football-strategy-update-november-2022)

¹⁰ Women and girls, older adults, people with disabilities and people from ethnic minorities. The full definition is in Annex 1.

¹¹ [Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme projects: 2021 to 2025 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/consultations/multi-sport-grassroots-facilities-programme-projects-2021-to-2025)

¹² The specific funding KPIs are discussed in Section 6.1.2.

1.2.2. Park Tennis Court Renovation Programme

In October 2021, DCMS committed £21.9m to the Park Tennis Court Renovation (PTCR) Programme, with the aim of refurbishing and renovating tennis courts and surrounding infrastructure, as well as the development of online booking systems to improve access to facilities. The Programme received an additional investment of £8.4m from the Lawn Tennis Association (LTA). A key aim of the Programme is to address the declining state of tennis courts in Great Britain.

The PTCR Programme is scheduled to be delivered over a two-year period from 2022 to 2024 and with the objective of bringing over 3,000 courts to a playable standard in addition to developing the supporting infrastructure¹³. The strategic objective of the Programme was to decrease inactivity throughout Britain by renovating park tennis courts nationwide to an acceptable playing standard by 2025.

As part of the evaluation of the PTCR Programme, future iterations of this report will also utilise booking data available as a result of the Free Park Tennis (FPT) initiative, which is being implemented across a range of facilities to boost participation in relation to the PTCR Programme. The FPT initiative will be launched during Summer 2024 and aims to provide free access to park tennis courts once a week, to increase the accessibility of the sport across communities. The initiative is being delivered by the LTA in conjunction with court operators and relevant local authorities.

1.2.3. Lionesses Futures Fund

The Lionesses Futures Fund (LFF) aims to continue to support the growth in female sport participation across England. This funding has been brought within the scope of the evaluation, and for the purposes of this report is considered a sub-section of the MSGF Programme. The funding of new pitches and new/upgraded changing facilities is aimed specifically at addressing the growth in female demand, a current lack of appropriate provision for women, as well as the public momentum behind the Lionesses' successes¹⁴ and the link to government objectives regarding physical activity levels. The funding also aims to establish a full talent pathway for girls¹⁵, something that was highlighted as in a recent review of women's football by Karen Carney MBE.¹⁶ The funding also aims to support wider UK Government strategies, such as the Get Active Strategy. DCMS's key aims for the Programme are to contribute to increased participation in sport and physical activity of women and girls by:

- Increasing the number of facilities available for women and girls;
- Prioritising access for women and girls; and
- Creating safe and welcoming spaces to play.

This funding totals £30 million (£25 million from DCMS, £5 million from the FA Group) for 30 Artificial Grass Pitches (AGPs) as well as new or upgraded changing facilities. The facilities that will be receiving funding will be identified by the Football Foundation, based on their ability to provide gold-standard provision for women and girls from the FF's investment pipeline. This pipeline is based on their Local Football Facility Plans (LFFPs)¹⁷, which have been developed in partnership with local authorities and community consultation. The sites selected for shortlisting to potentially receive funding have been chosen based on an assessment of showing "promising women and girls plans"¹⁸ as identified by the Football Foundation's regional managers.

¹³ As outlined in the PTCR OBC and associated programme documentation

¹⁴ 'The Lionesses' is the nickname given to England's women's football team.

¹⁵ Offering a complete accredited player pathway for girls playing within FA sanctioned League competitions. This aligns with the definitions of the full player pathway for girls for both two and three star FA Accredited Clubs for girls ([England Football Accredited | England Football](#)).

¹⁶ [Major review of women's football published - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

¹⁷ [Football Foundation | Local Plans](#)

¹⁸ "promising women and girls plans" reflects language agreed by DCMS and the Football Foundation in assessing which facilities have been selected as part of the shortlist, and is referenced as part of the Foundation's latest Programme Board documentation.

1.2.4. Key characteristics of the Programmes

While the MSGF (including the LFF) and PTCR Programmes are both aimed at decreasing inactivity levels and increasing physical activity levels in communities, there are differences between the design, development and implementation of the two which require them to be evaluated independently. Table 4 lists the key characteristics and differences between the MSGF and PTCR Programmes. For further information on each of these Programmes, please see Section 5: Programme Overview. A diagram that displays the relationships between DCMS, Delivery Partners and the facilities they fund can be found in Annex 2.

Table 4: Key characteristics between the Programmes in scope of the evaluation

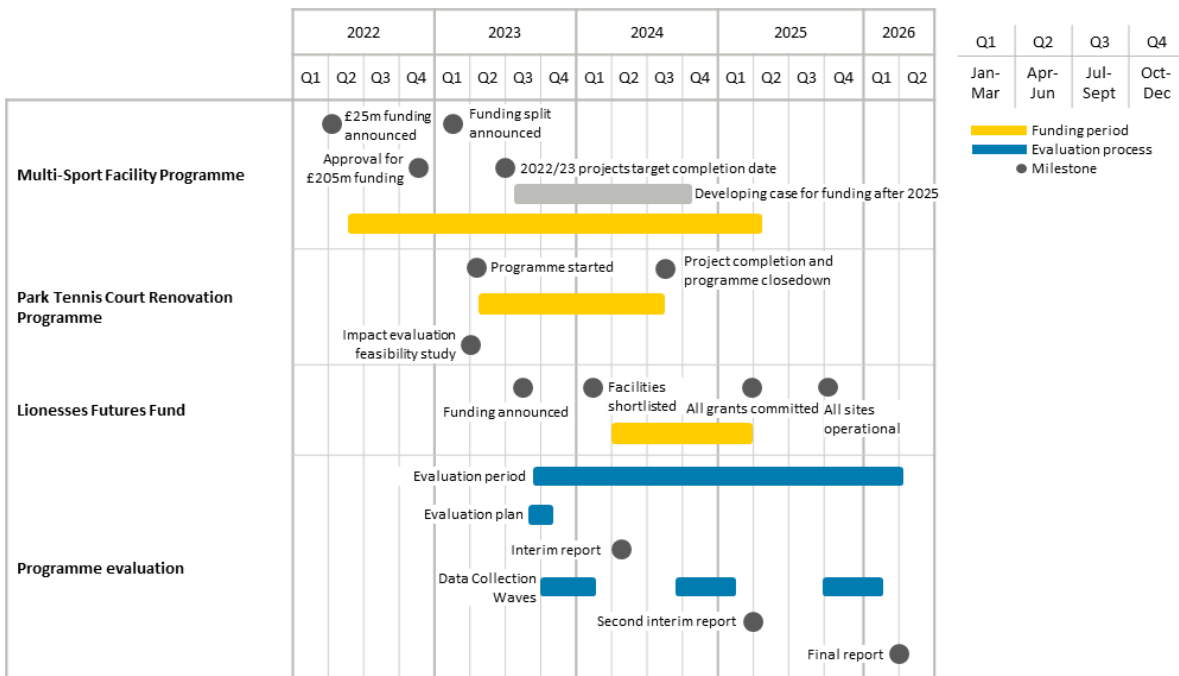
Programme characteristics	Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities (inc. Lionesses Futures Fund)	Park Tennis Court Renovation
Funding sources	Funding provided by DCMS. In England, this is combined with funding from the English FA and Premier League	Funding provided by DCMS and the LTA Tennis Foundation
Funding amounts	£320 million	£21.9 million
Regions	UK-wide (England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland). LFF in England only. Focus on areas with higher levels of deprivation and physical inactivity	Britain (England, Scotland, and Wales) Decreasing inactivity through greater access to park tennis courts
Delivery Partners	Football Foundation (England) Cymru Football Foundation Scottish FA Irish FA	Lawn Tennis Association (LTA)
Funding Period	MSGF (April 2021 – March 2025) LFF (April 2024 – March 2025)	April 2022 – March 2024
Monitoring & Reporting	Delivery Partners are responsible for monitoring the progress of projects; DCMS oversees the allocation and release of funds Involves live reporting across Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. England provide quarterly snapshots of delivery	The LTA is responsible for monitoring the progress of projects; DCMS oversees the allocation and release of funds Monthly reporting by the LTA to DCMS on completed projects
Application process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilities apply for funding in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. Applications are assessed by grant panels of respective Delivery Partners. In England, application process incorporated into standard Football Foundation grants process. A pipeline of eligible facilities is developed. DCMS sit on decision-making panels in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Sport England sit on the decision-making panels in England. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LTA is responsible for identifying courts and facilities through an initial needs-based assessment. These facilities, through Local Authorities and councils are then contacted and invite to participate in the Programme LTA responsible for decisions to award funding, DCMS do not sit on decision-making panels

Programme characteristics	Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities (inc. Lionesses Futures Fund)	Park Tennis Court Renovation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LFF sites need to meet minimum MSGF criteria and LFF-specific criteria 	

1.3. Programme and Evaluation Timelines

Figure 2 below outlines the expected timelines for all Programmes in scope as well as the expected timelines associate with evaluation activity. Notably, one wave of surveying activity has been conducted, and two additional waves, one in Autumn 2024 and one in Winter 2025, are planned. The scope of this evaluation now also includes the Lionesses Futures Fund, and so this has been reflected in the below timeline given its specific arrangements for implementation.

Figure 2: Programme and Evaluation Timelines



Source: Multi-Sport Facilities, Park Tennis Court Renovation and Lionesses Futures Fund Programmes’ timelines based on documents shared by DCMS. Calendar years. Assumptions of second interim evaluation report and final report timelines subject to future DCMS spending decisions.

1.3.1. Lionesses Futures Fund Milestones

It is important to note that whilst LFF is considered within scope of the MSGF Programme, its funding period and duration differs to the wider timelines of MSGF. Table 5 below shows how the evaluation of the funding will align with existing evaluation milestones across the existing evaluation:

Table 5: Key Milestones for the Evaluation of the Lionesses Futures Fund

Date	Evaluation Milestone
Winter 2024*	Data collection, including survey distribution, process interviews and case studies. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1st wave covering LFF (all sites to be selected by October 2024) 2nd wave covering MSGF
1 April 2025	Second interim report

Date	Evaluation Milestone
Autumn/Winter 2025	Data collection, including survey distribution, process interviews and case studies. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2nd wave covering LFF (all sites to be delivered by December 2025) • 3rd wave covering MSGF
April 2026	Final evaluation report

* This date is an estimate at this stage and will be subject to future planning and investment decisions by DCMS. Therefore, these dates are subject to change.

1.4. Report Structure

Table 6 highlights the sections in the remainder of this interim report and provides a summary of their content:

Table 6: Summary of Report Structure

Report section	Content
Theory of Change	Sets out the various inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes (both supply and demand side) anticipated as part of the Programmes. Highlights the hypothesised individual, community, and societal impacts associated with the Programmes. The evaluation does not directly address both Programme’s hypothesised impacts causally but will descriptively consider how the Programmes might have influenced these.
Evaluation questions and indicators	Explains the main purposes of the evaluation, detailing the evaluation questions and how it will answer these through the evaluation indicator framework.
Methods and data	Sets out the step-by-step methodology including rationale for approach, model specification and robustness checks. Discusses primary and secondary data sources and how they will be used for analysis.
Programme Information	Provides an overview of the MSGF and PTCR Programmes, including the allocation of resources across the four Home Nations and details on the overall funding commitments.
Emerging findings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Process evaluation • Impact evaluation • Economic evaluation 	<p>Presenting the detailed findings and supporting data for the Process evaluation, and Impact evaluation.</p> <p>Emerging findings for the Process evaluation cover the following (non-exhaustive):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment criteria • Communication between Delivery Partners and facilities • Monitoring • Outcome perceptions <p>Emerging findings for the Impact evaluation aimed to assess how the Programmes have delivered against the various evaluation questions set out in the ‘Evaluation questions and indicators’ section.</p> <p>Whilst at this stage Economic evaluation is yet to be undertaken, this interim report includes a brief assessment of the suitability of data collection to date in aiding this economic evaluation due to be included in future reports.</p>
Conclusion	Summary of the key findings of this interim report and the highlighted next steps.
Annexures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annex 1 – Abbreviations and Glossary • Annex 2 – MSGF and PTCR Funding Diagram • Annex 3 – Project progress and timelines • Annex 4 – Research framework

Report section	Content
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annex 5 – Technical annex • Annex 6 – Indicator framework • Annex 7 – Case studies • Annex 8 – Delivery Partner application processes • Annex 9 – Steering group • Annex 10 to 13 – Descriptive statistics • Annex 14 – Stakeholder engagement • Annex 15 – Surveys • Annex 16 – Interview Guide

2. Theory of Change

The Theory of Change for the Programmes describes the causal process through which the Programmes are intended to deliver their outputs, outcomes, and impacts.

It is important to also note that at this stage the outcomes from the LFF are additional to those from the MSGF Programme. Each site's application is judged against the existing MSGF Programme criteria, in addition to specific LFF criteria, and so are expected to also meet the intended outcomes of MSGF as well as the additional intended outcomes from the LFF. Any outcomes below specific to the aims of the LFF are marked with an (L).

Inputs: Both Programmes required a range of inputs, across a number of stakeholders (including the Government, Football Associations of devolved nations, the LTA and beneficiaries). Inputs across both Programmes include staff time from DCMS, DPs, LTA, beneficiaries and volunteers, funding from DCMS, Sports England and FA Wales, and insights from DPs, LTA, sports council, and external consultants.

Activities: The two Programmes involve several key activities required to deliver the Programmes' objectives including Programme management, application assessment and monitoring, structural improvement, and evidence-based development.

Outputs: Upon completion of the Programmes, the key outputs will be improved facilities in the case of MSGF and improved tennis court infrastructure through the PTCR, with a focus on a greater proportion of investment benefitting deprived local areas.

Outcomes: As outlined in the feasibility study and the Evaluation Plan, the overarching objectives of the two Programmes are similar. Given this, outcomes and impacts are not separated out by Programme, even though they will be subjected to separate evaluations to allow differentiation between them.

The Programmes are expected to produce the following outcomes:

Supply-side outcomes: These are defined as outcomes related to the quantity, quality, or distribution of facilities. Outcomes include:

- S.1: Additional provision of facilities that meet local needs
 - S.1.1 Renovated facilities meet local demand
 - S.1.2 Renovated facilities are financially sustainable
 - S.1.3 Renovated facilities are accessible
- S.2: Reduced geographic imbalance in provision of sports facilities
 - S.2.1 Renovated facilities are distributed across nations and Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) geographies
- S.3(L): Additional facilities with provisions for women and girls

- Renovated facilities with provisions for women and girls meet the local demand

Demand-side outcomes: These are defined as outcomes related to increasing demand for the facilities from residents. Outcomes include:

- D.1: Increased participation, both overall and sustained, particularly amongst underrepresented groups
 - D.1.1 Increased overall participation at facilities
 - D.1.2 Increased overall sustained participation at facilities
 - D.1.3 Increased participation among underrepresented groups (women and girls, older adults, people with disabilities, people from minority ethnic groups, by IMD level)
 - D.1.4 Increased sustained participation among underrepresented groups (women and girls, older adults, people with disabilities, people from minority ethnic groups, by IMD level)
 - D.1.5 Change in participation by main sport played at the facility
 - D.1.6 Change in participation by type of investment at the facility
- D.2: Reduced geographic imbalance in activity levels
 - D.2.1 Change in participation is distributed across Home Nations and Local Authorities (LAs)
 - D.2.2 Change in sustained participation is distributed across Home Nations and Local Authorities (LAs)
- D.3(L): Increased female participation, both overall and sustained, with additional new participants
 - D.3.1(L) Increased overall female participants at the LFF-funded facilities
 - D.3.2(L) Increased overall sustained female participation at the LFF-funded facilities
 - D.3.3(L) Increased number of new female participants at the LFF-funded facilities
- D.4(L) Greater priority access for women and girls
 - D.4.1(L) Increased number of female team sessions at the LFF-funded facilities
 - D.4.2(L) Increased number of high demand / peak slots used by women and girls at the LFF-funded facilities
 - D.4.3(L) Increased offering of number of women and girl only evenings at the LFF-funded facilities
 - D.4.4(L) Greater number of clubs / education settings with a full player pathway
 - D.4.5(L) Increased percentage of female users whose availability needs are being met
- D.5(L) Creating safer and more welcoming spaces to play
 - D.5.1(L) Increased number of sites with appropriate male and female toilets and changing rooms
 - D.5.2(L) LFF-funded facilities have a dedicated women and girls lead
 - D.5.3(L) Increased percentage of female users who feel safe and welcome at their facility

Broader outcomes: These are outcomes that achieve strategic, or wider reaching objectives. The Programmes would be expected to be associated with outcomes such as improved evidence base, extending social networks, increasing the number of volunteers, and workforce specialised in grassroots sport. These outcomes include:

- B.1: Improved evidence base
- B.2: Strengthened relationships between beneficiaries and DPs
- B.3: Increase in the workforce specialised in grassroots sports
- B.4: Extended social networks
- B.5: Improved links between schools and facilities
- B.6: Increased number of sports teams
- B.7: Increased number of volunteers
- B.8(L): Equal opportunities for women and girls in sport

It should be noted that the primary focus of the evaluation will be on demand- and supply-side outcomes, and the evaluation will not try to attribute any changes in these broader outcomes to the Programmes due to the volume of exogenous factors that can influence these.

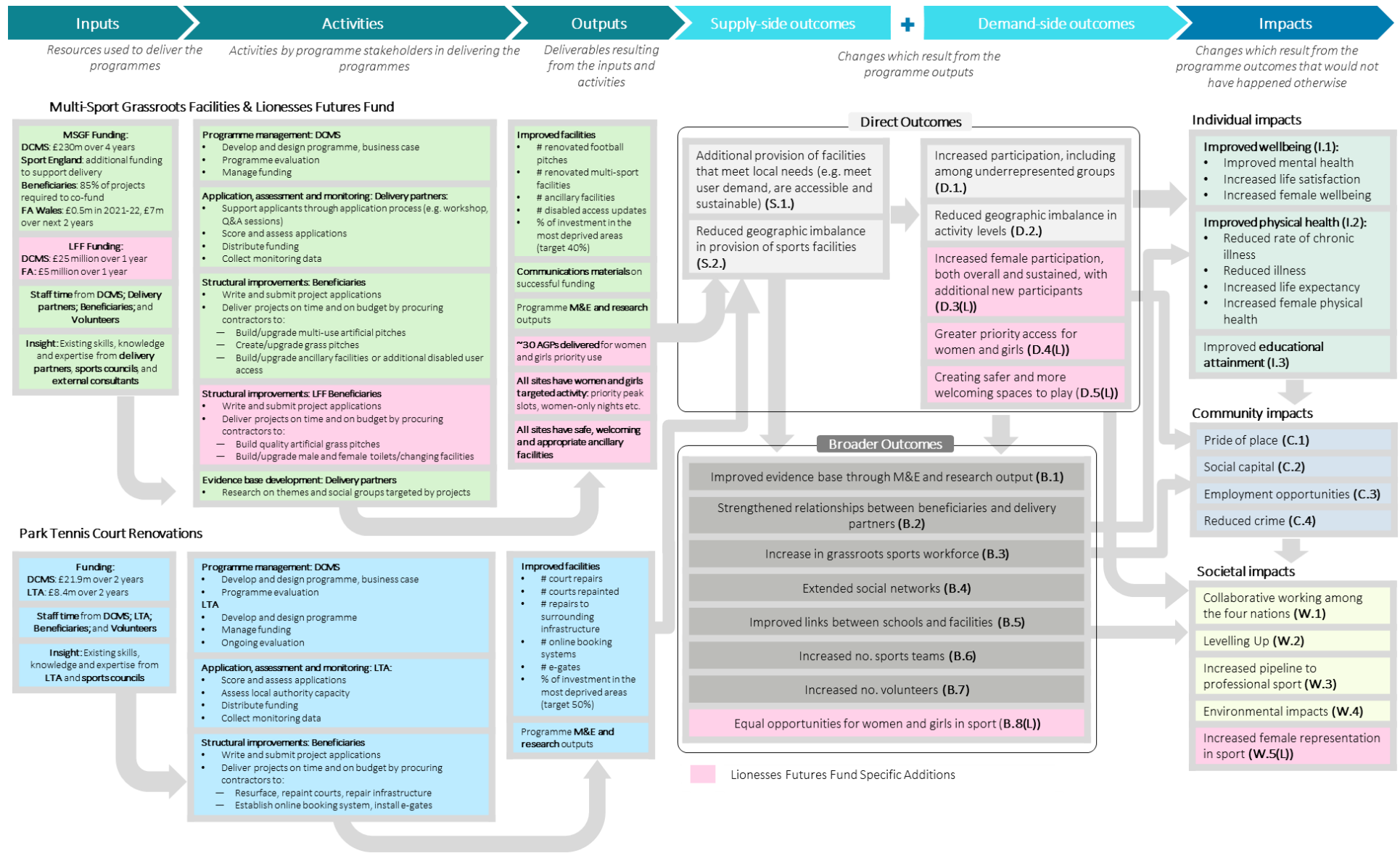
Impacts: As a result of the supply-side outcomes, there are demand-side outcomes that follow, that in turn create demand-realised impacts. Impacts are seen at the individual level, the community level, as well as at a wider societal level:

- Individual impacts: Through the uplift in physical activity or reduction in inactivity, driven by increased participation, the Programmes would be expected to deliver individual impacts, such as:
 - I.1: Improved wellbeing
 - I.2: Improved physical health
 - I.3: Educational attainment for the individual members of the local community
- Community impacts: The Programmes would be expected to deliver impacts to the local community, such as:
 - C.1: Pride in place
 - C.2: Social capital
 - C.3: Employment opportunities
 - C.4: Reduced crime
- Wider societal impacts: The Programmes would be expected to deliver wider impacts across the UK, such as:
 - W.1: Collaborative working across Home Nations
 - W.2: Contributing to wider objectives such as addressing regional inequalities
 - W.3: Increased pipeline into professional sport
 - W.4: Environmental impacts
 - W.5(L): Increased female representation in sport

The Theory of Change has been refined and updated based on the iteration of the logic model available in the feasibility study. Figure 3 below sets out a logic model visually representing this Theory of Change, clearly identifying the relevant outputs, outcomes and impacts that will need to be assessed. Whilst the evaluation won't be able to address all outcomes and impacts from the Theory of Change, it will test some hypothesised relationships causally¹⁹ whilst conducting descriptive analysis to assess the contribution of other factors to outcomes of interest. The Theory of Change will be iterated and adapted as and when new information and evidence becomes available.

¹⁹ The relationships that will be tested causally are shown in the causal evaluation questions shown in Section 3.3.

Figure 3: Theory of Change Logic Model



3. Evaluation Questions and Indicators

This chapter explains the main purpose of the evaluation and its objectives and evaluation questions, and how these will be answered through the evaluation indicator framework.

3.1. Evaluation Objectives

The objective of the overarching evaluation of the Programmes is to monitor their outputs, outcomes, and assess their impact and Value for Money (VfM). The evaluation is composed of:

- **Process Evaluation:** to understand whether Programme activities have been implemented as intended and resulted in the desired outputs in an efficient and effective manner;
- **Impact Evaluation:** to understand the extent to which the Programmes made a difference in the achievement of the expected outcomes; and
- **Value for Money (VfM)/Economic Evaluation:** to understand, in parallel to the process and impact evaluations, the benefits, and costs of the Programmes, and whether the use of resources over the course of implementation has been efficient, effective, and equitable.

This interim report discusses emerging findings from the first round of fieldwork conducted from January to March 2024, providing particular insight and focus on the process evaluation, as well as early indications of outputs and outcomes as part of the impact evaluation. **Findings will be further reported over the course of the evaluation process as additional data is collected and analysed, and causal analysis undertaken, which has not been feasible as part of this interim report.** This will allow a comprehensive understanding of outputs and outcomes, which will be explored in more depth based on the findings from the impact and process evaluations, before being assessed as part of an economic evaluation and value-for-money assessment. The main aims of the evaluation of the Programmes are thus:

- **To monitor the overall performance and progress of the two Programmes.** The interim report examines the metrics of interest to investigate the Programmes' impacts at this stage, using descriptive assessment and initial data collection to answer the evaluation questions. It also draws conclusions regarding the trajectory of the Programmes to meet their overall funding targets, as well as their effectiveness and efficiency in implementing and delivering the Programme to date.
- **To assess how the Programmes are being implemented, the extent to which they are meeting the demand-side and supply-side outcomes and driving sustained impact to understand the Government's return on investment.** The interim report produces preliminary findings on the impacts of the Programmes based on initial waves of data collection, with an assessment of data suitability for use of a quasi-experimental evaluation approach in later reports once a larger evidence base has been established.
- **To investigate the existence of causal links between investment in grassroot sport and improvement in participation and physical activity.** As above, at this stage of evidence availability, the report does not consider causality between the Programmes and the measured outcomes.
- **To identify lessons learned to inform current Programme delivery and potential future Programme design and implementation:** The interim report explores the successes and learnings raised by stakeholders through the emerging process and impact evaluation findings. Given some Programme delivery is still ongoing, the aim of these findings is to advise the existing Programme team as well as to inform potential future programmes.
- **To demonstrate accountability and transparency in the allocation of public funding by assessing whether the intended impacts of the Programmes have been achieved.** As above, at this stage of evidence availability, the report does not consider causality between the Programmes and the measured outcomes but does explore emerging findings with regards to impact.
- **To assess the VfM that the Programmes are providing to the taxpayer.** The interim report does not consider the VfM of the Programmes at this stage. Future evaluation reports will undertake an economic evaluation.

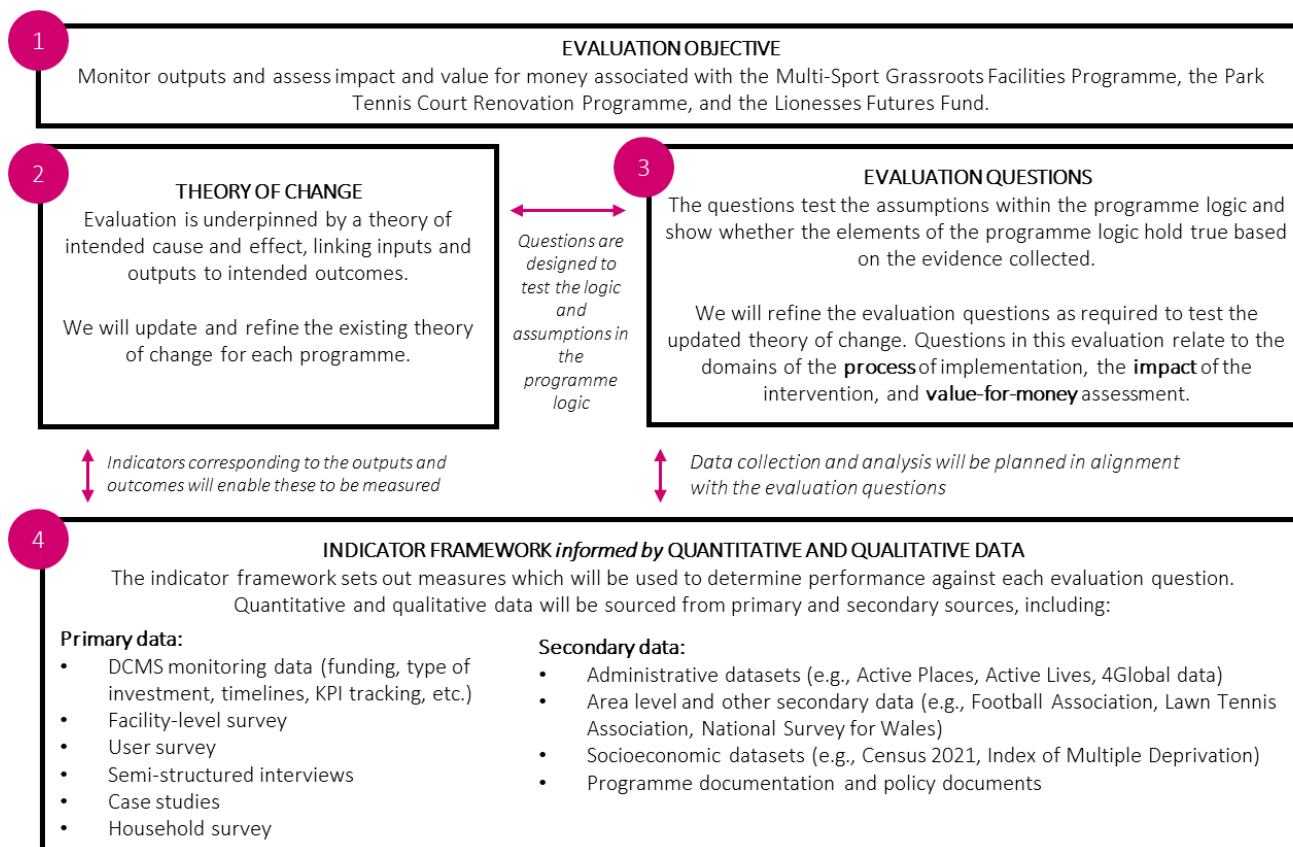
3.2. Evaluation Framework

It was agreed during the evaluation planning stage that the below overarching research question will be applicable to this evaluation:

“To what extent have the Programmes delivered improvements to facilities in need of investment and created a positive impact on physical activity within these facilities in England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland?”

Figure 4 below sets out the framework through which the Programmes are evaluated.

Figure 4: Evaluation Framework



3.3. Evaluation Questions

Key evaluation questions and sub-questions have been developed and agreed that follow from the overarching research question. The table below sets out these questions, which evaluation area will most inform the answer to that question, an indicative timeline for when evidence will be available, and whether the question is descriptive or causal:

- Descriptive questions aim to understand the context, needs, and problems that the intervention is addressing.
- Causal questions aim to establish whether the intervention directly or indirectly caused an impact, how and why the impact occurred, and how context may have influenced outcomes.

These questions help structure the data collection, analysis and reporting lines for the evaluation process which collectively form an evaluation framework. Since the agreement of the LFF’s success measures with DCMS and the FF, the LFF-specific evaluations questions have been reviewed to ensure coverage of all the Fund’s success measures.
























-  Some evidence available in this interim report
-  Evidence expected to be available by final report

Table 7: Evaluation Questions












EQ#	Evaluation Question	Sub-EQ#	Sub-Evaluation Question	Evidence Coverage	Question Type	Primary Evaluation Area
EQ1	Have the new/improved facilities resulted in additional participation in sport at the facility and local areas?	EQ1.1	Have the Programmes created a significant change in participation in the funded areas?*		Causal	Impact
		EQ1.2	To what extent have the Programmes delivered sustained increases in participation in the funded areas?*		Causal	Impact
		EQ1.3	To what extent do the renovated facilities meet local demand and increase user satisfaction?		Descriptive	Impact & Process
		EQ1.4	Have the Programmes helped the facilities become financially sustainable?		Descriptive	Process
		EQ1.5	Has the type of sport played at a funded facility impacted participation?		Descriptive	Impact
		EQ1.6	Has the type of facility investment impacted participation?		Descriptive	Impact
EQ2	Does the investment in facilities have an impact on participation levels from underrepresented groups and within deprived areas?***	EQ2.1	What has been the effect of the Programmes on sport participation levels amongst underrepresented groups (women, older adults ²⁰ , lower socio-economic groups ²¹ , people with disabilities, minority ethnic groups)?		Causal	Impact
		EQ2.2	What has been the effect of the additional Lioness Funding on football participation levels amongst women and girls? (England only)		Causal	Impact
		EQ2.3	To what extent have the Programmes delivered sustained increases in participation amongst underrepresented groups (women, older adults, lower socio-economic groups, people with disabilities, minority ethnic groups) in the funded areas?		Causal	Impact

²⁰ According to Sport England, this refers to individuals aged 55+ ([Adults' activity levels in England bounce back to pre-pandemic levels | Sport England](#))

²¹ As defined in the feasibility report, these are individuals living in deprived areas. Deprived areas are regions within IMD 1-5. More detail is outlined here: [English indices of deprivation 2019 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

EQ#	Evaluation Question	Sub-EQ#	Sub-Evaluation Question	Evidence Coverage	Question Type	Primary Evaluation Area
		EQ2.4	To what extent has the additional Lionesses Futures Fund delivered sustained increases in participation in football participation levels amongst women and girls? (England only)		Causal	Impact
		EQ2.5	To what extent has the Lionesses Futures Fund increased the number of new female participants? ²² (England only)		Causal	Impact
		EQ2.6	What has been the effect of the Programmes on sport participation levels amongst different regions and smaller geographies?*		Causal	Impact
		EQ2.7	To what extent have the Programmes delivered sustained increases in participation amongst different regions and smaller geographies?*		Causal	Impact
		EQ2.8	Have the Programmes created accessible facilities?		Descriptive	Impact & Process
EQ3	Do the new/improved facilities increase awareness of sports, and/or improve the perception of activity in local communities (e.g. quality of life, pride in place, community cohesion) for individuals?	EQ3.1	Have the Programmes improved local educational achievement through school level sport participation at facilities?		Descriptive	Process, Impact & Economic
		EQ3.2	Have the Programmes aligned with HMG's intention to address regional inequalities?		Descriptive	Impact & Process
		EQ3.3	To what extent have the Programmes improved metrics of community cohesion, social network size, and pride in place?		Descriptive	Impact & Process
		EQ3.4	To what extent have the Programmes improved metrics of mental wellbeing and physical health within the local community?		Descriptive	Impact & Process
		EQ3.5	Have the Programmes been associated with local/regional crime rates?		Descriptive	Process, Impact & Economic
		EQ3.6	What have been the environmental outcomes of the Programmes' activities?		Descriptive	Process
		EQ3.7	How have the Programmes impacted the UK's pipeline for players into professional sport?		Descriptive	Impact & Process

²² New female participants are defined as female users of the facility that joined since the funding materialised at the site.

EQ#	Evaluation Question	Sub-EQ#	Sub-Evaluation Question	Evidence Coverage	Question Type	Primary Evaluation Area
		EQ3.8	Have the Programmes increased the number of sport teams, volunteers, and number of workers specialising in grassroots sport at the funded facilities?		Descriptive	Impact & Process
EQ4	Have the Programmes improved collaborative working and available evidence?	EQ4.1	How have the Programmes impacted the evidence base for future evaluations?		Descriptive	Process
		EQ4.2	How have the Programmes strengthened the relationships between funded facilities and DPs?		Descriptive	Process
		EQ4.3	Have the Programmes increased collaboration across the four devolved nations?		Descriptive	Process
EQ5	Has the Lionesses Futures Fund achieved its intended outcomes?	EQ5.1	Has the Lionesses Futures Fund increased the number of women’s football teams?		Descriptive	Impact
		EQ5.2	Has the Lionesses Futures Fund increased the number of female-only sessions and number of peak time sessions for females?		Descriptive	Impact
		EQ5.3	Has the Lionesses Futures Fund increased the number of renovated or new female changing rooms?		Descriptive	Impact
		EQ5.4	Has the Lionesses Futures Fund helped to establish a full player pathway for girls?		Descriptive	Process & Impact
		EQ5.5	To what extent do Lionesses Futures Fund facilities meet the needs of female users?		Descriptive	Process & Impact
EQ6	Has the Lionesses Futures Fund helped to create safe and welcoming spaces for women and girl users to play?	EQ6.1	Has the Lionesses Futures Fund improved the appropriateness of toilets and changing facilities at LFF sites?		Descriptive	Process
		EQ6.2	To what extent do female participants at the funded facilities feel safer and more welcome?		Descriptive	Process

* The evaluation questions (EQ1.1, EQ1.2, EQ2.5 and EQ2.6) will estimate the causal impact (if any) of additional overall participation arising from funding from the Programmes and will account for displacement effects through consideration of established analytical approaches discussed in Annex 5. Displacement effects are an unintended consequence of policy interventions defined as a shift in users from unfunded facilities to funded facilities over time, thereby reducing the use of unfunded facilities over time.

** The evaluation questions pertaining to participation by underrepresented demographic groups can be analysed causally conditional on availability of a sufficient sample size from each group. Recognising that if adequate information cannot be collected, a descriptive analysis would be undertaken. The impacts on participation would be further be examined qualitatively through the case study interviews.

3.4. Evaluation Indicators

Building on the evaluation questions in Table 7, Annex 4 sets out the research framework that will be used for the evaluation, including:

- A summary of the key outputs, outcomes and impacts that are expected under each evaluation question (as defined in Table 7);
- The geographic level at which each evaluation sub-question will be assessed; this will be instrumental in measuring the change in participation between the treated and control facilities within a local area, prior to and after the funding, to capture for displacement effects (movement of users from unfunded facilities to funded facilities) using postcode level participation data on both DCMS funded and unfunded facilities collected via the surveys mentioned in Section 4.1. ; and
- The data source which will be used to gather the data and evidence required to answer each evaluation research question.

It is important to note that Table 7 is applicable for both the MGSF (including LFF) and PTCR Programmes. It has been indicated against evaluation questions wherever the question will be relevant for only a specific Programme.

4. Methodology, Data and Approach

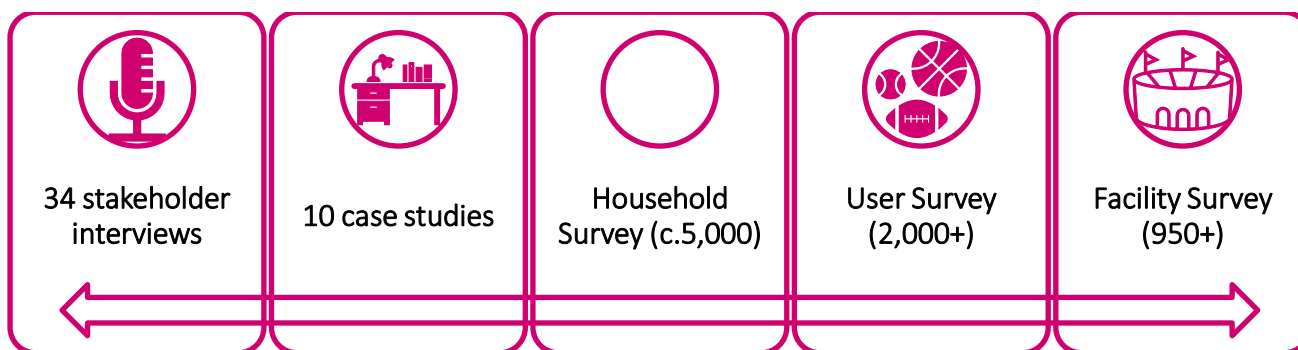
This chapter summarises the overall methodological approach to this evaluation, also outlining the primary and secondary data collection and analysis that will underpin this. This evaluation uses a mixed-methods approach across a diverse and representative cross-section of projects. This involves utilising a range of sources to capture comprehensive information for the process, impact and economic evaluation to help understand how the two Programmes have been delivered and achieved their outcomes, outputs and impacts whilst delivering value for money.

This interim report has been supported by only one wave of data collection to date. Significant future data collection activity is planned for two further waves in FY24/25 and FY25/26. The implications for the findings of this evaluation are explained in further detail in the following sections. Additional detail and explanation of the methodological approach is also available in Annex 5.

4.1. Primary Data Collection & Fieldwork

The evaluation of the MSGF and PTCR programmes is underpinned by a range of primary data collection techniques. This includes a comprehensive plan of surveying facilities, users and households for MSGF, in addition to case studies and interviews with a range of key stakeholders across both Programmes. A summary of the primary data sources that have been used to support this evaluation are outlined below.

Figure 5: Primary Data Collection – as of May 2024



4.1.1. MSGF: Facility Survey

The primary objective of surveying facilities is to collect self-reported data from facility managers, exploring current and pre-funding levels of participation, given that this data is not available through existing programme monitoring data, post-award assurance evidence or other secondary sources. The survey also looked to collect a number of other variables of interest, including perceptions of the application process, wider benefits of funding and the extent to which participation has been sustained, and many other datapoints.

4.1.1.1. Key Characteristics

- Responses from a ‘facility’ refer to information about the facility that is completed and returned by the manager of that facility.²³

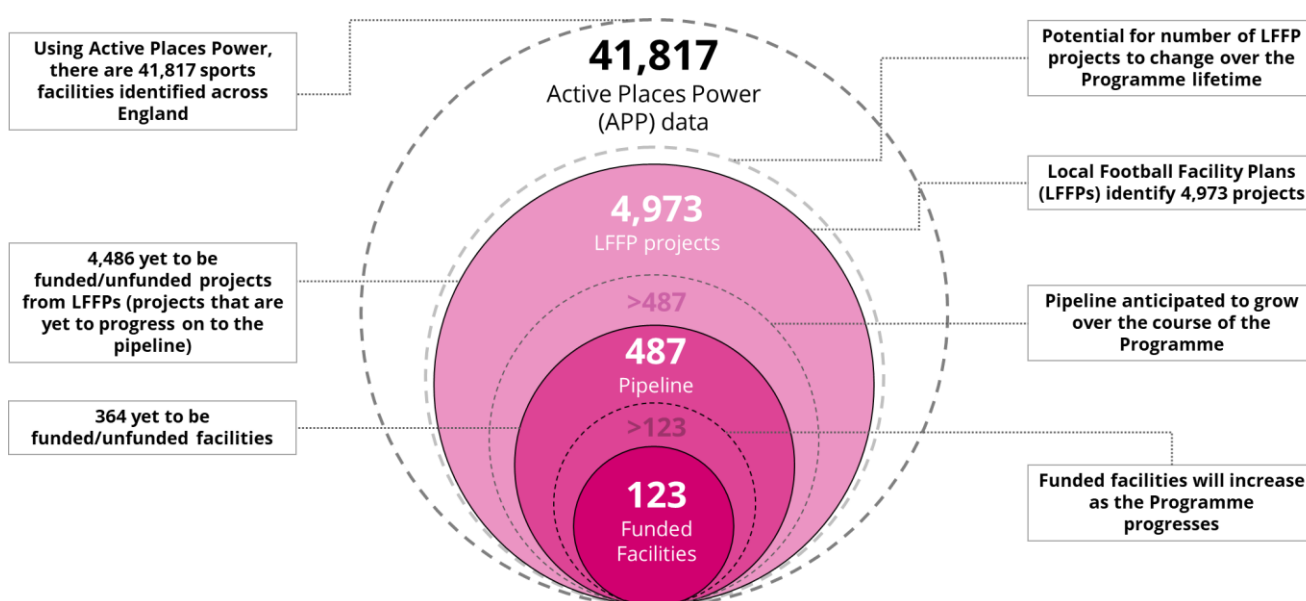
²³ A facility manager is defined as somebody at the facility who fulfils a role such as the CEO, chairman, committee member, officer, director, head coach, secretary, treasurer, trustee, or project manager for those facilities not yet constructed.

- The survey was administered to facilities in both the treatment (funded facilities/successful applications) and control (unfunded facilities/declined applications and non-applicants) groups for the Programme.
- For the primary variable of interest (participation), April 2021 was the reference time-period for facilities to provide participation data compared against²⁴. Facilities were able to choose between sharing specific numbers, percentage estimates, or to select a specific banded percentage estimates to sufficiently address recall bias, which is often prevalent with survey data. Collecting specific figures from facilities through booking data was deemed infeasible as this would present both challenges in terms of the consistency of datasets between facilities and would present missing data issues since many sites in scope of the Programme do not have booking data readily available.

