



Department for Levelling Up,  
Housing & Communities

# UK Shared Prosperity Fund: intervention- level evaluation

Feasibility Stage Report for Department of Levelling Up, Housing  
and Communities

Annexes

Frontier Economics and BMG Research

February 2024





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# Annex A Process evaluation questions, success indicators and data sources by theme

A.1 This annex provides theme-by-theme detail on the process evaluations, success indicators and data sources for the evaluation from late 2023 to late 2025.

## Process evaluation theme: Design and planning

A.2 This theme focuses on the design and planning of the projects within each of the study groups. This includes consultations with stakeholders, the process of designing projects (taking account of existing interventions and local area plans) and financial management considerations. Table 1 describes the evaluation questions, success indicators and data sources for this theme.

**Table 1 Process evaluation: design and planning theme**

Evaluation question	Success indicators	Data sources
How effective was the process of designing and planning interventions? Were there any key barriers and enablers?	Evidence that lead local authorities (LLAs) followed a systematic process to design and deliver interventions. Supporting evidence/ guidance from DLUHC was made available in a timely manner.	In-depth interviews with LLAs
How did places choose interventions? E.g., existing projects, local area-led projects, competition by default or other approaches?	Evidence that LLAs chose interventions to deliver maximum impact regardless of approach.	In-depth interviews with LLAs
Why was a particular intervention chosen? At what point did political leaders get involved in that decision, if at all?	Evidence that LLAs carefully considered interventions and chose those that would deliver the highest levels of impact in their areas.	In-depth interviews with LLAs

To what extent did places undertake consultation to arrive at the intervention design and submitted investment plan?	Evidence that areas undertook consultations when designing and planning interventions to ensure interventions planned meet local needs.	In-depth interviews with LLAs
To what extent did consultations involve people from excluded and/or disadvantaged backgrounds?	Evidence that consultations at the planning and design stages involved a wide range of stakeholders, including underrepresented and disadvantaged groups.	In-depth interviews with LLAs Monitoring data
To what extent and how were 'pride in place' and 'life chances' considered as priorities when designing and planning interventions?	Evidence that places considered 'pride in place' and 'life chances' priorities when designing interventions.	In-depth interviews with LLAs
To what extent and how were wider plans for the local area considered when choosing and designing interventions? How do the interventions fit with the wider vision for the local area?	Evidence that places considered existing plans for the local area when designing and planning interventions.	In-depth interviews with LLAs
Who was involved in the design and planning stages of interventions? Who drove the interventions forward? To what extent did places use external consultants and volunteers to design and plan interventions?	Evidence that relevant individuals and organisations were involved in design and planning to enable delivery of interventions.	In-depth interviews with LLAs In-depth interviews with delivery partners
To what extent were cost and benefit analyses conducted ahead of the interventions being implemented? What did this process entail? Who conducted cost and benefit analyses?	Evidence that cost and benefit analysis was conducted when designing and planning interventions to ensure benefits outweigh costs.	In-depth interviews with LLAs
What factors needed to be in place for interventions to be implemented?	Evidence that LLAs designed thorough plans for delivery of interventions.	In-depth interviews with LLAs

		In-depth interviews with delivery partners
What improvements can be made to the design and planning stages of interventions?	N/A (Open question where logical indicator of success cannot be proposed in advance).	In-depth interviews with LLAs In-depth interviews with delivery partners
To what extent was UKSPF an enabling factor to get projects off the ground (where previously private capital would have been needed)?	Evidence that LLAs see UKSPF funding as a unique catalyst to delivery.	In-depth interviews with LLAs

### Process evaluation theme: Delivery and management

A.3 This theme focuses on the implementation and management of the projects within each of the study groups, with an emphasis on enablers of and barriers to implementation. This theme also considers futureproofing of interventions. Table 2 describes the evaluation questions, success indicators and data sources for this theme.

**Table 2 Process evaluation: delivery and management theme**

<b>Evaluation question</b>	<b>Success indicators</b>	<b>Data sources</b>
To what extent was UKSPF the only source of funding used for interventions? What other funding sources were used?	LLAs perceive that the outcomes and impacts achieved by interventions have been enabled by the UKSPF funding allocated.	In-depth interviews with LLAs
What lessons can be learnt in relation to funding allocation to interventions?	N/A (Open question where logical indicator of success cannot be proposed in advance).	In-depth interviews with LLAs
How effective was the process of implementing interventions?	Evidence that places implemented interventions effectively and efficiently.	In-depth interviews with LLAs In-depth interviews with delivery partners