4.1.1.2. Sampling Approach for Interim Report

- The survey was distributed to all funded and unfunded facilities that applied for investment from FY21/22 to FY23/24, including waitlisted facilities across Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
- In England, the sample was agreed through collaboration with the Football Foundation and was determined to be those facilities on the ‘pipeline’ of facilities used by the Football Foundation to administer their funding. This was because this set of facilities were deemed to likely have similar characteristics in terms of meeting a ‘minimum’ threshold of suitability by the Football Foundation to be able to move into the next phase of the process. Additionally, higher quality data and evidence would be available on the projects considered at these facilities. Figure 6 below outlines how this sample was determined:

Figure 6: Depiction of Football Foundation's project pipeline journey from early identification to funded. Accurate as of Jan 2024



Source: Analysis of Active Places Power data, LFFP data and Football Foundation programme monitoring data. Correct as of January 2024.

- The first facility survey was circulated in February 2024, with 420 funded facilities and 541 unfunded facilities contacted. Two future waves of data collection will be undertaken in FY24/25 and FY25/26.
- The survey was designed to suit the requirements of each nation; given the difference in the application process of the Football Foundation (England), the language of questions were modified to be relevant and appropriate for stakeholders.²⁵ Additionally, given that unfunded facilities by their nature cannot comment

²⁴ April 2021 was selected as the point in time to compare against given this was when the Programme was initiated. This was also deemed the most appropriate point in time considering the impacts of Covid in 2020 and selecting a point as close as possible to the point of treatment.

²⁵ See Annex 15 for the survey questions and how they differ between England and the other Home Nations and between funded and unfunded facilities.

on information relating to their funding, the survey was adapted to ensure only relevant questions were asked.

Within the facility survey distributed to Lionesses Futures Fund-funded and LFF-unfunded (rejected) facilities, additional questions will be added to the existing surveys covering the MSGF Programme. The data collected will be used as part of both process and impact evaluations for the relevant evaluation questions added to cover an evaluation of the LFF.

Responses to the facility survey from funded and unfunded facilities were categorised as “complete” (if all questions in the survey questionnaire were answered or if respondents provided more than a minimum number of responses to key questions for analysis and evaluation²⁶), “incomplete” (if the respondent engaged with the survey but answered less than the minimum number of questions needed for analysis and evaluation²⁷). The response rates and survey sample sizes reported in later sections of this report are based on total responses received, which include all complete and incomplete responses as defined above to include all respondents who engaged with the survey. However, the analysis was carried out using only the complete responses. The full survey questionnaire, breakdown of survey response rates, detail on cut-off questions chosen and summary of data from the first wave of the facility survey is available in Annexes 10 and 15.

4.1.2. MSGF: User Survey

The purpose of collecting data through the user survey was to explore and understand the perceptions and views of users at an individual level, across funded and unfunded facilities, to provide granular descriptive findings to support and supplement the counterfactual impact assessment and other data sources. Questions regarding sports participation and physical activity were captured at the user’s local facility and more widely, as well as aspects such as demographic characteristics that will be useful to provide contextual understanding against some of the sub-evaluation questions regarding types of participation.

4.1.2.1. Key Characteristics

- The survey was distributed to users of funded and unfunded facilities via facility managers, where possible.²⁸ Facility managers were deemed most appropriately placed to circulate the survey among users of their facility as agreed with DCMS and Delivery Partners.
- Responses were encouraged from a wide range of users, including both new and regular users of the facility.
- The outputs of this survey provide more detailed descriptive and supplementary insights into the intensity of participation, sports played, user experience and perceptions of community cohesion to back the causal findings to be inferred from the facility level survey data.

Additional questions will be added to the existing user surveys from the MSGF Programme that will be shared with users of both LFF-funded and LFF-unfunded facilities. These questions will look to cover sustained and new participation as well as capture the views of female users at these sites to inform the relevant evaluation questions.

4.1.2.2. Sampling Approach for Interim Report

- The first of three waves of the user survey was distributed in February 2024, with 1,218 complete responses.²⁹ Two future waves of data collection will be undertaken in FY24/25 and FY25/26.
- The survey was shared with users of all funded and unfunded facilities through their respective facility managers. Given that the total population of users is not known, it is not feasible to determine an estimate of sample sizes for the waves, or indeed a target.

²⁶ Cut-off questions were defined to determine the minimum number of questions to be completed to qualify as a “complete” response. The cut-off question was set as the point before which all core participation related questions were covered.

²⁷ NB: this can also include records of individuals who opened the survey link but did not provide responses to any of the questions.

²⁸ This was not possible in the cases of facilities that had not yet been constructed, and had therefore no established user base to distribute to.

²⁹ 1,218 is the number of complete responses. 2,222 complete and incomplete responses were received for the user survey.

- The survey was distributed to users of all funded and unfunded facilities that applied for investment from FY21/22 till FY23/24, with the distribution and sampling approach aligning with the facility survey.
- Whilst this is not a longitudinal survey of individual users, it should be possible following future waves of data collection to understand trends at specific facilities, albeit with responses from a different set of unknown users (as it is not possible to identify unique users)

Whilst the facility and household surveys have a pre-determined sample coverage, the user survey was distributed with the objective of maximising reach. Recognising the need to incentivise users, it was agreed in collaboration with DCMS and its Delivery Partners to encourage response rates across the four nations, with the offer of free tickets to football matches to users as part of a prize draw for users that completed the survey.³⁰

In the same fashion as the facility survey, responses to the user survey were categorised as “complete” (if all questions in the survey questionnaire were answered or if respondents provided more than a minimum number of responses to key questions for analysis and evaluation³¹), “incomplete” (if the respondent engaged with the survey but answered less than the minimum number of questions needed for analysis and evaluation³²). The response rates and survey sample sizes reported in later sections of this report are based on total responses received, which include all complete and incomplete responses as defined above to include all respondents who engaged with the survey. However, the analysis was carried out using only the complete responses. The full survey questionnaire, breakdown of survey response rates, detail on cut-off questions chosen and summary of data from the first wave of the user survey is available in Annexes 12 and 15.

4.1.3. MSGF: Household Survey

The objective of the household level survey is to help to fill existing data gaps, particularly those that exist around pride in place and social cohesion. In addition to this, the survey covers themes of general wellbeing and physical activity at and outside of funded and unfunded facilities. The wellbeing questions asked in the survey are based on four wellbeing questions created by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).³³ This includes four subjective wellbeing measures on life satisfaction, happiness, worthwhileness, and anxiety with standardised scoring scales and interpretation which have been incorporated in several national level surveys in the UK such as the Annual Population Survey and Community Life Survey.

The household survey also includes specific questions on baseline physical activity aligned with the best practice approach as outlined in the Short Active Lives Survey³⁴ (SALS) designed by Sport England. This survey is a shortened version of Sport England’s Active Lives Survey³⁵ (ALS) designed specifically for the purposes of evaluation. The purpose of including this set of questions is to evaluate respondents’ baseline physical activity levels to categorise people in to three levels of physical activity:

- Active respondents achieve the recommended levels of at least 150 minutes of weekly moderate intensity physical activity;
- Fairly active respondents achieve 30-149 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity per week; and
- Inactive respondents achieve less than 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity per week.

³⁰ A pair of tickets (and two pairs in England) were offered to a winner/s chosen randomly from users who completed the user survey and opted into the competition.

³¹ Cut-off questions were defined to determine the minimum number of questions to be completed to qualify as a “complete” response. The cut-off question was set as the point before which all core participation related questions were covered.

³² NB: this can also include records of individuals who opened the survey link but did not provide responses to any of the questions.

³³ [Surveys using our four personal well-being questions - Office for National Statistics](#)

³⁴ [short-active-lives-questionnaire.pdf \(sportengland.org\)](#)

³⁵ [Active Lives | Sport England](#)

Although the SALS is far shorter than the ALS, using Sport England’s conversion tool³⁶ enables the data collected from this survey to be converted into the same format. This allows for comparison between SALS findings to data from the ALS, and this has been academically tested and validated for credibility.³⁷

4.1.3.1. Key Characteristics

- The survey invites a randomly selected sample of households from YouGov’s panel, based in the same postcode sector³⁸ as funded and unfunded facilities.
- The sample can therefore also include individuals who do not use any facilities but can provide a broader overview of both the general perception of how facilities contribute to the wider community and social impacts, such as community cohesion and pride in place. It will also allow the evaluation to explore a wider set of outcomes, potentially expanding on any monetised benefits in the social cost-benefit analysis.

4.1.3.2. Sampling Approach for Interim Report

- This survey was developed and distributed in conjunction with YouGov and drew from YouGov’s UK-wide online panel. A total of 5,128 households were contacted in the first wave to share information on sport participation, views about their neighbourhood, and wellbeing status.
- Households were sampled at the postcode sector level (i.e. from the same postcode sector as the funded and unfunded facilities).
- The sample split of households among the four nations was guided by the proportion of funding received which meant that the highest number of households surveyed were from England. The evaluation team and YouGov finalised the specific user demographics of interest to be appended to the survey responses, which will be used to better inform the findings of this study.
- The survey was cleaned by YouGov who completed their standard data quality checks.
- YouGov also conducted response weighting. The data was weighted by age and gender to UK 18+ targets sourced from the ONS and was also weighted by home nation to match the distribution of facilities across England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland.
- The second and third waves of the survey will be launched in FY24/25 and FY25/26 with sample sizes of 3,500 and 3,000 respectively.

Finally, it is also important to note that in order to answer Lionesses Futures Fund related evaluation questions, existing surveys will be augmented and adapted from the first wave of surveying activity from the MSGF Programme. This will include both amending and adding questions in surveys to answer the evaluation questions above. Since many of these questions will only be answerable through primary data collection, it is important to ensure the questions are as specific and relevant as possible.

The full survey questionnaire, breakdown of responses and summary of data from the first wave of this survey is available in Annexes 13 and 15.

4.1.4. MSGF & PTCR: Programme Monitoring Data

4.1.4.1. MSGF Programme Monitoring Data

Programme monitoring data is collected and stored by the DCMS Programme management team to track a selection of funded projects and to monitor each site’s progress toward their key delivery milestones. Spreadsheets are completed by Delivery Partners on a regular basis and provide an opportunity to flag any emerging risks to DCMS who can escalate if required.

Delivery Partners from Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland all use the same DCMS programme reporting template, whilst the Football Foundation uses a different template to align with their own existing programme

³⁶ [Short Active Lives Scoring Tool \(Sport England\)](#)

³⁷ [short-active-lives-survey-what-it-is-and-how-to-use-it-1.pdf \(sportengland.org\)](#)

³⁸ The postcode sector is made up of the postcode district (the initial string of text with a number that is between two and four characters long), a space, and the first character of the following characters. If an example postcode is ABC1 2DE, the postcode sector is ABC1 2.

monitoring tools. Given the importance of the delivery data for tracking the flow of grant funding throughout the Programme, regular maintenance and updates are required to the document to ensure the timely fixing of any errors or missing information. DCMS programme management staff are responsible for this task and liaise with Delivery Partners to correct any errors in the sheet.

For the reporting tools used by Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish Delivery Partners, the data is held in ‘Google Sheets’ spreadsheets, with separate documents for each nation. A Programme status dashboard sheet is contained within the document to track the Delivery Partners’ alignment with the funding KPIs, as well as report important summary information about the funded projects. For each project, the following information is captured:

- Project details;
- Funding KPIs;
- Project type;
- Project finances;
- Project milestones; and
- Post-completion monitoring.

The Football Foundation reporting data is similar in many respects, containing a dashboard covering important summary information pulled from the list of funded projects, and updates are shared with DCMS on a quarterly basis. The project information is similar, though it should be noted that the Football Foundation uses a slightly different set of funding KPIs to the other Home Nations. In addition, because of the unique funding model of the Football Foundation, namely that it operates numerous funding schemes and grant Programmes, more information is provided on the type of funding received by each facility, as well as other matched funding from other parties.

4.1.4.2. PTCR Programme Monitoring Data

DCMS hold data on the completed projects funded as part of PTCR Programme. This data is shared in the public domain on the Government’s website and is updated as of February 2024. As part of the evaluation, a more detailed copy of this dataset was shared that contained the exact renovation costs at each site³⁹ – this variable is not included in the publicly available dataset.

This dataset captures data for the 552 PTCR projects. Each project contains information on the total number of courts covered as part of the renovation work, totalling 1,792 park tennis courts across these projects. The following data is collected for each project:

- Venue name;
- Total number of tennis courts;
- Postcode;
- Region;
- Local authority;
- MP constituency;
- Facility type;
- Total project cost;
- MP; and
- Party.

Under the “Facility Type” variable, the type of renovation work is listed. The following options are provided:

- Court Refurbishment

³⁹ The total project cost could be covered by DCMS funding, LTA Tennis Foundation funding, local authority contributions, or some combination of these.

- Online Booking
- Gate Installed
- A combination of some or all of the above

The LTA also holds a comprehensive dataset of user information and booking data for a number of facilities. This booking data captures pre and post funding data for 51 funded and 27 unfunded courts. The LTA draws from its booking platforms (LTA Play and ClubSpark) to extract booking data for the pre and post funding intervention periods; this data is available from 2020 until January 2023. Owing to the seasonal nature of playing tennis with peak activity occurring during the summer months, the LTA defines one round of data as 12 months of both pre and post refurb (renovation) dates of participation data. It is important to note significantly more data will be available for analysis over Summer 2024 as more courts complete renovations and come online. The following variables are captured in the dataset:

- Organisation ID and name;
- Local Authority and region;
- Contact ID to identify users;
- Booking ID to identify bookings;
- Booking date and time;
- Total number of courts within the organisation;
- Project scope (type of renovation undertaken);
- Court or course booking indicator;
- Refurb/Renovation date (applicable for only the funded courts);
- Deprivation indicator (1 – Most deprived, 10 – Least deprived); and
- User characteristics (gender and age).

Booking data is available from 2019 until 31st January 2024 and courts were renovated from 2020 to 2023, comprising c.380,000 total bookings. To make a booking, a user must have an account and can choose to add the number of players playing on the court. As mentioned above, the court can be booked for a regular game or a course. The LTA defines participation based on an average estimate of number of players per booking; 1 for every course booking and 2.7 for every court booking. This estimate will be used as the basis of participation numbers for analysis.

4.1.4.3. Lionesses Futures Fund Programme Monitoring Data

As previously outlined, the Lionesses Futures Fund is currently in development, and an initial allocation of sites in the first wave of funding is yet to be determined.⁴⁰ However, activity is underway to plan and prepare for significant additional data collection at these sites. The Football Foundation has recently procured the services of ClubSpark to help implement online booking systems at a number of their facilities, primarily Artificial Grass Pitches (AGPs).

Robust and effective monitoring and reporting processes will be vital to support future evaluation activity. The Football Foundation and DCMS will continue to improve and refine these plans over the coming months.

4.1.5. Stakeholder Interviews

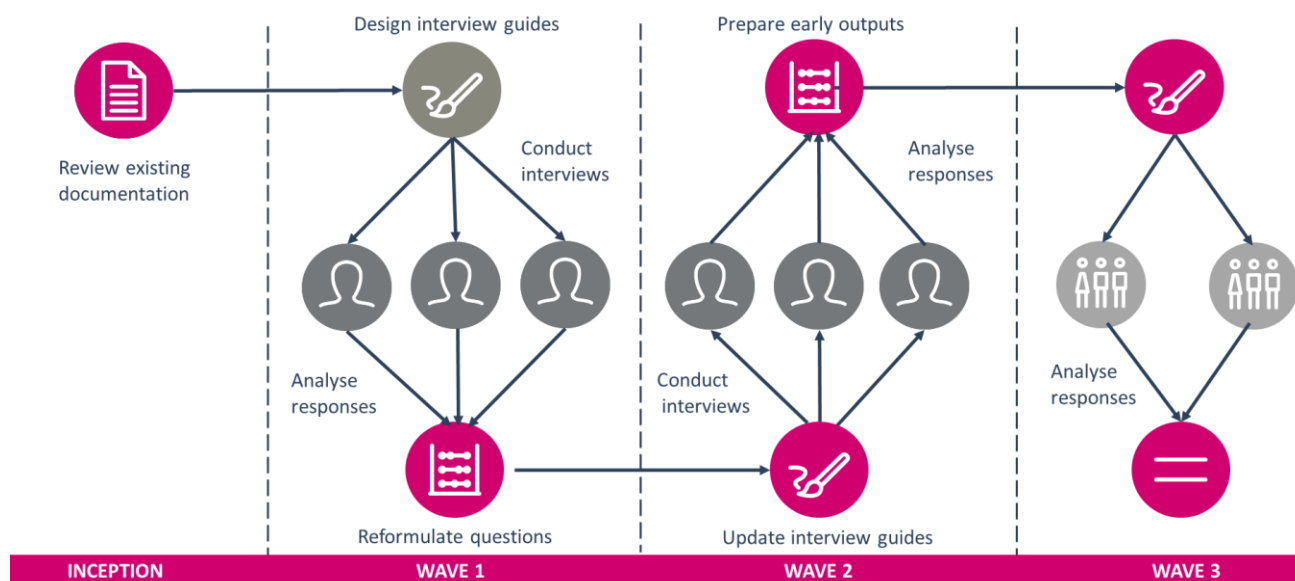
Interviews with key stakeholders of each Programme play a key role in the conclusions of the process evaluation. The evaluation team engaged with Delivery Partners and DCMS staff from both Programmes and agreed on a set of individuals who had been closely involved in the design, delivery, and implementation of the Programmes to interview.

⁴⁰ As of April 2024.

To gather a comprehensive range of views, these individuals were of ranging seniorities and grades across their respective organisations. For the same reason, stakeholders were interviewed who were involved in the respective Programme at different stages of its development and execution (e.g. early phases of Programme setup, later phases of Programme delivery, or involved throughout the entire Programme), and who fulfilled different roles (e.g. policy team, analysis team, programme monitoring team).

Figure 7 shows the approach taken for this wave of stakeholder interviews, and this will also be adhered to for future waves of data collection.

Figure 7: Interviews of key stakeholders



4.1.6. Case Studies

To provide relevant and diverse insights from case studies, Delivery Partners were engaged to support selection of an appropriate variety of projects to explore in more detail. Case studies will be developed of 24 facilities across the MSGF and PTCR Programmes in total across the evaluation. A long-list of 40 facilities has been developed, and 10 case studies were undertaken in February-March 2024. Two facilities from each nation were put forward for case study within MSGF, and two case studies chosen for PTCR. An additional 4 case studies will also be undertaken for the LFF, for a total of 28 case studies. The following characteristics were highlighted as being important for Delivery Partners to consider when sharing suggestions:

- **Project type:** the facility type, whether the project is a multi-sport project in the case of MSGF, and the work/investment undertaken at the chosen facility;
- **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) met:** funding KPIs from application met, including investment in multi-sport projects, investment in deprived areas, equal access for women and girls, and for underrepresented groups. This involves considering the socio-economic background of the local area the facility is located in, including its indices of multiple deprivation, as well as other socio-economic indicators available;
- **Geographical distribution:** coverage of a range of funding areas, distributed among the different nations, and at a more granular level within nations;
- **Implementation success:** the degree to which the project has met key delivery milestones, KPIs and has been viewed by stakeholders as delivering its intended outputs to budget and time. Please note that whilst it is important to capture the successes and outputs/outcomes delivered by the Programmes, it is also equally important to learn lessons from projects that encountered issues or blockers. This is important to learn lessons that aim to improve the delivery of the current Programme going forwards and for consideration in the design of potential future investment; and

- **Funding timing:** projects proposed from each year of funding of the Programmes, to ensure projects are captured with different durations of time since investment was received and impacts realised.

Once sites were selected, case study fieldwork was conducted virtually through 30–45-minute interviews with facility managers, delivery partners, and users of the facility. Efforts were undertaken to ensure a good mix of stakeholders for each site to gather the most comprehensive insights. The interviews covered a range of topics, including the specifics of the project and the perceived impacts on participation at the site and the impacts for the local community.

4.1.7. Secondary Data Sources

In addition to primary data, the list below sets out the secondary data sources that have been identified for informing this evaluation, that are publicly available or available through existing DCMS Partners (e.g. Sport England/DPs etc) with no use or cost restrictions. Whilst this list is not exhaustive, it presents existing data sources that may assist in evaluating key performance metrics, or could be used to sense check or compare findings from primary data collection. This list will be reviewed and updated regularly.

- Active Places Power⁴¹
- 4Global Supply Audit⁴²
- Active Lives Survey⁴³
- National Survey for Wales⁴⁴
- Wales School Sport Survey⁴⁵
- Scottish Household Survey⁴⁶
- Continuous Household Survey (Northern Ireland)⁴⁷
- ONS Population statistics⁴⁸
- ONS Census – Expenditures, and Quality of Life⁴⁹
- Community Life Survey⁵⁰

The use of secondary data will depend on its level of granularity and comparability to other data sources to be able to answer the evaluation research questions, and understand the specific outputs, outcomes and/or impacts of the Programmes. Primarily, this secondary data will provide useful context for the primary data collection, and either support or challenge these findings accordingly.

For several secondary sources, there is a natural time lag in the production and availability of the data. For example, the Community Life Survey 2021/22, was published on 28 February 2023. Given primary data, specifically monitoring data, is available up to the present day with little time lag, secondary data releases make this data less suitable for assessing and evaluating the outcomes and impacts within the same time frame.

Irrespective of these challenges, these secondary sources serve a useful purpose within the evaluation, offering insights into baseline characteristics of the wider population including participation behaviour, population demographics and facility features before funding was awarded. Secondly, they also provide useful overall context and a potential understanding of wider societal factors that may be relevant. Secondary data sources

⁴¹ [Active Places Power](#)

⁴² The 4Global supply audit dataset is not publicly available, but more information about 4Global can be found on their website: [Home - 4GLOBAL](#)

⁴³ [Active Lives | Sport England](#)

⁴⁴ [National Survey for Wales | GOV.WALES](#)

⁴⁵ [School Sport Survey 2022 | Sport Wales](#)

⁴⁶ [Scottish Household Survey - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

⁴⁷ [Continuous Household Survey | Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency \(nisra.gov.uk\)](#)

⁴⁸ [Population estimates - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

⁴⁹ [Census - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](#)

⁵⁰ [Community Life Survey - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

will therefore have a role to play in managing risks associated with missing data and providing important context on baseline trends, such as participation and community cohesion.

4.2. Process Evaluation Approach

This process evaluation explores whether the Programme interventions have been implemented as intended and resulted in the desired outputs, as well as considering the extent to which the Programmes have been delivered in an efficient and effective manner. This will examine issues including governance, communication, and delivery, with lessons learned for future refinement of the two Programmes and others across DCMS and wider government.

Laying strong foundations for the evaluation across all three aspects (process, impact and economic), through robust design and data collection processes has been the initial focus of activity. Findings around implementation and process are more readily available at this stage due to the status of the Programme's delivery and the data collection that has been undertaken to date. The following data collection activities have supported this to date:

- Review and assessment of **Programme documentation and monitoring data**
- **34 interviews** with key stakeholders involved in the delivery of the Programmes.
- **10 case studies** of facilities in receipt of MSGF or PTCR funding
- Analysis of secondary data including Active Lives, Active Places Power and the Community Lives Survey
- Analysis of initial wave of data available from three key surveys covering the MSGF Programme:
 - **Facility Survey:** A survey sent to both funded and unfunded facilities across the Home Nations for completion by managers of the facility. 259 responses were received from funded sites, and 288 responses received from unfunded sites.
 - **User Survey:** A survey distributed to users by facility managers of funded and unfunded facilities across the Home Nations. 2,222 responses were received.
 - **Household Survey:** A survey shared with households that comprised YouGov's online panel around funded and unfunded sites. This survey achieved 5,128 responses.

4.3. Impact Evaluation Approach

4.3.1. Overview

The chosen methodology for the counterfactual impact evaluation aligns with the methodology set out in the feasibility study⁵¹. This will seek to utilise quasi-experimental methods to establish if there is evidence of a causal effect from the Programmes, relative to a scenario where funding was not granted toward multi-sport facilities or tennis courts. This method seeks to estimate the differences if any, in the intended outcomes of the Programmes between the “treated” groups (facilities that applied and were awarded the funding) and the “control” groups. (facilities that applied for the funding but were not selected), where both groups were assessed based on the same selection criteria within each nation. As part of this evaluation, a Steering Group has also been established to provide challenge and feedback on the impact evaluation methodology.

The primary objective of this evaluation is to investigate the causal effect of Programme funding on sports participation and physical activity, in an environment where certain facilities or courts have been allocated funding, and others have not. As the MSGF and PTCR Programme designs do not allocate the funding randomly,

⁵¹ Referred to as 'Option A' in the feasibility study [Grassroots Sport Facilities Investment Programme: Impact Evaluation Feasibility Study \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

but instead grant funding based on a structured selection process, a quasi-experimental method, using a Differences-in-Differences (DiD) model, is best suited to measure the effect of these policy interventions (termed as the “treatment”). This approach aligns with the impact evaluation approaches set out in the Magenta Book⁵², as well as with the findings of the feasibility study conducted ahead of this evaluation.

Given that only data collection for Wave 1 has been completed and the remainder of the survey data collection for the second and third waves is to be conducted in FY 24/25 and FY 25/26 as planned, the causal impact evaluation methodology outlined above will be applied in the next stage of the evaluation.

The data currently available from the first wave of data collection in the form of the facilities, user and household surveys as well as the LTA PTCR booking data for investments allocated pre-2022, is assessed descriptively. This includes drawing insights through a pre- and post-Programme comparison for funded and unfunded facilities from self-reported estimates of participation. The data is used to perform exploratory analysis and develop emerging results to provide an initial indicative view on how the Programmes have been performing, whilst awaiting further data collection before conducting the causal analysis.

4.3.2. Methodological Framework for MSGF and PTCR

Step 1: Identifying an appropriate impact assessment methodology

The primary objective of this evaluation is to investigate the causal effect of Programme funding on sports participation and physical activity, in an environment where certain facilities or courts have been allocated funding, and others have not. As the MSGF and PTCR Programme designs do not allocate the funding randomly, but instead grant this based on a structured selection process, a quasi-experimental method, using a Differences-in-Differences (DiD) model, is best suited to measure the effect of these policy interventions (termed as the “treatment”).

This model will compare outcomes between a treatment group (funded facilities) and a control group (unfunded facilities), the latter of which is assumed to act as a proxy or a counterfactual for how the treatment group would perform if it did not receive Programme funding. This approach aligns with the impact evaluation approaches set out in the Magenta Book⁵³, and aligns with the findings of the feasibility study conducted ahead of this evaluation.

The key outcome of interest in the DiD analysis is participation in sports and physical activity (the dependent variable), and this evaluation aims to measure sport participation across the following specified dimensions:

- Total number of users in the facility since funding (in absolute terms or expressed as reported percentage change);
- Total number of unique users⁵⁴ in the facility since funding (in absolute terms or expressed as reported percentage change);
- Total number of existing users⁵⁵ in the facility since funding (in absolute terms or expressed as reported percentage change); and
- Intensity of participation by users (duration of visit and frequency of visit).

Step 2: Outlining key assumptions

After selecting a methodology, it is important to understand the key assumptions underpinning the approach. A DiD approach is based upon the core assumption of ‘parallel trends’. This assumption requires that the funded and unfunded facilities would have followed parallel outcome trends over time in the absence of the

⁵² [HMT Magenta Book \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

⁵³ [HMT Magenta Book \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

⁵⁴ The total number of distinct users who attend a facility over a given time frame.

⁵⁵ The total number of users who attended the facility before it received DCMS funding.

Programmes implying that the two groups are comparable. If this assumption is true, then the DiD model allows for the estimation the effect of the Programmes by comparing the changes in outcomes for the funded facilities to the changes in outcomes for the unfunded facilities and any change observed in outcomes could then be attributed to the Programmes. Although the validity of this assumption cannot be tested directly, confidence in the likelihood that it is met can be built by demonstrating whether funded and unfunded facilities followed parallel trends in the period before the Programme was implemented.⁵⁶

Step 3: Developing the main model specification

A commonly adopted approach to measure the heterogenous impact of the Programmes is the TWFE (Two-Way Fixed Effects) model. However, recent literature has utilised more appropriate methods to measure this. This evaluation will consider the estimator used in Callaway and Sant Anna (2021).⁵⁷ The model specification adopted enables measuring the effect of the Programme for multiple treatment groups that receive the treatment over multiple time periods. A detailed explanation is set out in the Technical Annex (Annex 5).

Step 4: Developing secondary model specifications (Displacement Effects)

In interventions of this nature, there is the potential for individuals already partaking in some form of physical activity at an unfunded facility/court to simply switch to a nearby funded facility/court, with this shift driven by the assumed improved quality of amenities owing to the Programme’s funding. This shift in economic activity is defined as “displacement”.

Therefore, it is critical to measure the total “additional” outcome of the Programmes, accounting for this displacement effect to understand the true impact of the funding interventions. This can be done by adopting a spatial difference-in-difference approach to compare participation in funded facilities and local unfunded facilities, before and after the intervention, using facility-level participation data.

Alternatively, examining the change in participation between funded and their respective neighbouring unfunded facilities will yield the impact net of displacement effects as impacts are anticipated to be localised. The triple difference approach has also been widely used to provide an estimate of spillover effects, i.e. the effect on the non-treated in the treatment state in the treatment period. i.e. the unintended or indirect effect the treatment (funding) could have on the non-treated (unfunded facilities, individuals who do not visit any facilities or individuals who visit unfunded facilities or live near unfunded facilities) or the wider geographical area. For instance, an individual who visits the funded facility could motivate less active members of his or her household to start visiting the facility and therefore produce better health outcomes in the longer term. It could also potentially encourage other unfunded facilities to become more eligible to receive funding thereby increasing participation in these local areas.

Step 5: Matching

In the case of both Programmes, decisions on receipt of funding were non-random and thus, facilities receiving funding and those that do not may differ not only in their funding status but also in other characteristics that affect the outcome of interest (sport participation). The aim of the matching exercise is to reduce the selection bias between the funded and unfunded facilities (i.e. lower the mean differences across both groups). This involves finding, for each funded facility, a corresponding similar unfunded facility by matching on pre-treatment characteristics. The full list of covariates considered, and the step-by-step methodology is outlined in Annex 5.

⁵⁶ Econometricians will feed in on precise specifications and diagnostic testing at the appropriate time. This will be to ensure that the regressions consider issues such as omitted variable bias, attenuation bias (due to survey data), or reverse causality.

⁵⁷ [Callaway and Sant’Anna \(2021\)](#)

Step 6: Extension of core methodology to account for selection process in England

As England was the only nation to adopt a different selection process, through shortlisting facilities in the form of a ‘pipeline’ and allocating the funding at various points in time defined as funding windows, this means that it is likely all facilities would fall under the treatment group eventually, but some would receive the funding earlier than others. Therefore, the treatment group will continue to expand while the control group will diminish in number over time.

This update to the methodology involved making a choice of control group of MSGF facilities in England after considering the suitability of both the list of facilities in the pipeline list that had not yet received the funding, and a larger group of projects implemented under the Local Football Facility Plans (LFFP) by the Football Foundation. It was concluded that the pipeline facilities would serve as a better control group as this minimises the differences in unobservable characteristics due to all these facilities being potentially similar having gone through the same selection process to qualify into the pipeline list.

Step 7: Robustness/Sensitivity checks

To test the sensitivity and validity of the results obtained from the evaluation, a number of key checks and tests will be considered where appropriate to verify causality. The full list of checks is provided in Annex 5.

4.3.3. Limitations and Caveats

The differences-in-differences (DiD) model is a widely used method in impact evaluations to estimate causal effects in observational data. However, it is important to be aware of the limitations in context of the method and this study overall. Please see below the key limitations and the steps implemented to mitigate each:

Table 8: Key Limitations with Mitigations of the Impact Evaluation Methodology

Limitation	Mitigation
Lack of multiple rounds of pre-treatment data	Availability of sufficient data on pre-treatment outcomes is instrumental for demonstrating parallel trends in the treatment and control groups. However, data constraints in this regard have prompted adopting measures recommended in the literature to address this limitation and make the parallel assumption more credible. This has been set out in detail in Annex 5 under robustness checks in the methodological framework.
Verification of parallel trends assumptions	Repeated pre-treatment data points for those facilities that are yet to be treated (currently in control) and eventually will be treated to establish parallel trends assumptions.
Selection bias	Selection bias refers to the bias introduced by the selection of individuals, groups, or data for analysis in such a way that proper randomisation is not achieved. This can lead to the estimated effect of the intervention being biased if the funded and unfunded facilities differ in ways that affect the outcome. This may over or understate the estimated impacts and will be addressed via statistical matching. This involves pairing treated and control units that are similar in observed characteristics to reduce the impact of selection bias. Propensity score matching is a common method used, which involves pairing units that have similar probabilities of receiving the treatment based on their observed characteristics.
Lack of sufficient sample size in the control group	This is a possible limitation that has been addressed by actively surveying unfunded facilities and achieving response rates similar to those of the

required to produce good quality matches	funded facilities in Wave 1 of data collection. This sample of unfunded facilities is expected to increase with future waves of surveying.
Awarding funding to the facilities which are expected to succeed	The assignment to the treatment group is based on those that are expected to achieve better outcomes. This may overstate the estimated impacts – the evaluation will control for facility characteristics within the counterfactual method.
Recall bias	The lack of pre-treatment data on outcomes has resulted in facility managers reporting recall data going back to pre-April 2021 on participation and capacity of their respective facilities. There have been several measures taken to minimise reporting of inaccurate data by providing facility managers the flexibility to either provide exact numbers or percentage changes if possible, and alternatively the option to provide these estimates in absolute number ranges or percentage bands.
Measurement error	Measurement error is a well-researched problem in the field of econometrics and impact evaluation and there is a risk of this arising particularly in survey data. Errors can result from survey questions that invite different interpretations, from questions that are time-sensitive, from judgment errors, recall bias or simply from respondent fatigue and approximations. This could be also due to the variable being conceptually well defined but challenging in terms of acquiring accurate estimates, such as self-reported estimates for participation and capacity which can cause deviations in the true value of these parameters. It is the difference between the observed and true values of the variable that is termed as measurement error. The measures mentioned above under the “Recall bias” limitation point have been taken to refine the survey instrument and therefore minimise the error and variance in the estimates captured.
Other interventions impacting sport participation	Identification of the true impact of sport investment as the findings could simply be a result of broader trends, such as other complimentary policies or interventions that encouraged sport participation and physical activity (e.g. more public parks). This possibility of external interventions that affect the trends of the facilities can be checked via a placebo test.

4.3.4. Impact Evaluation Approach (Interim Report)

Given that only data collection for Wave 1 has been completed and the remainder of the survey data collection for the second and third waves is to be conducted in FY24/25 and FY25/26 as planned, the impact evaluation methodology detailed in the previous sub-sections will be applied in the next stage of the evaluation.

The data currently available from the first wave of data collection in the form of the facility, user, and household surveys as well as the LTA PTCR booking data for investments allocated pre-2022 will be assessed descriptively. This will include drawing insights through an initial descriptive comparison of funded and unfunded facilities based on self-reported estimates of participation before and since implementation of the Programmes. The data will be used to perform exploratory analysis and develop emerging results to provide an initial indicative view on how the Programmes have been performing, whilst awaiting further data collection before conducting causal analysis. The findings will support ongoing conversations around key learnings for Programme delivery to be considered for mid-course correction and to maximise outcomes and impacts.

4.4. Economic Evaluation Approach

Approach for Interim Report

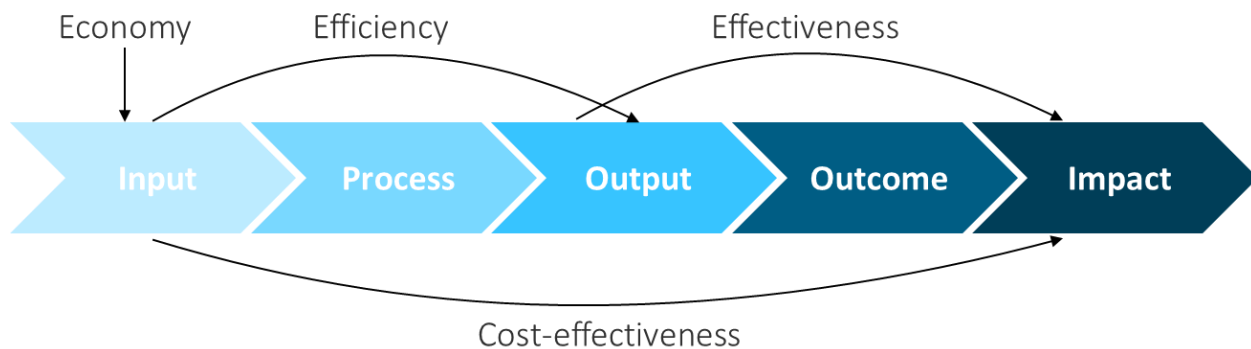
At this stage of the evaluation, it has been agreed that the focus and priority of interim work is to establish key emerging findings from process and impact evaluation, that will subsequently inform economic evaluation that will be conducted as part of future reports. This will allow outcomes and impacts of the Programmes to have more time to materialise, as well as the MSGF Programme to finish delivering funding, and will be a more appropriate time thus to conduct a value-for-money assessment.

Data collected as part of the initial wave of primary data collection has been considered in the context of economic evaluation, and surveys and interviews have been designed with key evaluation questions in mind. Whilst these emerging findings are helpful to understand early views on the benefits and costs of the Programmes, fundamentally, any VfM assessment of the Programmes will depend on having robust results from an impact evaluation so that the outcomes attributable to the Programmes can be known and, where possible, quantified. It is thus important to collect further data to increase confidence in these findings, which then be used as part of the below methodology.

Economic Evaluation Overview

The section below provides a summary of the approach to the economic evaluation set to take place. An economic evaluation to assess the VfM that the Programmes are providing to the taxpayer will be developed as part of this evaluation, developing quantified costs and benefits and a Net Present Social Value (NPSV) associated with the Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme and the Park Tennis Court Renovation Programme.

Figure 8: 3-E's assessment framework



Overview

A VfM assessment of the Programmes will be conducted utilising the 3-E's framework, visualised in Figure 8, with the 3-E's being:

- **Economy:** the degree to which public spending on the Programme's inputs were at the minimum level required to achieve its objectives. This will use case studies and build on the internal and external comparisons from the process evaluation;
- **Efficiency:** the extent to which the outputs arising from the Programmes were delivered efficiently (i.e. at minimum cost, using minimum resources and without delay); and
- **Effectiveness:** how far the outputs arising from the Programmes led to their intended outcomes and impacts, and the costs involved in producing these outcomes.

In addition to a 3-E's VfM assessment⁵⁸, a full Social Cost-Benefit Analysis ("SCBA") will be conducted as part of the Effectiveness analysis. A SCBA is an assessment which follows the principles of economic and social costs and benefits, set out in HM Treasury Green Book (2022)⁵⁹, associated with the intervention. This will explore whether the benefits of the Programmes exceed their costs. The SCBA will provide a view of costs incurred against social benefits, both monetised and non-monetised.

This will also utilise Sport England's Social Return on Investment ("SROI") model, developed by Sheffield Hallam University⁶⁰, to estimate both the economic and social benefits associated with sport to understand the economic and social value of sport in England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. The SROI model uses a range of indicators to measure the value of 16 social outcomes generated by sport and physical activity, including but not limited to health, wellbeing, education, crime, social capital, and volunteering. The model also estimates the costs of providing opportunities for sport and physical activity. The SROI ratio⁶¹ expresses the total value of social outcomes as a proportion of inputs. Although similar in many ways to the SCBA approach, the SROI approach is more focused on understanding the value of sport through a unique range of indicators designed to capture this magnitude.

Similar SROI models have also been developed as part of other Programmes, for example UEFA's work with the Scottish FA to quantify the value of football participation in Scotland.⁶² This report used a model developed as part of the UEFA Grow Programme⁶³, which monetised both direct and social benefits of football participation, including participation within grassroots football, making its use ideal in the present analysis.

Notably, some of these impacts may be challenging to monetise due to insufficient data and difficulty in isolating the drivers of impacts (e.g. is increased community participation driven by access to facilities or more general local investment in the area). This will also include monetising impacts such as a reduction in crime, changes to educational attainment and improvements to employability. While the literature has established mild positive association between physical activity and educational achievement⁶⁴, the mechanisms through which these impacts occur are more likely through improved physical and mental wellbeing or type of sport activity offered, and impacts vary greatly based on the metric chosen for educational attainment. This evaluation will also ensure non-monetised and intangible benefits are captured as part of cost-benefit analysis.

Benefit Cost Ratios

Two different Benefit Cost Ratios, known as BCRs, will be considered:

- **The aggregate BCR:** estimated by dividing the total benefits of the Programmes by all the costs attributable to it (including partner funding and operational costs).⁶⁵
- **A DCMS BCR:** estimated by dividing the total benefits of the Programmes by the costs funded only by the Government (i.e. excludes operational costs and partner funding). This is essentially a social return on investment (SROI) for the department.

⁵⁸ Economy, Efficiency and Effectiveness on pg.78 [*Grassroots Sport Facilities Investment Programme \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/101444/gb2022-01.pdf)

⁵⁹ [The Green Book \(2022\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/101444/gb2022-01.pdf)

⁶⁰ [Social return on investment of sport | Sheffield Hallam University \(shu.ac.uk\)](https://www.sheffieldhallam.ac.uk/research/social-return-on-investment-of-sport/)

⁶¹ The SROI output is also expressed as a proportion whereas the SCBA output is expressed as an absolute value.

⁶² [SFA UEFA SROI Model \(scottishfa.co.uk\)](https://www.scottishfa.co.uk/uefa-sroi-model/)

⁶³ [UEFA SROI Final Report \(knvb.nl\)](https://www.knvb.nl/uefa-sroi-final-report/)

⁶⁴ Examples include publications from [WHO](https://www.who.int/) and [Education Endowment Foundation](https://www.educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/)

⁶⁵ To the extent these costs can be identified from available data. It is likely that some indirect costs will not be possible to capture for example.

5. Programme Overview

This section covers the facts and figures of the MSGF Programme and PTCR Programme, using a range of both publicly and not publicly available programme monitoring data. This is done with the intention to set out an understanding of the basic characteristics of the Programmes before analysis of the data is presented.

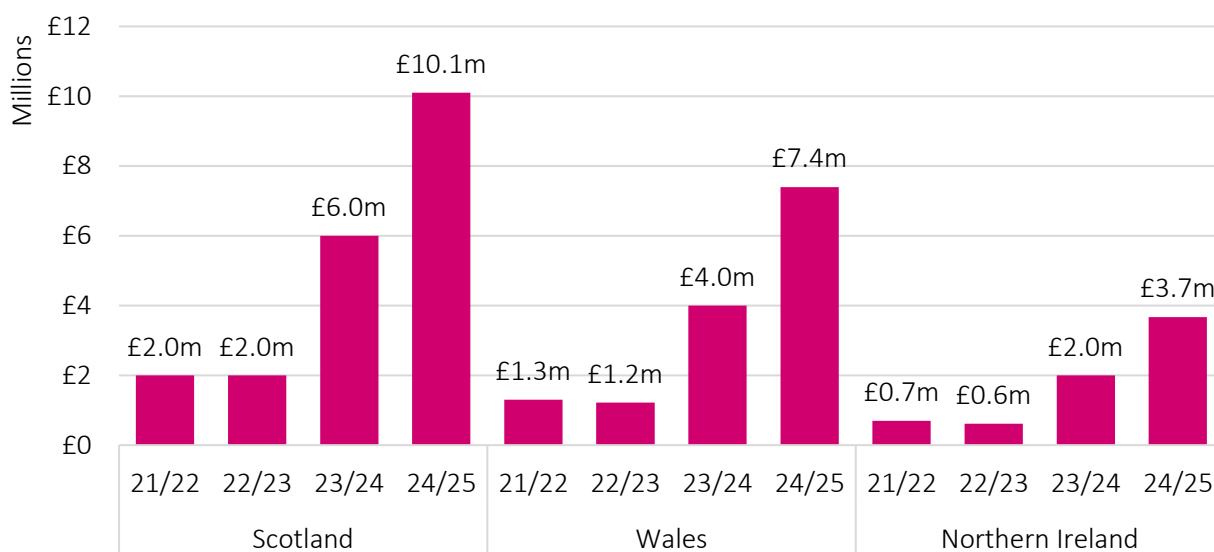
All the information presented in this section is static in nature. These insights will be updated in future reporting as the Programmes continue. The information displayed in this section of the interim report will inform other sections of the analysis, particularly the Process Evaluation: Emerging Findings section.

5.1. Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme

5.1.1. Funding and Resource Allocation

The MSGF Programme will invest £320 million between 2021 and 2025. Figure 9 demonstrates how this funding is allocated across Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland across financial years. Scotland is allocated £20.1 million, Wales £13.9 million, and Northern Ireland £7.0 million over the lifetime of the Programme. Figure 10 shows the allocation for England across financial years. England’s budget is presented separately given that that Football Foundation receives matched funding from other funding partners such as the FA and the Premier League, and therefore, funding structures are not directly comparable.

Figure 9: MSGF Budget Allocation for Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland across Financial Year

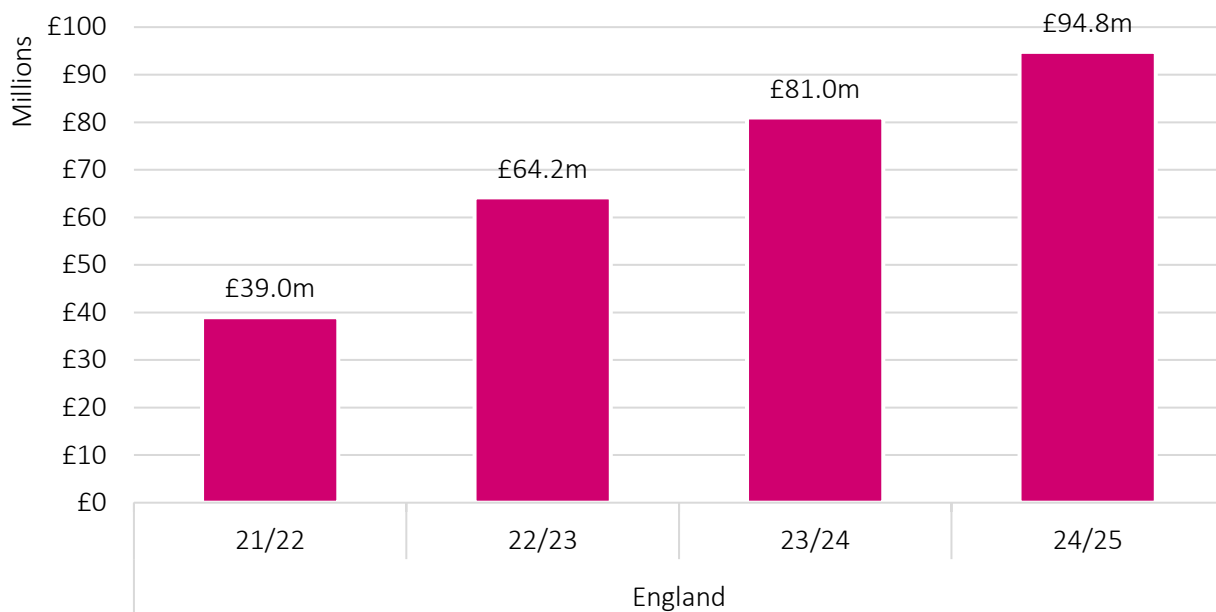


Source: Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programmes information based on DCMS monitoring data as of 3rd April 2024

England is allocated £279 million over the four financial years, with the funding amount growing each year of the Programme. These figures do not take into account additional partner investment from the English FA or the Premier League, thus the total value of Football Foundation grants to these projects is higher⁶⁶.

⁶⁶ [Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme projects: 2021 to 2025 \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

Figure 10: MSGF Budget Allocation for England across Financial Year



Source: Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programmes information based on DCMS monitoring data as of 3rd April 2024

5.1.2. Funding Committed

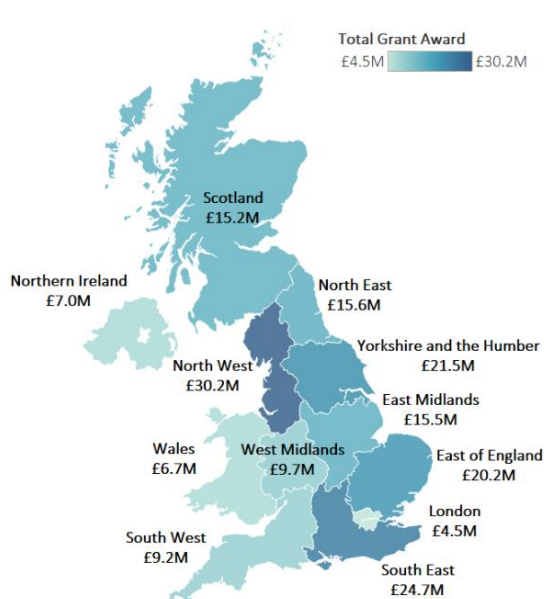
Whilst the section above shows the funding allocation, this section covers the committed grant funding to date as part of the MSGF Programme. This committed funding can be broken down across several categories, shown across the sections below.

5.1.2.1. Region

As shown in Figure 11, funding commitments are broken down into the level of funding committed within each region. The UK is typically split into subdivisions using the International Territorial Level (ITL) geocode standard⁶⁷. This section using the ITL 1 level, which corresponds to the regions of England alongside Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. Figure 11 shows the committed DCMS funding broken down by ITL 1 region across FY21/22, FY22/23 and FY23/24, and Table 9 displays the funding invested and projects delivered per nation per financial year:

⁶⁷ [International geographies - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk/international-geographies)

Figure 11: MSGF Funding Committed between FY21/22 and FY23/24, broken down by nation / region, including funding per capita per region



Nation / Region	Funding	Funding Per Capita
North East	£15.6m	£5.80
North West	£30.2m	£4.02
Yorkshire & the Humber	£21.5m	£3.88
Northern Ireland	£7.0m	£3.66
East of England	£20.2m	£3.15
East Midlands	£15.5m	£3.14
Scotland	£15.2m	£2.79
England	£151.0m	£2.64
South East	£24.7m	£2.63
Wales	£6.7m	£2.14
West Midlands	£9.7m	£1.61
South West	£9.2m	£1.59
London	£4.5m	£0.51

Source: Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programmes information based on publicly available DCMS Programme delivery data as of February 2024: [Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme projects: 2021 to 2025 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/multi-sport-grassroots-facilities-programme-projects-2021-to-2025) (Accessed 9th April 2024). Population of UK regions: [UK population by region 2022 | Statista](https://www.statista.com/statistics/1111111/uk-population-by-region-2022/) (Accessed 23rd April 2024). Grant funding total figures rounded to the nearest £0.1m, and funding per capita figures rounded to the nearest £0.01

Table 9: MSGF Funding Committed and Number of Projects Completed Per Nation Per Financial Year

Nation	FY21/22		FY22/23		FY23/24	
	Funding Committed	Number of Projects	Funding Committed	Number of Projects	Funding Committed	Number of Projects
England	£57.8m	152	£63.3m	1504	£29.9m	995
Scotland	£1.9m	17	£2.0m	23	£11.4m	40
Wales	£1.3m	17	£1.2m	44	£4.1m	62
Northern Ireland	£0.7m	26	£0.6m	28	£5.7m	17
Total	£61.7m	212	£67.2m	1,599	£51.2m	1,114

Source: Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programmes information based on publicly available DCMS Programme delivery data as of February 2024: [Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme projects: 2021 to 2025 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/multi-sport-grassroots-facilities-programme-projects-2021-to-2025). Accessed 9th April 2024. Figures rounded to the nearest £0.1m

In England, as of February 2024, £151 million across 2,651 projects⁶⁸ has been committed since the start of the Programme. Out of the ITL regions in England, the North West has received the most total funding at £30.2 million, or £4.02 per capita. The highest funding per capita was in the North East at £5.80 per capita, whilst

⁶⁸ As outlined above the number of projects completed in England is based upon data that includes projects supported by partner funding from the Premier League and FA, and as a result aren't directly comparable to figures in other nations.

London received the least funding and funding per capita at £4.5 million in total and £0.51 per capita, respectively.

To date, a total of £14.7 million has been committed in Scotland across 80 projects, with a funding per capita of £2.79. Wales has seen £6.7 million invested across 123 projects, with a funding per capita of £2.14. £7.0 million has been spent in Northern Ireland on 71 projects at a funding per capita of £3.66. The funding committed within each of these nations rose significantly in FY23/24, and whilst the number of projects also rose, this increase was proportionally less than the increase in total funding, indicating that Delivery Partners in these regions were focusing on delivering larger-scale investment grants during this financial year compared to previous funding years.

5.1.2.2. Grant Size

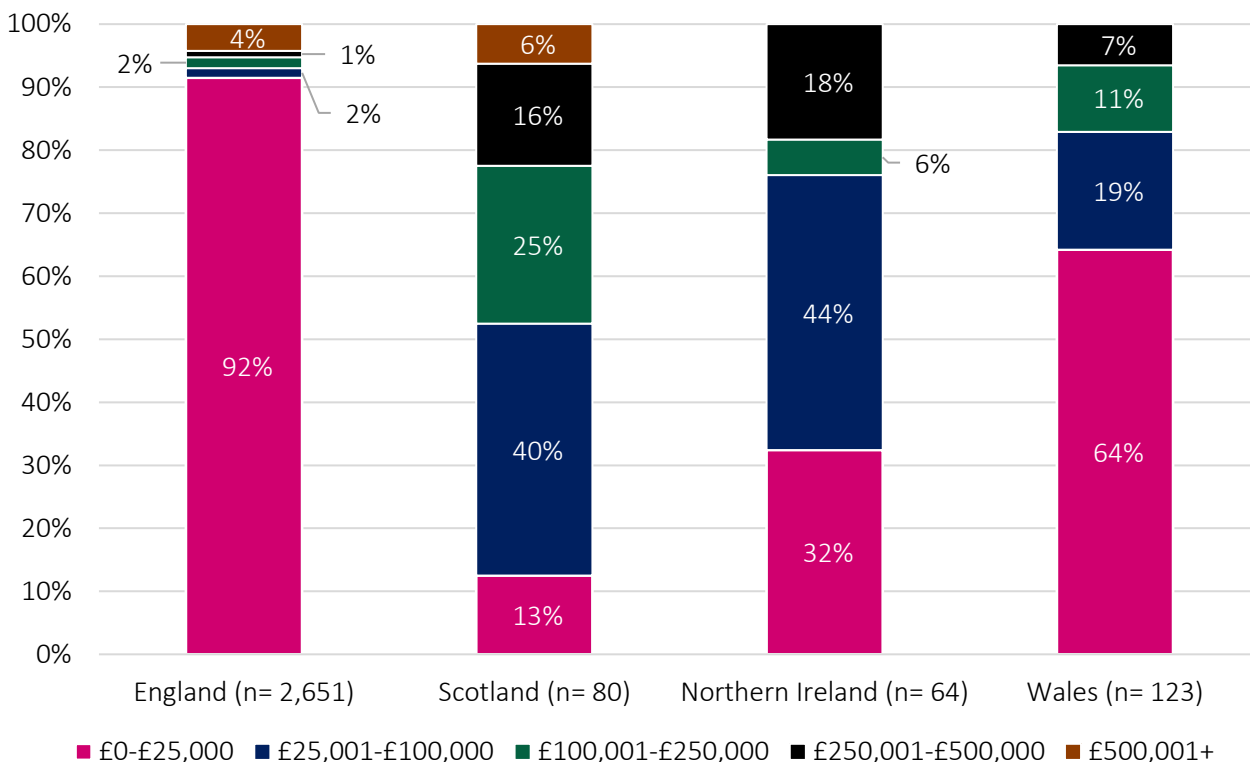
The MSGF Programme funding delivers a range of projects across the Home Nations. These projects will vary in cost and type depending on the needs of local communities in these regions, therefore, it is likely that each nation had a different distribution of grant sizes.

Figure 12 reports the distribution of grant funding by Home Nation through categorisation of grant sizes into bands: £0-£25,000, £25,001-£100,000, £100,001-£250,000, £250,001-£500,000 and £500,001+. Due to the different funding structure and subsequent reporting documentation provided by the Football Foundation in England, the projects in England included in this diagram also comprise of projects delivered through partner investment from the FA and the Premier League.

In total, 2,916 facilities received funding through the MSGF Programme, with an average grant size of C.£61,000. Indeed, the average grant size varied significantly across the four Home Nations. Scotland reported the highest average grant size at c.£190,000, followed by Northern Ireland at c.£98,000, England at c.£57,000, and Wales at c.£55,000.

A considerable proportion (92%) of England's projects received grants of less than £25,000, and these tended to be delivered through funding partners committing projects through their small grant investment schemes. Wales had the next highest percentage of projects using grants of up to £25,000 at 64%, followed by Northern Ireland at 32%, and Scotland at 13%. Because of this allocation, England and Wales together cover 99% of all small grants across all the Home Nations. The percentage distribution of projects with grants valued between £25,001 and £500,000 varied significantly across nations as well, with 4% of projects in England, 36% in Wales, 68% in Northern Ireland and 81% in Scotland falling under this category. Scotland and England were the only nations to deliver grants of over £500,000.

Figure 12: % of Projects Funded by Grant Size across Nations

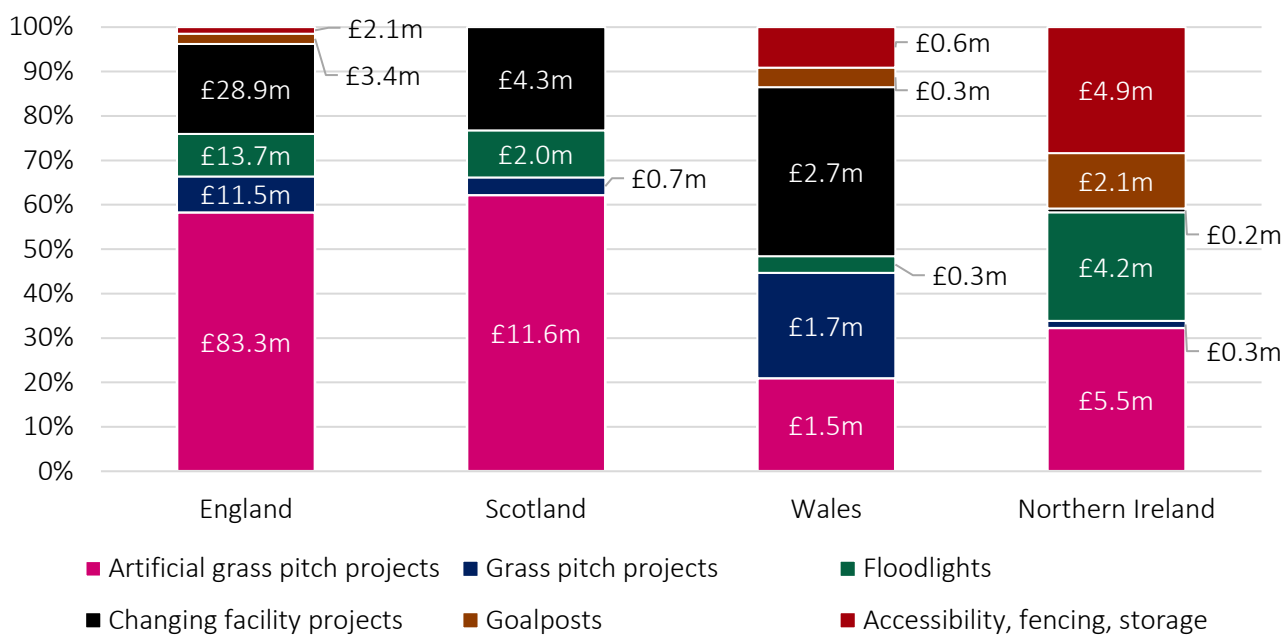


Source: Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programmes information based on publicly available DCMS Programme delivery data: [Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme projects: 2021 to 2025 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/multi-sport-grassroots-facilities-programme-projects-2021-to-2025). Accessed 9th April 2024. Totals may not add up due to rounding

5.1.2.3. Project Type

Figure 13 shows the proportion of projects across different project types. Due to inconsistent or incorrect data found in programme monitoring spreadsheets, including details pertaining to project type, this information may underreport the true distribution of project type across nations. It is possible that projects can cover multiple of the project types listed below. As a result, the total number of projects in each nation does not add up to the true total number of projects reported above. Additionally, this figure includes projects delivered in England through partner investment from the FA and the Premier League.

Figure 13: Funding Committed by Project Types Across Nations



Source: Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programmes information based on publicly available DCMS Programme delivery data: [Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme projects: 2021 to 2025 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/114114/Multi-Sport_Grassroots_Facilities_Programme_projects_2021_to_2025_-_GOV.UK.pdf). Accessed 9th April 2024. Totals may not add up due to rounding. One project can cover multiple project types.

Each nation has taken a different approach to the types of projects that have been funded. As mentioned above, since the Football Foundation’s investment into English facilities is complemented by partner investment from the FA and Premier League whose grants mainly focus on smaller grant projects, a significant proportion of projects in England involve the funding of goalposts. Scotland has the greatest proportion of AGP projects among the Home Nations, with more than half of their funded projects involving AGPs. The most frequent project type in Northern Ireland was also an AGP, whilst the most popular project type in Wales was investment into grass pitches. The least common project types were changing facilities in England and Northern Ireland, goalposts in Scotland, and AGPs in Wales.

Overall, this figure shows that there is a notable difference in the composition of project type across funding nations, and reasons for this are explored further as part of the process evaluation. This may also lead to different expected outcomes across funding nations that correlate with the distribution of project type and the different impacts each project type is expected to deliver.

5.1.2.4. KPI Alignment

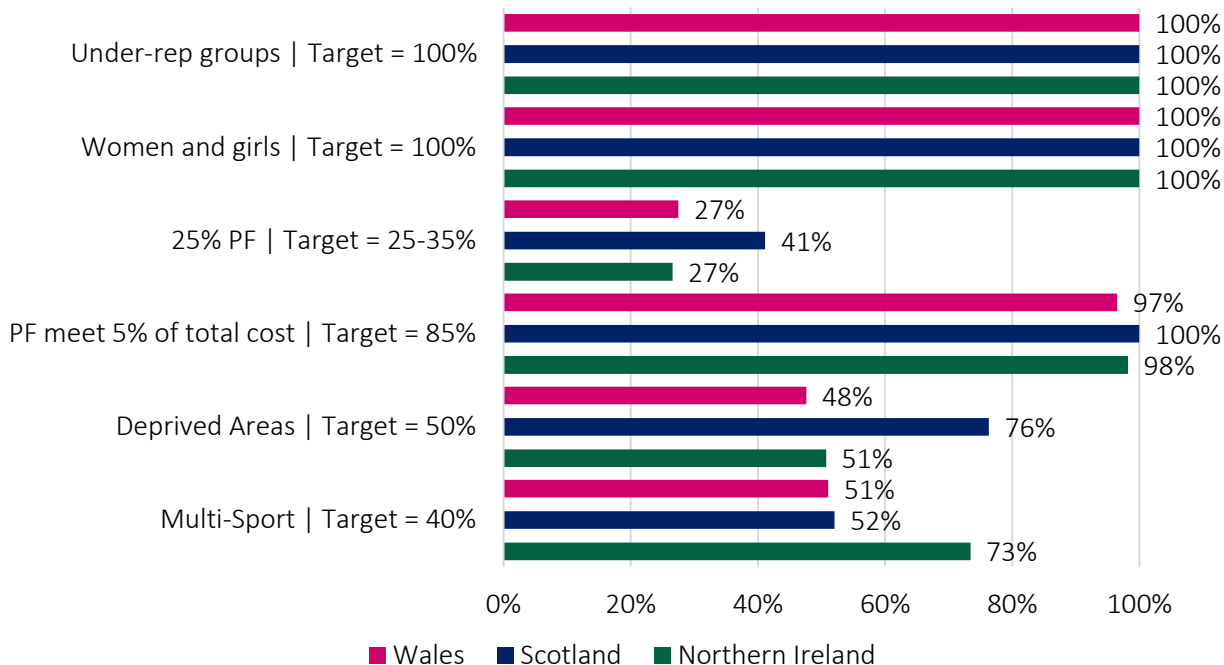
Figure 14 shows the alignment of projects within Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland with the funding KPIs as reported in Programme monitoring data, averaged for FY22/23 and FY23/24.⁶⁹ Every project in Scotland across FY22/23 and FY23/24 was supported by partner funding of at least 5% of the total cost, the majority of which came from the applicant’s own funds, or other funding bodies such as sport councils, local charity trusts and local council. Wales and Northern Ireland similarly exceeded the 85% target, achieving 97% and 98%, respectively.

Out of these nations, Scotland had the highest percentage of projects in deprived areas across FY22/23 and FY23/24, exceeding the target by 26%. According to the monitoring data, Wales slightly undershot the target by 2%, with Northern Ireland marginally over at 51%. The share of projects funded across Wales, Scotland and

⁶⁹ KPI alignment for England is omitted here as it follows a different format, both in terms of how the KPIs are measured and how they are reported. Monitoring data for FY21/22 and funding already allocated for FY24/25 was excluded from this analysis due to being largely incomplete and insufficient.

Northern Ireland with a multi-sport element all comfortably exceeded the 40% target. Overall, Delivery Partners have performed well in terms of alignment with projects funded against the funding KPIs, generally either meeting or exceeding targets across FY22/23 to FY23/24, which helps the Programme deliver on its key aims.

Figure 14: Average of FY22/23 and FY23/24 KPI Alignment Across Nations



Source: DCMS Programme delivery information (as of 3rd April 2024)

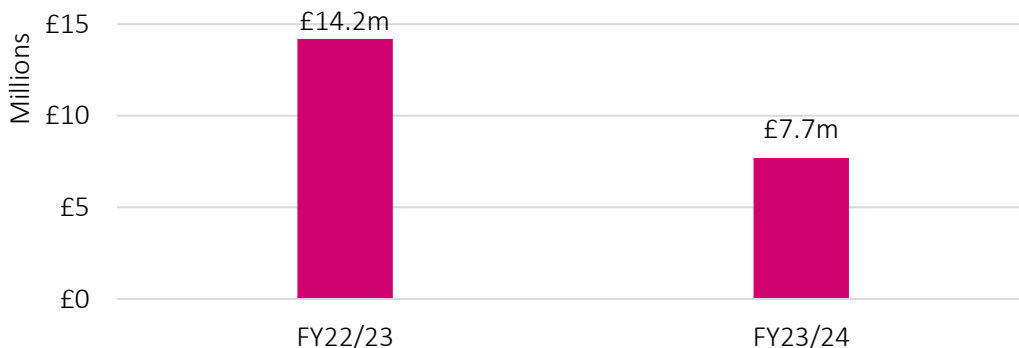
Base: 102 projects in Wales (2 projects excluded due to incomplete data), 55 projects in Scotland (1 project excluded due to incomplete data), 38 projects in Northern Ireland

Further discussion and exploration of the impacts of these funding KPIs are considered as part of the process evaluation in Section 6.

5.2. Park Tennis Court Renovation Programme

5.2.1. Funding Allocation

Figure 15: PTCR Funding Allocation across FYs



Source: PTCR Programme business case documentation

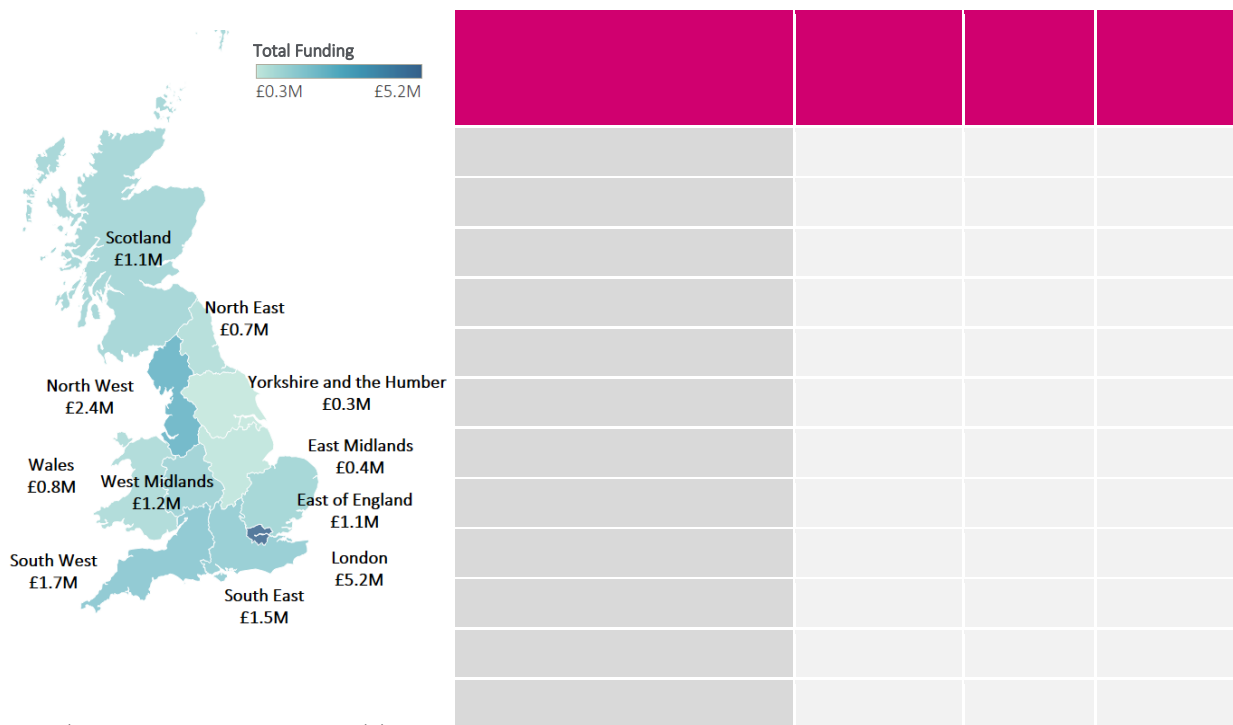
Figure 15 sets out the funding allocation of the PTCR Programme for FY22/23 and FY23/24 as outlined in the funding’s economic case. Nearly double the amount of funding was allocated in FY22/23 at £14.2 million

compared to £7.7 million in FY23/24, giving a total Programme spend of £21.9 million. This funding was also complemented by £8.4 million from the LTA’s tennis Foundation, totalling £30.3 million to renovate and improve park tennis courts across the Great Britain.

5.2.2. Funding Committed

5.2.2.1. Courts Funded by Region

Figure 16: PTCR - Total Commitment by nation/region, including funding per capita



Source: Park Tennis Court Renovation delivery data. Population of UK regions: [UK population by region 2022 | Statista](#) (Accessed 23rd April 2024). Grant funding total figures rounded to the nearest £0.1m, and funding per capita figures rounded to the nearest £0.01. Includes projects supported by DCMS funding, LTA TF funding, LA contributions, or a combination of both/all. Note: due to timelines of data sources, there is a one-month lag between courts renovated in this figure and courts renovated in Figure 19. Bracketed numbers indicate the number of parks/sites per region e.g. 586 courts delivered across 169 sites in London.

As of February 2024, the PTCR Programme monitoring data reported that 1,792 courts across 552 parks have been renovated as part of the Programme in England. The region with the largest number of courts that received funding was London with 586, with Yorkshire and the Humber the region with the least number of funded courts. Additionally, 96 courts in Scotland were refurbished along with 89 courts in Wales.

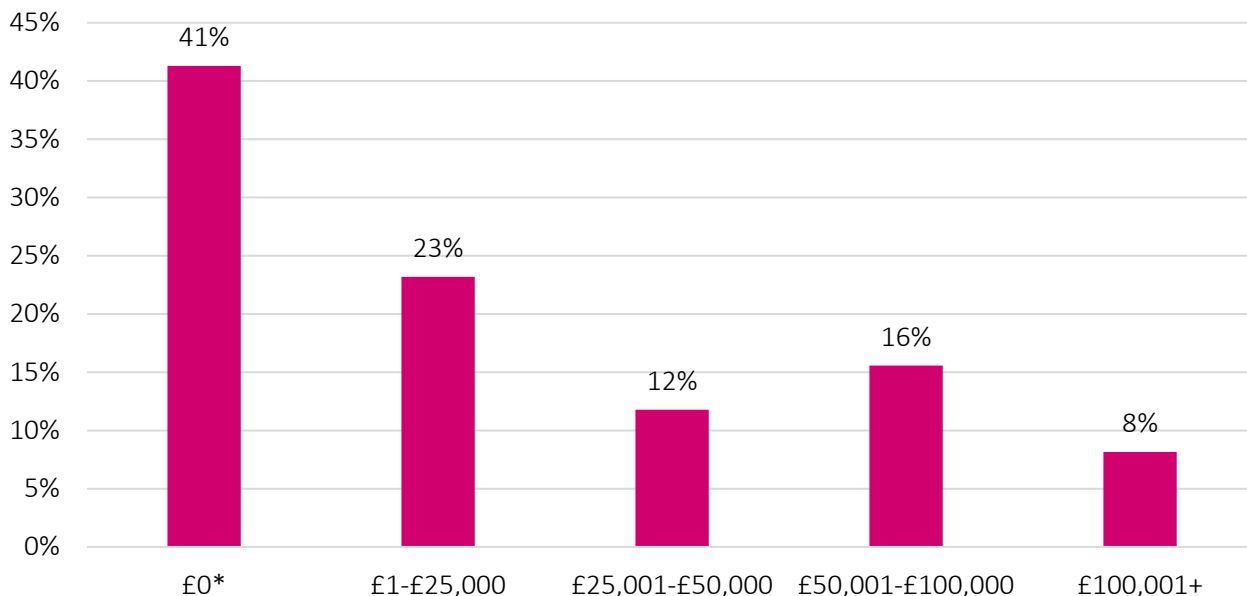
5.2.2.2. Grant Size

Figure 17 indicates the difference sized grants committed by the PTCR Programme. Firstly, it should be noted that a grant size of £0 is not a project with zero cost. These projects use other funds or resource not directly allocated to the PTCR Programme, and thus have no associated cost attributable to the Programme. The most common grant size costs were these types of projects, covering 41% of projects. These renovations involved either a gate install, an online booking system active at the site, or both, with zero cost attributable to the Programme. 51% of projects totalled between £1 and £100,000, with 8% of projects funded costing over £100,000. The cost of these projects exceeds the highest average unit costs estimated by the LTA in the economic case for the Programme (£30,000 for an unplayable court).⁷⁰ This has contributed to the Programme’s

⁷⁰ A more detailed discussion of this is in Section 6.2.

funding gap, which stood at £2.2 million as of February 2024, and conversations are ongoing on how to cover this shortfall.

Figure 17: Grant Size under the PTCR Programme



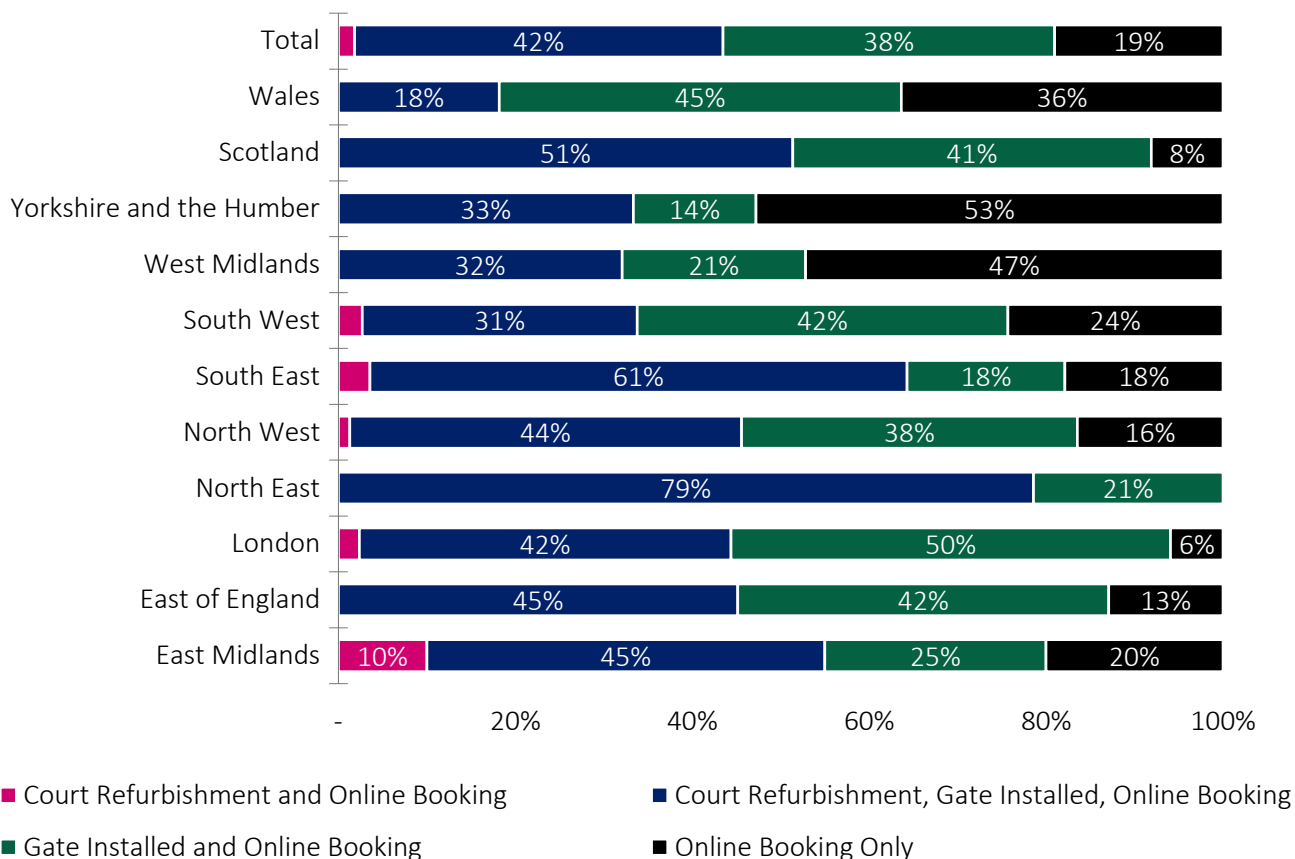
Source: Park Tennis Court Renovation delivery data. Base n = 552. Population of UK regions: [UK population by region 2022 | Statista](#) (Accessed 23rd April 2024). Includes projects supported by DCMS funding, LTA TF funding, LA contributions or a combination of both/all * £0 refers to the use of funds or resource other than those allocated to the PTCR Programme. These projects will have associated costs and resource requirements, but since these have no impact on the PTCR Programme’s funding allocation, these are reported as £0 Base: 552 parks. Totals may not add up due to rounding

5.2.2.3. Funded Project Types

Figure 18 displays the types of projects funded by the PTCR Programme across the different regions. 552 projects had been completed as of February 2024 as part of the PTCR Programme. The most common project type being a court refurbishment, gate installation and online booking system, with a project involving a court refurbishment and online booking system without gate installation being the least common.

The PTCR Programme has a greater uniformity of project types compared to MSGF. This is likely due to a variety of reasons, including there being fewer types of projects. It is also possible that since only one Delivery Partner is responsible for project selection, a more consistent approach to identification and project selections has been taken to align with the aims of the funding and for ease of delivery.

Figure 18: PTCR - Project Type across Regions



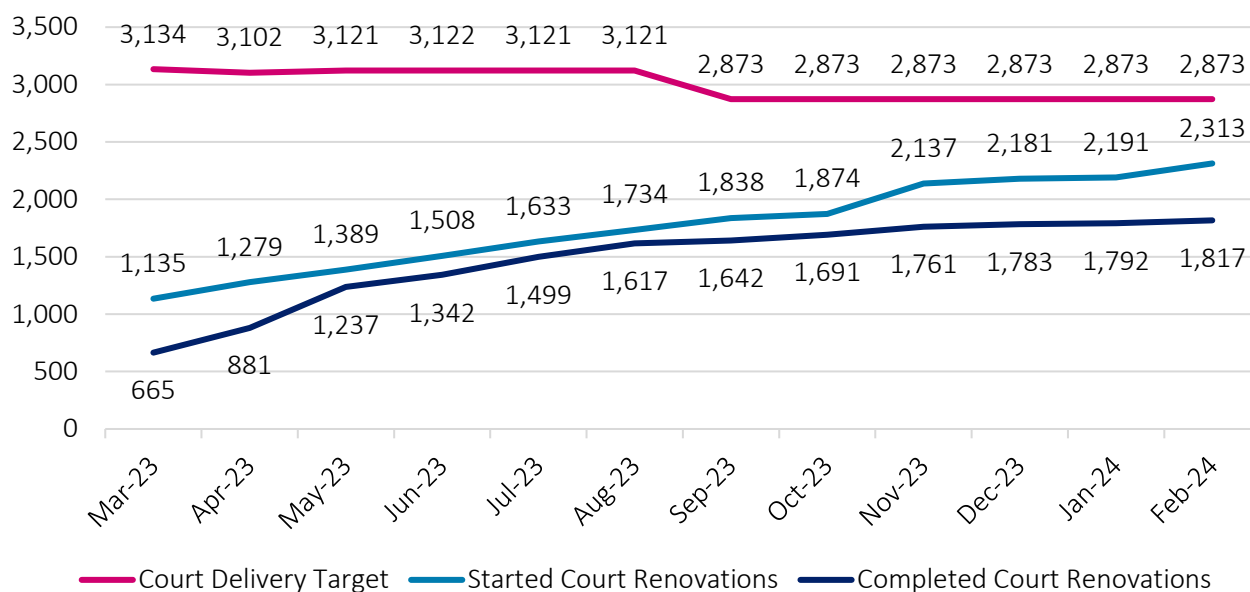
Source: Park Tennis Court Renovation information based on publicly available DCMS Programme delivery data up to date as of February 2024: [Park Tennis Court Programme: completed projects - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/park-tennis-court-programme-completed-projects). Accessed 3rd April 2024. Base n = 552. Totals may not add up due to rounding

5.2.2.4. Project Delivery Targets against Projects Started and Completed

Figure 19 shows the PTCR Programme delivery targets for the number of courts renovated relative to projects started and completed based on the monthly delivery updates. Projects started and completed do not start at zero since the first report made available was from nearly a year into the Programme, but also included 465 projects started and completed from the LTA TF’s pre-2022 investment. The delivery target was reduced in September 2023 from 3,121 to 2,873 with approval from Ministers. This change may have stemmed from various issues, including overspend relative to estimated targets set at the start of the funding which generated a shortfall of £3.7 million. This was combined with a lack of local authority engagement with the Programme, leading to slow response times and missed deadlines⁷¹. The graph shows steady growth of projects started and completing towards the delivery target for the Programme. The increase in projects being completed each month has reduced as the Programme nears its completion. Conversations were ongoing to fill the £2.2 million shortfall as of February 2024.

⁷¹ More information relating to the processes involved in the PTCR Programme can be found in Section 0

Figure 19: PTCR Court Delivery Targets against Court Renovation Started and Completed



Source: Analysis of PTCR Programme Delivery Reports. Projects started and completed includes 465 projects started and completed from the LTA TF’s pre-2022 investment

5.3. Lionesses Futures Fund

As of 01 April 2024, there was a shortlist of 40 sites identified by the Football Foundation for possible funding through the LFF. These sites will be invited to complete an application for the LFF which will be received and reviewed by an independent panel. This panel will judge the application against the existing criteria of the MSGF Programme, as well as additional criteria from an LFF-specific project assessment matrix that aligns with the goals of the LFF. Alongside this process, there will be extensive technical guidance based on Sport England’s advice for inclusive facilities⁷².

Unlike the MSGF Programme, these sites will have site-specific intervention targets to improve outcomes for women and girls, including reserved peak sessions and women and girls only evenings, and will meet a target of 30% peak sessions for women, with a stretch target of 50%. Sites must also nominate a women and girls lead at the site as well as establish and commit to a full player pathway. Many key outcomes will be monitored on an ongoing basis by the FF for reporting against their women and girls’ success measures. The FF have also agreed and committed to a range of additional post-award assurance processes to ensure continued alignment with the aims of the funding.

As the primary aim of the funding, tracking participation outcomes will be important to establish a comprehensive evidence base to evaluate the Fund’s success. To aid in this process, the FF intends to use booking data for sites funded by the LFF using the ClubSpark system. There are a range of planned data collection points for this system, and some of these key variables have been included in the list below:

- Facility information such as:
 - Name
 - Facility type
 - Capacity in peak and off-peak slots
- Booking information such as:

⁷² [Accessible facilities | Sport England](#)

- Time of booking
- Booking activity
- Team information (gender, age, disability)
- Financial information such as:
 - Facility income

The currently planned key delivery milestones for the LFF are outlined below:

Table 10: Key Delivery Milestones for the Lionesses Futures Fund

Date	Milestone
29th November 2023	Public announcement of commitment to funding
January 2024	Addendum to business case approved at Finance Committee and confirmed to the FF
February 2024	40 sites shortlisted for funding from window 8, 9 and 10 of the FF's pipeline
April 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Window 8 applications reviewed by independent panel⁷³ and grants awarded
July 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Window 9 applications reviewed by independent panel and awarded
October 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Window 10 applications reviewed by independent panel and awarded
January 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Window 11 applications reviewed by independent panel and awarded
March 2025*	All sites to have grants committed and signed
June 2025*	All sites started
December 2025*	All sites to be operational

Source: Lionesses Futures Fund milestones based on documents shared by DCMS. Subject to change by DCMS.