		Focus groups with beneficiaries
To what extent were interventions implemented as intended?	Evidence that interventions were delivered according to original design and delivery plans.	In-depth interviews with LLAs In-depth interviews with delivery partners Focus groups with beneficiaries
What was working well in delivery and why?	N/A (Open question where logical indicator of success cannot be proposed in advance).	In-depth interviews with LLAs In-depth interviews with delivery partners Focus groups with beneficiaries Surveys of beneficiaries Researcher observations
Were there any delivery enablers or facilitators that positively contributed to delivery and outcome realisation?	N/A (Open question where logical indicator of success cannot be proposed in advance).	In-depth interviews with LLAs In-depth interviews with delivery partners Focus groups with beneficiaries Surveys of beneficiaries
To what extent did places encounter delivery difficulties and how were these addressed?	If difficulties were faced, evidence that these could not have been foreseen and mitigated against in advance and that timely support was available to address these.	In-depth interviews with LLAs In-depth interviews with delivery partners Focus groups with beneficiaries
Were there any barriers or blockers that negatively contributed to delivery and outcome realisation?	N/A (Open question where logical indicator of success cannot be proposed in advance).	In-depth interviews with LLAs In-depth interviews with delivery partners



		Focus groups with beneficiaries Surveys of beneficiaries
To what extent were there delays in delivering interventions? Why?	Evidence that delays were not experienced or that delays could not have been foreseen if they materialised. Evidence that delays did not affect outcome realisation.	In-depth interviews with LLAs In-depth interviews with delivery partners Focus groups with beneficiaries
To what extent and in what ways have contextual factors influenced delivery?	N/A (Open question where logical indicator of success cannot be proposed in advance).	In-depth interviews with LLAs In-depth interviews with delivery partners Focus groups with beneficiaries
Who was involved in the delivery of interventions? Who drove the interventions forward? To what extent did places use external consultants and volunteers to deliver interventions?	Evidence that relevant and experienced stakeholders were involved in the delivery of interventions.	In-depth interviews with LLAs In-depth interviews with delivery partners Focus groups with beneficiaries Researcher observations Monitoring data
How effective was the relationship between stakeholders when it comes to the delivery of interventions (central government, LLAs, delivery partners/volunteers and beneficiaries)?	Evidence that engagement between stakeholders worked effectively and efficiently, facilitating outcome realisation.	In-depth interviews with LLAs In-depth interviews with delivery partners Focus groups with beneficiaries
To what extent and why did all intended beneficiaries engage with interventions? Did places experience problems in relation to uptake of interventions by beneficiaries?	Evidence that intended beneficiaries engaged with interventions and that any problems in relation to uptake of interventions were addressed in a timely manner.	In-depth interviews with LLAs In-depth interviews with delivery partners

		Focus groups with beneficiaries Monitoring data
How well were intervention beneficiaries identified and encouraged to participate?	Evidence that LLAs used a range of channels to identify beneficiaries (including underrepresented and disadvantaged groups) and encouraged them to engage with interventions.	In-depth interviews with LLAs In-depth interviews with delivery partners Focus groups with beneficiaries Monitoring data Surveys of beneficiaries
What were beneficiaries' experiences of intervention delivery? What did they perceive the benefits of interventions to be?	Evidence that intended beneficiaries had positive experiences of intervention delivery. Evidence that beneficiaries see interventions as unique catalysts for achieving benefits.	Focus groups with beneficiaries Surveys of beneficiaries
To what extent and how did interventions engage underrepresented and disadvantaged groups as deliverers/beneficiaries?	Evidence that places publicised opportunities through a range of channels and in a timely manner. Evidence that a wide range of beneficiary/deliverer groups were reached, including underrepresented groups.	Focus groups with beneficiaries Surveys of beneficiaries Monitoring data
To what extent did places experience difficulties related to market capacity e.g. difficulty sourcing contracts for construction or other work to be carried out?	Evidence that adequate support was available if capacity challenges were faced.	In-depth interviews with LLAs
To what extent and how did central guidance and support contribute to the implementation of the intervention and the overall outcomes?	Evidence that timely support and guidance was provided to places to ensure interventions were delivered efficiently and effectively.	In-depth interviews with LLAs In-depth interviews with delivery partners
What improvements can be made to the process of	N/A (Open question where logical indicator of success	In-depth interviews with LLAs

delivering interventions? What lessons can be learnt to inform the levelling up agenda as well as other funds/programmes?	cannot be proposed in advance).	In-depth interviews with delivery partners Focus groups with beneficiaries Surveys of beneficiaries Monitoring data Researcher observations
To what extent were there plans to ensure the continuity of interventions post UKSPF funding? What were these plans? Were LLAs relying on volunteers or paid staff for this?	Evidence that local authorities had plans in place to future-proof interventions post UK SPF funding.	In-depth interviews with LLAs In-depth interviews with delivery partners
To what extent were local authorities planning to use secondary sources of funding so that activities continue beyond the UKSPF funding period? What sources will be used? Are these private or public?	Evidence that local authorities were planning to use other sources of funding to future-proof interventions.	In-depth interviews with LLAs In-depth interviews with delivery partners