* Most sites from windows 8 and 9 will reach these milestones earlier. Therefore, these milestones are the last possible dates. This will be used to inform the early warning indicators for this part of the Fund, which are currently still under development

⁷³ The panel is the FF's Grants Panel, currently consisting of Paul Spooner (Independent Chair), Nick Perchard (Premier League Representative, Phil Woodward (The FA Representative), Patrick Brosnan (Sport England Representative), Richard Smale (Independent member), Rahul Bissoonauth (Independent member), Sue Catton (Independent member) and Sue Bowers (Independent member (Source: [Our trustees | Football Foundation](#)).

6. Process Evaluation: Emerging Findings

This chapter considers both the MSGF and PTCR Programmes and the learnings from design, delivery and implementation explored through this process evaluation. It focuses on understanding the extent to which these factors enabled effective and efficient delivery of the intended outputs and outcomes of the Programmes, and the learnings which can be applied to the future delivery of both these Programmes and future DCMS and wider Government funding.

The key emerging findings below are set out thematically and are broken down by Programme; with an aim to clearly convey the extent to which the Programmes have been delivered efficiently and effectively in key areas of design, implementation, and delivery.

It is crucial to note that although the emerging findings for the MSGF Programme should at least be considered by all Delivery Partners, they are particularly applicable to the Cymru Football Foundation, the Scottish Football Association, and the Irish Football Association.

At this stage, this evaluation does not explore the design, delivery, and implementation of the Lionesses Futures Fund. The first wave of data collection covering the MSGF Programme has been completed and results presented in this interim report, but future process evaluation activity related to the Lionesses Futures Fund will follow in subsequent waves of evaluation fieldwork.⁷⁴

Process Evaluation: Key Emerging Findings

Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme

- **Early Programme Development:** Despite limited capacity and experience of delivering similar Programmes initially, DCMS launched the Programme with allocations of funding in FY21/22, quickly developing key relationships with stakeholders and progressing design and delivery of the Programme to enable funding allocations. (DCMS & E/S/W/NI)
- **Funding KPIs:** KPIs used as part of the assessment criteria for awarding funding were **perceived as a facilitator in driving the right behaviour** from applicants and Delivery Partners; **generally understood and accepted**; and **encouraged funding to be delivered in focus areas** to benefit those from **under-represented groups** and those within communities impacted by **higher-than-average levels of deprivation**. (DCMS & E/S/W/NI)
- **Deprivation and Multi-Sport:** However, the KPIs related to **deprivation and multi-sport could have been more clearly defined**: for example, the level of granularity on which deprivation is defined, at times, caused issues for selection of appropriate projects; clarity around what constitutes a ‘multi-sport’ project, and whether there is to be differentiation between ‘sport’ and ‘physical activity’, has similarly impacted potential project selection. (DCMS & S/W/NI)
- **Application Process:** Application processes for funding were unique to each Delivery Partner, which led to **a lack of consistency and comparability across nations**, although **a standardised approach could present practical challenges** given the differences between nations and Delivery Partners in terms of levels of resource, nation size and the total amount of funding to deliver. Processes also substantially differed in complexity and length. In some cases during the early phases of the Programme, this meant applicants (particularly volunteers) felt they faced a burdensome application process. (S/W/NI)

⁷⁴ More information on timelines of the evaluation can be found in Section 0

- **Application Process:** Iterations and improvements have been made to application processes over time, with key learnings and insights shared effectively across Delivery Partners. (E/S/W/NI)
- **Panel Representation:** Decisions to award funding and the distribution of the funding have been conducted in different ways across nations. Whilst grant panels have iteratively improved in terms of transparency and diversity of membership, some Delivery Partners felt that more could be done to improve representation by ensuring greater inclusion of a wide range of perspectives and experiences in the decision-making process in all nations. (S/W/NI)
- **Collaboration:** Overall, there has been strong communication and collaboration from all parties, and a clear willingness and enthusiasm to work together to achieve the best possible outcomes. Asks of Delivery Partners have been stretching at times, but stakeholders have been professional, polite, and proactive in rising to the challenge. (DCMS & E/S/W/NI)
- **Project Delivery:** Project delivery has been perceived to be effective, but improvements focused on additional technical expertise and flexibility around the allocation of funding could help improve the efficiency of future delivery. (DCMS & S/W/NI)
- **Programme Monitoring Data:** Programme monitoring has significantly improved since the Programme launched, and stakeholders engage with the regular processes of reporting and monitoring key updates in Programme delivery. However, there are still ongoing issues with the quality and timeliness of data submission from Delivery Partners to DCMS, with consequences for the value and usability of this data for stakeholders, as well as creating an additional burden for DCMS and Delivery Partner staff in resolving data issues. (DCMS & E/S/W/NI)
- **Stakeholder Relationships:** Relationships with facilities and local communities have been improved and strengthened by the Programme, and Delivery Partners have widened their networks and understanding of sports participation across the UK. (E/S/W/NI)
- **Achievement of Outcomes:** Stakeholders universally agree that participation and physical activity has increased at funded facilities, although acknowledge that further causal analysis is required to determine additionality. For example, some DCMS and Delivery Partner staff suggested that the impacts may have been more significant for existing players, rather than encouraging new players. Funding to date has sometimes focused on clubs with existing facilities as opposed to areas where no facilities currently existed, the latter potentially being a significant aspect of further growth in participation to ensure that those in areas without a sports provision can get involved in physical activity and sport. (DCMS & E/S/W/NI)
- **Overall:** Overall, whilst recognising this is an interim evaluation, the evidence suggests delivery of the Programme has become iteratively more efficient from FY21/22 to date, with many key learnings and improvements implemented. Evidence also suggests effective delivery of the Programme, but the extent to which this continues and improves is subject to ongoing delivery through the final Programme phases during FY24/25. (DCMS & E/S/W/NI)

Park Tennis Court Renovation Programme

- **Early Programme Development:** The initial development and design of the PTCR Programme was less efficient than it might have been, internal collaboration with commercial colleagues in particular created delays. DCMS has now overcome these issues and improved processes and planning subsequently.
- **Funding KPIs:** The LTA utilised an appropriate process with relevant KPIs for identification and selection of sites to be renovated, with input from a range of stakeholders. Technical assessments of projects and associated cost estimates underestimated the extent of required work and funding on a number of

occasions. However, the LTA and DCMS were effective in appointing a new third party to manage the risks from inaccurate technical assessments to overall delivery. A funding shortfall remains for the Programme, and talks are ongoing on how to rectify this funding gap.

- **Collaboration:** Communication and collaboration across stakeholders was a core strength of the Programme's delivery right from inception, and dedicated resource for the Programme from both the LTA and DCMS has significantly improved the efficiency and effectiveness of delivery. Officials have also been professional, polite and proactive amongst often stretching asks.
- **Project Delivery:** Project delivery has been perceived to be efficient and effective, with a high volume of court renovations completed within a constrained period of time. The LTA have utilised their experience and knowledge and adapted quickly to issues that have arisen. Delays have often resulted from stakeholders external to delivery of the Programme and outside of DCMS' or the LTA's control.
- **Programme Monitoring Data:** Programme monitoring has been straightforward and positive, and stakeholders have agreed on the accuracy and timeliness of data being shared. Whilst there have been issues in funding allocation and reporting against targets and allocations for funding, these have been dealt with appropriately.
- **Stakeholder Relationships:** LTA and DCMS staff believed relationships with a broad range of stakeholders had improved as a result of this funding, largely due to proactive communication and a transparent approach to decision-making.
- **Achievement of Outcomes:** Sentiment amongst stakeholders acknowledged the positive effect on achieving an uptick in participation at the courts in receipt of this funding, whilst acknowledging the causal link between the Programme and overall participation impacts will be more challenging to determine. There was an appreciation that the Programme may need to go further than solely renovations, also acknowledging that further proactive initiatives, such as Free Park Tennis, would be key to sustaining this uptick long-term.
- **Overall:** Overall, whilst recognising this is an interim evaluation, the evidence suggests initial challenges were overcome and the Programme has been efficiently delivered. The effectiveness of the Programme will be better understood with greater booking data collection and analysis.

6.1. The Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme

6.1.1. Early Development of the Programme

This section considers the early development of the Programme, focusing on initial approvals and assurance of the Programme through governance routes before implementation. Overall, DCMS was effective in establishing the Programme against challenging timelines with limited resource and experience, designing and making the case for the Programme and receiving approvals at all relevant stages of internal governance.

With the announcement of the Programme in March 2021, the initial focus was on progressing the relevant internal governance and assurance processes. DCMS staff who were part of the team at the inception stage (comprising three people) commented on the level of experience and size of the team, noting that early phases of the Programme evolved through 'learning-by-doing', and willingness to take on additional responsibility outside of job descriptions became critical to the Programme's progression. Whilst the ask of DCMS staff was significant and capacity limited, overall, stakeholders across DCMS and wider Government commented that the team had capably and successfully established the Programme against tight deadlines. Since the initial announcement of the Programme, resourcing of the DCMS internal team gradually and consistently increased,

with the majority of DCMS staff feeling that there was now an effective balance of skills of policy, programme management and analysis that enables the team to work well. Staff were keen to encourage further collaboration and communication between the policy and programme management team, as well as analytical colleagues, recognising that this could be further improved, particularly at times of peak activity. Whilst the majority of DCMS staff felt that the Programme team is now much more adequately resourced to deliver with twelve members of staff, there was some acknowledgement of the constraints still felt by the team that could benefit from further resources.

“I understand that government do the most they can with as little resource as possible, but I feel the team is missing 1 or 2 people. Though in terms of the capability of the team, the team is in a good place...” (DCMS)

Stakeholders from DCMS and other Government Departments (OGDs) also highlighted the funding mechanism and delivery structure selected for implementation of the Programme (i.e. through chosen Delivery Partners in each of the Home Nations), and the relative inexperience of these organisations in working together and delivering capital investment projects. The exception was the Football Foundation (England) who have significant experience in delivering capital investment grants, having done so for more than 20 years. Extensive discussions took place with the Football Foundation when designing and developing the Programme. Many stakeholders also mentioned the importance of forming strong relationships internally and externally across organisations in the early phases, particularly as the size and shape of teams changed over time. For further detail on internal and external relationships, please see Section 6.1.5.

Observation: continue to champion and enable knowledge sharing amongst Delivery Partners; reviewing DCMS internal delivery processes, communication, and resourcing, to enable teams to be empowered and with the appropriate skills and experience. (DCMS & E/S/W/NI)

6.1.2. Assessment Criteria

This section focuses on the assessment criteria developed to evaluate funding applications. Overall, DCMS developed an appropriate set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) agreed amongst stakeholders that gave direction to the decision-making panels in awarding funding. There were specific improvements that could have been made to clarify particular KPIs with regards to deprivation and multi-sport, but overall, these were appropriate in the context of the funding and aligned with the Programme’s objectives.

As part of development and design of the Programme, assessment criteria to evaluate funding were agreed by DCMS, HMT and Delivery Partners. These KPIs differed slightly between England’s Football Foundation, and those adopted by the other Home Nation Delivery Partners, the Irish FA, Scottish FA, and Cymru Football Foundation. Those adopted are detailed as below:

- **Football Foundation KPIs**
 - **Multi-Sport:** A third of the total amount of funding to projects with a multi-sport element, i.e. sustained usage by at least one sport in addition to football;
 - **Deprivation:** 50% of total amount of funding to projects located in the 40% of most deprived local authorities;
 - **Women and Girls:** 100% of funding applications demonstrate a clear commitment to ensure their facilities are accessible for women and girls (if they are not already) on an equal basis/to meet demand;
 - **Underrepresented Groups:** 75% of projects to engage with underrepresented groups;
 - **Clubs and Communities:** 38% of projects to invest in, or benefit, club & community organisations; and
 - **On/Off Pitch:** 75% of funding to be allocated towards ‘on pitch’ items, with a quantified goal of 5,000 new quality pitches to be achieved.
- **Irish FA, Scottish FA and Cymru Football Foundation KPIs**

- **Investment in Multi-Sport Projects:** 40% of total amount of funding to projects with a multi-sport element, i.e. sustained usage by at least one sport in addition to football;
- **Investment In Deprived Areas:** 50% of total amount of projects that have received funding and are located in 40% of the most deprived local authorities;
- **Partner Funding Secured:**
 - **1:** 85% of projects commit 5% of partner funding: total amount of projects that have committed partner funding equal to or greater than 5% of the total project cost;
 - **2:** 35% partner funding on average across the programme: this is an aspirational target combining partner funding across Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, with contributions aggregated to track the average;
- **Equal Access for Women and Girls:** 100% of funding applications demonstrate a clear commitment to ensure their facilities are accessible for women and girls (if they are not already) on an equal basis/to meet demand; and
- **Equal Access for Underrepresented Groups:** 100% of funding applications demonstrate a clear commitment to ensure their facilities are accessible for underrepresented groups (if they are not already) on an equal basis/to meet demand.

6.1.2.1. Multi-Sport

The multi-sport KPI, requiring that there must be a multi-sport element to at least 40% of the funded projects, had a more varied response from individuals across Delivery Partners and DCMS. Broadly, there was an acceptance of it being necessary to drive sports participation across all sports, given the Programme's objectives. However, some individuals felt that the definition of a multi-sport project was at times unclear which, occasionally, made it difficult to assess applications. Whilst some stakeholders in DCMS and Delivery Partners raised the potential conflict between the KPI and the interests of Delivery Partners as football-focused organisations, other individuals felt that this enabled Delivery Partners to consider applications in the appropriate context of the relative level of demand for football facilities.

Case Study Example: Chapel Gate, Bournemouth University

In 2023, Bournemouth University installed a supersize artificial grass pitch with shock pads allowing for multi-sport use (football, rugby, American football, lacrosse, ultimate frisbee). Whilst football has been the main beneficiary so far, multi-sport use is increasing. The number of users is up an estimated 15-25% to around 4,000 people playing sport there weekly, not counting additional spectators.

*"In terms of the pitch itself, that was designed in such way that it provides multi-sport benefits. So, it's got crash mats for rugby playing, and it's got lines for various sports ... there is just a multitude of disciplines operating on site."
(Facility manager)*

Despite mild reservations around its relevance, the Irish FA, Scottish FA, and Cymru Football Foundation have all exceeded the 40% target for this KPI, with an average of 73%, 52% and 51% of projects, respectively, including a multi-sport element over the three phases of the Programme to date.⁷⁵ England's Football Foundation similarly exceeded their own multi-sport target of 33%, having achieved 41% and 58% in FY22 and FY23, respectively (50% on average).⁷⁶ Across the Home Nations, these largely consisted of projects involving multi-use artificial grass developments, or more general off-pitch improvements to the overall facility that could benefit any type of physical activity that occurs at the venue, such as accessibility improvements, a new or upgraded pavilion, solar panels, or new or upgraded floodlight systems.

*"We've delivered a lot of great projects with multi-sport elements, and I feel we have done really well at meeting this KPI overall."
(Delivery Partner)*

⁷⁵ Sourced from DCMS programme reporting spreadsheets and cover FY22/23 and FY23/24 KPI tracking, as of 3rd April – FY21/22 and FY24/25 excluded due to incomplete and insufficient data.

⁷⁶ Sourced from the FF's programme reporting spreadsheets.

6.1.2.2. Deprived Areas

Delivery Partners and DCMS staff broadly agreed on this KPI being both useful and important, as it acknowledges that some areas are in greater need of investment than others. However, many felt that the level of granularity at which the definition of deprivation was set at was too generalised. Stakeholders felt that the levels of deprivation within one local authority can differ substantially, and that defining deprivation at this geography was therefore too broad to effectively target funds towards the intended kind of projects. Delivery Partners gave a number of specific examples where they felt a particular facility or local area had been disadvantaged by the definition of the KPI, and in at least one instance confirmed that a facility that a Delivery Partner deemed an appropriate recipient for funding, was unable to obtain funding as an explicit result of needing to meet these KPIs.

“I don’t agree with using the deprivation level of the local authority. For example, we funded a project in [geographical area] because it is in [relevant local authority] which is deemed deprived, yet this specific area is in fact in the [nation’s wealthiest] top 10%.” (Delivery Partner)

DCMS stakeholders noted that extensive discussions and engagement with stakeholders had taken place in the development and agreement of these KPIs for the Programme, but acknowledged the inherent difficulty in defining a single KPI that would be appropriate in all circumstances, recognising the range and diversity of projects that were to be funded. However, overall, DCMS and Delivery Partners were in agreement that the purpose and intent of this KPI was appropriate, and on balance had improved the overall distribution of investment across sites.

“The deprivation KPI needs some work, but generally really happy with it.” (Delivery Partner)

6.1.2.3. Women and Girls

Universally, Delivery Partners and DCMS staff agreed on the importance and relevance of the requirement for projects to demonstrate a commitment to equal access for women and girls. Indeed, in the cases of the Irish FA, Scottish FA, and Cymru Football Foundation⁷⁷, 100% of projects approved for funding have been reported as having met this criterion, with England’s Football Foundation coming under their target in FY22 at 86% to then achieving 100% in FY23.⁷⁸ There was a shared observation across Delivery Partners that participation of women and girls could potentially be impacted by sub-standard changing facilities and the appropriateness of venues for these players, and that this KPI had helped reinforce the importance of consideration of this with facilities seeking funding. A small number of stakeholders expressed potential difficulties in evidencing this as part of funding applications for specific types of investment (e.g. car park upgrades or online booking systems) but acknowledged that the overall importance of the KPI, and encouraging this kind of participation, was a clear priority.

“Although I do acknowledge that pitches are the true drivers of participation, at the same time if women and girls turn up to a shoddy car park or changing room, they may not get as far as the pitch.” (Delivery Partner)

6.1.2.4. Underrepresented Groups

Delivery Partners agreed on the importance of this KPI, which aligned with many of their own organisational priorities. Many expressed that the observed uptick in participation amongst underrepresented groups was a significant benefit of the Programme, though some Delivery Partners felt that there is more that could be done to augment this. Similar to the women and girls KPI, it was felt that the projects which focused on improving

⁷⁷ Sourced from DCMS programme reporting spreadsheets and cover FY22/23 and FY23/24 KPI tracking (excluding 3 FY23/24 projects with incomplete data: 2 from Wales, 1 from Scotland) – FY21/22 and FY24/25 excluded due to incomplete and insufficient data.

⁷⁸ As per consolidated reporting figures provide in the Football Foundation Board Pack shared with DCMS, looking at post-award KPIs in FY22 and FY23.

infrastructure beyond the pitch (e.g. changing room developments, toilet blocks) seemed to have the most impact on engaging underrepresented groups, rather than pitch developments. As with the women and girls KPI too, across FY22/23 and FY23/24, the Irish FA, Scottish FA, and Cymru Football Foundation each achieved the 100% target of funding projects with a clear commitment to ensure accessibility for underrepresented groups.⁷⁹ In the case of the Football Foundation, with a target 75% of all projects having this commitment, they reached 55% in FY22 and 83% in FY23 (69% average).

Delivery Partners praised the existence of this KPI in its ability to drive progressive conversations amongst clubs and other applicant organisations. They felt it enabled them to influence these outcomes at project-level, by setting the expectation from the offset that they would like a project to engage with underrepresented groups, enabling them to effectively achieve these outcomes actively, rather than passively.

“[The KPIs] definitely drive the right behaviours... they enable the right kind of conversations with the applicant from day one to drive the project in the right ways to serve the community.” (Delivery Partner)

However, some stakeholders suggested that, whilst the KPI aligned with their own organisational values, their organisation could benefit from an improved specialism and general upskilling in Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) matters to enable them to effectively maximise the impact of these projects and engage these broader user bases.

“Yes [I feel the team has the right skills and experience to deliver], but there may be a slight exception from the underrepresented groups perspective. From an EDI lens, I would like to see more people within the team that could provide this experience for us to then improve upon.” (Delivery Partner)

In summary, the above perceptions of the Programme KPIs demonstrate that they have been effective in driving the right behaviours for the distribution of funding across facilities in the Home Nations. Acknowledging that there have been concerns about precise definitions and clarity of KPIs, particularly deprivation and multi-sport, significant work was initially undertaken, and continues to be undertaken, to explain and review these in the context of any concerns raised. Indeed, stakeholders themselves acknowledged that these concerns were not specific to the Programme’s approach to defining these KPIs, and that across the wider sector there is no clear consensus on the most appropriate and useful way to define and implement these types of KPIs.

Observation: providing greater guidance to Delivery Partners and potential funding applicants on what constitutes as a ‘multi-sport’ project, to give more clarity on what can be delivered. (S/W/NI)

Observation: review the suitability of the deprivation KPI and its geographical granularity. This could potentially better account for socio-economic variations within local authorities. (DCMS)

Observation: upskill and train staff in equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) matters to enable them to effectively maximise the impact of these projects by engaging broader user bases. (DCMS & E/S/W/NI)

6.1.3. Application Process

This section looks at the application processes developed by DCMS and its Delivery Partners for applicants across the UK applying for funding. For this section in particular, although the emerging findings from the process evaluation for the MSGF Programme should at least be considered by all Delivery Partners as well as DCMS, there are instances where particular observations may be more relevant to specific Delivery Partners.

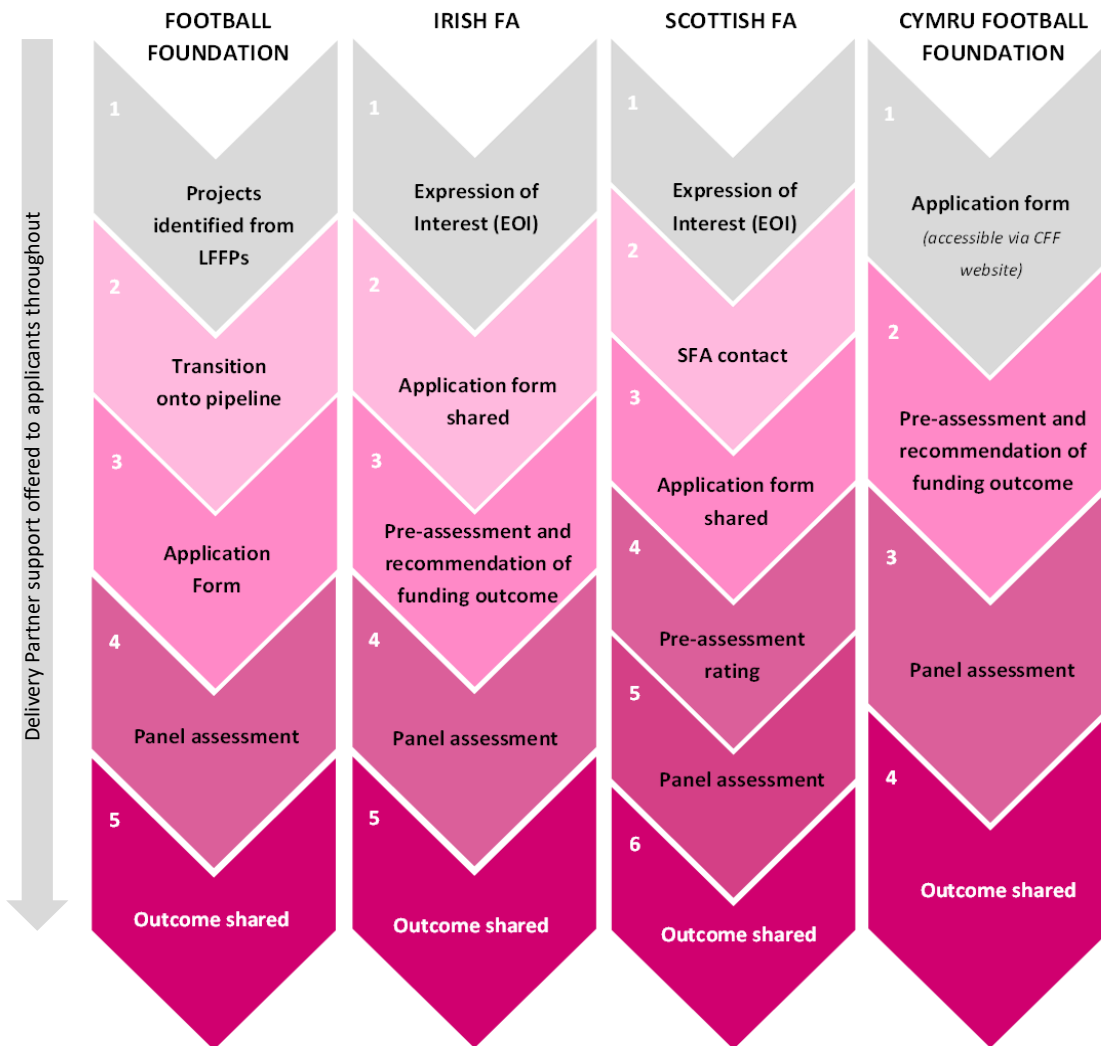
⁷⁹ Excluding 3 FY23/24 projects with incomplete data: 2 from Wales, 1 from Scotland.

This findings from Section 6.1.3 are most relevant to the Scottish FA, Cymru Football Foundation and the Irish FA.

Overall, the initial processes were inconsistent and often burdensome for Delivery Partner staff and applicants alike. However, as the Programme progressed, significant iterative improvements were made to application processes, reducing their length and complexity, improving accessibility, and progressing towards consistency across Home Nations where possible. There was still more that could have been done, particularly on consistency of processes across Home Nations.

Each Delivery Partner in the four Home Nations took a different approach in determining the projects that would be awarded a grant through the Programme. DCMS and Delivery Partners worked together before the first wave of annual funding to agree the most appropriate way of assessing funding applications in each Home Nation. Stakeholders commented on the Football Foundation's (the MSGF Delivery Partner in England) experience and maturity as a Delivery Partner, with the most experience of delivering similar kinds of investments previously. The Football Foundation is also funded in a different way to other Delivery Partners, and therefore chose to incorporate the application and awarding process of MSGF grants into their standard process for grant administration, with the other Delivery Partners developing their own bespoke processes. A summary of the key steps for each Delivery Partner been presented in Figure 20, with detailed information specifically covering the processes of each Delivery Partner to identify projects, process applications and review at panel outlined in Annex 8.

Figure 20: Visualisation of the different application processes adopted by each Delivery Partner



Source: Findings from conversations and interviews with Delivery Partners

6.1.3.1. Design of Application Processes

DCMS and Delivery Partner staff commented on the suitability of Delivery Partners to be able to design and implement bespoke application processes. Whilst some stakeholders expressed benefits of implementing a standardised approach, it was felt that there were a number of benefits to this adaptable approach. Primarily that the significant differences in the resourcing, organisational structures and operational approaches allowed Delivery Partners to appropriately design their own processes based on their own internal structure, whilst having autonomy to action improvements identified through feedback from their users, or from practical experience.

However, a number of stakeholders described this as a reluctance by some Delivery Partners to adopt a standardised approach to assessing and awarding applications that had implications for the effective and efficient administration of the Programme. These concerns primarily focused on consistency and interpretability of data, decisions and monitoring of projects across Delivery Partners. Challenges would arise when inconsistencies in approach made it difficult to objectively compare the progress of each of the Home Nations. For example, whilst all projects across the Home Nations were marked against broadly the same KPIs, there was no guarantee that this would replicate into the same assessment approach due to there being no

standard set of questions, or threshold of information required from applicants to support their applications. Whilst some Delivery Partners adopted similar approaches than others, this overall ambiguity around approaches challenged comparability, with a DCMS colleague feeling that they could have benefitted from investing more time into understanding the respective Delivery Partners' application processes overall and is something to consider reviewing for future programmes of this type. For further detail on this, please see Section 6.1.4.

6.1.3.2. Improvements to Processes

Whilst the specifics of the application processes implemented by each Delivery Partner differed, there was universal agreement from DCMS and Delivery Partner staff that these processes were iteratively improved phase-by-phase through the implementation of the Programme, as efficiencies were identified, issues resolved, and simplifications made. Some improvements to the application processes that have already been made by stakeholders included:

- Reducing the length of applications where possible to reduce complexity for applicants, reflecting and acknowledging that many applicants were volunteers with limited time and resources;
- Changing the platform applications were hosted on to improve accessibility and usability for applicants, as well as appropriateness for Delivery Partners to efficiently collect and analyse application data;
- Identifying efficiency through greater preparation for assessment panels, allowing more time for constructive discussion and less focused on the smaller details; and
- Opting for a longer application window with rolling assessment panels that spread the workload and enabled greater focus on applicants, as opposed to more condensed timeframes.

6.1.3.3. Support for Applicants

Delivery Partners did express some difficulties in meeting the time and resource demands of application processes, from administrative elements to site visits and ensuring adequate time was spent with each applicant to support them through the processes, particularly within the timelines specified by DCMS during the earlier phases of the Programme. Amongst the facility managers interviewed as part of the ten case studies, some felt that whilst they found the application itself at times lengthy and cumbersome, there was an appreciation of this being a necessary step due to the scale of funding, and across the board relayed appreciation for the support provided by each of the Delivery Partners throughout. These facility managers across the Home Nations felt supported throughout the process.

“What they're delivering is phenomenal because they want everybody to be successful. I know you can't, but they want everybody to be successful.” (Facility manager)

The survey of facilities conducted as part of this evaluation collected information pertaining to facility managers' satisfaction with the overall funding process. These ratings were further supplemented by qualitative evidence from case studies of experience of the process.

Amongst facility managers in England, 90% indicated that they were either “Satisfied” or “Very satisfied” with the process. Positive feedback highlighted effective communication, a straightforward process, clarity on selection criteria, and felt consistently supported by staff and Delivery Managers. However, the online portal used for applications was felt to be an area for improvement, being sometimes inaccessible or lacking the most recently available information. The requirement to acquire partner funding prior to applying for a grant was also felt to be challenging, as facilities felt some resistance from councils to commit funds to a project that had not yet been approved. Others felt the level of granularity needed on the projection of future business plans was unrealistic and inflexible, and that system, process and personnel changes caused some duplication of work and delays in project activity. Whilst many found the process straightforward, some facilities found it to be to be complex and time-consuming, particularly the legal process for completing the funding grant deed.

In Northern Ireland, the responses largely indicate that the facility managers were highly satisfied with the process, as 75% of respondents said they were either “Satisfied”, or “Very satisfied” with the process. Whilst most facility managers found the process to be simple and with a good level of communication, some also stated that they were unclear about certain aspects of the funding process, such as the stage at which they needed to arrange match funding.

Case Study Example: Ysgol y Grango, Cymru Football Foundation

A senior facility manager at Wrexham Council led the funding application on behalf of the school. The manager worked closely with the Cymru Football Foundation (CFF) team, who were supportive throughout the process, providing guidance to ensure a successful application and being easily accessible for in person meeting, site visits, and keeping the facility informed throughout the whole process.

“[The CFF] were always on hand to help with the process...they very much want to work with you on that journey to make sure your application is successful.” (Facility manager)

Across Scotland’s facility managers, 95% indicated that they were either “Satisfied” or “Very satisfied” with the process, with none of the respondents stating that they were dissatisfied. The communication from the Scottish FA officers was highlighted as crucial to the successful delivery of the funding process and most respondents indicated that the application process itself was straightforward and easy to complete. One facility manager, however, highlighted the inability to save and come back to the application was burdensome as it had to be completed in a single sitting, leading to duplication of work due to having to start again. This was addressed by the Scottish FA and the process changed for subsequent phases of the Programme.

In Wales, all facility managers indicated that they were either “Satisfied” or “Very satisfied” with the process and highlighted the clear communication and engagement from the Cymru Football Foundation staff as one of the factors contributing to the success of the process.

6.1.3.4. Financial Year Allocations

Given the financial requirements and structure of the Programme, the Scottish FA, the Irish FA and the Cymru Football Foundation were required to allocate and deliver specific proportions of the funding in each financial year of delivery of the Programme. DCMS staff commented on internal governance and approvals processes taking up time in the first year (FY21/22) causing a delay in the announcement of the funding, which meant timelines for inviting applications, assessing them, and then delivering the investment and upgrades were even more tightly constrained having lost months of the financial year window. As a result of this, these Delivery Partners explained that they focused on prioritising projects that were feasible and deliverable in this timeframe as a key criterion for receiving investment. Indeed, stakeholders commented more generally on the 12-month window for end-to-end delivery of projects, from invitations to applications, right through to completion of the investment project, limiting their selection of suitable projects.

“In phase 1 and 2 [of the Programme], a number of really good projects were dismissed as we would not have had time to deliver them within the financial year. Once delays around the likes of planning permission were taken into account, we could not consider anything that was going to take more than 5-6 months to complete.” (Delivery Partner)

“Whilst this 12-month process with uncertainty attached to the funding remains, the projects we can fund will always result in pitch refreshes.” (Delivery Partner)

DCMS and Delivery Partner staff acknowledged that this could have had unintended consequences for the Programme and had influenced the selection of project in certain cases. As highlighted by the quote above, Delivery Partners felt that if they had more financial flexibility, this could have allowed larger scale investment project that could have had significant impact for local communities.

Stakeholders also highlighted that the April to March financial year does not align with the football calendar that is typically busy up until May, with a break before the season begins in August. Projects sometimes found it difficult to secure buy-in and support from particular stakeholders for projects trying to complete major renovations or upgrades during these busy periods of the football season. Delivery Partner staff also commented on significant adverse weather experienced during winter months in particular regions and areas of the UK further limiting this ‘opportunity window’ within a financial year.

“We lose massive parts of the year due to significant winters. The actual laying of turfs can’t happen until well into March when the weather improves, so having less rigid timescales is essential to enable these projects to spread over phases.” (Delivery Partner)

In the third year of the Programme, FY23/24, the Scottish FA, the Irish FA and the Cymru Football Foundation have agreed a phased project approach with DCMS. This enabled greater flexibility to consider larger-scale projects that they could phase over more than one financial year, so long as they could demonstrate the allocated spend in both years. This was a clear demonstration of iterative improvement in the delivery and implementation of the Programme, with stakeholders being receptive to feedback and amending aspects of the Programme to help enable delivery of projects with potentially significant benefits.

“The replacement of 3Gs [an artificial grass pitch surface] were crucial projects, if we didn’t replace them, nobody would. However, the phased approach allowed in phase 3 has enabled us to approve bigger, game changer projects.” (Delivery Partner)

6.1.3.5. Delivery Partner Resourcing

As awareness of the availability of funding grew, through both direct advertising of the Programme by Delivery Partners and word of mouth amongst grassroots sports communities, processing the volume of applications received for some Delivery Partners, whilst also providing support to prospective applicants alongside maintaining other day-to-day organisational commitments, was resource intensive. In FY22/23, a number of stakeholders involved in delivery at Delivery Partner organisations commented on the physical health and wellbeing impacts they had experienced. There was a complex balance for these Partners to strike, recognising the benefits and importance of distributing funding to projects within their respective regions, whilst also trying to appropriately resource the teams responsible for delivery with limited financial capacity, and against challenging timelines.

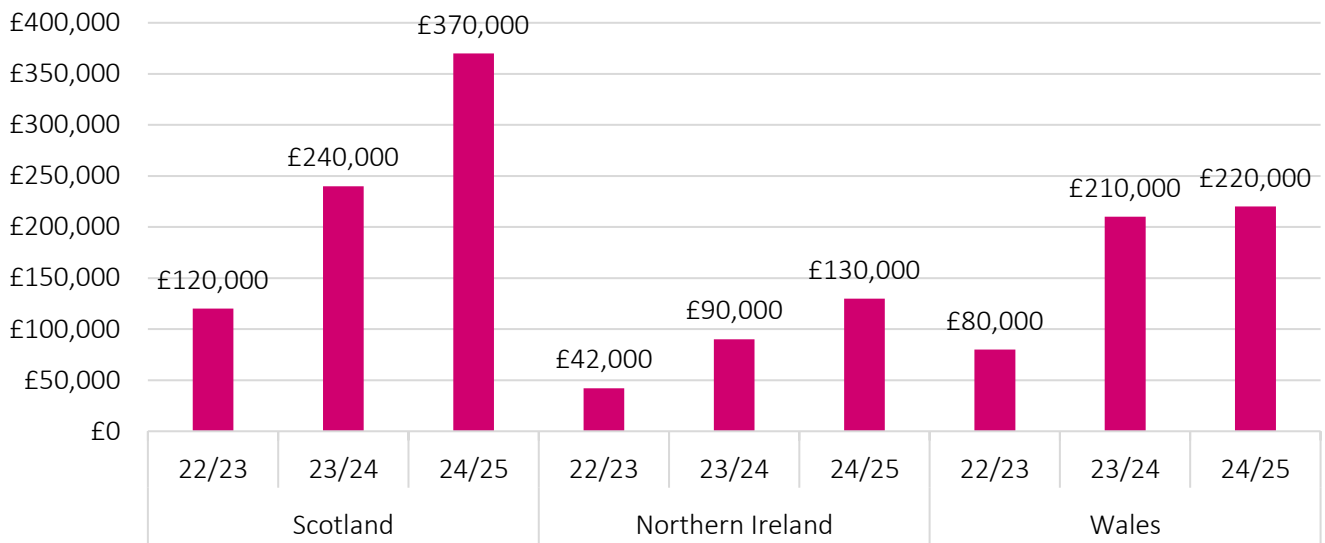
Following a challenging first two phases of the Programme, the Scottish FA, the Irish FA and the Cymru Football Foundation approached DCMS with their concerns about resourcing for administration of the Programme, and that currently there was a risk that insufficient resourcing in Delivery Partners could impact the ability of their organisations to distribute their allocation of funding.

“Due to the restrictions of [having to deliver funding within financial years], we found we have had to be reactive instead of proactive.” (Delivery Partner)

Introduced in the 2022/23 phase of the Programme, DCMS granted additional resource funding that came to an average of 5% of the Home Nation’s funding allocation across the financial years to support the Delivery Partners in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in the delivery and administration of the MSGF Programme. Resource funding was allocated to Delivery Partners as a percentage of their total capital. This was a significant factor in the evolution of Delivery Partners’ internal application processes, whilst also enabling more resources to support the applicants in developing strong applications. For one Delivery Partner, the resource funding provided the budget to recruit a team focused on the programme’s delivery and its end-to-end improvement. This facilitated and enabled a complete restructure of the application approach that was simplified and made more efficient for both the applicants, and the reviewing Delivery Partner. However, one Delivery Partner expressed frustration at this resource funding being allocated as a percentage of the funding received to deliver, feeling that the challenges faced by the respective Home Nations were broadly the same due to the element of

fixed costs dictated by delivery funding of this kind, leaving them less resourced than their Delivery Partner counterparts. The resource funding allocation per nation per year as follows:

Figure 21: MSGF Resource Allocation, broken down by Nation and Financial Year



Source: Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programmes information based on DCMS monitoring data as of 3rd April 2024

As Figure 21 shows, the amount of resource funding increased every year for each Home Nation, with the amount allocated in FY24/25 more than tripling for Northern Ireland and Scotland, and just under tripling for Wales. Scotland is allocated the largest budget for resource at £730,000, followed by Wales at £510,000 and Northern Ireland at £262,000.

“I don’t think [the application process] will ever stop changing. It will be continually improved to make it easier to apply.” (Delivery Partner)

Observation: continue early engagement with future applicants, providing accessible and open process and additional assessment guidance for future potential applications and projects. (E/S/W/NI)

Observation: discuss required resourcing for delivery of Programmes at an earlier stage and agree sufficient budget and resource allocation for stakeholders to deliver Programme requirements effectively and efficiently. (Future programmes)

Observation: consider a standardised application process and add additional assessment guidance for future Programmes, to enable consistent and comparable processes across nations. (Future programmes)

6.1.4. Decision-making and Application Assessment Panels

This section focuses on the decision-making and application assessment panels held by DCMS and its Delivery Partners. **Overall, these panels were efficient and effective in assessing available information to make appropriate funding decision**, with panels made up of appropriately skilled and experienced members, showing proactivity in reviewing and widening membership. **There is more that could be done to improve the diversity and inclusion of panels in all Home Nations**, and this is critically important in improving representation of a wide range of perspectives and experiences in the decision-making process. This also helps to build credibility and trust with stakeholders and demonstrate DCMS’ and Delivery Partners’ clear commitment to fairness and equality.

As outlined previously, Delivery Partners established bespoke approaches to assessing applications within their nations; this was also true for the decision-making element of this process. All Delivery Partners went through

some element of pre-assessment of applications prior to sharing with the relevant decision panel to give some comparable indication or mark of the respective project’s viability. This involved an evaluation of the application’s alignment with the relevant KPIs and the overall social benefit, with some Delivery Partners applying a RAG status⁸⁰ against key aspects of feasibility, and/or index measure or equivalent comparison with other projects, and in some cases making a funding recommendation. The relevant information collated per application would then be shared with the independent panel for final review and assessment.

The membership of these panels was also commented on by DCMS and Delivery Partner staff, with mixed views on whether membership could or should be improved to increase diversity of views and opinions, and whether decisions had always resulted in the most deserving projects being funded. Some individuals felt that there should be more panel representation from those in the organisation with closer proximity to the projects who could provide additional context and an ‘on-the-ground’ perspective, though suggested this could be more beneficial in an advisory capacity as opposed to necessarily having a vote.

Others felt that there was an opportunity to improve the diversity of panel members responsible for making decisions, and that there was a risk in the current process in some nations that applicants may not feel that panels contained representation from particular groups in their community, including women, ethnic minority backgrounds and disabled groups. DCMS and Delivery Partner staff acknowledged that improvements had been made to panel representation over time, but there was more that could be done to consistently improve this. One Delivery Partner explicitly mentioned recently bringing on board a ‘Youth Officer’, who would be able to share views of a younger person and their use of such facilities, as another example of continuous iterative improvement and review of panel membership.

“[The panel] was weak on structure ... lots of white old men ... many had other priorities, personalities and agendas.” (Delivery Partner)

However, some Delivery Partner staff disagreed with this, and felt that the key criteria and determinant of membership of the panel should be expertise, experience and knowledge of sports and similar grant funding processes.

“I can’t think of a better panel and feel lucky to have such experienced members at such a senior level. The Chief Executive and President [of the DP organisation] have always found the time and engaged with all of the content... I could not speak more highly of the panel.” (Delivery Partner)

Additionally, the independence of panels was felt to be important for all Delivery Partners; stakeholders agreed that impartiality was a particularly key priority in regions and nations where the political context of decision-making needed to be recognised. Therefore, ensuring there was explicitly visible fair and equal treatment of all applicants was a principal requirement of the approach in all nations. In one nation, the Delivery Partner chose to utilise an external body with experience of delivery in the political context, who would potentially give more credibility and trust in the application process for applicants and local communities. Some Delivery Partner staff also highlighted the value of panels in enabling them to demonstrate independence from funding decisions, which could be helpful to maintain relationships with unsuccessful applicants. For more information on relationships with applicants, please see Section 6.1.8.

“There has been some good debate, which has been healthy for the decision-making process and has ensured that it has been open and transparent... so applicants can see the decision is from the panel and not the officer.” (Delivery Partner)

⁸⁰ RAG status is a project management tool used to indicate the status of a project or task. RAG stands for Red, Amber, and Green, which are the three colours used to represent the status of the project or task

Another important factor in the efficiency and effectiveness of decision-making panels was the information and data available to panels. Some stakeholders noted that decision-making panels were inherently constrained by the information and evidence available to them, and that whilst panels did a good job of assessing and evaluating applications, the level of time, effort and resultant quality of applications differed substantially from application to application. Stakeholders commented on the use (although infrequent) by some applicants of external consultants to support application development as an example of this. This experience and additional resourcing support in developing applications meant that these facilities were more likely to develop strong applications and would potentially score more highly in the decision-making process when compared to other sites where there was limited capacity or capability to develop such applications or bring in external support. However, this is an inherent limitation of these kind of application processes and is not an issue unique to this Programme. Overall, Delivery Partners have been proactive in identifying complexities and unnecessary questions/requests of applicants as part of their application processes and have endeavoured to refine and improve these over previous and future waves of the Programme.

Observation: provide further guidance to stakeholders on ‘what good looks like’ with regards to the diversity of panel representation, and overall approach; encourage regular review and refinement of panel membership to facilitate this. (DCMS & S/W/NI)

6.1.5. Stakeholder Relationships

This section focuses on the relationship between DCMS and its Delivery Partners, and the impacts on programme delivery. Overall, there has been strong communication and collaboration from all parties, and a clear willingness and enthusiasm to work together to achieve the best possible outcomes. Asks of Delivery Partners have been stretching at times, but stakeholders have been professional, polite, and proactive in rising to the challenge.

Whilst direct funding by DCMS of Delivery Partners through the Programme was new for many stakeholders, Delivery Partners interviewed were keen to stress that delivery of the Programme had strengthened relationships between organisations. Delivery Partners felt they were able to be open and honest with DCMS, sharing updates, challenges, and issues as they arose. All Delivery Partners commented on the professional, responsible, and empathetic approach of DCMS colleagues across all grades and teams, and how this has continually improved over the Programme phases.

“Our collaboration with DCMS has been strong, we can challenge them and they challenge us, and is overall a very fair relationship. Where they can, they always try and help and support, I’d say we have a collective approach.” (Delivery Partner)

Whilst sentiment was broadly positive, Delivery Partners expressed experiencing strains to relationships when short-term asks from DCMS would have imminent deadlines, causing additional resource pressures in already constrained periods of delivery. Delivery Partners recognised that DCMS colleagues were just fulfilling the asks of them from government, e.g. Ministers and Permanent Secretaries, however felt that these were often challenging to fulfil in the deadlines expected given the data the Delivery Partners had readily available, and then constrained capacity to go beyond this.

One Delivery Partner team member expressed that these short-term asks from DCMS could at times feel overburdensome and disproportionate, and as a smaller Delivery Partner, they only had enough resource to meet the high priority items in their list of asks. Another Delivery Partner noted that their workload was heavily dependent on the phase of funding, with more resourcing needed during peak periods, and spare capacity available during quiet phases. Particularly during these periods, ad hoc queries with short-term deadlines that did not align with the Delivery Partner’s organisational priorities created additional pressures on resourcing.

Another important aspect that enabled efficient and effective delivery of the Programme was the strengthening of relationships between Delivery Partners across the Home Nations. Delivery Partner staff in all nations agreed that communication and sharing of insights was helpful and insightful. This was particularly true for staff from the Scottish FA, Cymru Football Foundation, and Irish FA. These Delivery Partners felt that their similar levels of experience in delivery of similar Programmes enabled useful discussions, generally focused on the benefits and impacts of the Programme, resourcing, and resolving any issues that had arisen during delivery. One Delivery Partner noted that these conversations with other partners were crucial for sharing technical knowledge and insight, something other partners struggled with during the Programme.

“[The] bit I’ve enjoyed the most – building relationships with the other Home Nations beyond the lessons learned sessions. They have been a great support system and we have formed a bond in their shared experiences. I could not speak more highly of the other Home Nations.” (Delivery Partner)

These conversations were helpful alongside regular Lessons Learned events, sessions where stakeholders in the Programme met quarterly in-person to discuss best practice and share experiences, as well as conduct site visits to show DCMS and other Delivery Partners the progress and impacts of the funding and helping to deepen interpersonal relationships across their organisations. The Lessons Learned sessions were noted by both Delivery Partners and DCMS as being beneficial and effective in sharing knowledge, and colleagues were unanimously keen for them to continue.

Observation: where possible, manage expectations around short-term asks, work with stakeholders to prepare common breakdowns and splits of data. Require stakeholders to improve internal reporting and quality assurance processes so that shared data is accurate, timely, and complete. (DCMS & E/S/W/NI)

6.1.6. Project Delivery

This section considers delivery of projects once investments had been made, and some of the strengths and weakness of delivery at this point in the process. Overall, project delivery has been effective, but a number of consistent points were raised by stakeholders to improve future delivery, specifically focused on more technical expertise and forward planning on timelines when working with other governmental bodies.

As previously highlighted, many Delivery Partners commented that they have felt stretched at times, both in terms of capacity and in terms of skills and experience. Several Delivery Partner staff commented on the challenges of in-person site visits. Whilst an important part of the grant process, given the requirement to attend every site before funding is delivered, this at times became burdensome and time intensive. For particular staff, especially those with larger geographical areas to cover, it was sometimes challenging to conduct large amounts of travelling in addition to meeting day-to-day workloads. However, with additional resource funding in more recent phases of the Programme, staff suggested this had become less of an issue.

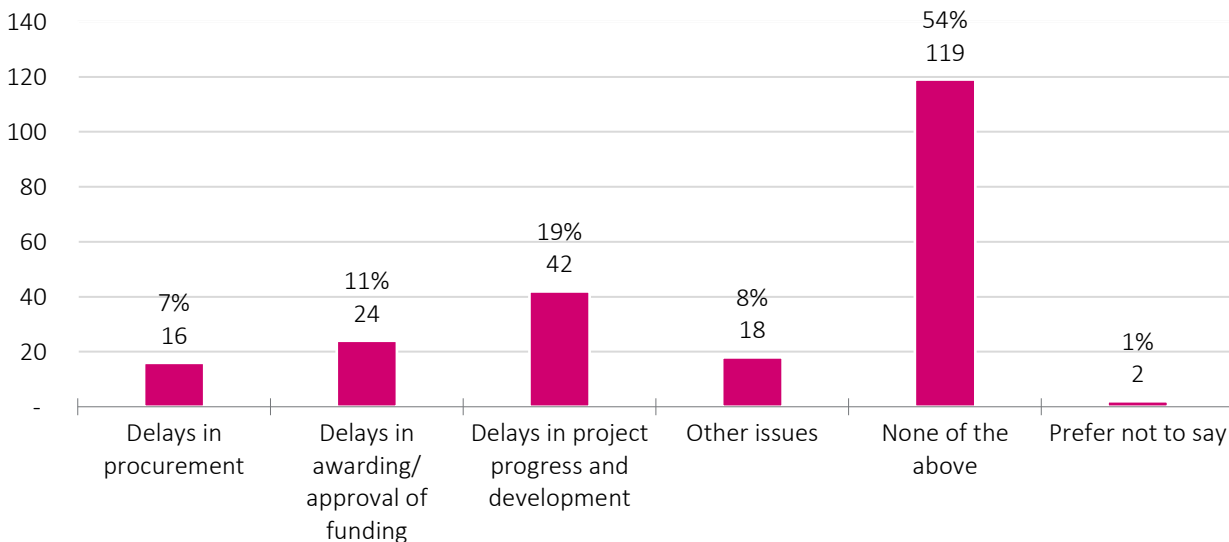
The importance of technical knowledge and expertise in evaluating the feasibility of projects was also highlighted as a common difficulty in progressing delivery. Although some partners felt they had sufficient expertise in this regard, others flagged that more technical input, or resources to procure this, would have been beneficial, particularly when evaluating projects with highly complex technical requirements. Following the earlier phases, some Delivery Partners chose to recruit staff with this kind of experience to conduct technical assessments, either in-house or through a third-party. Other Delivery Partners have been able to learn lessons through communication and dissemination of learning across organisations, but ultimately many still feel there is room for further improvement in utilising and adopting this skillset as part of core delivery teams.

Beyond this, Delivery Partners spoke of encountering issues with the delivery of some projects external to the influence of the Programme, such as, difficulties around obtaining planning permission, rapidly inflating construction costs from the point of feasibility study to actual delivery and then requiring additional funding

sources, construction delays as a result of poor site surveys, bureaucracy hurdles in projects led by local authorities due to stricter procurement policies and the like.

In addition, views from facility managers were gathered from the facility survey to gauge whether they had encountered any issues with the delivery process, including whether they had experienced any delays and how long these delays were. Figure 22 reveals that whilst the majority of funded sites did not experience any issues in the delivery process, some sites did, with the most common problem reported being a delay in the project’s progress and development, which 19% of funded facilities experienced. 11% of sites also shared that they experienced some delays in being notified of funding approval and 7% experienced delays in procurement. Figure 5 in Annex 10 displays the different duration of the delays experienced by sites who were impacted by issues in the delivery process. The most frequent length of delays was 1-3 months, with 28 sites sharing that they had experienced delays of this length. 15 sites reported experiencing delays of more than 6 months, which is 25% of all sites who reported experiencing a delay. 10 sites were impacted by relatively minor delays of up to 1 month. Whilst it is not possible to know the cause of why these delays occurred, this does align with the views shared by Delivery Partners that some issues were encountered in certain projects, who believed such problems were caused by factors external to the Programme and outside of their control.

Figure 22: Experience of the Delivery Process for Funded Facilities



Source: analysis of facility survey data. Totals may not add up due to rounding

Observation: early engagement with Delivery Partners to agree the resourcing, skills and experience needed to deliver internally, also continuing the Lessons Learned sessions and champion knowledge sharing amongst Delivery Partners to improve delivery across all nations. (DCMS & E/S/W/NI)

6.1.7. Programme Monitoring

This section considers DCMS and its Delivery Partners’ reporting processes, the quantity and quality of data captured and how this supported effective and efficient implementation and delivery. Overall, Programme monitoring has significantly improved over time, and stakeholders engage with the regular processes of reporting and monitoring key updates in programme delivery. However, there are still ongoing issues with the quality and timelines of data submission, that can have impacts on reporting of the Programme to senior stakeholders and create additional burden for DCMS and Delivery Partner staff in resolving.

DCMS established various programme monitoring and reporting processes, and this evaluation has reviewed copies of the latest available reporting data (as of 3rd April 2024), as well as historic versions. It has also included

interviews with stakeholders from both DCMS and Delivery Partners who were responsible for administering and complying with these processes.

Programme reporting by Delivery Partners took two routes:

- **Scotland/Wales/Northern Ireland:** Delivery Partners were responsible for completing a live spreadsheet containing a complete list of all the funded projects within their nation, detailing project information, project type, project finances, as well as monitoring key milestones such as procurement and project completion dates; and
- **England:** Every quarter, the Football Foundation shares a complete list of projects in receipt of funding within England. This similarly contains key variables including project information, project type, project finances, as well as monitoring key milestones such as procurement and project completion dates.

When asked if the submission process was efficient and effective for DCMS in capturing key data and enabling internal reporting to senior leaders and Ministers, DCMS staff felt that the current reporting tools used in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland are overall appropriate and capture all the relevant delivery updates. However, this was often framed by stakeholders within the bounds of what was possible for staff to use. Many DCMS staff and Delivery Partners commented on the lack of dedicated project management software and the risks associated with using a Google Sheets document as the primary reporting tool, and the manual updates that staff needed to make. Stakeholders felt that the complexity of this document and the inconsistent ways in which this could be used and updated by Delivery Partners, sometimes limited its usability and value to the team. DCMS stakeholders felt that Delivery Partners had not always given sufficient time to this reporting route and did not always recognise the importance of this data and its use cases within the Department. Whilst staff did stress that Delivery Partners were often stretched and made efforts to get DCMS required information often with tight deadlines, for more regular and standard updates, the DCMS delivery team commented on needing to remind Delivery Partners in order to understand the latest picture.

Others within Delivery Partners felt that this reporting mechanism was overly burdensome and suggested this was of secondary importance to their own internal reporting, even after DCMS streamlined the tool with the intention of making it easier for Delivery Partners to submit data. As a result, it was suggested by DCMS staff that there have been occasions where data has been incomplete, or of insufficient quality to meet the needs of DCMS, impacting timelines and the quality of data DCMS was able to share with Senior Civil Servants, Ministers, Parliament, or other stakeholders.

The process utilised by England's Football Foundation was felt to be more straightforward and comprehensive, with an appropriate level of regularity, as they were able to share monitoring data in the process and format already established as a result of previous funding delivery experience. This alternative approach to the other Home Nations was agreed between DCMS and Football Foundation due to the acknowledgement that MSGF was additional to other programmes being delivered simultaneously, therefore enforcing a bespoke reporting mechanism would have felt overburdensome. However, DCMS commented that they had encountered significant challenges in collecting timely reporting data from the Football Foundation who were often slow to share relevant information relating to the Programme's delivery, delaying internal DCMS timelines.

As part of this evaluation, it has sometimes proved challenging to collate data from across Delivery Partners that accurately reconciles with data used by DCMS in its reporting documentation. These issues have also been seen across publicly available published data, and whilst headline figures and reporting is often accurate, there have been a number of issues with specific variables and data points within spreadsheets that have either been completed with some inconsistencies or are inaccurate when compared with other sources.

One such challenge encountered during the evaluation involved reconciling the programme reporting documentation with application logs shared by Delivery Partners in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. This was necessary to create a comprehensive dataset of funded and unfunded facilities to be surveyed. The

application logs that Delivery Partners hold contain the full details of all applications received for funding and whether an application was approved or rejected. However, there were a number of inconsistencies between this and programme monitoring data, such as application names, project locations, project type and the timing of the application, that required Delivery Partner input to clarify.

“In terms of the product, it is a really good tool particularly in DCMS as we’re limited in tools because we can’t use professional project management software. In terms of getting the info that we need, it gets everything.” (DCMS)

Some Delivery Partner staff felt that the information required by DCMS did not go far enough with respect to tracking and following up on progress with specific facilities and projects, being particularly noticeable in later funding phases. Although this was not mentioned by other Delivery Partners, they felt that the information requirements from DCMS were “really light touch” and that there was a large reliance on the honesty of the facility manager when it came to tracking the project’s delivery. DCMS staff did acknowledge this and echoed similar sentiments with regards to post-award assurance and the quality of information available to the Department after investment and upgrades were initially complete.

“The data has been really light touch. We would have liked it to be far more detailed. Some clubs were really honest and said the true participation changes which was handy.” (Delivery Partner)

An example given was the expected start dates for the key monitoring milestones – these are particularly hard to validate as it would require direct input from the grant recipient and will frequently change subject to progress with individual projects. DCMS, thus, had a dependency on Delivery Partners to regularly and accurately report figures to the best of their ability, but a lack of regular updates often created outdated or missing elements of key data.

To reduce instances of monitoring data inaccuracy, the team noted the clear need for more regular updates from Delivery Partners, although acknowledging the existing time and resource capacity constraints on Partners. Doing so should also reduce the number of ad hoc requests that Delivery Partners receive from DCMS, something that partners shared as a significant challenge on their workload.

For consideration in future Programmes, some of the DCMS team and Delivery Partners were keen to see a uniform and professional delivery monitoring platform that was designed specifically for Programmes of this nature. Staff felt that with a clearer interface and more accessible and usable platform, this would help minimise burden on DCMS and Delivery Partners alike and incentivise more frequent and accurate updates.

“We could do with one platform that we are all working on that is built by developers specifically for this Programme and is really user friendly (UI) which would make it easier for DCMS because it’ll be easier for DPs to input data. From my understanding there isn’t the budget to do that.” (DCMS)

Observation: review and stream data capture, analysis, and reporting practises, and consider the platform through which Delivery Partners and DCMS manage and oversee funding with efficiency and effectiveness of delivery at the core. (DCMS & E/S/W/NI)

6.1.8. Relationships with Facilities and Users

This section considers the Programme's effects on relationships of DCMS and its Delivery Partners with local facilities and communities. Overall, the Programme has been hugely positive for these relationships, and improved communication and networks with communities have allowed for applications from a wide variety of organisations and communities. Whilst some have been less receptive to engagement in instances where funding applications were not successful, in the vast majority of cases connections have improved and working relationships have been strengthened, supporting more effective delivery of the Programme.

Given the structure and design of the Programme, significant resource and time has been spent engaging with facility, their users, and local communities. Stakeholders were positive about the Programme's impact on the relationship between their organisation and local facilities when questioned. Delivery

Partner staff commented that a positive of the Programme was its ability to reach and work with clubs that had not previously been on their 'radar', with others raising that it has enabled progressive conversations with clubs around purpose and development that had not happened in the past. All Delivery Partners emphasised the collaborative approach with potential applicants in supporting them through the process to maximise the success rate of applications and fund as many projects as they're able to, which has subsequently improved internal and external networks and relationships with local communities. The extent of this support was, at times, dependent on the level of resource the respective Delivery Partners had, as outlined above, but the appreciation and impact of this support was clearly felt by facility managers.

However, it was raised by some Delivery Partners that the impact of the Programme on these relationships could be impacted by the outcome of a prospective application. Whilst many stakeholders felt that the projects that had been funded through the Programme have been critical in both supporting and enhancing a positive image of their association, in a small number of cases, projects that were unsuccessful in receiving a grant have at times had knock-on consequences for the relationship with those organisations, clubs, and individuals applying for funding. Delivery Partners did comment on efforts to mitigate this however, and that contact details were provided to unsuccessful applicants to reach should they want feedback or guidance on elements they could expand or improve upon.

"From the association level, the impact [of the Programme] has been huge in terms of stakeholder engagement, and the way it has painted the association in a more positive light has been monumental." (Delivery Partner)

Case Study Example: Brookvale Park, Irish Football Association

The club's chairman and his colleagues began the process of upgrading the facility approximately seven to eight years ago. They were made aware of the funding opportunity through an email from the Irish Football Association's (IFA) sports development officer for the Mid and East Antrim area. Whilst the application process was not straightforward, requiring significant work and engagement of experts to strengthen the application, the IFA provided substantial support throughout the process, offering guidance and assistance whenever needed.

"I think, credit where it's due, the IFA have been absolutely tremendous with us, really good... They're very good at replying, they're very responsive. I could not complain at all, and the application process was very good. If you're applying for a lot of money, you know, you have to put the work in for it and we understand all that." (Facility manager)

Observation: continue to conduct final assessments and decision-making via an independent panel to ensure a diverse range of views and opinions consider the merits of applications. (E/S/W/NI)

Observation: maintain close relationships with beneficiaries of funding through Delivery Partners and other stakeholders, to support longer-term understanding of impacts and outcomes of funding. (DCMS & E/S/W/NI)

6.1.9. Perceptions of Achievement of Outcomes

This section discusses stakeholders' overall perception of the extent to which the Programme has met its intended objectives and outcomes. It is important to note that this is also further explored as part of the impact evaluation in this interim report, in Section 7, and that this section specifically focuses on reported views of stakeholders as part of interviews and case studies. Overall, stakeholders were confident that the Programme had led to increases in participation, particularly for women and girls, and that these would be sustained over the medium and long term. Stakeholders were keen to emphasise that evidence at this stage of delivery of the Programme was largely anecdotal, and more time would be needed to fully understand impacts on participation. Some DCMS and Delivery Partner staff suggested that the impacts may have been more significant for existing players, rather than new players, as well as the potential for funding to be more focused on clubs with existing facilities as opposed to areas where no facilities currently existed.

The overwhelming majority of interviewees were confident that participation had improved, particularly those 'closest to the pitch' and in regular communication with clubs and local communities. Stakeholders acknowledged that much of this evidence in support of improved participation was anecdotal at this stage of the Programme, where there is not yet an established evidence base, data collection at upgraded sites, and funding is still being allocated and delivered to further sites, and so this was to be expected. Some Delivery Partners commented on supporting data they themselves had collected (such as their own surveying activities) that evidenced an increase in participation. Others from Delivery Partner organisations and DCMS highlighted that they had seen clear evidence of improved participation during site visits with funded facilities. When anecdotally asked about progress towards funding targets during visits, facilities were confident they had met expectations and even exceeded them in some instances, particularly smaller projects, as described by Delivery Partner staff. Another Delivery Partner was also keen to emphasise that facilities meeting or exceeding their targets was not necessarily as a result of setting easily attainable, or low, targets, but as a result of effective and efficient delivery of funding. Delivery Partners do have a number of check and challenge processes in place for funding recipients if targets seem unrealistic or unachievable.

"It has definitely increased participation. It's the second year in a row that we have reported the highest number we've ever had. The investment we have now is significant enough to invest into new infrastructure, as opposed to necessarily just improvements. Kids don't mind if it's an old or new pitch, but new facilities themselves are the key to driving this participation change." (Delivery Partner)

Others, particularly within DCMS were more cautious about suggesting an uplift in participation, with some interviewees noting the lack of statistical proof suggesting any changes at this stage of the Programme. Some stakeholders suggested that they had observed that the approach to funding prioritises clubs that already exist, and hence the primary impact of upgrades is to either maintain or increase the frequency of use by existing players, rather than new additional players. This impact on participation is further explored as part of the impact evaluation in Section 7.

"[When asked has the Programme met its intended objectives of improving participation in grassroots sports] I think it is subjective and anecdotal, from the sites we go to, I believe they have improved participation but requires more evidence." (DCMS)

In terms of sustaining participation, there was a mixed response across stakeholders. For the purposes of this evaluation, sustained participation is defined as participation related activity that has occurred over the last 12 months. For example, one Delivery Partner commented that they had a "deep feeling" that participation would be sustained, supported by strong growth in the women and girls' game. Another individual from the same organisation was equally concerned that participation would struggle to be sustained if future funding was not secured. It was suggested that without continued additional financial support, some facilities may not be able to remain open, accessible, and affordable to support participation into the future.

Others also stressed the importance of contextually understanding the project type and its impact on participation. Investments focusing on pitches and floodlighting for instance may have clearer and more direct impacts on participation than, say, changing room upgrades or car park improvements, but it is not necessarily the case that the latter were not important, instead rather that their impacts are more indirect and potentially harder to capture.

Assessing participation changes amongst different groups, significant uplifts in participation in the women and girls' game was consistently shared, with DCMS and Delivery Partner staff emphasising that they felt there was still much additional untapped potential for growth. However, there was mixed views on what the funding has delivered for women's changing rooms. Whilst one Delivery Partner commented that they were confident that their funding had made big improvements to women's changing rooms, two other partners felt that there was still more to be done for women's changing rooms, and that this still presented a big issue as poor quality or non-existent women's changing rooms was the biggest driver of low female sport participation. Other interviewees commented that they have observed large boosts in the junior game and engagement from lower socioeconomic groups, but another Delivery Partner added that they felt that disabled users and culturally diverse populations hadn't benefitted from their funding as much as they had hoped.

“For many women and girls, if they don't feel safe and comfortable in changing room facilities, they won't play. This investment cycle is crucial to addressing this.” (Delivery Partner)

“MSGF prioritises existing users... where clubs already exist... albeit it with users using it a little bit more. Are there extra users? Maybe. But does it shift the dial at a macro level, not yet is my guess.” (DCMS)

Observation: establish more consistent and comprehensive post-award assurance with beneficiaries of funding to enable better understanding of the achievement of intended objectives, outcomes, and impacts. (DCMS & E/S/W/NI)

Observation: review approach to in-year allocations of funding and the ability to finance longer-term, larger projects that may proportionately benefit key under-represented target groups (e.g. women and girls). (DCMS)

6.1.10. Future Delivery

This section focuses on stakeholders' views on future delivery of this Programme, and subsequent funding decisions and choices for Government. Opinions on whether individuals felt football associations were the right vehicle to deliver a 'multi-sport' focused Programme were mixed. Some stakeholders felt there was a disincentive for these organisations to appropriately invest and prioritise other sports aside from football, as it was felt the internal objectives and aims of these organisations would take precedence in funding decisions, and funding other sports may even make delivering the association's objectives more challenging. On the other hand, others felt they were better placed to deliver this type of funding with a 'multi-sport' element than other sporting associations, as it meant that they could preserve football's interests simultaneously, which they felt they might lose if this was delivered by another organisation. Delivery Partners and DCMS each emphasised the dominance of football in terms of demand in the Home Nations, and the need to deliver funding according to demand from the public. It was felt that there was potentially more risk in delivering funding through national sporting bodies (e.g. Sport England/Wales/Scotland/Northern Ireland etc), where funding may be distributed on an equal basis across sports that would prove ineffective in meeting the demand of football.

“The main driver of grassroots sport is often the football clubs, and therefore I agree that this should be delivered through football associations due to having the bespoke lens that football requires... that naturally benefits other sports.” (Delivery Partner)

Delivery Partners were broadly uniform in their positive responses when asked if they would participate in another programme funded by DCMS.

6.1.11. Conclusion

Overall, stakeholders across Delivery Partners and DCMS were positive about their involvement in the Programme, and the outcomes and impacts it has delivered to date. There has been recognition across the board that significant elements of the Programme's delivery have evolved iteratively across phases of delivery, with many key learnings to be taken for the remaining period of implementation and of future Programmes.

The efficiency and effectiveness of communication in more recent phases of the Programme, both between DCMS and Delivery Partners, and amongst Delivery Partners independently, has been one of the strongest aspects of the overall implementation of the Programme. Indeed, relationships with facilities and local communities have also significantly benefitted from the Programme, and the continued engagement and approachability of Delivery Partners has enabled effective selection of sites from a wide range of geographies and investment types and upgrades. Stakeholders are also clear that effective and efficient delivery of the Programme has, in their views, resulted in higher participation in sports and physical activity.

However, stakeholders also acknowledge the need to understand this increase in participation empirically and at a causal level. Additionally, a number of considerations around this interim report focus on streamlining and standardising data practises, from data capture through to reporting and analysis. These have made understanding some of the impacts of the Programme difficult to understand at this stage, and in some cases made delivery more challenging as a result of increasing the burden on stakeholders either through inefficient processes or resultant delays and issues.

6.2. The Park Tennis Court Renovation Programme – Key Findings

6.2.1. Early Development of the Programme

This section focuses on early development of the Programme and the initial approvals and assurance of the Programme through governance routes before implementation. Overall, DCMS faced a number of internal barriers and delays with the development of the business case and some of the Programme's commercial aspects, but against challenging timelines with limited resource and experience, successfully launched the Programme.

The Park Tennis Court Renovation Programme was launched with the aim to create opportunities for more people to play tennis and keep people active across Britain, and DCMS was responsible for obtaining internal government assurance and approvals for the Programme. DCMS staff in the team at inception noted internal capacity and experience, and highlighted that staff often worked above capacity and were tasked with responsibilities they sometimes lacked experience in. DCMS staff commented that this led to occasions where there were single points of failure that created issues in progressing development of the Programme, whether that be due to staff sickness, leave or attrition. However, DCMS staff were broadly positive on their ability to overcome these issues and the flexibility and adaptability of the team to situations.

In addition to the initial Programme team, DCMS and LTA stakeholders also commented on collaboration and involvement of other core workstreams from across DCMS. Stakeholders agreed that effective support was provided by finance and analytical colleagues, who provided regular input, challenge and support as part of the Programme's development. However, a number of DCMS and LTA staff felt they received ineffective and inefficient advice and input from the commercial team during this early development phase of the Programme. A number of stakeholders cited issues with the commercial framework agreement that was being developed to support Local Authorities with procurement activity. These issues led to the initial business case being rejected by DCMS' Investment Board, which in addition to causing delays in establishing the Programme, also put additional strain on relationship between DCMS and the LTA. Some LTA staff felt they lacked understanding of the key documentation required, or an outline of asks with timescales during the process of the initial business case, grant funding agreement and procurement strategy, causing additional delays on top of the lengthy delays in these processes to occur within DCMS. This was particularly relevant given the LTA team hadn't previously delivered public procurement at this scale. This set-back however, led to more direct involvement of keyholders and senior leadership, who were able to provide constructive feedback, that meant issues were overcome and the subsequent version of the business case to be submitted was approved.

“A big struggle was with the commercial team – we created a commercial framework agreement to go out to tender that Local Authorities would then use for those who were successful. We got very lacking advice from the commercial team around what the framework was and what was needed.” (DCMS)

A small number of DCMS staff also shared that they felt the team could have benefitted from additional legal resource at the Programme's inception. There was a significant volume of legal input required at the outset of the project and it was felt this could have been aided with additional resource. Overall, DCMS staff were positive about overcoming some of the initial issues experienced in establishing the Programme however, and felt that lessons had been learned such that similar issues had not arisen in subsequent delivery of the Programme over the following months.

LTA staff felt the overall workload in the initial phases was generally manageable, although also noted the additional pressures and issues around the development of the commercial framework. Staff particularly noted the capacity pressure of needing to deliver required governance and assurance activity for DCMS, in addition to warming up and preparing their own stakeholders (e.g. Local Authorities, Councils and facilities) for potential additional funding that would need to be delivered in the delivery window. Some LTA staff felt that those with

significant experience of delivering similar projects were not necessarily brought in or able to focus on their specialisms to support Programme Delivery as quickly as they could have been.

“With the very start of the project, we had to deal with creating the national framework and tendering for the work whilst we were having the conversations with people to communicate what the project would look like and whether they would be on board.” (LTA)

Observation: improve training and knowledge of the Programme team staff in business case processes. Facilitate regular check-ins for staff across teams, particularly for new joiners and those with less experience of DCMS as an organisation.

6.2.2. Initial Needs Based Assessment

This section considers the initial needs-based assessment undertaken by the LTA and subsequent selection of sites to fund. Overall, an appropriate process was developed for identification and selection of sites to be renovated, with input from a range of stakeholders. Lessons were learned on the technical assessment process and engaging with local authorities in particular, but the LTA was able to manage and mitigate these risks to overall delivery.

The LTA was responsible for the initial identification of potential renovation projects. Site identification involved comprehensive desktop audits led by Park Investment Delivery Partners (PIDPs) for park tennis courts within particular areas of geographical responsibility. Stakeholders highlighted the experience and value these staff brought to the process, with many having multiple years of experience and knowledge of local park tennis facilities in their regions of responsibility. As a result, DCMS and LTA staff were confident in the comprehensiveness of the initial identification of park courts in England, Scotland and Wales.

Once sites were identified, it was the responsibility of the PIDPs to initiate conversations with the relevant local authorities to gauge their interest in being involved in the Programme. If they agreed to be involved with the Programme at this stage in principle, courts were then assessed by technical contractors who defined the scope of the renovations required. LTA staff commented on the volume of activity involved in undertaking these initial technical surveys, and the time taken in conducting this activity stretching capacity of some staff during this period.

Some stakeholders noted the financial risk taken on by the LTA in this process, as often-expensive technical surveys of courts were undertaken based only on an agreement in principle with the local authority or council, acknowledging that they could remove their support at any stage and potentially lead to unnecessary surveys being conducted. However, despite the risk, there was no evidence of this occurring during delivery of the Programme.

However, concerns with the accuracy of the technical surveys conducted by contractors were raised by both DCMS and LTA staff. Contractor’s survey estimates of court quality and required renovations were often subsequently deemed inaccurate, and often a significant underestimate of the activity and financial input required to improve the quality of courts to a playable level. Several examples and instances were shared where quality assessments, and thus cost estimates were considerably lower than the realised costs of the renovations, which created a financial need that had not been anticipated by either the LTA or DCMS. This financial need had been estimated as part of the economic case for the PTCR Programme. The LTA provided estimates for average renovation costs for different types of court condition. These figures were derived through the LTA’s internal benchmarking process as well as their experience with historical procurements. LTA staff noted that a large factor in the underestimation of court renovation costs originated from the underestimation of the true renovation costs due to inaccurate desk top assessments or too broad assessments by the LTA’s local teams.

The Programme cost underestimation can be evidenced using the difference observed between the average completed project cost and the costs estimated at the start of the Programme. In addition to the projected costs to renovate courts based on their condition, the economic case contained the number of attainable courts that were categorised in each condition, and these figures were informed by an in-depth technical assessment completed by the LTA. Both of these pieces of information are displayed below in Table 11.

Table 11: Number of Court Improvements Attainable and Estimated Refurbishment Costs

Condition	Attainable Courts	Estimated Cost
Unplayable condition	215	£30,000
Very poor condition	710	£19,000
Poor condition	707	£7,500
Average condition	1189	£1,500
Good condition	477	£1,500

Source: PTCR business case documentation

Multiplying the proportion of attainable renovations for each condition by the estimated average cost provides an estimated average renovation cost of £8,412. However, from records held by DCMS on the completed projects as of February 2024⁸¹, the average project cost was £29,354, over three times higher than projected. Such a difference of this magnitude explains the £2.2 million shortfall currently facing the Programme, and conversations and ongoing on how to rectify this funding gap.

In addition, LTA staff felt that technical assessments sometimes lacked sufficient detail, potentially as a result of the volume of assessment needing to be undertaken by contractors. The above issues resulted in the LTA onboarding new contractors to deliver technical, and stakeholders agreed that this new partner delivered better results, in terms of quality, cost and frequency of issues.

Following technical assessments of court refurbishment needs, the LTA considered three models relating to management of the site going forward, focusing particularly on enabling the financial sustainability of the court in the long-term.

1. The local authority is responsible for running the facility and its court/s.
2. The LTA manages the court/s but outsources coaching activity.
3. The LTA manages the court/s but outsources day-to-day operation to independent operators. The LTA has a sizeable network of independent operators it works with, including over 200 that have signed up to their operator forums where there can be discussed of best practice and the sharing of key learnings.

Local authorities as the owners of these sites were responsible for selecting an appropriate management structure and approval for the project to proceed at their facility. LTA staff emphasised the work and discussions they had with local authorities to encourage appropriate management structures being selected, being clear with stakeholders on their research into the benefits of gated access and charging for use of tennis courts. These benefits included the creation of sinking funds to fund future renovation and maintenance activity, as well as freeing up internal local authority budgets for spend on other needs, in addition to increases in health

⁸¹ More information on the PTCR funding committed can be found in Section 5.2.

outcomes through participation (due to certainty of playing) and additional amenities such as coaching. LTA staff noted that although there was broad understanding and accepting of these arguments some stakeholders were resistant or hesitant to adopt such changes.

Projects were then assessed by the LTA finance team and the LTA’s funding panel. Sites were chosen that were deemed to be the most impactful based on several different criteria and key performance indicators (KPIs)⁸²:

- **Participation:** whether it was expected that sites would deliver additional participants, including those from under-represented groups;
- **Deprivation:** whether the facility falls into the top 5 IMD deciles;
- **Booking system:** whether the facility will be accessible to book on the LTA’s digital booking platform ClubSpark;
- **Free weekly tennis offer:** whether the facility will be able to participate in the LTA’s Free Park Tennis Programme; and
- **Programmed activity:** whether the facility is able to deliver activities such as group coaching or flexible competition.

Stakeholders commented that this selection process was efficient and effective, and generally chosen sites were able to straightforwardly be assessed against these KPIs, that stakeholders agreed were appropriate and useful for determining funding awards. DCMS staff also agreed on the effectiveness of the identification and selection process, but a small number suggested that although they are confident that the LTA adhered to the relevant Programme KPIs and chose appropriate sites, all parties might have benefitted from additional DCMS input into the process. These DCMS staff felt that in hindsight it could have been helpful to be slightly closer to this process in order to fully understand how decisions were made and where funding was awarded, and to promote continuity and consistency of funding decisions across project selection and delivery phases.

Observation: review the way in which technical resource is involved in capital investment Programmes, and how to effectively manage and oversee third party procurements where relevant.

Observation: earlier engagement with Local Authorities and local government stakeholders to facilitate early buy-in, and identify potential risks and blockers to project delivery.

6.2.3. Stakeholder Relationships

This section discusses the relationship between DCMS, the LTA and wider stakeholders, and the extent to which these impacted the efficient and effective delivery of the Programme. Overall, stakeholders worked well together and established strong working relationships, and efficient and clear communication channels. Officials were professional, polite and proactive, and enabled effective delivery of the Programme’s objectives.

DCMS and LTA staff agreed on the strength and value of the relationship between the organisations. Both organisations had dedicated contacts responsible for delivery and implementation of the Programme, which resulted in a closer relationship, faster communication and any arising issues being rapidly resolved. This also helped to foster a sense of transparency between DCMS and the LTA, which enabled both teams to share information openly and honestly, improving the efficiency of delivery. DCMS staff highlighted the LTA’s flexibility and ability to respond to asks, and their professionalism in understanding and acknowledging the ad hoc nature of these sometimes being outside of the control of DCMS staff. Similarly, LTA staff commented on the professionalism and pragmatism shown by DCMS staff on regular delivery calls and in helping deal with issues,

⁸² As per the PTCR business case

and noted the significant improvement in this relationship following the earlier issues with governance in the earlier stages of the development of the Programme, as outlined above.

The LTA engaged with numerous other external stakeholders as part of the Programme and its wider delivery. There was regular communications and engagement with English sporting bodies such as the Football Foundation and Sport England, with a focus on strategically aligning on project selection, so that funding was appropriately distributed and minimised instances where local authorities could be overburdened with potential projects in their area. The LTA also highlighted their channels through which they collaborated with

Observation: where possible, manage expectations around short-term asks, work with stakeholders to prepare common breakdowns and splits of data. Require stakeholders to improve internal reporting and quality assurance processes so that shared data is accurate, timely, and complete.

organisations from other nations, including Tennis Scotland and Sport Scotland, as well as Sport Wales. These relationships were also noted as a key part of improving the effectiveness of the Programme, and brought on board as many stakeholders as possible to both promote and improve the design of Programme.

6.2.4. Project Delivery

This section focuses on delivery of court renovation projects following the allocation of funding. **Overall, project delivery was efficient and effective, with a high volume of court renovations completed within a constrained time period.** The LTA utilised their experience and knowledge to support effective delivery, and learned from, and adapted quickly to, issues that have arisen. Delays often resulted from stakeholders external to delivery of the Programme, and outside of DCMS' or the LTA's control.

DCMS and LTA staff emphasised the importance of PIDPs' experience in delivery as being critical to delivery of the Programme and on-the-ground progress being made. These staff had extensive knowledge and understanding of not only their local tennis facilities, but also in dealing with local authorities and councils, and contractors responsible for undertaking renovations. These skills were also complemented by the use of technical consultants with expertise in assessing and supporting delivery from a technical perspective. This was particularly useful when conducting site visits, as PIDPs did not typically have the required training to provide this perspective.

Stakeholders were also positive about internal communication within the LTA across numerous different departments and teams, with the quality of communication only improving over time and helping ensure efficient delivery of projects. LTA and DCMS staff particularly noted that the presence of a dedicated parks communication officer was extremely helpful in communicating with local authorities and made this a more efficient and effective process.

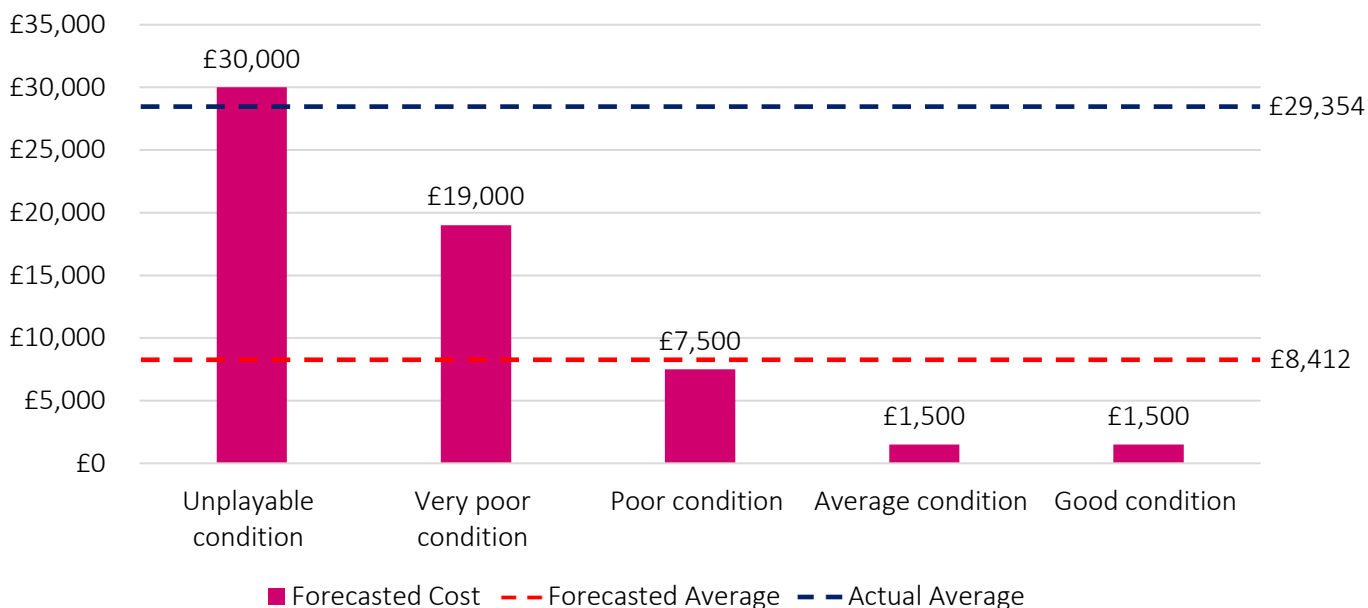
“Many of them [PIDPs] already had good relationships with local authorities, which has been really important to deliver at the pace that we have. There has also been good LTA facility investment expertise. We also have a dedicated parks communication manager who has a background in local authorities comms which is really helpful as they understand the local authorities and how they work.” (LTA)

There were however mixed views on communication and engagement with local authorities. LTA staff commented on numerous issues with local authority response times, burdensome levels of bureaucracy, and potential reticence in some cases to engage with the LTA. Although these problems rarely prevented delivery of renovations, they often presented some significant barriers for the LTA and DCMS to overcome, particularly in adding time delays to project delivery timelines. LTA staff also noted that even fairly basic logistical processes, such as sending funds to local authorities, were often made complex and presented issues. These issues were typically overcome through a range of channels, including encouraging councils to speak together and highlight the successes and impacts of the Programme, engaging senior leadership and escalating communications where

needed, as well as presenting case studies demonstrating the impacts of participation at the renovated courts and the benefits of successful, timely delivery.

This also had a subsequent impact on the ability of the LTA to deliver court renovations within annual allocations of funding set out and agreed with DCMS. Delays in approvals from local authorities, issues with planning permission in particular, being a common theme for many renovation projects, led to both longer delivery timelines but also increased costs associated with projects. Stakeholders also noted that this increased the importance and necessity of leveraging additional support and funding from local authorities and commented on the potential opportunity to leverage more of this funding for future delivery of similar Programmes.