## Process evaluation theme: Monitoring

A.4 This theme focuses on how delivery and outcomes are monitored for the projects within each of the study groups. Table 3 describes the evaluation questions, success indicators and data sources for this theme.

**Table 3 Process evaluation: monitoring theme**

Evaluation question	Success indicators	Data sources
What was the LLA's capacity for implementation and evaluation of the intervention?	Evidence that LLAs did not face capacity challenges (e.g. financial expertise gap, project management, simple	In-depth interviews with LLAs

	understaffing, etc.) or that timely support was available if challenges were faced.	
To what extent were LLAs monitoring delivery of interventions themselves (apart from monitoring required by DLUHC)? What was being monitored?	Evidence that LLAs monitored outcomes and impacts of interventions beyond monitoring requested by DLUHC.	In-depth interviews with LLAs Monitoring data
To what extent and how does monitoring (requested by DLUHC and monitoring by LLAs themselves) affect performance/how well interventions are implemented?	Evidence that monitoring led to improved performance and delivery of interventions.	In-depth interviews with LLAs In-depth interviews with delivery partners
To what extent did reporting on originally identified output/outcome indicators change? Why? If so, was the change an improvement?	Evidence that monitoring was modified if it was found to be insufficient.	In-depth interviews with LLAs In-depth interviews with delivery partners Monitoring data
What improvements can be made to monitoring and evaluation?	N/A (Open question where logical indicator of success cannot be proposed in advance).	In-depth interviews with LLAs In-depth interviews with delivery partners Monitoring data

# Annex B Detailed process evaluation methodology

B.1 This annex provides further detail on the process evaluation methodologies for the evaluation from late 2023 to late 2025.

**Table 4 Detailed process evaluation methodology: People & Skills study groups**

<b>Study group</b>	<b>In-depth interviews with local authorities</b>	<b>In-depth interviews with delivery partners</b>	<b>Survey of beneficiaries</b>	<b>Focus groups with beneficiaries</b>	<b>Observation days</b>	<b>Secondary data on</b>
Projects to help local economically inactive people into employment	One per project	One per project with lead delivery contact  One per project with staff/volunteers	Survey of participating individuals for each project (~100 respondents per project, depending on number of participants)	One per project (5-8 individuals each)	N/A	Uptake of support Who is in charge of delivering programmes Advertisement of programmes to local businesses/economically inactive people Monitoring of projects by local authorities or others on their behalf
Projects to help local economically inactive young adults into	One per project	One per project with lead delivery contact	Survey of participating individuals for each project (~100	One per project (5-8 individuals each)	N/A	Uptake of support Who is in charge of delivering programmes

employment (excl. volunteering)		One per project with staff/volunteers	respondents per project, depending on number of participants)			Advertisement of programmes to local businesses/economically inactive people Monitoring of projects by local authorities or others on their behalf
Projects to help local economically inactive young adults into employment through volunteering	One per project	One per project with lead delivery contact One per project with staff/volunteers	Survey of participating individuals for each project (~100 respondents per project, depending on number of participants)	One per project (5-8 individuals each)	N/A	Uptake of support Who is in charge of delivering programmes Advertisement of programmes to local businesses/economically inactive people Monitoring of projects by local authorities or others on their behalf
Projects that involve local businesses in helping the local economically inactive into employment	One per project	One per project with lead delivery contact One per project with participating businesses	Survey of participating individuals for each project (~100 respondents per project, depending on number of participants)	One per project (5-8 businesses or individuals at each)	N/A	Uptake of support Who is in charge of delivering programmes Advertisement of programmes to local businesses/economically inactive people Monitoring of projects by local authorities or others on their behalf