Figure 23: Forecasted Average vs Actual Average Court Renovation Cost



Sources: Forecasted costs from PTCR business case documentation, actual average cost from PTCR delivery data from February 2024

Figure 23 displays a comparison between the forecasted renovation costs across each type of court condition and the actual costs realised for the Programme as of February 2024. Forecasted costs were created by the LTA based on their experience with renovation procurement, and the forecasted average costs were arrived at by multiplying the forecasted costs with the proportion of the number of attainable courts in each condition category, with this number of courts being informed by an in-depth technical assessment also completed by the LTA. The actual average cost was arrived at by using the PTCR delivery data and dividing the actual total cost of the PTCR Programme as of February 2024 by the number of courts renovated. It is important to consider that the delivery data does not share the condition of the court before work began, and as a result, it is not possible to compute the actual costs associated with each court condition category. In addition, delivery of the Programme is still ongoing, so the actual average cost will change in the future. **This figure clearly demonstrates a substantial difference between average forecasted cost and the average actual cost, with the actual average cost being over three times that of the forecasted average cost.** To explain why this may be, **interview reports with stakeholders involved in the delivery of the Programme believed this difference ultimately stemmed from inflationary pressures after the COVID lockdowns and the war in Ukraine.** Combined with frequent instances of technical assessments underreporting the extent of the required renovations to courts, the Programme accrued an overspend of approximately £2.2m.⁸³ Whilst the LTA is on track to meet all KPIs outlined previously, the

⁸³ Correct as of time of interview in February 2024, recognising there is ongoing discussions and review on this.

exception has been the delivery of the original target number of courts (3,121). Progress against this target can be seen in Figure 19 in Section 5.

Observation: early engagement with Delivery Partner to agree the resourcing, skills and experience needed to deliver internally.

6.2.5. Programme Monitoring

This section considers the processes in place to monitor and report on the Programme’s delivery, and the quantity and quality of data captured and how this supported effective and efficient implementation of the Programme. Overall, Programme monitoring was straightforward and positive, and stakeholders agreed on the accuracy and timeliness of data being shared. Whilst there were issues in funding allocation and reporting against targets and allocations for funding, these were dealt with and handled appropriately.

DCMS and LTA staff agreed that the experience of completing reporting templates and sharing Programme updates was straightforward and efficient, the LTA team was particularly positive, and suggested that they “would not change anything about the process”. Staff appreciated timely and constructive feedback from DCMS on information and updates shared, and welcomed the regular meetings to work through reporting, delivery and milestones.

The DCMS Programme team shared that there were some issues with earlier iterations of the delivery reporting template that meant the process was not as clear as it could have been from their perspective but agreed that since changes were made to the template, emerging risks were more clearly flagged, and the overall process was much clearer and worked well.

“Before changes were made to the delivery report template, this was not the most clear. [For example] issues could be hidden in the report maybe within a number within a cell on the 7th sheet. Now we have made changes to emphasise their importance – changes in scope due to emerging risks or new changes are now flagged directly at the top.” (DCMS)

“The process was just inefficient [initially]. We were using excel/word that was too admin heavy ... Processes just were not established ... There were so many areas of efficiency saving and red flags around things being too time consuming.” (LTA)

Many stakeholders in the LTA and DCMS commented on the nature of reporting of funding allocations across financial years, and some of the issues that this process created. The LTA had not spent the full budget allocation from DCMS (£14.2m) in the first year and there was a risk of losing funding if this was not all spent. Stakeholders highlighted potential miscommunications and a lack of clarity around this point and suggested that inclusion of the LTA in conversations with HMT where this had been discussed could have mitigated the risk of issues.

6.2.6. Relationships with Facilities and Users

The focus of this section considers the effect the Programme has had on the LTA’s relationships with its stakeholders. Overall, the LTA was clear that they believed relationships with a broad range of stakeholders had improved as a result of this funding, largely due to their proactive communications and transparent approach to decision-making.

One of the key points highlighted by stakeholders was engagement with existing clubs and more established facilities (as opposed to park courts). There was initial hesitation from some of these organisations who believed funding could be more impactful and better spent at facilities similar to theirs. However, the work of the LTA, particularly that of its communications team, meant these stakeholders quickly understood the benefit and

impact these renovations could have in encouraging a wider variety of new additional players and promoting the game to a wider audience. Decisions and funding allocations were transparently communicated, including through a regular newsletter to tennis clubs as well as communications with their volunteer networks.

The LTA also communicated effectively with local communities in areas with renovated courts. Although many courts will no longer be free of charge, which some community members have opposed, their use of transparent communication through a range of channels, including social media, has helped overcome these issues and helped improve the understanding and benefit of how renovations have occurred to improve courts through the longer-term.

“Initially, there was some concern or questions about why funding was delivered to park tennis courts and why the LTA and Government is focusing on these. The LTA then took some proactive measures, for example, sending out a venue newsletter that goes out to facilities such as tennis clubs, to be open and transparent about the project. We also have regular communication with the volunteer network and there has been various networks with volunteers who have wanted to attend. So there have been various methods of communication with stakeholders to speak to the programme.” (LTA)

Observation: maintain close relationships with beneficiaries of funding through Delivery Partners and other stakeholders, to support longer-term understanding of impacts and outcomes of funding.

6.2.7. Perceptions of Achievement of Outcomes

This section focuses on perceptions held by both DCMS and the LTA on how they felt the investment has impacted participation and achieved its broader intended outcomes. Overall, sentiment amongst stakeholders acknowledged the positive effect of the Programme in terms of achieving an uptick in participation at the courts in receipt of this funding. They also acknowledged that the causal link between the Programme and overall participation impacts will be more challenging to determine. There was an appreciation that the Programme may need to go further than solely renovations, and acknowledgement that further proactive initiatives, such as Free Park Tennis, would be key to sustaining this uptick in the long-term.

LTA and DCMS were universally in agreement that the Programme had generated an uplift in participation. Stakeholders noted the particular impact in areas where the Programme had improved courts that were previously unplayable, therefore filling a supply-deficit than just improving the quality of facilities already in action, and the transformational impact in these areas for local communities. Evidence for growing participation was suggested both with data and anecdotally.

Macro participation trackers utilised by the LTA were frequently cited⁸⁴, with two LTA staff members quoting the data suggests that participation figures have grown by around half a million since the Programme began. However, the staff also agreed on the importance and value of additional pre- and post-intervention statistical

⁸⁴ LTA Press Release, 2023: ‘British tennis sees big surge in both adult and children's participation during 2022’ [[British tennis sees big surge in both adult and children's participation during 2022](#)]

analysis to understand participation and causality between the Programme and participation figures. LTA Programme team members provided anecdotal evidence of increasing participation and pointed towards the LTA's case studies of renovated park tennis courts, particularly highlighting the stories shared by users of the courts who really benefitted from the funding. The others shared that they had heard many positive conversations noting increasing use of the courts from colleagues and close contacts who regularly frequent the renovated sites themselves.

[When asked has the Programme met its intended objectives of improving participation in grassroots sports] “Yes, shown by the macro level of participation growth – Participation has grown by 400,000.. We would not be able to really show causality until later to bring through year on year growth.” (LTA)

When considering if participation growth will be sustained, LTA and DCMS staff were also optimistic. Stakeholders felt that the way in which sites had been improved, encouraged both new and existing users to become regular users, but also meant that sufficient financial sustainability existed for courts to be on top of ongoing maintenance and longer-term sink fund to future renovations and upgrades. Stakeholders also noted from their experience that gated access for courts typically correlates with reduced vandalism of the site, which is also vital to maintain the usability of the facility going forward.

“Because the facilities are better, this will convert into far more regular users. The more you use the facilities, the less chance they will be vandalised.” (LTA)

Young people were suggested as being a group that has benefitted from the investment in particular, generating a decrease in the average age of tennis users, with women and girls also shared as a user group having gained more from the Programme than others. Anecdotally, the LTA Programme team also felt this supported the LTA's progress towards bringing players in a new playerbase to courts that are more representative of the local communities surrounding them.

Despite an overall positive sentiment about the Programme's progress so far, the LTA and DCMS both suggested there was still more to do. It was suggested that renovating the courts alone may not be enough to generate the sustained impacts that were intended by the Programme, and that locations that may be underserved by court provision would continue to be so, given no additional court locations had been developed. Positive references were also made to the Free Park Tennis scheme, a supplementary addition to the PTCR Programme which intends to enhance the funding's impact through delivering free tennis and coaching at local facilities. Whilst the impacts of this are not yet understood ahead of wide rollout of the scheme in Summer 2024, stakeholders suggested schemes like this were arguably overdue and should be significantly expanded in scope to help maximise impact.

Finally, DCMS staff also noted that they had witnessed impressive attendance at site launch days, but again were still cautious to suggest any causality of the Programme on participation in the absence of causal analysis

Case study example: Six Bells Park, LTA

After receiving funding, the council maintained regular contact with the LTA. Monitoring data was shared, with the coaching operator Break Point Tennis submitting information. The LTA can also access booking and income data directly through ClubSpark. The facility manager found this a straightforward process, with the LTA continuing to provide support around the coaching programme. Some small technical issues arose with ClubSpark and the gate system, but nothing major. Formal review points were not yet established but ongoing conversations allowed reflection on operational matters.

“The facility was completely unused, so we've gone from absolutely zero or unusable surfaces with gates that were not working, just unfit for purpose courts to, yes, I think the last time we looked we had 500 players using the courts across, so, the active memberships that pay and play. And then we've got about 200 people who actually pay for coaching on top of that. So, yes, participation wise really good.” (Facility manager)

at this stage. DCMS staff also emphasised the importance of understanding displacement of these courts, and whether this had led to additional participation and physical activity, or whether participation had primarily been driven by users from other sports opting to spend more time playing tennis given the improved facilities.

“It is clear from the case studies that the renovations and refurbishments are increasing uptake but I am unsure exactly how much. Anecdotally, it seems to be making difference – there is impressive data and uptake, particularly straight after renovations in summer.” (DCMS)

Observation: review approach to in-year allocations of funding and where possible, allow for potential flexibility of funding allocations in circumstances where delays or unexpected issues occur.

6.2.8. Future Delivery

This section discusses stakeholder views on future delivery of this Programme, and subsequent funding decisions and choices for Government. Stakeholders from the LTA agreed that although this Programme provided incredibly positive support and funding for renovating tennis courts in parks, there was still much more to be done. LTA staff emphasised the benefit of renovating further courts that may have fallen outside of the scope and identification process under PTCR. The most commonly cited and clearest example in many stakeholders’ views, referenced by both LTA and DCMS stakeholders, was funding for areas and communities that do not have any tennis provision, and so would not have benefitted from this renovation funding. This was a clear limitation of the funding provided under PTCR, and there could be significant potential to increase provision and thus participation and physical activity in communities. Stakeholders also felt that DCMS and the LTA had overcome initial delays and blockers very well; working collaboratively, effectively and efficiently to deliver a large quantity of projects over a short period of time, and that this funding mechanism could work well for any future delivery too. Others suggested that other routes for future funding should be considered, for example through national governing bodies for sport, such as Sport England, or even through tennis bodies such as Tennis Scotland and Tennis Wales for delivery in other nations. Stakeholders were however not clear on what the benefits or improvements to delivery might be under different kinds of funding mechanisms.

6.2.9. Conclusion

Overall, stakeholders from the LTA and DCMS were confident about the progress and implementation of the Programme and the delivery of its outcomes and impacts. Despite initial blockers and challenges as part of the development of the Programme internally, these were overcome, and the Programme was successfully launched. Against tight timelines, and ambitious delivery targets, stakeholders worked collaboratively to deliver project renovations effectively. Delivery also evolved substantially throughout the duration of the Programme, with a number of key learnings leading directly to changes to key aspects; this included new contractors for technical assessments for example, which the LTA quickly identified and resolved as an issue to be fixed.

Strong relationships between stakeholders were also one of the strongest aspects of the overall implementation of the Programme. Indeed, relationships with facilities and local communities have also significantly benefitted from the Programme, and the continued engagement and approachability of LTA has enabled DCMS to quickly gain the information required to demonstrate all aspects of the Programme’s delivery and implementation. Stakeholders were also clear that effective and efficient delivery of the Programme has, in their views, resulted in higher participation in sports and physical activity.

However, stakeholders also acknowledged the need to understand this increase in participation empirically and at a causal level. Significant additional data will be required to understand this kind of impact of the Programme, and the LTA is working to deliver this data to the evaluation over the coming months.

7. Impact Evaluation: Progress Update and Emerging Findings

This section discusses the emerging findings from currently available data and evidence with regards to the impacts of the MSGF and PTCR Programmes up to March 2024. It descriptively considers the impacts of the Programme on participation, both overall and sustained, as well as wider the impacts and outcomes across local communities, such as mental and physical wellbeing and community cohesion. Given the current stage of the evaluation and this being an interim report, causal analysis will be undertaken once additional evidence is collected as part of the subsequent waves of primary data collection.

As set out in Section 4.3.2, the key metrics of interest for the impact evaluation are:

- **Total number of users** in the facility since funding (in absolute terms or expressed as reported percentage change)
- **Total number of unique users** in the facility since funding (in absolute terms or expressed as reported percentage change)
- **Total number of existing users** in the facility since funding (in absolute terms or expressed as reported percentage change)
- **Intensity of participation** by users (duration of visit and frequency of visit)

This section also considers a wide range of other impacts as set out in the Theory of Change, including accessibility, mental and physical wellbeing, pride in place and many others.

Impact Evaluation: Progress Update and Key Emerging Findings

Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme

Progress Update

- **Good facility survey response rates achieved:** The facility survey conducted achieved good response rates for both funded (62%) and unfunded (53%) facilities, enabling descriptive comparisons across key participation measures. **Funded facilities have reported higher overall participation and sustained participation rates** than unfunded facilities.
- **Good response rates also achieved to the user survey:** The user survey achieved a **strong sample size across the sample period of 2,222 responses** across all nations, a substantial improvement on previous user survey activity, likely assisted by the **integration of a prize draw** into the surveys to incentivise responses. Responses provided important **contextual understanding of participation, accessibility, and physical wellbeing** of users at facilities.
- **Useful insights for wider impacts gathered from household survey:** The first wave of a **panel sample of 5,000 households** near to funded and unfunded facilities has provided **important findings for local community and wider impacts**, including physical and mental wellbeing, community cohesion, social networks and pride in place.
- **Case studies highlighted some the positives of the Programme but also some of challenges funded sites experienced:** Case studies of eight facilities in receipt of funding gave **depth and insight into the views of facility managers and the real-world impacts of funding**, although **challenges arose in maximising participation** of a wider range of facility stakeholders in this process.

Key Emerging Findings

- **Descriptive findings given at this stage, with the aim of causal findings in future reporting:** Comparisons and analysis presented in this interim report are descriptive in nature, and so care should be taken in attributing any differences in impacts and outcomes between funded and unfunded facilities to the Programme at this stage. With the planned collection of additional evidence in two further waves of fieldwork, **the aim of the evaluation remains to deliver robust causal analysis in future reporting.** Additionally, **facility survey response rates have been similar across funded and unfunded sites** (an important component need for robust statistical matching and subsequent causal analysis).
- **Not enough evidence yet to assess participation additionality:** Further analysis is required to understand the **additionality of participation**, with limited quantitative evidence available and quantitative data reported by **stakeholders suggesting funding may have impacted existing users of facilities more.**
- **Sample sizes are too limited for granular insights at this stage:** Impacts are **less clear when analysing breakdowns of participation**, primarily due to **limited sample sizes available at this stage**, after one wave of data collection, however limited evidence suggests a positive impact. **Additional data collection plans are in place** to inform future evaluation analysis and reports.
- **Potential improvements to programme monitoring data would be beneficial:** Improvements in Programme monitoring data has been used to support descriptive analysis, but **further work from Delivery Partners and DCMS is needed to improve the accuracy and completeness** of this dataset.
- Further detail on the data sources analysed and evidence against evaluation questions is provided in the matrix below (Table 12).

Park Tennis Court Renovation Programme

Progress Update

- **More data to be shared over Summer 2024:** In booking data shared, only **one facility of 78 has undergone court renovation**, and **less than 20% of the court bookings provided have occurred since 2022.** The LTA expects **significantly more data to become available** over Summer 2024 as courts finalise renovations and weather conditions improve.
- **Case studies qualitatively detailed the impacts of the funding on participation and wider impacts:** Qualitative case study fieldwork covered two sites, one in Wales and one in England. Both sites reported **positive impacts of funding on participation and wider anecdotal qualitative impacts.** Challenges were encountered, especially in engaging with users of the funded park tennis court sites selected.

Key Emerging Findings

- **Insufficient data to highlight participation impacts of the Programme at this stage:** Booking data available at this stage contains **insufficient observations to descriptively analyse participation impacts of the Programme.** This is due to grants for **court renovations under the PTCR Programme only commencing in Q2 2023**, and therefore, the required 12-month pre- and post- intervention dataset is not yet available. Causal analysis is not feasible at this stage, and given limitations of booking data, **caution should be taken in inferring impacts and outcomes.** Future reporting will aim to utilise a **larger booking dataset to provide additional descriptive insights and enable causal inference.**
- **A focus of future reporting is to cover the Programme's wider impacts:** There is **less readily available information on wider impacts of the Programme** at this stage; for example anecdotal evidence of

environmental, educational or health outcomes, but this will be a focus of future evaluation reports and activity. **Secondary data sources have provided contextual understanding** of tennis participation more generally, through sources such as the Actives Lives Survey and the LTA’s participation tracker, but the **proportion of respondents participating in park tennis is limited.**

- Further detail on the data sources analysed and evidence against evaluation questions is provided in the matrix below (Table 13)

The matrices below (Table 12 and Table 13) set out the key data sources used to demonstrate impacts across both Programmes, and provide a high-level summary of the emerging findings of each data source against the key evaluation themes related to the evaluation questions in Section 3. These matrices show what this evaluation is able to understand about impacts at this stage, but also where data gaps currently exist and where further analysis and activity should focus in order to holistically assess the Programme’s impacts and outcomes.

Table 12: MSGF Key Findings Matrix

MSGF Data Source	Overall Participation	Sustained Participation	Breakdowns of Participation	Local Community Impacts	Other Impacts
Facility Survey	82% of funded facilities reported an increase in participation in both direction and magnitude, compared with 65% of unfunded sites since April 2021. Artificial Grass Pitch investments drove the highest reported increase in participation.	A higher proportion of funded facilities (50%) reported an increase in sustained participation since April 2021 relative to unfunded sites (39%).	No clear trends yet on differences between funded and unfunded facilities across gender, geography, ethnic minority groups or disabled individuals. Further analysis will be undertaken as sample sizes increase through additional planned data collection.	No clear trends yet between funding and its impacts on accessibility, both in terms of access by different groups or sports and operating hours of facilities.	The Programme aligns with HMG's intention to address regional inequalities. Facility managers reported anecdotal evidence of improved environmental outcomes.
User Survey	User survey findings will not inform causal analysis, but descriptive analysis suggests a similar proportion of funded users (98%) visiting their local facility at least once a month relative to unfunded users (96%).	There was a significant uplift in sustained participation among users of funded facilities (90%) relative to unfunded facilities (79%).	A higher proportion of funded users across each of the nations reported an overall participation increase, with higher multi-sport participation too.	N/A	N/A
Household Survey	Household survey findings will not inform causal analysis, and the sample size of respondents using the facilities was small (<20%) and therefore comparative descriptive analysis was not presented.	N/A	N/A	Households near funded and unfunded sites reported similar levels of wellbeing. Older and wealthier users tend to have better wellbeing and higher levels of life satisfaction.	N/A
Case Studies	Funded sites reported experiencing or expecting to experience significant uplifts in participation.	Facility managers suggested participation was expected to be sustained at their site, and that demand was increasing over time.	Facility managers across all nations reported anecdotal growth in participation, particularly from younger people and women and girls.	Facility managers presented numerous examples of funding improving 'pride in place' in the local community and improved accessibility for underrepresented groups.	Facility managers gave anecdotal evidence that funding had facilitated improvements in educational and environmental outcomes.
Interviews	Interviewees were confident that participation had improved, particularly those 'closest to the pitch'. Significant uplifts in the women and girls' game were also emphasised. Further work is needed to understand the additionality of this participation however.	Mixed views were shared by stakeholders, although most generally were confident that the Programme had led to increases in participation that would be sustained over the medium to long term.	N/A	Benefits to the community through improvements made to local clubs and facilities were anecdotally iterated by interviewees across Delivery Partners as a significant positive of the Programme.	Improvement of inter-organisational relationships with DCMS, between the Delivery Partners, and between Delivery Partners and the local facilities and clubs.
Secondary Data Sources	In the Active Lives Survey 22/23, participation in football and general activity levels have remained stable over the last 12 months in England.	N/A	The Active Lives Survey indicates that the regional divide in activity levels is increasing in England.	The Active Lives Survey shows no change in the measures of mental wellbeing in the last 12 months.	N/A

Table 13: PTCR Key Findings Matrix

PTCR Data Source	Overall Participation	Sustained Participation	Breakdowns of Participation	Local Community Impacts	Other Impacts
LTA Booking Data	<p>Available data covers a limited time period, for a limited number of court renovation types. However, the number of bookings at funded and unfunded sites has increased since the Programme began: 40% for funded courts, and a much higher increase in the unfunded courts (due to a much lower baseline position). The number of players at funded courts is 300% higher than at unfunded courts potentially driven by the larger capacity at funded sites.</p> <p>It is not possible at this stage given data quality to determine indicative emerging impacts and outcomes of the Programme. Further data collection is critical to improve this analysis.</p>	<p>Sustained participation in terms of growth in total visitation was highest in 2020. The average number of sustained visits were however similar across 2020 to 2023. Further data collection is critical to improve the understanding of these impacts.</p>	<p>Bookings at funded sites by region are most concentrated in London, and within least deprived areas. Unfunded courts registered a higher rate of increase in female bookings than funded courts.</p> <p>Again, the above characteristics are likely as a result of the skewed sample distribution of the available data to date, that limits the ability to compare impacts.</p>	N/A	N/A
Case Studies	<p>Facility managers from case study sites reported significant increases in participation in tennis at the sites, including rapid growth driven significantly by the ability to offer an expanded coaching offering.</p>	<p>Participation outcomes are believed to be sustained by stakeholders, although some uncertainty was noted due to poor weather at the sites.</p>	<p>Case study activity covered a site in England and a site in Wales, and both reported similar positive impacts.</p>	N/A	<p>Funding has enabled an increase in coaching capacity and increased usage by local schools.</p>
Interviews	<p>Stakeholders reported a positive effect of the Programme on achieving increased participation at funded courts, whilst acknowledging the causal link between the Programme and overall participation impacts will be more challenging to determine.</p>	<p>LTA and DCMS staff were confident that the Programme has encouraged both new and existing users to become regular users. Additional analysis is required on a larger dataset to understand this further.</p>	N/A	N/A	N/A
Secondary Data Sources	<p>The latest Active Lives Survey (November 22/23) indicates no significant change in the number of people playing tennis or in general physical activity levels over the last 12 months.</p>	N/A	N/A	<p>LTA surveys have found park facilities to be more popular among female participants, therefore PTCR is expected to have long-term impact in addressing the current gender gap in tennis</p>	N/A

7.1. Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme

7.1.1. Impacts on Overall Participation

This section considers to what extent MSGF funding has impacted overall participation at funded facilities. The analysis largely draws on evidence collected through distribution of a facility survey to managers of both funded and unfunded facilities to demonstrate how participation by all groups has changed.

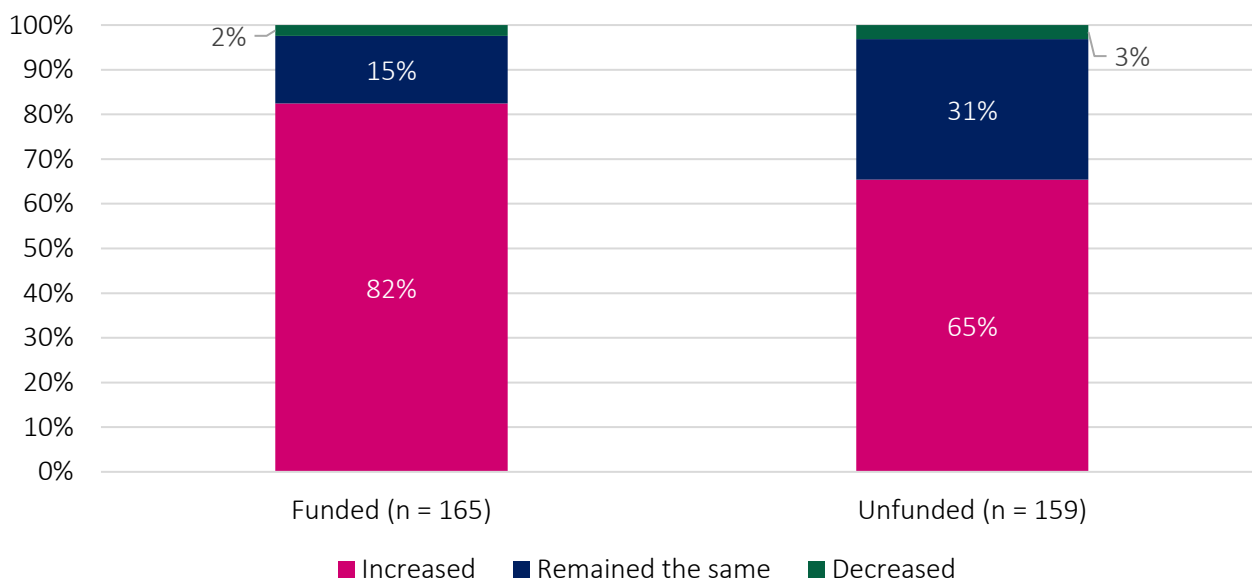
7.1.1.1. Overall Participation at Funded & Unfunded Facilities

In order to show changes in participation in funded areas, facility managers⁸⁵ were asked to report changes in the overall number of users to their sites since April 2021. This self-reported data from facilities was determined to be the most pragmatic and feasible way to collect such data in the absence of detailed programme monitoring data around participation.

Directional Changes in Overall Participation

Facilities were given the option to provide an overall indication of the direction of change in participation levels comparing the most recent month at the time of response to April 2021. Examining these self-reported figures displayed in Figure 24 reveals that 82% of funded facilities registered an increase in participation, relative to 65% of unfunded facilities. Over double the proportion of unfunded facilities (31%) relative to funded facilities (15%) reported their participation remaining the same since April 2021. The proportion of funded and unfunded facilities reporting a decrease in participation was very similar at 2% and 3%, respectively. These results suggest that funded facilities have been more likely to experience growth in participation and less likely to experience no change or a decrease in participation compared to unfunded facilities since the start of the MSGF Programme in April 2021.

Figure 24: Overall Participation Changes



Source: Analysis of facility survey data

In addition, funded facilities were given the option to respond that they were unaware of how participation had changed at their facility. Out of the total responses, 17 facilities, representing 9% of the funded facility sample, did not know if participation had changed at their facility since April 2021. As such, it is not possible to assess the impact of funding at these facilities and highlights the importance of collecting data on participation at these

⁸⁵ The manager of the facility is defined as someone at the site in a position of management such as the CEO, chairman, committee member, officer, director, head coach, secretary, treasurer, or trustee.

sites to evaluate the overall success of the Programme and produce lessons learned for any potential future funding programmes.

Magnitude of Changes in Overall Participation

In addition to providing data on whether participation had directionally increased, decreased or remained the same, facility managers were also asked to report an estimate or exact change in participation at their site. This could be completed in either percentage terms (for example, overall participation has increased by 25% since April 2021)⁸⁶ or absolute terms (1000 more users attend my facility since April 2021).

Table 14 aggregates responses relating to the changes in participation since April 2021 across funded and unfunded facilities. For the purposes of the analysis, the results are displayed across the different percentage bands provided, with exact percentages and exact numbers counted in the relevant band. 54% of all funded facilities who responded to the survey reported an increase in participation of between 0% and 50%, compared to 47% of all unfunded facilities. However, 11% of funded facilities reported an increase in participation between 51-100% relative to only 3% of unfunded facilities. Decreases in participation were uncommon across both funded and unfunded facilities. This data suggests (any bias from self-reporting notwithstanding) that although both funded and unfunded facilities have on average experienced an uplift in participation since April 2021, the magnitude of this increase has been greater at funded sites.

Table 14: Reported Change in Participation since April 2021 at Funded and Unfunded Facilities

Direction	Magnitude	Funded	Unfunded
Percentage Increase	>100%	5%	5%
	51-100%	11%	3%
	26-50%	25%	17%
	0-25%	29%	30%
Percentage Decrease	0-25%	1%	1%
	26-50%	0%	0%
	51-100%	1%	2%

Source: Analysis of facility survey data

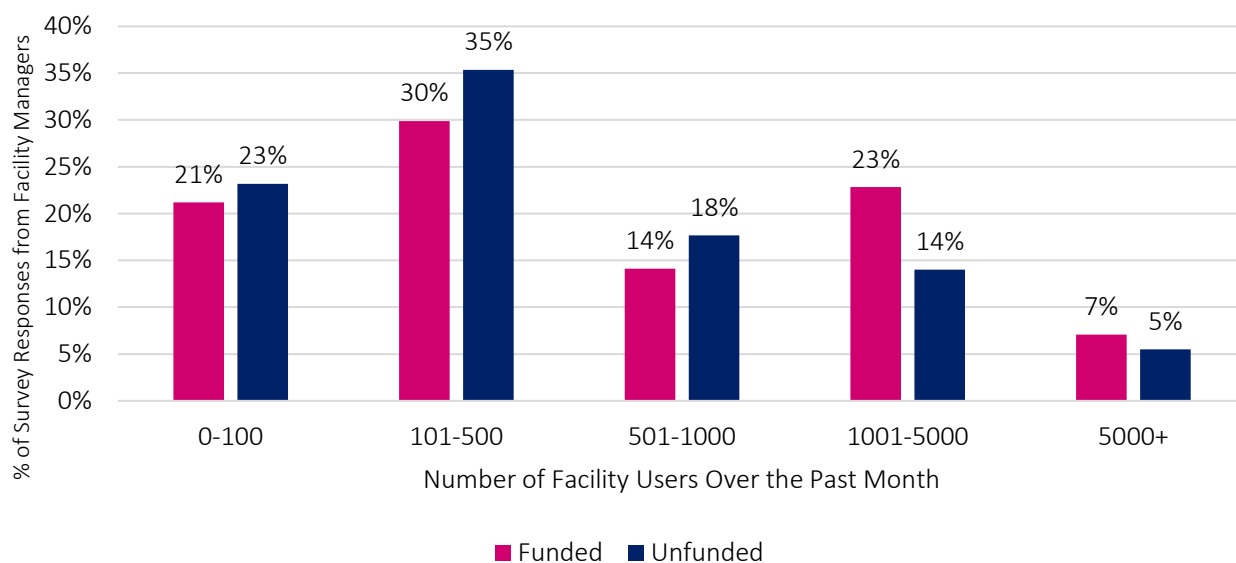
Base: n = 190 (funded facilities), n = 168 (unfunded facilities), percentages in parentheses were estimated based on the base values (n) which are the total facility sample sizes for funded and unfunded facilities. Totals may not add up due to rounding

Facility managers had the option of reporting the absolute number of participating users in the last month at their facility⁸⁷. Similar to the above, this figure could be provided exactly or estimated within bands. Banded changes are reported in the analysis, with the absolute changes being added to the relevant band. The distribution of responses was broadly similar across funded and unfunded facilities, with a larger proportion of funded facilities (24%) reporting user visitation numbers between 1,001-5,000, compared to only 14% of unfunded facilities as seen below in Figure 25. This suggests changes at funded facilities have been, in general, larger in absolute terms than at unfunded facilities.

⁸⁶ Facility managers were asked to either provide an exact percentage or a percentage band when reporting changes in participation

⁸⁷ The user bands facilities could report were broken down into “0-100”, “101-500”, “501-1000”, “1001-5000” and “5000+”.

Figure 25: Number of Users at Facilities in the Last Month



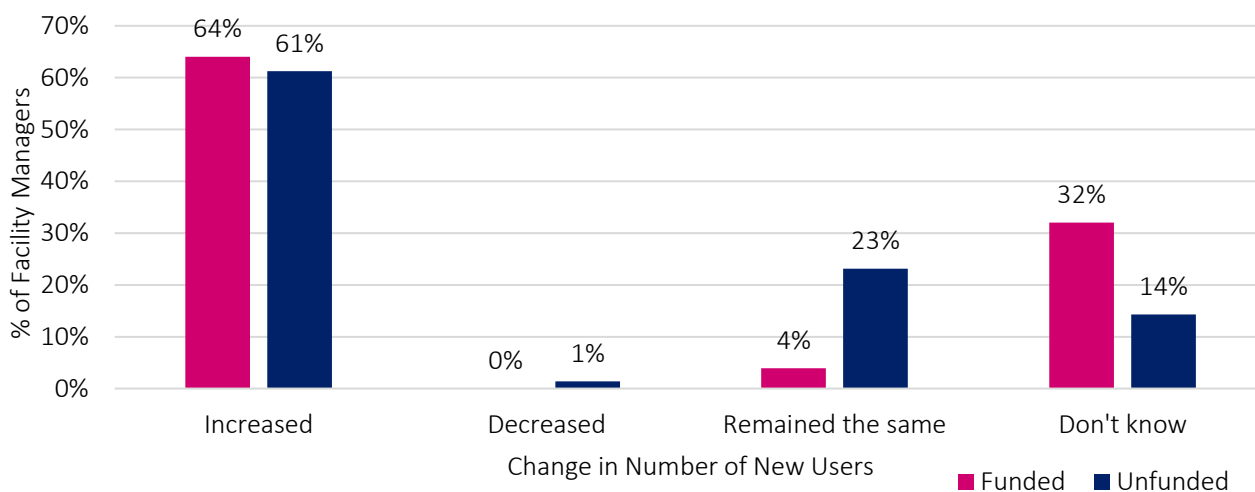
Source: Analysis of facility survey data

Base: n = 190 (funded facilities), n = 168 (unfunded facilities). Totals may not add up due to rounding

Additional New Users

Overall participation is also considered with regards to the number of *new* users attending the site. Facility managers were asked to report whether there has been a change in the number of new users participating in sport or physical activity at their facility through the facility survey⁸⁸. Whilst the results shown in Figure 26 show that a slightly higher proportion of funded facilities (64%) reported an increase in new users compared to unfunded facilities (61%), the data also shows that funded facilities were more likely to be uncertain about whether there was a change in new users (32%) compared to unfunded facilities (14%). This highlights the need for improvements in monitoring and overall knowledge of facility usage at funded sites, particularly where facility managers are unable to report this kind of information. Therefore, no clear conclusions can yet be drawn on whether the funding has impacted the number of new users participating at funded sites.

Figure 26: % of facility managers reporting a change in the number of new users at their facility



Source: Analysis of facility survey data

Base: n = 190 (funded facilities), n = 168 (unfunded facilities). Totals may not add up due to rounding

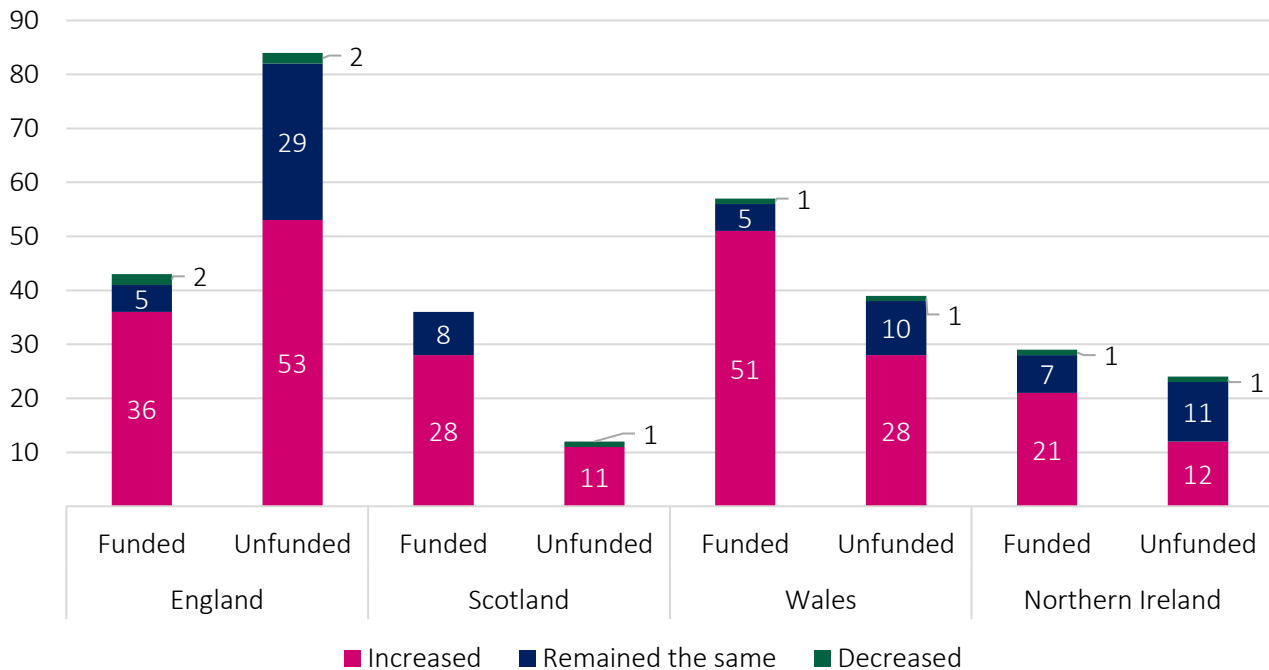
⁸⁸ A new user is a user defined that started attending the facility after April 2021.

The change in new users participating at funded sites is an important outcome to be understood in order to provide evidence to the impacts of the Programme, and particularly the additionality of the Programme. It will therefore be important to collect additional data in future waves of surveying activity to continue to track this metric as the Programme continues.

7.1.1.2. Overall Participation by Geography

MSGF funding has been delivered across all Home Nations, and as set out in EQ2.6, it is informative to evaluate the extent to which participation outcomes have varied across each. The analysis below sets out differences in total participation, broken down by geography across each of the four Home Nations, across funded and unfunded facilities, in order to understand potential impacts at a more granular level.

Figure 27: Number of facilities reporting participation changes by nation



Source: Analysis of facility survey data

As shown in Figure 27, across the four nations, the proportion of funded facilities reporting increased participation varied slightly between nations from 68% and 84%. The proportion of unfunded facilities reporting increased participation also marginally varied between 50% to 92%. A very small number of funded and unfunded facilities reported a decrease in participation. Overall, although some differences are observed in the participation impacts between nations based on the current data available, sample sizes are too small in some instances to draw reasonable findings, and additional data collection as well as robust econometric analysis are required to contribute any changes in participation, particularly at higher levels of granularity such as across nations, to the Programme.

Consistently across nations, a considerable proportion of funded facility managers were not aware of the directional change in participation at their sites, particularly within England. Given the importance of this as a primary outcome of interest of the Programme, this emphasises the need for improved monitoring and data capture across facilities in the future.

It is also likely that for a significant number of projects across nations, it was not yet possible to fully understand the impacts of funding on participation at the time of data collection. Whilst the Programme is still in its delivery

phase, due to complete by March 2025, many projects have either recently been completed, are still ongoing or yet to start, and so such projects will need to be given sufficient time for impacts to materialise.

Overall, the findings indicate that both funded and unfunded facilities have experienced a rise in participation since April 2021. With 48% unfunded facilities having ongoing and completed externally funded projects similar in nature to those implemented in the funded facilities, it is expected that this is a driver for reported growth for these facilities.

As seen below in Table 15, change in participation expressed in percentage bands has been broken down by nation. A higher proportion of English funded facilities reported an increase greater than 50% implying that overall, funded facilities have performed better in terms of the magnitude of increase in participation. Similarly across the other nations, funded facilities were more likely to report increases of up to 50% in terms of proportion of facilities and absolute numbers of facilities. Northern Ireland has the biggest difference between the funded and unfunded facilities while the proportions are similar across Wales and Scotland. Further analysis of a larger sample in future evaluations will be important to demonstrate these trends in greater detail.

Table 15: Percentage change in participation in funded and unfunded facilities by nation, counts by band

Direction	Magnitude	Funded					Unfunded				
		E	W	S	NI	TOTAL	E	W	S	NI	TOTAL
Percentage Increase	> 100%	4	3	1	1	9 (5%)	4	1	1	3	9 (5%)
	51-100%	5	5	6	4	20 (11%)	1	3	1	0	5 (3%)
	26-50%	13	18	6	10	47 (25%)	16	8	3	2	29 (17%)
	0-25%	13	21	13	9	56 (29%)	26	15	4	6	51 (30%)
Percentage Decrease	0-100% *	2	1	0	1	4 (2%)	2	1	1	1	5 (3%)

Source: Analysis of facility survey data

Base: $n = 190$ (funded facilities), $n = 168$ (unfunded facilities), Percentages in parentheses were estimated based on the base values (n) which are the total facility sample sizes for funded and unfunded facilities. Therefore, percentages will not add to 100%.

*Percentage Decrease has grouped facilities across all percentage bands (0-25%, 26-50%, 51-100% and >100%), due to low sample sizes

The International Territorial Level (ITL)⁸⁹ is a hierarchical system used by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) to present regional breakdowns of statistics. Whilst analysis has been conducted to establish changes in participation at this level of granularity, small sample sizes in a number of regions mean that it is not possible to demonstrate impacts or findings at this stage. For reference, only two out of the nine ITL 1 regions of England had a sample size of facilities greater than five through the first wave of facility survey data collection⁹⁰. Therefore, analysis by geography is limited to a higher level at this stage of the evaluation. As further data collection progresses through subsequent waves, this analysis will be revisited.

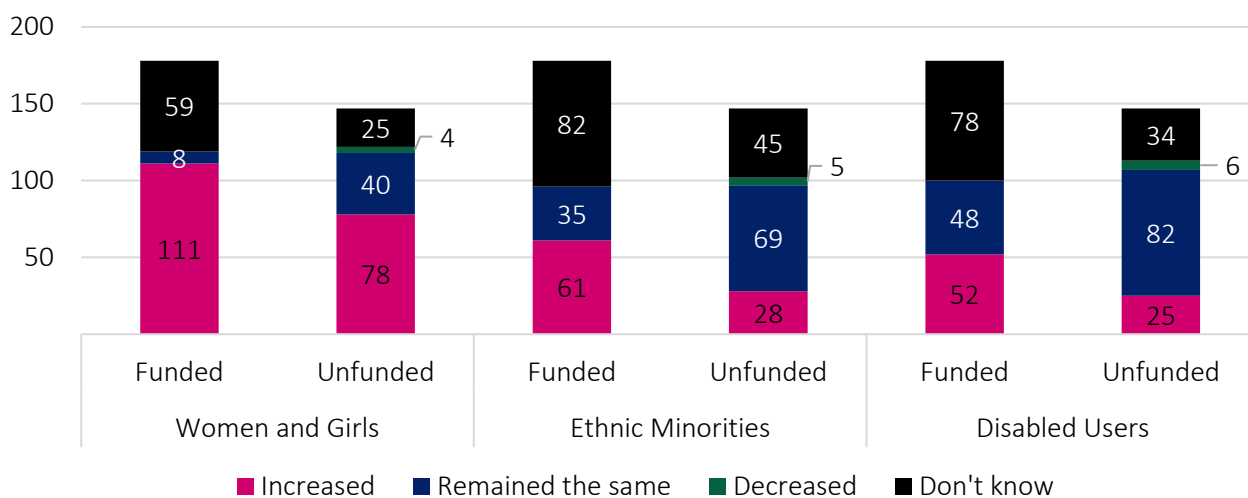
7.1.1.3. Overall Participation by Underrepresented Groups

EQ2.1 highlights the importance of considering how participation impacts from the Programme have been distributed across underrepresented groups. Figure 28 shows how funded and unfunded sites reported participation by different underrepresented groups has changed since April 2021.