**Table 5 Detailed process evaluation methodology: supporting business study groups**

<b>Study group</b>	<b>In-depth interviews with local authorities</b>	<b>In-depth interviews with delivery partners</b>	<b>Survey of beneficiaries</b>	<b>Focus groups with beneficiaries</b>	<b>Observation days</b>	<b>Secondary data on</b>
Programmes to support the digital development of local businesses	One per project	One per project with lead contractor One per project with staff involved in delivery	Survey of business participants for each project (~100 respondents per project depending on the number of participants)	One per project (5-8 businesses each)	N/A	Uptake of programmes Who is in charge of delivering programmes Advertisement of programmes to local businesses Monitoring of projects by local authorities or others on their behalf
Provision of grants to local businesses	One per project	One per project with lead delivery organisation One per project with staff involved in delivery	Survey of business participants for each project (~100 respondents per project depending on the number of participants)	One per project (5-8 businesses each)	N/A	Uptake of programmes Who is in charge of delivering programmes Advertisement of programmes to local businesses Monitoring of projects by local authorities or others on their behalf
Projects to help businesses decarbonise through decarbonisation	One per project	One per project with lead contractor One per project with staff involved in delivery	Survey of business participants for each project (~100 respondents per project depending on	One per project (5-8 businesses each)	N/A	Uptake of programmes Who is in charge of delivering programmes Advertisement of programmes to local businesses

plans and grants	the number of participants)	Monitoring of projects by local authorities or others on their behalf
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**Table 6 Detailed process evaluation methodology: Communities & Place study groups**

Study group	In-depth interviews with local authorities	In-depth interviews with delivery partners	Survey of beneficiaries	Focus groups with beneficiaries	Observation days	Secondary data on
Major refurbishment of community buildings (e.g. community hubs)	One per project	One per project with contractors One per project with staff/volunteers in charge of running community buildings	Your Community, Your Say (YCYS) survey of local residents for each project (~500 residents each)	One per project with users of community buildings (5-8 individuals at each)	One day per project	Usage of community buildings Who is in charge of running buildings Advertisement of community centres to residents Monitoring of projects by local authorities or others on their behalf
Large investments in sports pavilions or pitches	One per project	One per project with contractors One per project with staff/volunteers in charge of running facilities	YCYS survey of local residents for each project (~500 residents each)	One per project with users of facilities (5-8 individuals at each)	One day per project	Usage of facilities Who is in charge of running facilities Advertisement of sport facilities to residents/potential users Monitoring of projects by local authorities or others on their behalf
Significant improvements to,	One per project	One per project with contractors	YCYS survey of local	One per project with users of	One day per project	Usage of parks/playgrounds



or the provision of new, playground equipment	One per project with individuals in charge of maintaining playgrounds	residents for each project (~500 residents each)	playgrounds (5-8 individuals at each)	Who is in charge of running/caring for parks/playgrounds Advertisement of parks/playgrounds to residents/potential users Monitoring of projects by local authorities or others on their behalf
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# Annex C Detailed impact evaluation methodologies

- C.1 This annex provides further detail on the proposed evaluation methodology for each of the ten recommended study groups. This includes more detail on the types of projects to be evaluated within each study group, a summary of the assessment of evaluation feasibility, details of the proposed methodologies (both for this evaluation and what might be possible over a longer timeframe post 2025, which is illustratively through 2028) and risk mitigations. These study groups and projects within them are not chosen to be able to make representative findings across the UKSPF as a whole, but to add to the evidence base on what works, for whom and under what conditions.

## Study groups recommended for evaluation

### SG1: Projects to help local economically inactive people into employment

#### Study group description

- C.2 This study group comprises projects which aim to facilitate the movement towards employment of local adults who are economically inactive.<sup>1</sup> The projects in this study group target adults who are economically inactive, without focusing on any particular cohorts. The projects use a variety of approaches, such as education and skills training, one-to-one coaching, and signposting to opportunities, to achieve their aims. Through increasing employability and employment (alongside other outcomes such as health and wellbeing), these projects seek to improve life chances and, potentially, increase pride in place.
- C.3 An example description (provided by an LLA) of a relevant project is:  
*... will engage 1,340 economically inactive beneficiaries from [the local area], moving at least 20% into employment using an innovative 3 phase employability model.*

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<sup>1</sup> Economically inactive means someone who is not working nor actively seeking work. Depending on the projects selected for evaluation, the study group may include projects that aim to facilitate the movement towards employment of those who are currently unemployed (i.e. out of work but actively seeking employment) as well as those who are inactive.

C.4 There are many such projects being funded by UKSPF, but as the majority are still being commissioned (as they are planned for delivery starting in 2024) the specifics of many projects are still being determined. However, information available to date is sufficient to provide confidence that three projects that will share similar characteristics and will be feasible to evaluate robustly will be readily identified before the end of 2023.

### Summary of evaluability assessment

C.5 Table 7 sets out the assessment of this study group against the evaluation feasibility criteria. This is followed by additional detail on the proposed methodology for the impact evaluation, including an indication of what could be undertaken over a longer timeframe than the current evaluation (ending late 2025).

**Table 7 Assessment of SG1 against evaluation feasibility criteria**

Criteria	Assessment
Fills an evidence gap, and is of particular policy interest	There was a strong view from LLAs that economic inactivity was a core area where they felt they could benefit from greater evidence on ‘what works’. There was consensus across DLUHC, DWP and DfE that there is a need for additional evidence, and that evidence of the impact on life chances through a local lens would be valuable.
Potential overlap with other evaluations	There are no direct overlaps with ongoing central government evaluations. Some LLAs are commissioning evaluations of their own programmes of support for economically inactive people.
Articulation of a valid theory of change	There is a robust theory of change through which these projects could be expected to improve life chances and, potentially, pride in place, alongside other important outcomes. A logic model based on available information is shown in <b>Figure 1</b> .
Suitable data for theory-based evaluation	Yes. Theory-based evaluation is feasible. It would be proportionate to collect quantitative and qualitative data from participants, in addition to monitoring data from programme delivery partners.

Criteria	Assessment
Feasible to include quasi-experimental component within the theory-based evaluation	No. Unlikely to be proportionate to include a component of quasi-experimental analysis in this evaluation due to the challenges of collecting data on short-term outcomes from 'control group' individuals.
Feasibility of quasi-experimental analysis over the longer term	Potentially. Quasi-experimental analysis would be feasible and proportionate over a longer timeframe. Impacts of particular projects on employment could be estimated using a matching approach via the DWP Employment Data Lab.
Projects sufficiently large, and delivered within evaluation period	Yes. There are large employment support projects being implemented by 2024/25 at the latest. Immediate impacts on leading indicators of employment outcomes expected to be observable.

## Contribution to evidence

- C.6 There is a large evidence base on the impact of policy initiatives aimed at helping economically inactive individuals towards employment. The What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth conducted a recent evidence review, which found that employment training programmes for adults can have a positive, although modest, impact on earnings and employment.<sup>2</sup>
- C.7 Despite the existing literature, local authorities and government departments were clear on the need for more robust evidence on what works. This evaluation aims to contribute to that evidence base by assessing the impact of local interventions on a range of outcomes including employment as well as crucial leading indicators (such as skills, confidence to seek work and perceived barriers to employment), expected life chances and pride in place. There is much less existing evidence on what works in improving these wider outcomes.

## Detail on proposed evaluation approach for the period from 2023 to 2025

- C.8 Based on the evaluation feasibility assessment, it is recommended that an integrative evaluation approach is used to provide robust evaluation evidence over the period through 2025. This would maximise learning and enhance rigour by integrating evidence from different data sources and analytical approaches.

<sup>2</sup> <https://whatworksgrowth.org/resource-library/employment-training/>

The approaches incorporated for this study group would include descriptive analysis, before-versus-after analysis and theory-based contribution analysis.

- C.9 Contribution analysis seeks to evaluate an intervention by verifying the relevant theory of change using robust quantitative and qualitative evidence. A logic model (based on project information available to date) for this study group is provided in Figure 1. The outcomes for pride in place and life chances are ultimately part of the missions to level up communities across the UK, as set out in the Levelling Up White Paper (HMG, 2022).
- C.10 The descriptive analysis, before-versus-after analysis and contribution analysis would be evidenced using data from three main sources:
- **Monitoring data**, which is expected to be available from programme providers on individuals' baseline qualifications and past employment histories, their engagement with the programme and their immediate employment outcomes.
  - **Bespoke surveys**, which will address necessary gaps in monitoring data (such as core data about the individuals to enable the evaluation to understand variations, where proportionate, across individuals with different characteristics). They will also be used to collect quantitative and qualitative data from programme participants during and after the end of their engagement with the programme. Data will be collected on outcomes such as individuals' confidence to begin to seek work and prepare a CV or job application; perceived barriers to employment and (in the latter survey) their employment outcomes including work placements; and perceptions of the impact of the programme on life chances, pride in place and other important outcomes (such as wellbeing). These surveys would be conducted online and by telephone, and are expected to be fielded (subject to ethical considerations) to all individuals engaged by the programme.
  - **Qualitative data**, which will be collected from programme participants through focus groups (one per project, with around five to eight individuals attending) and from programme delivery organisations through in-depth semi-structured interviews (two per project). This qualitative data collection will support both the impact and process evaluation, to minimise the burden of the evaluation on respondents.
- C.11 Analyses of these data would be triangulated to provide robust evidence on what works to improve employability, address perceived barriers to employment, enhance perceived life chances and change other important outcomes (such as wellbeing) for economically inactive individuals. The bespoke survey data would be used to support comparisons of outcomes over time ('before' and 'after' support), while the survey and qualitative data would

provide evidence on the lived experience and self-assessed impacts of the support received. The evaluation would seek to evidence for whom the interventions have most impact, and under what conditions, comparing impacts both across individuals within projects and between projects.