⁸⁹ There are a total of 12 ITL 1 regions, which include North East England, North West England, Yorkshire and the Humber, East Midlands, West Midlands, East of England, London, South East England, South West England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland: [International geographies - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk/geography-and-place/international-geographies)

⁹⁰ Sample sizes and results are available in Annex 15 for reference.

Figure 28: Responses by facilities on how participation by underrepresented groups has changed since April 2021



Source: Analysis of facility survey data

Base: n = 190 (funded facilities), n = 168 (unfunded facilities)

Whilst no funded site reported that participation across any of the underrepresented groups had decreased since April 2021, just under 50% of these facilities were unsure as to whether there had been any change at all for these groups. This points to the need for a better evidence base covering user participation at funded sites, particularly disaggregated across different groups.

A greater proportion (58%) of funded sites reported that participation by women and girls had increased since April 2021 when compared to unfunded sites (46%). 4% of funded sites and 27% of unfunded sites reported no change in participation. This suggests that funded sites are more likely to have experienced an uplift in women and girls’ participation since the start of the MSGF Programme.

The leads to a similar conclusion when assessing participation by ethnic minority groups and disabled players. Although there is uncertainty around the directional change of participation for these groups, greater proportions of funded sites report an increase in usage since April 2021. Combined with a greater proportion of unfunded sites stating that participation by these groups has remained the same since April 2021, funded sites appear more likely to have experienced an uplift in participation by both ethnic minority users and disabled users since April 2021.

7.1.1.4. Overall Participation by Type of Project

Different types of projects will generate different outcomes based on what the project aims to deliver for the facility. Whilst funded facilities received investment (by definition), a number of unfunded facilities also reported receiving funding from other sources outside of the Programme. As asked in sub-evaluation question EQ1.6, the extent to which participation outcomes vary across facility investment can descriptively show impacts of the Programme. Investments were categorised across a wide range of project types by facility managers in the facility survey, spanning from constructing new or upgrading Artificial Grass Pitches (AGPs) and regular Grass Pitches, to upgrading facility amenities such as installing solar panel, new lighting, spectator stands or construction of car parks and changing rooms.

The project types outlined in the table below have been grouped together based on the responses provided by facility managers in the facility survey. The survey used a ‘multiple selection’ functionality which meant that managers could select all operational project types applicable to their facility from the listed options:

- Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) (new or upgraded)

- Grass Pitch (*new or upgraded*)
- Facilities (including changing rooms, lighting, car park, accessibility, storage, portable shelter, spectator stand, clubhouse, Multi-use Games Area, etc.) (*new or upgraded*)
- Equipment (groundskeeping, solar panels, goal posts, etc) (*new or upgraded*)
- Maintenance
- Other

Table 16 below shows the project type shared by facility managers, and links to report changes in participation, to understand any kind of trends of impacts.

Table 16: Change in Participation by Type of Facility Investment

Type of facility investment/s	Funded				Unfunded			
	No. of projects	Increase	Decrease	Remain the same	No. of projects	Increase	Decrease	Remain the same
Grass Pitch	13	69%	0%	31%	4	50%	25%	25%
Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP)	46	85%	4%	11%	4	75%	25%	0%
Facilities	45	82%	2%	16%	18	67%	11%	2%
Equipment + Maintenance	32	91%	0%	9%	31	71%	3%	26%
Facilities + Equipment	8	75%	0%	25%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Artificial Grass Pitch + Facilities / Equipment / Maintenance	21	76%	5%	19%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source: Analysis of facility survey data. Multiple selection of project types + indicates when two different project types have taken place
Base: n = 190 (funded facilities), n = 168 (unfunded facilities). Totals may not add up due to rounding

‘Equipment and Maintenance’ investments generated the highest proportion of increase in participation among funded facilities (91%). In absolute terms, Artificial Grass Pitch investments had the highest number of facilities reporting an increase (39); 92% more funded facilities reported this increase compared to unfunded facilities receiving non-DCMS external funding for AGPs. This is expected as AGPs are likely to attract more players throughout the year owing to the weather-resistant and durable nature of the surfaces. Further, upgrades to facility infrastructure such as solar panels and lighting also facilitate the facility to remain open for longer thereby enabling more participation.

Whilst this data does indicatively suggest a difference between funded and unfunded facilities at this early stage, it is not yet possible to identify and understand the specific project or investments’ impact on participation as this will require causal analysis and a larger sample size of facilities.

7.1.1.5. Overall Participation by Type of Sport

Granular information on the specific type of sport played at a facility is also not readily available in existing datasets. Programme monitoring data does not capture this consistently – for some nations there are very

limited reports of primary and secondary sports played at a facility, but this information is of insufficient quality to conduct analysis with, or report potential impacts at this stage⁹¹. However, some Delivery Partners in particular nations required the submission of a usage plan. Whilst usage plans were not considered as part of the analysis for this interim report, conversations about the feasibility of analysis of such data are ongoing. These usage plans could potentially then be linked to facility survey data on changes in participation allowing for impacts to be better demonstrated. It was determined that the risk of bias in responses to the facility survey on type of sport played would limit the quality of this data, and so these questions were not included.

The below section, however, considers which facilities have reported ‘multi-sport’ usage of their facility, and subsequently links this to facility data on participation. So whilst this does not explain differences across specific sports, it does go some way in aiding understanding of the differences between facilities where only one sport is played, and those where two or more sports are played.

Multi-Sport Usage

The DCMS delivery and monitoring dataset for the four nations comprises a “multi-sport facility” indicator for some projects. Whilst this is not exhaustive and is missing datapoints, the breakdown of available multi-sport and non-multi-sport facilities is 60:40 for England and almost 50:50 for Scotland. However, this split is not as even for Northern Ireland and Wales with multi-sport comprising 69% and 100% of the total number of facilities for which this indicator data is available.

This variable is particularly incomplete in Wales and Scotland. Therefore, whilst this data is presented to show the number of multi-sport projects from those facilities where this data is available, given the substantial level of incompletes, it is not possible to infer impacts or outcomes at this stage. The difference in completeness is demonstrated through the difference in the first two rows compared to the number in the full sample.

Table 17: Multi-sport Facilities

Type of facility	England	Wales	Scotland	Northern Ireland	Total
Multi-sport facilities	33	8	19	20	80
Non-Multi-sport facilities	22	0	18	9	49
Facilities in full sample ⁹²	55	64	41	31	191

Source: Analysis of facility survey

Base: n = 37 | 124 (England funded | unfunded); 35 | 99 (Scotland funded | unfunded); 6 | 74 (Northern Ireland funded | unfunded); and 6 | 54 (Wales funded | unfunded)

The table below linked those facilities where a multi-sport indicator was available to levels of participation reported through the facility survey of managers. Whilst the difference in participation was consistently in favour of multi-sport facilities, again given the sample size it was not possible to infer impacts from this data.

⁹¹ Data for Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales contains a parameter denoting additional sport played at the facility besides football for only 33 facilities. Rugby was the most common secondary sport (10 facilities) followed by GAA/Gaelic Football (8 facilities) and School PE Activity (7 facilities). The other sports played included running, cricket, hockey, curricular PE and community sport.

⁹² This denotes the total number of funded facilities surveyed from each nation in the full sample. The two rows above are the number of facilities for which multi-sport and non-multi-sport indicator data is available and will therefore not sum up to the total number in the third row.

Table 18: Participation by Multi-sport and non-Multi-sport Facilities

Participation	England			Wales			Scotland			Northern Ireland		
	MS	Non MS	Diff.	MS	Non MS	Diff.	MS	Non MS	Diff.	MS	Non MS	Diff.
Increased	21	15	29%	6	0	100%	13	12	8%	12	8	33%
Decreased	1	1	0%	0	0	N/A	0	0	N/A	1	0	100%
Remained the same	4	1	75%	0	0	N/A	4	4	0%	5	1	80%

Source: Analysis of facility survey data. MS stands for Multi-Sport and NMS stands for Non Multi-Sport

7.1.1.6. Capacity of facilities and meeting local demand

Detailed data on the level of demand for sports facilities across local communities in the UK is not readily available. Indeed, estimates of local demand can be hard to collect accurate data for, and will be subject to limitations including time lags, changing population demographics and changing preferences. However, this section uses data collected as part of this evaluation as a proxy for potential local demand.

Comparing Capacity and Number Of Visits

Using insights from facility survey data, it is possible to generate a proxy for local demand and the extent to which facilities meet this, through a comparison of current capacity and the number of users visiting a facility monthly. The assumption underpinning this is that those facilities that experience a number of visits close to, or at their existing level of reported capacity, are likely meeting local demand. However, it must be noted that this will not provide fully informed conclusions due to limitations of recall bias⁹³, the self-reported nature of the data, and that many projects have only recently been delivered and subsequently may require a longer amount of time for potential impacts on participation to kick in.

As shown in Table 21, facilities have been grouped into four capacity bands (ranging from 0-100 to 1000+), and five monthly user visitation bands (ranging from 0-100 to 5000+). This analysis approximated the average number of daily users from the reported monthly figures⁹⁴, and compared this to the capacity reported by facility managers.

⁹³ A type of bias that occurs when participants in a research study do not accurately remember a past event or experience

⁹⁴ Attendance at facilities as reported through the user survey showed that 96% of the c.1,220 users visited their local facility at least once a month

Table 19: Comparison of Facility Usage and Capacity⁹⁵

Legend: Higher risk of user demand exceeding capacity
 Risk of user demand exceeding capacity

Average daily no. of users		0 to 3	3 to 17	17 to 33	33-323	323+
Capacity	0-100	20	23	5	11	4
	101-200	11	17	3	11	4
	201-1000	11	16	13	13	5
	1000+	1	0	5	9	2
Total (n=184)		43	56	26	44	15

Source: Analysis of facility survey data

Those facilities in the top left of this table have relatively low average daily users, but also relatively low capacity. The facilities in the bottom right have the largest volume of average daily users, but also the largest capacity. Those facilities that fall into either red or amber shaded boxes are at potential risk of demand exceeding capacity. This analysis is also based on a number of assumptions, and the validity and accuracy of these assumptions will be clearer as more data is collected over a longer period of time.

Reported Changes to Capacity

Facilities were also asked to indicate whether the programme funding resulted in any increases in capacity for existing groups and sports. Whilst this does not directly address the extent to which facilities meet demand, an inference can be made at this stage that increases to capacity are likely made in response to resource demands at a particular facility, which could suggest those facilities reporting an increase in capacity where near, or at, full capacity previously. Of the 190 funded facilities surveyed, 60% reported an increase, while 34% did not witness any change in capacity.

Table 20: Survey Responses to Change in Capacity

Reported Increased in Capacity?	Number of Responses	%
Yes	114	64%
No	64	36%

Source: Analysis of facility survey data

Base: n = 178 (funded facilities)

7.1.2. Impacts on Sustained Participation

Whilst changes in participation over a shorter time horizon can still have generated positive outcomes, sustaining changes in participation helps to ensure the impacts of the Programme continue. Sustained participation outcomes have been evaluated across numerous sub-evaluation questions in EQ1 and EQ2 and are referred to in the analysis below.

⁹⁵ Self-reported monthly number of users was used as the basis for estimating the range of daily users expected to visit a facility. This is simply a crude estimate [Daily users = Monthly users/No of days in a month (30)].

To assess how sustained participation levels in funded areas have changed since the start of the Programme, facility managers⁹⁶ were asked to report changes in the number of *regular* users at their facility. Regular users have been defined as users who participated at the facility before the start of April 2021 and attended the facility at least once a month (on average). For funded facilities, this change was asked since the project's completion, and for unfunded projects, this change was asked since April 2021.

At this stage, the responses covering sustained participation have been compared between funded and unfunded facilities based on responses to the facility survey, also broken down by nation. Changes in number of regular users across other breakdowns, such as underrepresented groups, were not captured due to lack of granularity of available data, but will be considered in future waves of data collection.

7.1.2.1. Change in Regular Users

To inform an assessment of the Programme against EQ1.2, this section utilised survey data to descriptively assess the degree to which participation at funded facilities has been sustained, using a proxy of the change in the number of regular users at the site. This figure was then descriptively compared against unfunded facilities.

In the facility survey, estimates of directional changes in participation were self-reported by facility managers based on their knowledge and ability to recall this information. Funded facilities were asked to report this change since the completion of their funded project, whilst unfunded facilities were asked to report the change compared to April 2021, i.e. prior to the commencement of the MSGF Programme.

These results are reported in Table 21. A high proportion of funded sites selected "Don't know", and this reflects a high proportion of funded projects that received the survey that still had work ongoing, and thus, could not report any changes based on the stage of work at the site. Despite this, 49% of funded facility managers suggested an increase in the number of regular users since their project's completion, while only 35% of unfunded facilities reported an increase since April 2021. None of the funded facilities reported a decline in regular user participation, and a significantly higher proportion of unfunded facilities reporting no change in the number of regular users (38%).

Table 21: Change in Regular Users

No of regular users	% Funded Facilities	% Unfunded Facilities
Increased	49%	35%
Decreased	0%	4%
Remained the same	14%	38%
Don't know	31%	12%

Source: Analysis of facility survey data. Funded facility managers selected "Don't know" if their funded project had yet to complete as of the time of the survey

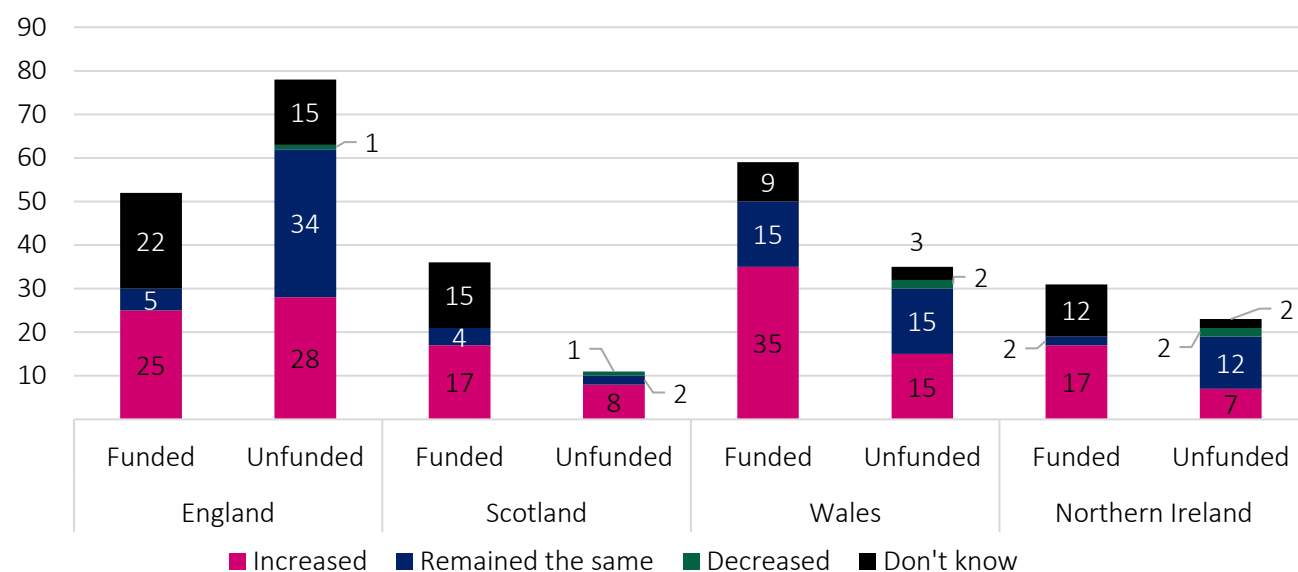
Base: n = 190 (funded facilities), n = 168 (unfunded facilities). Totals may not add up due to rounding

7.1.2.2. Sustained Participation Broken Down by Geography

Similar to analysis of overall participation at the regional level, a lack of sample size made it challenging to evidence the impacts of the Programme on sustained participation at the ITL 1 regional level of granularity at this stage. In addition, not all respondents that provided a response to total participation gave an answer for *sustained* participation. At this stage therefore, insights are given at the national level to inform EQ2.7.

⁹⁶ The manager of the facility is defined as someone at the site in a position of management such as the CEO, chairman, committee member, officer, director, head coach, secretary, treasurer, or trustee.

Figure 29: Number of Facilities Reporting Changes in Regular Users, by Nation



Source: Analysis of facility survey data. Funded facility managers selected "Don't know" if funded projects were yet to complete.

Of the 55 funded facilities in England that responded to the survey, only 30 facility managers provided a response to this question, which included those that reported an increase and those who stated that participation remained the same. Across all the four nations, 50-60% of the funded facilities that responded on sustained participation reported an increase since April 2021. However, it was not yet possible to establish a causal link between this and Programme funding. Again, while similar proportions of unfunded facilities have also reported an increase in participation, a higher number of funded facilities have reported that they currently do not know whether there has been an impact or not which could change as more projects complete.

7.1.2.3. Other Breakdowns of Sustained Participation

At this stage it is not possible to break down findings with regards to sustained participation by any further disaggregation. Other contextual findings with regards to sustained participation have been shown in Annex 10. Findings from these surveys have not been included within this section at this stage, as this data will not be used to inform causal analysis going forwards. There will also be additional data collection through another wave of both user and household surveys, where these findings will be reviewed and analysed further.

7.1.3. Local Community Impacts

7.1.3.1. Accessibility of Facilities

Evidence to support the understanding of impacts with regards to the accessibility of facilities was collected as part of the facility survey and provided views on improvements in amenities for diverse groups and sports, and the overall condition of sites. For funded sites, this was asked in both current and future tense to cover projects that had and had not yet completed. For unfunded sites, this was asked hypothetically in the case that the facility was to receive additional funding in the future, and the facility manager was asked to report what benefits they feel this investment would generate at their site.

54% of funded facilities reported either observed increased access for different groups or sport or believe this will be delivered once the project is completed. This is compared to 62% of unfunded facilities who felt that additional funding could help increase access for different groups or sports. Additionally, 39% of funded facilities shared that there had either been no improvement or believed that there would not be any improvement in this regard, whereas only 24% of unfunded sites thought that additional funding would not lead to an increase in accessibility for different groups or sports. Identical conclusions were found to the question of whether

funding has or will allow a facility manager’s facility to remain open or playable for longer periods during the day or year. These differences are minimal and should be treated with caution given that unfunded facilities were asked to consider hypothetical outcomes if they were to receive additional funding.

Whilst the underlying cause of this trend is not yet clear, both areas require a deeper exploration of the drivers behind reported outcomes of the unfunded facilities. In addition, since delivery is ongoing for many sites surveyed, these results will likely change once the impacts of funding at funded sites have materialised. Nonetheless, one plausible reason for the conclusions above could be that 52% of the unfunded sites who reported increased access received other forms of external funding and could be associating their responses with this. As these findings are descriptive in nature, this difference cannot necessarily be attributed to the MSGF Programme at this stage. It could also potentially be driven by unobservable characteristics that determined how these unfunded facilities were selected for secondary non-DCMS funding.

Table 22: Facility Accessibility

Accessibility to facilities		Funded		Unfunded	
		Response	Response Rate	Response	Response Rate
Increased access for different groups or sports	Yes	103	54%	104	62%
	No	75	39%	41	24%
Open/playable for longer during the day or year	Yes	84	44%	87	52%
	No	94	49%	58	35%

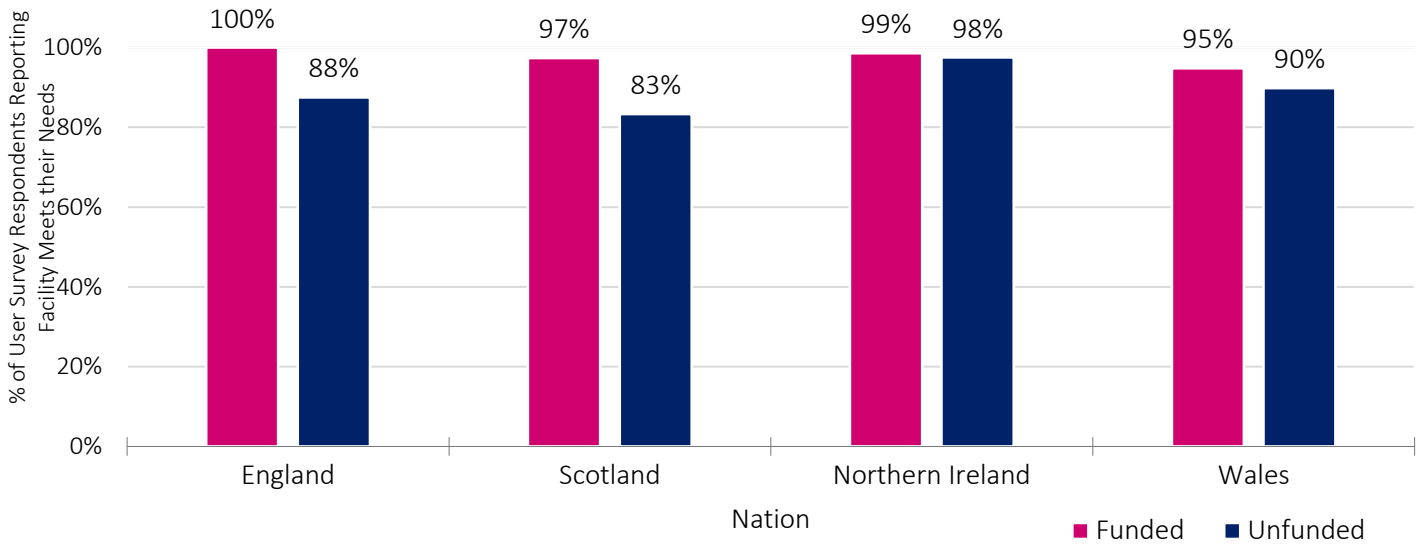
Source: Analysis of facility survey data

Base: n = 190 (funded facilities), n = 168 (unfunded facilities)

Findings on Accessibility from the User Survey

A higher share of users of funded facilities across all four Home Nations indicated that the facility either fully or partially meets their needs. Whilst no user of funded facilities in England indicated the facility did not meet their needs, the figure for users of funded facilities in Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Wales ranged from 1% to 5%. However, the corresponding figure for unfunded facilities across the Home Nations ranged between 2% and 17% of users of unfunded facilities. This may imply that funded facilities were perceived as more accessible among their users.

Figure 30: User survey - does the facility either fully or partially meet your needs?

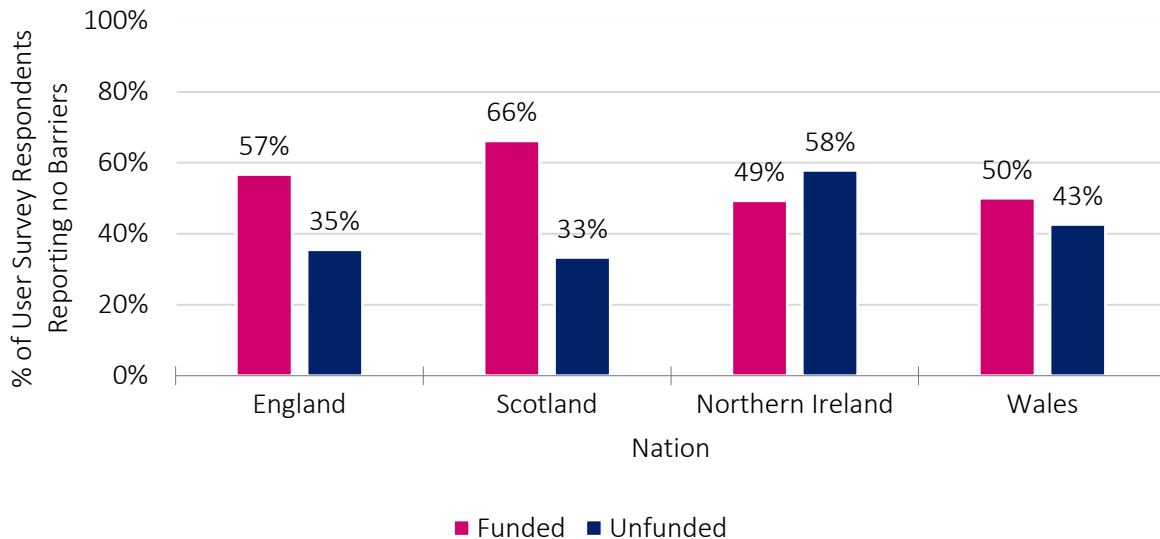


Source: Analysis of user survey

Base: n = 58 | 329 (England funded | unfunded); 272 | 54 (Scotland funded | unfunded); 69 | 159 (Northern Ireland funded | unfunded); and 58 | 108 (Wales funded | unfunded)

Users of funded facilities across England, Scotland, and Wales also reported lower barriers to attending their facility more regularly or for longer periods when compared to users of unfunded facilities.

Figure 31: User survey - barriers preventing users from attending more regularly or for longer periods (no barriers / NA)



Source: Analysis of user survey data

Base: n = 60 | 327 (England funded | unfunded); 272 | 54 (Scotland); 69 | 159 (Northern Ireland); and 58 | 108 (Wales)

Lower perceived barriers could, potentially, have contributed towards a greater increase in physical activity levels among underrepresented groups compared to April 2021.

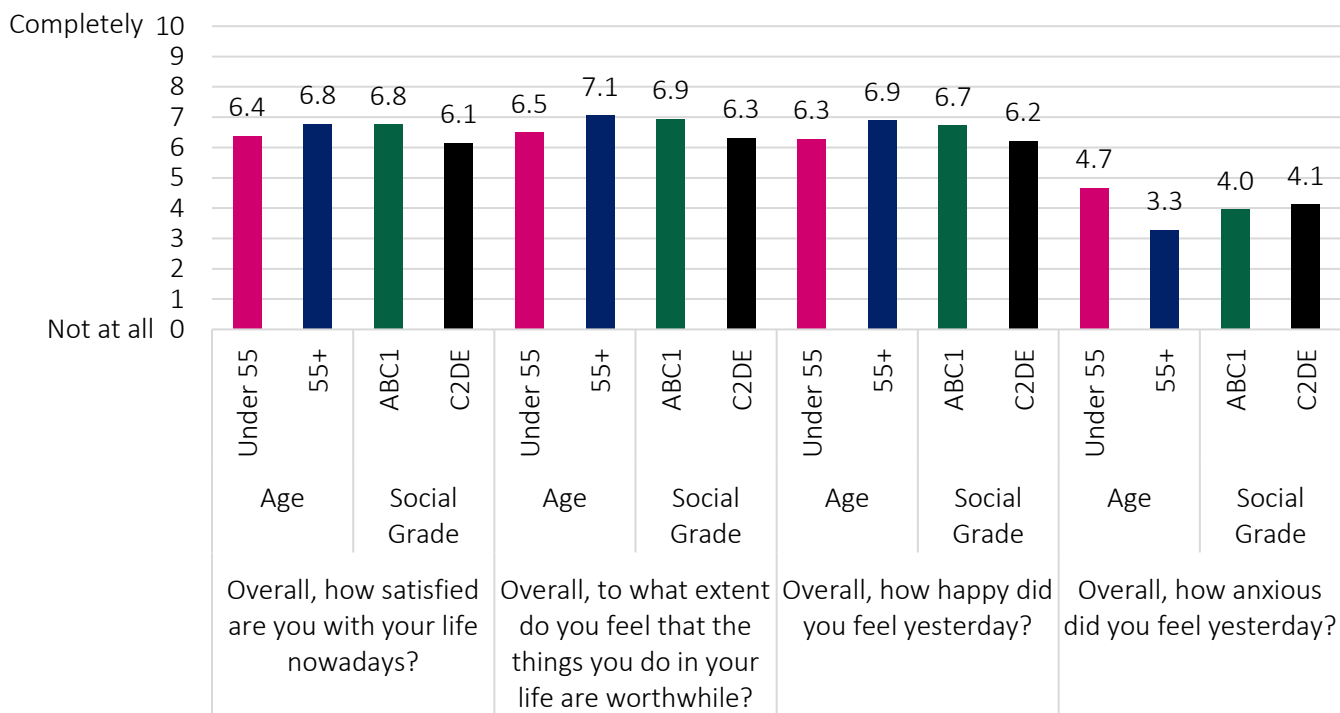
7.1.3.2. Mental Wellbeing and Physical Health

Another useful indicator in demonstrating the extent to which the Programmes have generated wider social benefits of participation is the role it has played in improving mental wellbeing and physical health. Looking at mental wellbeing, the household survey conducted asked local respondents in the same postcode sector as funded and unfunded sites wellbeing questions relating to life satisfaction, anxiety levels and how happy the respondent felt. Physical health outcomes were informed by comparing perceptions of physical activity as well as baseline levels of physical activity of respondents near funded and unfunded sites to see if general physical wellbeing has been influenced by the Programmes.

Mental Wellbeing

In response to being asked to score life satisfaction from 1 to 10⁹⁷, the average reported score across the funded sample was 6.6. Assessing the extent to which the respondent feels things they do in their life are worthwhile and how happy the respondent felt yesterday, similar average scores are observed at 6.8 and 6.6, respectively. Reported anxiety levels of the respondent yesterday, with 0 being not at all anxious and 10 being completely anxious, averaged 4.0 to those living near funded sites. Scores were relatively similar across postcode sectors containing funded and unfunded facilities, and so it was not yet possible to infer or conclude on the impacts of the Programme.

Figure 32: Mental Wellbeing Outcomes split by Age and Social Grade



Source: analysis of household survey data

Base: 2,651 under 55 respondents, 2,477 55+ respondents. 3,662 ABC1 respondents, 1,457 C2DE respondents

⁹⁷ On a scale between 0 being not at all satisfied and 10 being completely satisfied

As shown in Figure 32, higher average mental wellbeing outcomes are observed for those respondents of ages 55 and over and respondents in the NRS-defined ABC1 social grade.⁹⁸

Physical Health

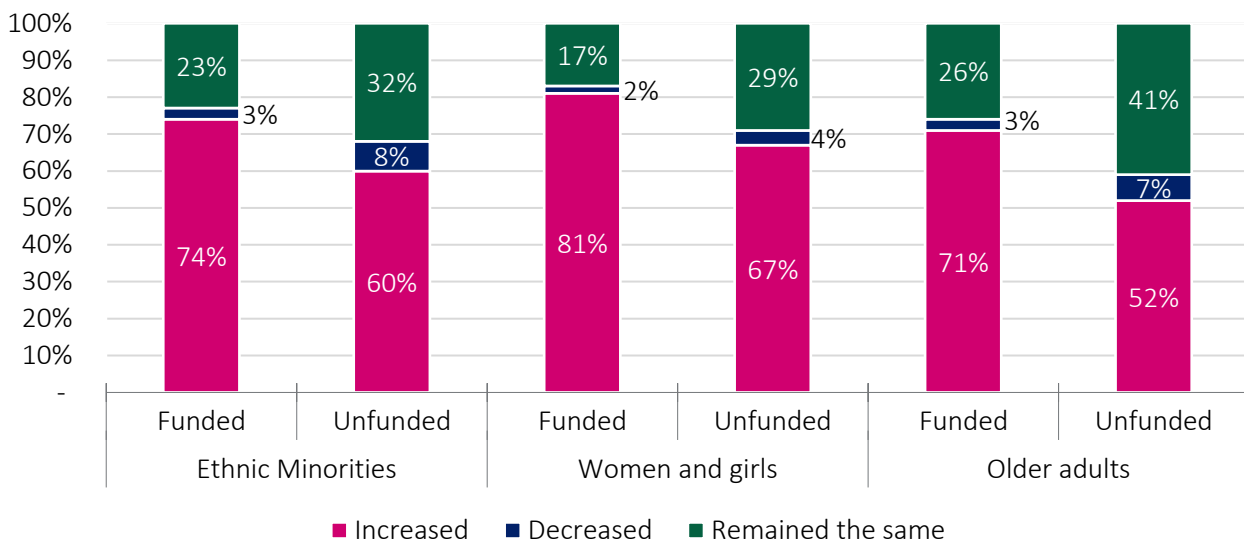
The household survey also provided insights into the respondent’s attitudes toward physical activity. When asked on a scale between 1 to 5 how motivated they were to be active over the last six months, with 1 being ‘not at all motivated’ and 5 being ‘highly motivated’, respondents near funded sites scored an average of 3.2, with 38% of these respondents giving a score of either 4 or 5 and 25% giving a score of 1 or 2. There were minor differences to answers given by respondents near unfunded sites, but broad trends were overall similar.

When asked what would encourage them to become more active, respondents near funded sites primarily felt they needed more time available to be active, with 37% sharing this view, followed by 30% wanting lower costs at local facilities. Both these options were on average more frequently selected by respondents near unfunded sites, with 42% needing more time to be active and 32% wanting less expensive local sport facilities.

In response to a question asking if further improvements to their local facility (through higher quality playing surfaces, equipment, ore capacity, more accessibility) would encourage users to be more active, a lower percentage of respondents near funded sites selected agreed compared to respondents near unfunded sites, suggesting a potential impact of improvements already delivered to the facilities near funded respondents as part of the Programme.

Additionally, findings from the user survey in Figure 33 show that users from under-represented groups using funded facilities indicated a greater increase in physical activity from April 2021, compared to those using unfunded facilities. This may imply that users from under-represented groups have benefited from increased access at funded facilities more than those at unfunded facilities.

Figure 33: Comparing your level of physical activity now to April 2021, how has your overall level of physical activity changed?



⁹⁸ Respondents in the ABC1 social grade have an occupation that falls into one of the following: “Supervisory, clerical and junior managerial, administrative and professional, intermediate managerial, administrative and professional, higher managerial, administrative and professional”. Respondents in the C2DE social grade have an occupation that falls into one of the following: “Skilled manual workers, semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers, state pensioners, casual and lowest grade workers, unemployed with state benefits only”. Source: [Social Grade | National Readership Survey \(nrs.co.uk\)](https://www.nrs.co.uk/social-grade/)

Source: Analysis of user survey data. Base n = ethnic minorities – 68 | 137 (funded | unfunded); women and girls – 114 | 174 (funded | unfunded); older adults – 106 | 111 (funded | unfunded)

7.1.3.3. Community Cohesion, Social Network Size, and Pride in Place

The Programme aimed to generate wider social benefits beyond the direct benefits of sport participation. Capital investment into new or renovated local facilities can help the local community feel proud to live in the area and encourage greater social cohesion amongst residents. This section looked at the evidence collected from the household survey and case studies to compare metrics of community cohesion, social network size and pride in place.

Community cohesion

Assessing community cohesion through household survey responses, at funded sites, 21% of respondents were involved in volunteering activities in their local neighbourhood, with a slightly greater percentage of women involved in volunteering compared to men. The most common type of volunteering was community or local infrastructure development work, with frequent “other” answers including church and charity initiatives as well as litter picking. Twice as many men, as a percentage of the male sample, were involved in sports volunteering compared with women (4% of all men compared to only 2% of all women). 50% of respondents near funded sites said they spoke to their neighbours at least once a week, and 56% of respondents felt that many of the people in their neighbourhood could be trusted.

From the evidence gathered from the household survey from the first wave of data collection, there have been impacts to community cohesion through a number of metrics, but is not yet clear if there is a causal link to the Programme, or a statistically significant difference between communities with funded and unfunded facilities.

Social Networks

The impact of the Programme on the size of social networks has been discussed and explored as part of the case studies conducted in the first wave of data collection. Numerous facilities interviewed shared that the site had seen an increasing number of memberships and active teams. It is also likely that rising participation at a facility encourages greater levels of interaction between users, increasing the size of social networks, and given increasing participation has been more common at funded facilities, this suggests from the evidence available that the Programme has helped facilitate growing social network size.

Pride in Place

‘Pride in place’⁹⁹ outcomes were generally positive for respondents near funded facilities. Just below 60% of respondents near funded facilities felt either very or fairly strongly that they belong in their neighbourhood, with 12% of respondents near funded sites feeling they do not at all belong in their immediate neighbourhood.

The majority of respondents near funded sites also felt either fairly or very proud to live in their neighbourhood, (53%). Very few respondents felt not at all proud to live in their neighbourhood, with most of the remaining responses falling into the “neither proud nor unproud” category. Just over 90% of respondents near funded facilities felt their neighbourhood was either a fairly or very safe place to live, but just under half of all respondents agreed that people in the neighbourhood pull together to improve their local area. On average, the responses indicate that people near funded sites felt more strongly that the friendships they developed by engaging in community activities or attending community events better connected them to their neighbourhood than the friendships they developed through engaging with physical activity and sport. 54% of

⁹⁹ This evaluation follows the commonly used definition of pride in place from the Bennet Institute: “the emotional attachments to the places that we live and the pride we express in them.”

respondents near funded sites also agreed that their local area was a place where people from different backgrounds get on well together.

Differences observed between responses to pride in place questions across nations or gender were not substantial. However, it was observed that older respondents generally responded more positively on average to questions relating to pride in place. A similar observation can also be seen when evaluating between ABC1 and C2DE NRS social grades¹⁰⁰, with respondents falling into the ABC1 social grade generally providing slightly more positive responses. For example, 61% of ABC1 social grade respondents felt that many people in their neighbourhood can be trusted compared to 48% of C2DE social grade respondents.

Overall however, as above, at this stage there are no clear consistent trends separating reported outcomes in communities with funded and unfunded facilities. Through subsequent waves of data collection, and as more improvements are completed and given further time to make impacts in communities, these trends and patterns will be revisited.

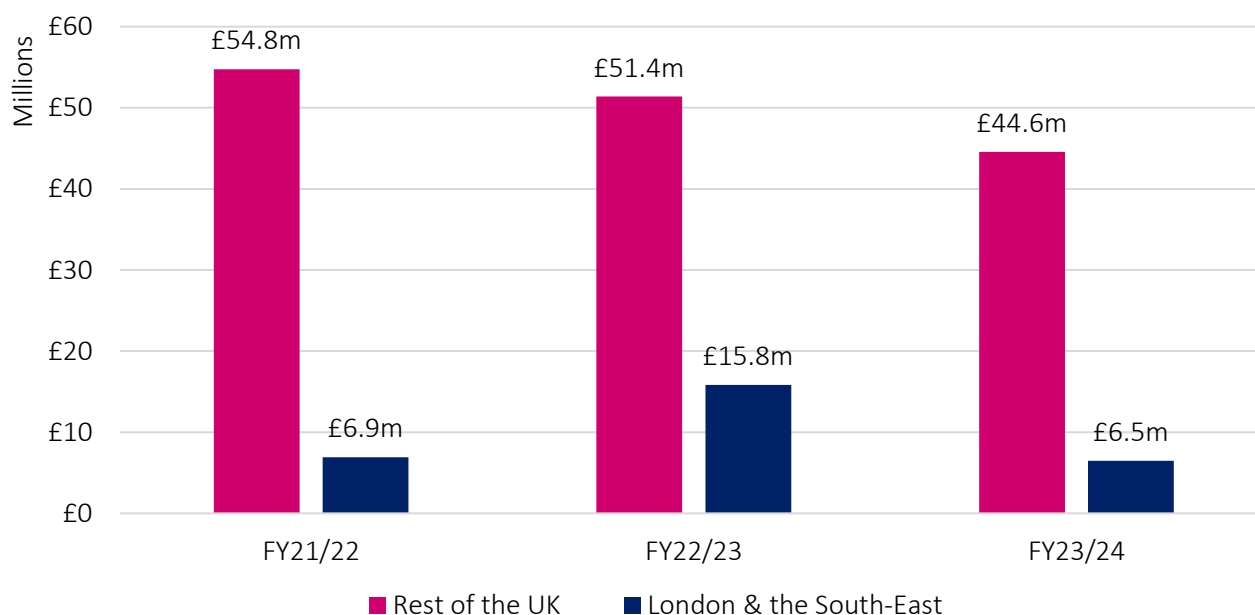
7.1.4. Other Impacts

7.1.4.1. Addressing Regional Inequalities

Through direct capital investment into projects in towns and cities across the UK, the Programmes aim to increase sports participation and deliver positive mental and physical health outcomes.

Using Programme monitoring data covering both MSGF and PTCR Programmes, it is possible to understand how funding was allocated between different regions of the UK, such as between London and the South-East and less affluent regions. Figure 34 below maps MSGF grant commitments within financial years across regions of the UK.

Figure 34: MSGF Spend between London and the South-East and the Rest of the UK



Source: Analysis of MSGF delivery documentation. Base: n = 212 in FY21/22, n = 1,599 in FY22/23, n = 1,114 in FY23/24

Across the three years, an average of 84% of funding has gone to regions outside of London and the South-East, totalling just over £150 million. This average proportion represents two years of higher investment outside of London and the South-East and one period of slightly lower investment¹⁰¹. Furthermore, Figure 11 in Section

¹⁰⁰ [Social Grade | National Readership Survey \(nrs.co.uk\)](https://www.nrs.co.uk)

¹⁰¹ 89% in FY21/22 and 87% in FY23/24 of grant funding flowed to other regions in the UK, but this proportion was lower in FY22/23 at 77%.