- C.12 The evaluation feasibility assessment concluded that including a component of quasi-experimental analysis in the evaluation over the period through 2025 is unlikely to be feasible or proportionate.
- C.13 These projects are expected to have impacts in the short term on outcomes such as perceptions of work confidence and barriers to work. Bespoke primary data would be needed to measure these short-term outcomes and, although it is feasible and proportionate to collect such data (over the time period available) from supported individuals, it is relatively more challenging to collect equivalent information from individuals who are not being supported by the programme (i.e. a control group). It is more difficult to identify such individuals, and response rates are likely to be low. Furthermore, analysis of project information has revealed that recruitment for the UKSPF projects in these study groups is not expected to be material until the latter stages of 2024 and early 2025. Therefore, there is likely to be insufficient time for an adequate time series of outcome data to be available from a sufficiently large sample of participants in both a treatment group and a control group to support robust quasi-experimental analysis over the period through 2025.
- C.14 Over a longer timeframe, these projects would be expected to have impacts on employment, on which secondary data is more readily available. Quasi-experimental analysis is therefore more feasible as part of an evaluation post 2025, illustratively considered over the period through 2028 (discussed below).
- C.15 It is therefore recommended that the evaluation to 2025 further explores and facilitates the viability of future quasi-experimental analysis, for example advising what appropriate monitoring data is collected and preserved and starting feasibility discussions with the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP).
- C.16 However, where this quasi-experimental analysis is feasible for individual projects, it will be included and this will be determined following project selection in the implementation of this evaluation. This will depend on whether individual projects have sufficient sample sizes and clear methodologies for inclusion to allow for the development of a sufficiently large control group.

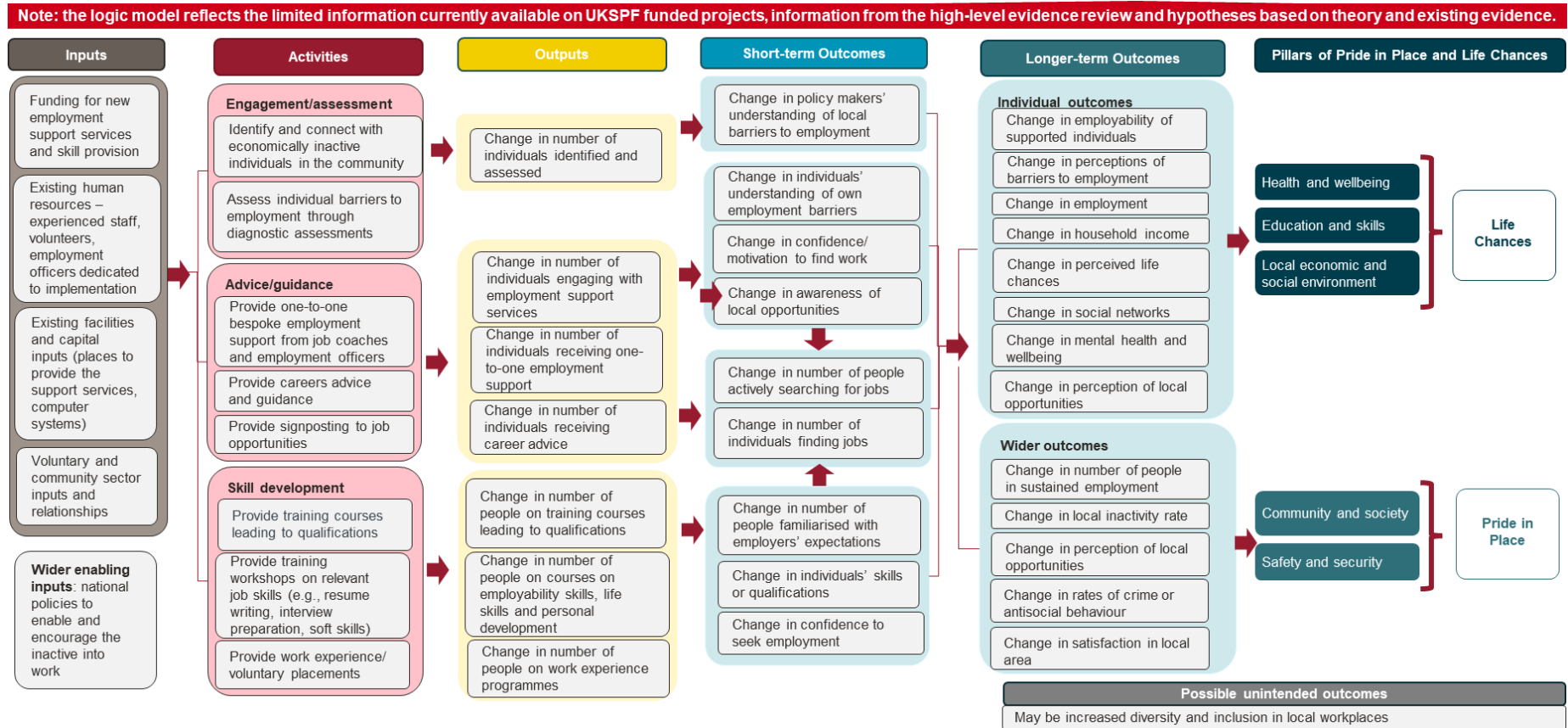
## Detail on evaluation approach considered for post 2025

- C.17 Over a longer evaluation timeframe, illustratively considered to be through 2028, valuable additional evidence on the size of the impacts of these UKSPF-funded projects could be produced through an integrative evaluation that includes quasi-experimental methods.
- C.18 In particular, over a longer timeframe, such as with an additional three years through 2028, the projects in this study group would be expected to have an impact on individuals' employment outcomes, and secondary data on employment exists. Quasi-experimental analysis of the impacts of interventions is likely to be possible using administrative data such as that provided via the Employment Data Lab Service by the DWP.<sup>3</sup> Programme participants could be identified in the administrative data, and a matched control group formed of individuals with similar characteristics who did not participate in the programme. The employment outcomes of participating individuals up to two years after the programme could be compared with the matched control sample to estimate the employment impact of the interventions. This could be combined with evidence from a further follow-up bespoke survey of participating individuals to understand wider contextual factors and individual perceptions, and could provide rich evidence on the extent to which the intervention worked, how and for whom.

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<sup>3</sup> This is subject to the ability to match data on participants in the UKSPF projects within DWP Employment Data Lab.

**Figure 1 Theory of change for Study Group 1: Projects to help local economically inactive people into employment**



Source: Frontier Economics



## **SG2: Projects to help local economically inactive young people into employment (excluding through volunteering)**

### **Study group description**

- C.19 This study group comprises projects which aim to help local young adults who are economically inactive towards employment.<sup>4</sup> It is distinct from study group 1 due to its focus on young adults (rather than all adults). To achieve their aims, the projects use a variety of approaches such as education and skills training, one-to-one coaching and signposting to opportunities. The projects in this study group do not use volunteering as a delivery mechanism, as such projects are covered by study group 3. Through increasing employability and employment (alongside other outcomes such as health and wellbeing) these projects seek to improve life chances and potentially to increase pride in place.
- C.20 An example description (provided by an LLA) of a relevant project is:  
*... a twenty week programme offering an intensive wrap-around service to progress participants to work readiness. The programme takes a four-phased approach which works to build the confidence and reduce the barriers to employment as they progress through each phase.*
- C.21 Many projects that potentially sit within this study group are still being commissioned (as they are planned for delivery starting in 2024), and so the specifics of many projects are still being determined. However, information available to date is sufficient to provide confidence that three projects that will share similar characteristics and be feasible to evaluate robustly will be readily identified before the end of 2023.

### **Summary of evaluability assessment**

- C.22 Table 8 sets out the assessment of this study group against the evaluation feasibility criteria. This is followed by additional detail on the proposed methodology for the impact, including an indication of what could be undertaken over a longer timeframe than the current evaluation (ending late 2025).

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<sup>4</sup> Economically inactive means someone who is not working nor actively seeking work. Depending on the projects selected for evaluation, the study group may include projects that aim to facilitate the movement towards employment of those who are currently unemployed (i.e. out of work but actively seeking employment) as well as those who are inactive.