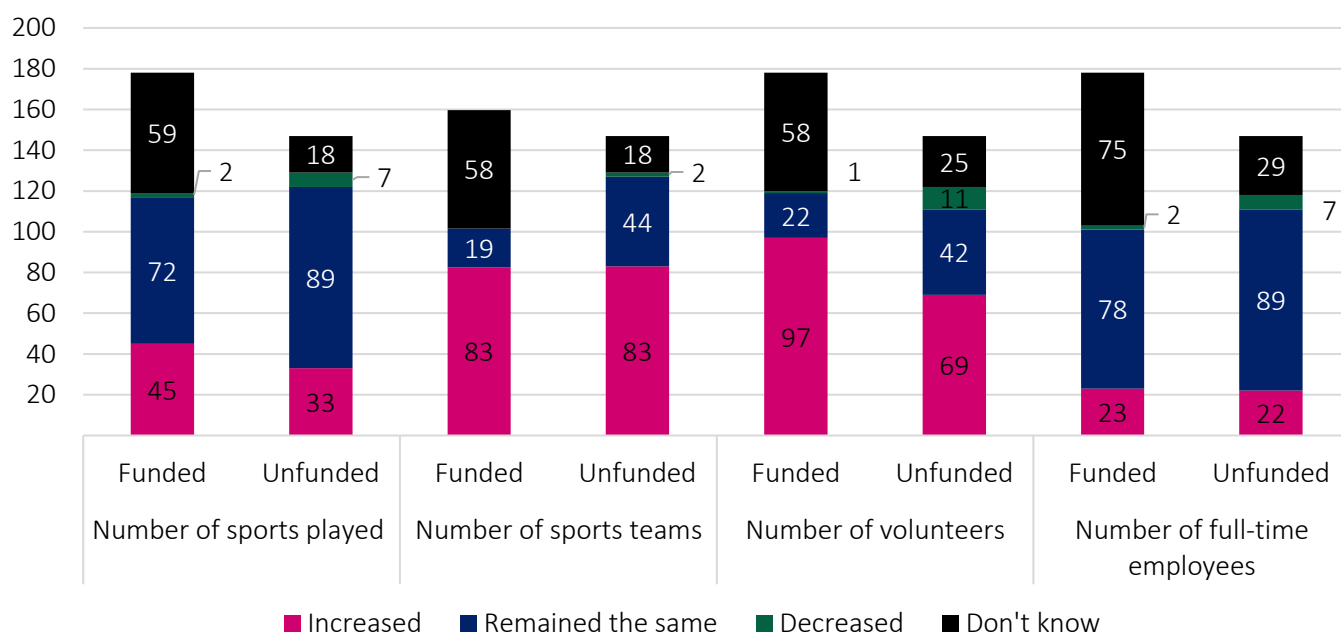
5.1.2.1. shows that London and the South-East received some of the smallest amounts of funding per capita to date, with other higher priority regions in the North receiving far greater funding per capita.

7.1.4.2. Sport Teams, Volunteers, and Number of Workers Specialising in Grassroots Sport

Overall, sports teams and volunteers are an integral part of the sports and physical activity ecosystem and their participation is crucial to the Programme’s success and sustainability. Sports teams provide a sense of belonging for players, and volunteers provide essential support through coaching, administrative activities, event planning and fundraising. All the above has the potential to foster better connections within the local community and promote an active lifestyle.

Figure 35 below presents a comparison of facility managers’ reported changes in sport and volunteering activity and employment on site since the commencement of the MSGF Programme. Similar to the responses to other questions assessed in this report, a higher proportion of funded sites were unsure as to the impacts of the funding since April 2021. This is likely as a result of some of these investments yet to be completed and work still ongoing, and so managers were unable to report changes at this point. Therefore, inferring impacts from the data below at this stage should wait for additional future waves of data collection.

Figure 35: Changing in the Number of Sports Played, Sports Teams, Volunteers and Full-time Employees



Source: Analysis of facility survey data
 Base: n = 178 (funded facilities), n = 147 (unfunded facilities)

7.1.4.3. Environmental Outcomes

The environmental impacts of the Programme are important to consider in terms of the potential impacts on the surrounding area, its ecosystem, and the local community. At this stage evidence is available from case study interviews with funded sites as well as contextual evidence collected from the facility survey. Future reporting will look to estimate the net impact of the Programme on emissions, subject to data of sufficient granularity being available to perform these quantifications.

Case study fieldwork points towards the generation of environmental benefits that were made possible by the funding. Kilwinning Community Club’s facility managers, for example, commented that their upgraded floodlighting system has produced sizeable environmental benefits, as the system is far more energy efficient and has much lower maintenance costs compared to the previous floodlights. In addition, the club has taken

advantage of the increased usage by local schools, and has combined sporting sessions with education, teaching children about the environmental impacts of football. Facility managers from Plas Arthur Leisure Centre in Wales also commented on the reduction in light pollution and energy usage from the MSGF-funded installation of LED floodlights at the site, and that they continue to engage with the Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty team in the area to minimise any environmental impacts caused by activities at the facility.

Responses to the facility survey also revealed reflections on the positive environmental impact of the DCMS funding through qualitative responses to questions asking for additional views. One manager stated that the *“transition to LED lighting reduced energy consumption by 50%”*, while another was pleased to report that the facility’s utility bills have fallen significantly since gas boilers were replaced by the *“installation of solar panels and heat batteries”*, thereby *“reducing the carbon footprint”* of the site.

7.1.4.4. Educational Outcomes

This evaluation sub-question looks to understand to what extent the Programme has improved school-level sport participation and driven increases in educational achievement in the local area. Analysis at this stage is informed by evidence collected primarily from case study activity, but will later be informed by causal analysis in the impact evaluation and economic evaluation. Because of the nature of the case studies, these outcomes generally cover the facility’s involvement with schools and the impact this has had on both the facility and the students. The clear picture provided from the evidence collected points to significant benefit to schools through uplifts in pupil participation as a result of both direct funding into school-based sites and engagement by funded clubs with their local schools. More information is provided below detailing these outcomes and highlighting the positive collaboration between funded sites and schools facilitated by the Programmes. Additional evidence will be collected as part of future waves of data collection, particularly though future rounds of case study fieldwork.

One such example of improved educational outcomes is the new 3G AGP delivered at Ysgol y Grango, a Welsh secondary school. The pitch replaced a damaged sand-based astroturf and opened in early 2023. The school are the primary users throughout the day, and this has allowed for a huge enhancement in curriculum PE offered at the school. As a result, there has been a substantial uplift in sports participation at the school which has been sustained since its opening. Girls in particular were reported as benefitting the most. In addition, facility managers felt that the pupil participation has given the students increased motivation and increased their aspirations to compete in sport. It should be noted that many projects funded by the Programme have been at school sites. Therefore, it is likely that the experiences reported at the Ysgol y Grango site may be similar to those experienced at many other funded school-based sites in the MSGF Programme across the UK.

Funded clubs working alongside schools was a common theme across most of the other case studies conducted in this wave of data collection for the MSGF Programme. Another example is Kilwinning Community Sports Club, which is a multi-sport facility that received a grant to upgrade their floodlighting system. The club has been able to continue supporting their local community, particularly engaging with local schools in the area. The upgraded lighting system allows the facility to stay open later during the darker evenings particularly observed in winter months and facilitates increased involvement from people who can only train outside of work and school hours. As a result, the facility managers highlighted that children and young people, and in particular girls’ football, have gained significantly from the MSGF funding by increasing their opportunity to play. The facility managers recognise that girls’ football is growing in Scotland and feel this project has allowed them to support this growth. Outside of supporting sporting activities, the club has also provided educational sessions to highlight the environmental impacts of football.

7.1.4.5. Evidence Base for Future Evaluations

The impact of the Programme on the evidence base can be split in to three areas: new primary data sources, new reporting, and incentivisation of external stakeholders.

Primary Data Sources

For the purpose of the evaluation, primary data collection has been a crucial element of the evidence base, informing many key aspects of the analysis alongside study of secondary data. The first wave of primary data collection undertaken in the evaluation to date included extensive surveying of facility managers, users and households for the MSGF Programme and case study fieldwork and process evaluation interviews with key stakeholders involved in delivery of the Programme.

The facility survey covered both funded and unfunded sites and engaged over 350 facility managers, providing invaluable insights for the evaluation covering their experience of the funding process, participation at the site, and other impacts of the funding at the facility. The user survey was distributed by facility managers to their local users, gathering insights from over 1,200 facility users about their usage of the site and their experience of using its facilities. The household survey reached over 5,000 households near funded and unfunded sites, collecting data on the usage of the relevant facility by the respondent and members of the respondent's household, baseline physical activity levels, and pride in place and physical and mental wellbeing outcomes. Case study fieldwork enabled a qualitative in-depth assessment of facilities funded across both MSGF and PTCR Programmes, generating analysis intending on focusing in on the drivers of performance of facilities funded across a varied range of projects from the four nations. Also qualitative in nature, the process interviews informed detailed findings and key learnings based on interviews with important stakeholders across Delivery Partners and DCMS for informing project management in future iterations of potential funding across both Programmes.

This data collected forms one part of three planned waves of data collection covering all Programmes in scope of the evaluation. With each iteration of data collection, amendments and updates can be made to the primary data collection methodology to further enhance the conclusions the evaluation is able to deliver.

Reporting

The publication of this interim report will enhance the evidence base of the impacts of funding into sports facilities based on the findings from the analysis to date. This report contains extensive detail covering aspects across the scope of the evaluation and draws insightful conclusions, particularly within the process and impact evaluation sections, that can be used to inform potential future funding schemes. The conclusions made in this report are supported by evidence from primary and secondary data sources to deliver informative, accurate and actionable conclusions based on these insights. Future reporting as part of this evaluation will further add to the evidence pool available, with potentially new insights from each wave of data collection and analysis that may capture emerging findings as the Programme develops and concludes.

Incentivisation of External Stakeholders

Through the evaluation, there has been regular engagement and collaboration with other stakeholders involved in delivery and monitoring of the Programme to improve the evidence they continually collect to inform the analysis and for benefit for their internal reporting.

One such example of this is improvements made to data quality through the prompting of Delivery Partners on queries relating to data shared as part of the evaluation, thus reducing time spent in the future resolving any data issues and reduce additional burden on stakeholder workloads. Delivery Partners were also keen to learn from, and incorporate, aspects of primary data collection undertaken in this evaluation independently e.g. through additional surveying in-house to supplement and demonstrate evidence of the impacts of the funding in their region. In addition, numerous discussions have been ongoing with the Football Foundation and the use of booking data through ClubSpark for a range of facilities. Deployment of gated entry systems and booking platforms at funded sites will greatly improve the ability of DCMS and the FF to track participation at the sites in an easy, frequently-updated and accurate way.

7.1.5. Summary

This section has provided an analysis of the currently available data to answer the key evaluation questions as set out in 3.3. Whilst causal analysis is not been undertaken, there are a number of positive trends and suggestions that can be made from this evidence that would suggest positive impacts of the Programme. Total participation figures, and specific breakdowns of this such as women and girls, are the areas most clearly impacted by this data. It will be important for data collection activity to continue as the Programme continues delivery throughout FY24/25, in order to give currently delivering sites time to complete, as well as future projects.

7.2. Park Tennis Court Renovation Programme

7.2.1. Impacts on Overall Participation

7.2.1.1. Overall Participation by Funded/Unfunded (direction and magnitude)

Data was shared by the LTA that captures the total number of bookings (c.383,000) made from 2019 to 2024 across 78 facilities (including funded and unfunded), covering 287 courts across England, Scotland and Wales.

It is important to note that these 287 courts largely fall under the 465 courts renovated using £1.1m of LTA Tennis Foundation funding pre-2022, that primarily focused on gate installation & online booking.¹⁰² As tennis is a sport that is seasonal in nature with peak and off-peak activity throughout the year, the LTA have provided one years' pre-Programme and one years' corresponding post-Programme booking data to average out participation and minimise bias.

In addition, only one facility of the 78 has undergone court renovation, 7 facilities were allocated online booking funding and 42 facilities were selected for investment in both gate installation and online booking. The remaining 28 facilities did not receive any form of LTA funding (the unfunded sample). This is due to grants for court renovations under the PTCR Programme only commencing in Q2 2023, and therefore, the required 12-month pre- and post- intervention dataset is not yet available. Therefore, again, although findings pertaining to the PTCR Programme will demonstrate initial insights on booking activity for investments made in the pre-2022 phase, future analysis including additional data will be able to better inform participation impacts, and so use of these figures to conclude any impacts should be avoided at this stage.

Overall Booking Activity and Participation

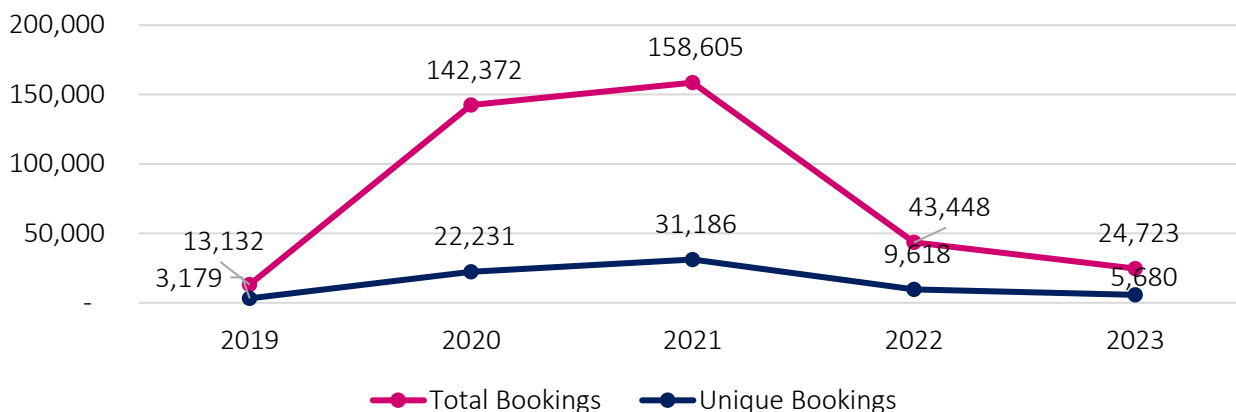
Available booking data was analysed to compare the overall change in participation between funded and unfunded courts before and after the implementation of the Programme. Addressing the question on change in overall participation involved reviewing this metric by the total number of bookings, unique bookings¹⁰³ (which gives the total number of unique users who made bookings) and total number of players (this is different to and greater than the total number of users as it includes all the individuals who played tennis in a session). A number of assumptions regarding average numbers of players per court booking and tennis course were shared by the LTA and used as part of this analysis¹⁰⁴.

¹⁰² £1.1m of LTA TF funding was invested pre-2022 and is referred to as the Park Tennis Court Programme 2022-2024 as these are the financial years that DCMS funding has been invested. As the £1.1m pre-2022 LTA TF investment was within scope of the Park Tennis Court Programme, it was agreed that it would be included within the £8.4m LTA TF investment (with the LTA not limited by HMT requirements like DCMS). The objectives of the £1.1m LTA TF investment pre-2022 were exactly the same, with no differences in the selection process of the sites with some of these courts having free park tennis (same as all other funded courts) so these funded courts can be analysed in the same manner as any other funded courts.

¹⁰³ Approximately 59,000 unique IDs were used to book a court within the period as per booking data analysis.

¹⁰⁴ Please see Annex 11 for further detail on the assumptions underpinning this analysis

Figure 36: Total and unique bookings (2019-2023)

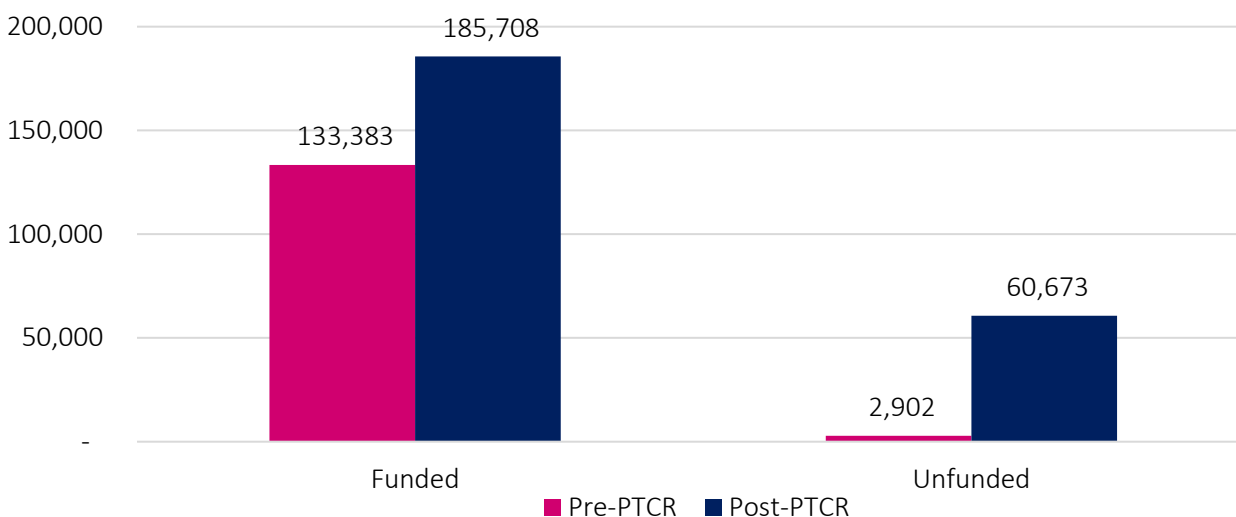


Source: Analysis of LTA booking data

The total number of bookings from the available dataset increased significantly from 2019 to 2020 (shown in Figure 36). The number of unique bookings also follows the same trend; there was a just under a 600% increase in booking from 2019 to 2020. This trend was driven by the quantity of “gate installation and online booking” renovations occurring during this period (36% of all such projects occurred in this period).

The graph below presents a comparison of booking numbers between funded and unfunded courts. The pre- and post-cut-off period for a funded facility is determined by the date on which the court was refurbished. However, for the unfunded courts where no intervention occurred, pre-Programme bookings were defined as bookings made before May 2020, as the earliest funded projects available in the dataset commenced from this point onwards. **This figure demonstrates clearly the lack of data available for unfunded sites pre-2020. This is due to the availability of data from courts in the time period pre-2020 (for unfunded sites), and more generally from 2021 onwards, and as mentioned previously, inference of trends at this stage should be avoided before further data is shared in future.**

Figure 37: Total Bookings in funded and unfunded courts



Source: Analysis of LTA booking data

The number of bookings at funded and unfunded sites has increased since the Programme began; for funded courts this was equivalent to a 40% rise and in the unfunded this increase is much higher (due to the absolute quantity of the number of bookings made starting from a low point)¹⁰⁵.

It is also possible to use the LTA's assumptions on court usage to consider another dimension of participation, the total number of players¹⁰⁶. Since the PTCR programme was implemented, the number of players playing tennis at funded courts has risen from 347,000 to 495,000. The number of players at funded courts is three times higher than at unfunded courts, although it is likely that at least part of this impact is explained by the larger capacity of funded facilities which on average have 5 courts per facility; this is lower at 3 courts for the unfunded facilities.

The key emerging finding here, as above, is that given the quantity of data provided, meaningful conclusions on pre- and post- Programme impacts should not yet be drawn. Additionally, the cut-off year used to define the pre- and post- period may also be reviewed subject to more data availability in the future, as results and findings will potentially be sensitive to this definition. Analysis of participation across different geographies, demographic groups, and types of refurbishment will be possible in future reporting assuming improved data availability.

7.2.1.2. Findings from other sources

Whilst Sport England's Active Lives survey for 2023 showed no significant change to tennis participation in England from 2022¹⁰⁷, figures published by the LTA looking at the UK as a whole showed the number of adults who reported to have played tennis increased from 4.7m in 2022 to 5.6m in 2023 (increase of 19%).¹⁰⁸ The LTA highlighted the online court and coach booking systems as a key driver of growth among 16–34-year-olds in 2022, with participation in this age group having grown by 48%.¹⁰⁹

Whilst the figures published by the LTA and Active Lives are not directly comparable to the analysis of the LTA's Park Tennis booking data due to their broader look across the tennis ecosystem as a whole, they do provide additional context of the impact of LTA's initiatives on the grassroots participation level in the sport.

This additional insight is valuable given the challenges caused by a proportionately small sample size of park tennis participation, as highlighted by the LTA when discussing incorporating additional questions into pre-existing LTA survey activity. The LTA conduct monthly population tracker surveys that collate information from c.1,500 people over the age of 16, weighted to be nationally representative of the UK population. Of these monthly samples, LTA staff stated that only a small proportion of these play tennis, with an even lesser proportion playing tennis using park facilities (estimated to be 4% of the adult population, c.60 of the c.1,500

¹⁰⁵ When comparing the number of unique bookings pre and post, there was a similar trend, with a 47% increase in booking figures for funded facilities, from a baseline of 25,500 to 37,000.

¹⁰⁶ As mentioned in the Data and Methods section, the LTA has defined the average number of players per booking (1 for every course booking and 2.7 for every court booking).

¹⁰⁷ Active Lives Adult Nov 22-23 Data Tables, Sport England: Sport England define a regular participant as someone who has participated twice within a 28-day period.

¹⁰⁸ LTA Press Releases: 'British tennis sees big surge in both adult and children's participation during 2022' [[British tennis sees big surge in both adult and children's participation during 2022](#)]; 'More women and girls playing tennis than ever – but gender equity in participation still a way off' [[More women and girls playing tennis than ever – but gender equity in participation still a way off](#)]. The LTA define a regular participant as someone who has participated once within a 28-day period.

¹⁰⁹ 2022 LTA Finance and Governance Report [[LTA Finance and Governance Report 2022](#)]

monthly respondents).¹¹⁰ This is key to consider as due to this constrained sample size, capacity to identify causal changes in behaviour that the evaluation has been initiated to capture and measure is limited.

7.2.2. Local Community Impacts

7.2.2.1. Findings from Other Sources

Looking at the broader tennis ecosystem, participation figures published by the LTA reported a further narrowing of the gender gap within adult tennis participation in 2023, with female participation figures having increased by 19% from 2022.¹¹¹ Of the 5.6m adults playing tennis annually, 42% were women in 2023, however the LTA noted there was still more to do in this space to achieve true equity. The PTCR programme was highlighted as a crucial element to addressing this as the LTA found park facilities to be more popular among female participants. Therefore, the long-term impacts of the Programme are expected to continue to address the gender gap, along with various more targeted LTA programmes such as the ‘She Rallies’ campaign.

A 53% increase in participation amongst lower socio-economic groups was similarly reported in 2022 as a result of targeted LTA initiatives such as LTA Play Your Way and the LTA SERVES Programme and is something the LTA wishes to improve further through the introduction of Free Park Tennis sessions.¹¹²

The LTA additionally surveys clubs and volunteers to capture data around their perceptions of the club and ‘club health’, defined by a composition of several factors, including financial stability, governance and management, membership growth, membership retention, and court programming and utilisation.¹¹³ Whilst most respondents found their own club to be inclusive, less than half believed the broader British tennis ecosystem to be inclusive. Additionally, only a small minority of clubs reported to collect data on diversity and inclusion characteristics.¹¹⁴ Whilst these perceptions on inclusivity are from the club context, they provide insight to consider alongside the PTCR Programme, noting the objective impact of the Programme is yet to be determined, in its focus on enhancing park tennis that offers an alternative pathway into participation beyond the traditional club setting.

7.2.2.2. Addressing Regional Inequalities

Figure 38 shows the amount of funding committed as part of the PTCR Programme in the London & the South-East region and compares this to the amount committed across the other regions of the UK.

¹¹⁰ As per information provided by the LTA staff during interviews.

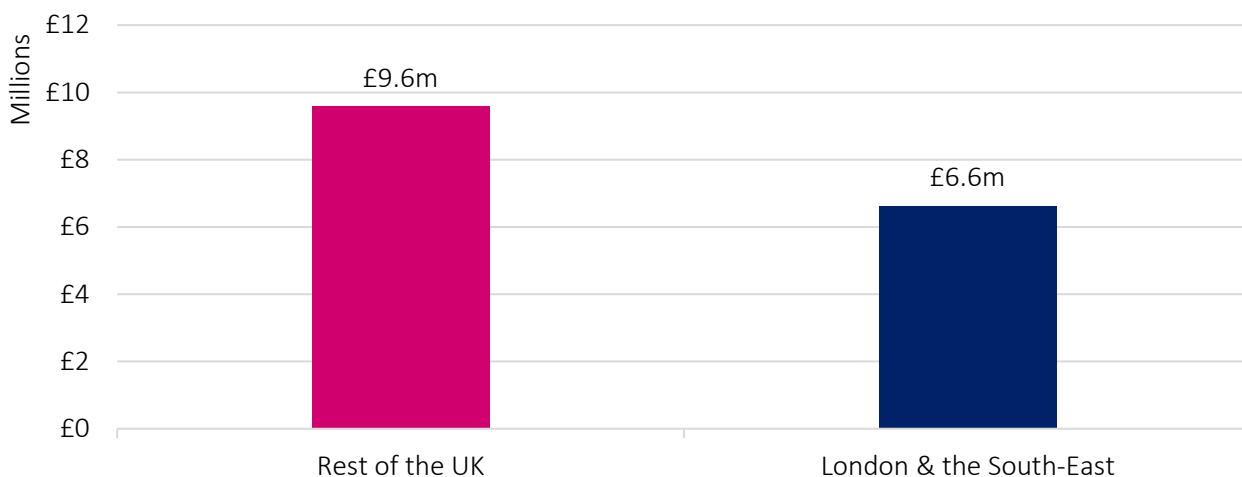
¹¹¹ LTA Press Release, 2023: ‘More women and girls playing tennis than ever – but gender equity in participation still a way off’ [[More women and girls playing tennis than ever – but gender equity in participation still a way off](#)]

¹¹² LTA Press Release, 2022: ‘British Tennis sees a big surge in both Adult and Children’s Participation during 2022’ [[British Tennis sees big surge in both Adult and Children’s Participation](#)]

¹¹³ Survey Results – Club Health & Volunteer Engagement: [Club Health & Volunteer Engagement - Survey Results Q2 2023](#)

¹¹⁴ 11% of clubs collected disability characteristics, with only 5% on ethnicity, 6% on sexual orientation and 2% on faith. Club Health, Q2 2023: [Club Health & Volunteer Engagement - Survey Results Q2 2023](#)

Figure 38: PTCR Programme Committed Funding Per Region



Source: Analysis of PTCR project list documentation
Base: 552 funded projects

The PTCR Programme has a smaller proportion of funding flowing outside of London and the South-East (relative to MSGF), with 59% flowing to other regions across the UK. In addition, Figure 16 in Section 5.2.2.1. shows that London received the greatest funding per capita out of all the ITL 1 regions at £0.58, nearly double that of the next highest funding per capita region, the North West, at £0.32. However, the South-East was one of the smallest funding per capita regions covered by the Programme at £0.16.

7.2.2.3. Sport Teams, Volunteers, and Number of Workers Specialising in Grassroots Sport

Although evaluating sports teams is less relevant to the PTCR Programme, there was evidence presented through case studies that suggested the funding has facilitated a ramp up in the availability of coaching offered at the site. Whilst it was unclear if this involved additional coaches specialising to meet demand, this does suggest the Programme may deliver a growth in the number of individuals specialising in tennis over a longer timeframe. Future reports will review and assess this in further detail.

7.2.2.4. Environmental Outcomes

As identified in the Economic Case for the Programme, environmental risks are considered and mitigated in advance of any work taking place. The document also comments that since refurbishments are to existing courts, this does not involve extensive and potentially invasive construction to build new courts. It is also expected that the managers will have a good understanding of the existing environmental risks at the site and therefore can mitigate emerging risks from the renovations quickly. Future reports will review and assess this in further detail. As mentioned in the emerging findings for the MSGF Programme, future analysis will look to estimate the net impact of the Programme on emissions, subject to data of sufficient granularity being available.

7.2.2.5. Educational Impacts

The impacts of the funding on local schools were highlighted in interview with both case study sites covered as part of the PTCR Programme. Both sites have seen increased usage by local schools who are bringing their pupils to play tennis at the site as well as taking advantage of the coaching available at the facility. Alexandra Park in particular is well placed to deliver these outcomes, being in the vicinity of numerous primary and secondary schools, and the management of the site has already delivered tennis festivals and other free coaching initiatives to drive increased usage by pupils.

7.2.2.6. Evidence Base for Future Evaluations

The impact of the Programme on the evidence base can be split in to two areas: new primary data sources, new reporting, and incentivisation of external stakeholders.

Primary Data Sources

For the purpose of the evaluation, primary data collection has been a crucial element of the evidence base, informing many key aspects of the analysis alongside study of secondary data. The first wave of primary data collection undertaken in the evaluation to date included extensive case study fieldwork and process evaluation interviews with key stakeholders involved in delivery the Programme.

This data collected forms one part of three planned waves of data collection covering all Programmes in scope of the evaluation. With each iteration of data collection, amendments and updates can be made to the primary data collection methodology to further enhance the conclusions the evaluation is able to deliver.

Reporting

The publication of this interim report will enhance the evidence base of the impacts of funding into sports facilities based on the findings from the analysis to date. This report contains extensive detail covering aspects across the scope of the evaluation and draws insightful conclusions, particularly within the process and impact evaluation sections, that can be used to inform potential future funding schemes. The conclusions made in this report are supported by evidence from primary and secondary data sources to deliver informative, accurate and actionable conclusions. Future reporting as part of this evaluation will further add to the evidence pool available, with potentially new insights from each wave of data collection and analysis that may capture emerging findings as the Programme develops and concludes.

7.2.3. Summary

This section has provided an analysis of the currently available data to answer the key evaluation questions as set out in 3.3. Causal analysis has not been undertaken, and at this stage insufficient data is available to fully understand the impacts of the Programme compared across funded and unfunded sites. Additional data collection will be critical ahead of future reporting.

8. Overall Interim Conclusions & Next Steps

This section brings the analysis set out in this report together to provide some key conclusions on the emerging lessons to be learnt from design, development and implementation, as well as impacts and outcomes of the Programmes to date.

For the MSGF Programme, findings and conclusions of the evaluation at this stage are limited in how far they can conclusively demonstrate the overall impacts and outcomes of the Programme; however, the available evidence does imply positive impacts of the Programme on overall participation, sustained participation and participation of under-represented groups. There are clear differences between funded facilities and unfunded facilities in comparative descriptive analysis, and this aligns with qualitative reporting from stakeholders on the impacts and benefits of this funding. Overall participation is notably higher when comparing funded and unfunded facilities, and women and girls are likely to be the group that have benefitted most from this. There will need to be significant work to understand these impacts in more detail, particularly the additionality of participation and the extent to which users are now attending facilities in receipt of funding, who were not doing so prior to investment. There will also be a continued focus on sustained participation, and quantitatively understanding the extent to which funded facilities have been able to retain the participation of existing users above and beyond that of unfunded facilities.

For the PTCR Programme, the key dataset (LTA booking data) that is mainly used to understand participation at funded and unfunded facilities contains insufficient observations at this stage to descriptively analyse participation impacts of the Programme. Whilst some analysis and breakdowns of data have been presented within this report, there is a lack of data available in a number of critical dimensions that will allow assessment of the Programme. Case studies and interviews with key programme stakeholders have suggested positive impacts of the Programme and effective targeting of courts in need of renovation, which aligns with other assessments conducted by the LTA on tennis participation and activity at facilities. There is less readily available information on wider impacts of the Programme at this stage; for example anecdotal evidence of environmental, educational or health outcomes, but this will be a focus of future evaluation reports and activity. In conclusion, in order to both descriptively and causally analyse participation impacts of the PTCR Programme, additional data is critical, across more project types, more recent time periods and at more courts. The LTA do have plans in place to capture additional data and many more sites are expected to offer booking data in the coming months for use in future analysis.

8.1 Interim Conclusions from Process Evaluation to Date

Significant aspects of process evaluation activity have been conducted as part of this interim report. This has been supported by a wide range of primary and secondary data collection and analysis, including:

- Review and assessment of Programme documentation and monitoring data;
- 34 interviews with key stakeholders involved in the delivery of the Programmes;
- 10 case studies of facilities in receipt of MSGF or PTCR funding;
- Analysis of initial wave of data available from three key surveys covering the MSGF Programme, including facilities, users and households; and
- Analysis of secondary data sources, including Active Lives and Active Places Power.

Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme

Overall, stakeholders across Delivery Partners and DCMS were positive about their involvement in the Programme, and the outcomes and impacts it has delivered to date. There has been recognition across the

board that significant elements of the Programme’s delivery have evolved iteratively across phases of delivery, with many key learnings to be taken for the remaining period of implementation and of future Programmes.

Despite limited capacity and experience of delivering similar Programmes, DCMS successfully developed and established the Programme in its early phases, quickly developing key relationships with stakeholders and progressing design and delivery of the Programme to enable funding allocation from FY21/22. Additionally, KPIs used as part of the assessment criteria for awarding funding were effective in driving the right behaviour from applicants and Delivery Partners; generally understood and accepted; and encouraged funding to be delivered to areas most in need. However, the KPIs related to deprivation and multi-sport could have been more clearly defined: for example, the level of granularity on which deprivation is defined has at time caused issues for selection of appropriate projects; clarity around what constitutes a ‘multi-sport’ project, and whether there is to be differentiation between ‘sport’ and ‘physical activity’, has similarly impact potential project selection.

Application processes were unique to each Delivery Partner, which led to a lack of consistency and comparability across nations. Processes also substantially differed in complexity and length, and in some cases during early phases of the Programme meant applicants, particularly volunteers, faced what was perceived as an unnecessary burden in applying for funding. Iterations and improvements have been made to application processes over time, with key learnings and insights being shared effectively across Delivery Partners. Furthermore, decisions to award funding and the distribution of the funding have also been conducted in different ways across nations. Whilst grant panels have iteratively improved in terms of transparency and diversity of membership, more could be done to improve representation by ensuring greater inclusion of a wide range of perspectives and experiences in the decision-making process in all nations.

There has been strong communication and collaboration from all parties, and a clear willingness and enthusiasm to work together to achieve the best possible outcomes. Asks of Delivery Partners have been stretching at times, but stakeholders have been professional, polite and proactive in rising to the challenge. Project delivery has been effective, but improvements to future delivery, specifically focused on additional technical expertise and flexibility around the allocation of funding could help improve the efficiency of future delivery. Programme monitoring has significantly improved over time, and stakeholders engage with the regular processes of reporting and monitoring key updates in programme delivery. However, there are still ongoing issues with the quality and timeliness of data submission, with consequences for the value and usability of this data for stakeholders, as well as creating an additional burden for DCMS and Delivery Partner staff in resolving data issues. Relationships with facilities and local communities have been improved and strengthened by the Programme, and Delivery Partners have widened their networks and understanding of sports participation across the UK.

Stakeholders universally agree that participation and physical activity has increased at funded facilities, although acknowledge that further causal analysis is required to determine additionality. For example, some DCMS and Delivery Partner staff suggested that the impacts may have been more significant for existing players, rather than encouraging new players. Funding to date has sometimes focused on clubs with existing facilities as opposed to areas where no facilities currently exist, the latter potentially being a significant aspect of further growth in additional participation.

Park Tennis Court Renovation Programme

Overall, stakeholders from the LTA and DCMS were confident about the progress and implementation of the Programme and the delivery of its outcomes and impacts. Despite initial blockers and challenges as part of the development of the Programme internally, these were overcome, and the Programme was successfully launched. Against tight timelines, and ambitious delivery targets, stakeholders worked collaboratively to deliver project renovations effectively. Delivery also evolved substantially throughout the duration of the Programme, with a number of key learnings leading directly to changes to key aspects; this included new contractors for technical assessments for example, which the LTA quickly identified and resolved as an issue to be fixed.

Strong relationships between stakeholders were also one of the strongest aspects of the overall implementation of the Programme. Indeed, relationships with facilities and local communities have also significantly benefitted from the Programme, and the continued engagement and approachability of LTA has enabled DCMS to quickly gain the information required to demonstrate all aspects of the Programme’s delivery and implementation. Stakeholders were also clear that effective and efficient delivery of the Programme has, in their views, resulted in higher participation in sports and physical activity.

However, stakeholders also acknowledged the need to understand this increase in participation empirically and at a causal level. Significant additional data will be required to understand this kind of impact of the Programme, and the LTA is working to deliver this data to the evaluation over the coming months.

8.2 Interim Conclusions from Impact Evaluation to Date

Multi-Sport Grassroots Facilities Programme

Overall, as outlined above, additional primary data collection is still required to increase the amount of data available for analysis, primarily through surveys and Programme monitoring data, in order to enable robust causal analysis of the impacts of the Programme in future evaluation reports. The findings and conclusions of the evaluation at this stage are limited in how far they can conclusively demonstrate the overall impacts and outcomes of the Programme; however, the available evidence does imply positive impacts of the Programme on overall participation, sustained participation, and participation of under-represented groups.

There are clear differences between funded facilities and unfunded facilities in comparative descriptive analysis, and this aligns with qualitative reporting from stakeholders on the impacts and benefits of this funding. Overall participation is notably higher when comparing funded and unfunded facilities, and women and girls are likely to be the group that have benefitted most from this. There will need to be significant work to understand these impacts in more detail, particularly the additionality of participation and the extent to which users are now attending facilities in receipt of funding, who were not doing so prior to investment. There will also be a continued focus on sustained participation, and quantitatively understanding the extent to which funded facilities have been able to retain the participation of existing users above and beyond that of unfunded facilities.

Park Tennis Court Renovation Programme

Overall, as outlined above, the key dataset (LTA booking data) that is mainly used to understand participation at funded and unfunded facilities contains insufficient observations at this stage to descriptively analyse participation impacts of the Programme. Whilst some analysis and breakdowns of data have been presented within this report, there is a lack of data available in a number of critical dimensions that will allow assessment of the Programme. This includes types of projects (the current dataset is made up of almost exclusively online booking and gate installation projects, with very few court renovations), a small number of projects since 2022 (only 10% of projects at the 287 courts were completed since 2022) and a smaller number of booking observations occurring since 2022 (less than 20% of the provided sample), as well as a limited number of facilities with available data (51 funded sites and 28 unfunded sites).

Case studies and interviews with key programme stakeholders have suggested positive impacts of the Programme and effective targeting of courts in need of renovation, which aligns with other assessments conducted by the LTA on tennis participation and activity at facilities. There is less readily available information on wider impacts of the Programme at this stage; for anecdotal evidence of environmental, educational or health outcomes, but this will be a focus of future evaluation reports and activity.

In conclusion, in order to both descriptively and causally analyse participation impacts of the PTCR Programme, additional data is critical, across more project types, more recent time periods and at more courts. The LTA do have plans in place to capture and share additional data from existing sites, and many more sites are expected to offer booking data in the coming months for use in future analysis.

8.3 Next Steps

Focus of future evaluation activity

Future evaluation activity will primarily focus on improving the availability of data. This larger dataset can then be used to assess the key metrics that help capture and understand the impacts and outcomes of both Programmes with the intention of completing a robust impact evaluation. This will help in informing a more causal assessment of the Programmes' impacts on participation and assist in assessing the degree of 'additionality' resulting from the funding. Understanding these impacts, including those beyond participation, in greater detail will also be critical for informing the economic evaluation which will be covered in future reporting, enabling a comprehensive and robust overall assessment. In addition to additional quantitative data being collected across future waves of surveying activity, further qualitative data from stakeholders following the completion of both Programme's delivery schedules will also be collected, including additional case studies and depth interviews with Programme stakeholders. Finally, activity related to evaluation of the Lionesses Futures Fund will begin, from designing and developing additional primary data collection required, through to qualitative data collection and analysis ahead of the next planned interim report.

Additional evidence and analysis required

Additional primary data collection and secondary data analysis ahead of the next interim report includes:

- **Surveys:** a second iteration of facility, user and household surveys will be undertaken. The appropriateness of particular questions and wording, as well as incentives and distribution methods, will be refined and reviewed ahead of distribution.
- **Case Studies:** a further 8 case studies will be conducted across MSGF and PTCR Programmes.
- **Interviews:** further process evaluation interviews will take place with stakeholders from across both programmes, as they near and pass the completion points of delivery.
- **Programme monitoring data:** significantly more Programme monitoring data is expected to be available ahead of the next evaluation report, particularly for the PTCR Programme, and this will heavily inform future impact analysis.

Considerations for remaining delivery

As set out previously in this report, the key considerations arising from the process evaluation can help to inform and improve remaining delivery of the Programmes. These are set out below:

Table 23: Key considerations from the process evaluation

#	Observations	Applicability
1	Continue to champion and enable knowledge sharing amongst Delivery Partners; reviewing DCMS internal delivery processes, communication, and resourcing, to enable teams to be empowered and with the appropriate skills and experience.	MSGF (DCMS & E/S/W/NI), PTCR & future Programmes
2	Review the suitability of the deprivation KPI and its geographical granularity; this could potentially better account for socio-economic variations within local authorities.	MSGF (DCMS) & future Programmes
3	Provide greater guidance to Delivery Partners and potential funding applicants on what constitutes as a 'multi-sport' project, to give more clarity on what can be delivered.	MSGF (S/W/NI)
4	Continue early engagement with future applicants, providing accessible and open feedback on potential applications and projects.	MSGF (E/S/W/NI), PTCR & future Programmes
5	Consider a standardised application process and additional assessment guidance for future Programmes, to enable consistent and comparable processes across nations.	Future Programmes

#	Observations	Applicability
6	Discuss required resourcing for delivery of Programmes at an earlier stage and agree sufficient budget and resource allocation for stakeholders to deliver Programme requirements effectively and efficiently.	Future Programmes
7	Share guidance with stakeholders on ‘what good looks like’ with regards to the diversity of panel representation, as set out by relevant sports councils; encourage regular review and refinement of panel membership to facilitate this.	MSGF (DCMS & S/W/NI) & future Programmes
8	Where possible, manage expectations around short-term asks, working with stakeholders to prepare common breakdowns and splits of data. Require stakeholders to improve internal reporting and quality assurance processes so that shared data is accurate, timely, and complete.	MSGF (DCMS & E/S/W/NI), PTCR & future Programmes
9	Early engagement with Delivery Partners to agree the resourcing, skills and experience needed to deliver internally, also continuing the Lessons Learned sessions and championing knowledge sharing amongst Delivery Partners to improve delivery across all nations.	MSGF (DCMS & E/S/W/NI), PTCR & future Programmes
10	Review and streamline data capture, analysis and reporting practises, and consider the platform through which Delivery Partners and DCMS manage and oversee funding with efficiency and effectiveness of delivery at the core.	MSGF (DCMS & E/S/W/NI), PTCR & future Programmes
11	Continue to conduct final assessments and decision-making via panel processes to ensure a diverse range of views and opinions consider the merits of applications.	MSGF (E/S/W/NI) & future Programmes
12	Maintain close relationships with beneficiaries of funding through Delivery Partners and other stakeholders, to support longer-term understanding of impacts and outcomes of funding.	MSGF (DCMS & E/S/W/NI), PTCR & future Programmes
13	Establish more consistent and comprehensive post-award assurance with beneficiaries of funding to enable better understanding of the achievement of intended objectives, outcomes, and impacts.	MSGF (DCMS & E/S/W/NI), PTCR & future Programmes
14	Review approach to in-year allocations of funding and the ability to finance longer-term, larger projects that may proportionately benefit key under-represented target groups (e.g. women and girls)	Future Programmes
15	Improve training and knowledge of the Programme team staff in business case processes. Facilitate regular check-ins for staff across teams, particularly for new joiners and those with less experience of DCMS as an organisation.	MSGF (DCMS), PTCR & future Programmes
16	Review the way in which technical resource is involved in capital investment Programmes, and how to effectively manage and oversee third party procurements where relevant.	MSGF (S/W/NI), PTCR & future Programmes
17	Earlier engagement with Local Authorities and local government stakeholders to facilitate early buy-in, and identify potential risks and blockers to project delivery.	PTCR & future Programmes
18	Upskill and train staff in equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) matters to enable them to effectively maximise the impact of these projects by engaging broader user bases.	MSGF (DCMS & E/S/W/NI), PTCR & future Programmes