**Table 8      Assessment of SG2 against evaluation feasibility criteria**

Criteria	Assessment
Fills an evidence gap, and is of particular policy interest	There was a strong view from LLAs that economic inactivity was a core area where they felt they could benefit from greater evidence on ‘what works’. There was consensus across DLUHC, DWP and DfE that there is a need for additional evidence, including on whether different types of interventions are more successful for particular groups (such as younger or older adults), and that evidence of the impact on life chances through a local lens would be valuable.
Potential overlap with other evaluations	There are no direct overlaps with ongoing central government evaluations. Some LLAs are commissioning evaluations of their own programmes of support for economically inactive people.
Articulation of a valid theory of change	There is a robust theory of change through which these projects could be expected to improve life chances and, potentially, pride in place, alongside other outcomes. A logic model based on available information is shown in <b>Figure 2</b> .
Suitable data for theory-based evaluation	Yes. Theory-based evaluation is feasible. It would be proportionate to collect quantitative and qualitative data from participants, in addition to monitoring data from programme delivery partners.
Feasible to include quasi-experimental component within the theory-based evaluation	No. Unlikely to be proportionate to include a component of quasi-experimental analysis in this evaluation due to the challenges of collecting data on short-term outcomes from ‘control group’ individuals.
Feasibility of quasi-experimental analysis over the longer term	Potentially. Quasi-experimental analysis would be feasible and proportionate over a longer timeframe. Impacts of particular projects on employment could be estimated using a matching approach via the DWP Employment Data Lab.
Projects sufficiently large, and delivered within evaluation period	Yes. There are large employment support projects being implemented by 2024/25 at the latest. Immediate impacts on leading indicators of employment outcomes expected to be observable.

## Contribution to evidence

- C.23 There is a large evidence base on the impact of interventions aimed at re-engaging inactive young adults with the labour force. Youth Futures Foundation has collated an online map of evidence on the effectiveness of interventions aimed at improving the job quality, skills and employment of young people.<sup>5</sup>
- C.24 Despite the expansive body of existing evidence, discussions with DWP and local authorities highlighted a need for more robust evidence on what works, especially from a local lens. This evaluation aims to contribute to the evidence base by assessing the impact of interventions targeted at young economically inactive adults on a range of outcomes including employment and crucial leading indicators (such as skills, confidence to seek work and perceived barriers to employment), as well as expected life chances and pride in place on welfare. There is much less existing evidence on what works in improving these wider outcomes.

## Detail on proposed evaluation approach for the period from 2023 to 2025

- C.25 Based on the evaluation feasibility assessment, it is recommended that an integrative evaluation approach is used to provide robust evaluation evidence over the period through 2025. This would maximise learning and enhance rigour by integrating evidence from different data sources and analytical approaches. The approaches incorporated for this study group would include descriptive analysis, before-versus-after analysis and theory-based contribution analysis.
- C.26 Contribution analysis seeks to evaluate an intervention by verifying the relevant theory of change using robust quantitative and qualitative evidence. A logic model (based on project information available to date) for this study group is provided in Figure 2. The outcomes for pride in place and life chances are ultimately part of the missions to level up communities across the UK, as set out in the Levelling Up White Paper (HMG, 2022).
- C.27 The descriptive analysis, before-versus-after analysis and contribution analysis would be evidenced using data from three main sources:
- **Monitoring data**, which is expected to be available from programme providers on individuals' baseline qualifications and **past** employment

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<sup>5</sup> <https://youthfuturesfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/Youth-Futures-Foundation-EGM-2022.html>

histories, their engagement with the programme and their immediate employment outcomes.

- **Bespoke surveys**, which will address necessary gaps in monitoring data (such as core data about the individuals to enable the evaluation to understand variations, where proportionate, across individuals with different characteristics). They will also be used to collect quantitative and qualitative data from programme participants during and after the end of their engagement with the programme. Data will be collected on outcomes such as individuals' confidence to begin to seek work and prepare a CV or job application; perceived barriers to employment and (in the latter survey) their employment outcomes including work placements; and perceptions of the impact of the programme on life chances, pride in place and other important outcomes (such as wellbeing). These surveys would be conducted online and by telephone and are expected to be fielded (subject to ethical considerations) to all individuals engaged by the programme.
- **Qualitative data**, which will be collected from programme participants through focus groups (one per project, with around five to eight individuals attending) and from programme delivery organisations through in-depth semi-structured interviews (two per project). This qualitative data collection will support both the **impact** and process evaluation, to minimise the burden of the evaluation on respondents.

C.28 Analyses of these data would be triangulated to provide robust evidence on what works to improve employability, address perceived barriers to employment, enhance perceived life chances and change other important outcomes (such as wellbeing) for economically inactive young adults. The bespoke survey data would be used to support comparisons of outcomes over time ('before' and 'after' support), while the survey and qualitative data would provide evidence on the lived experiences and self-assessed impacts of the support received. The evaluation would seek to evidence for whom the interventions have most impact, and under what conditions, comparing impacts both across individuals within projects and between projects.

C.29 The evaluation feasibility assessment concluded that including a component of quasi-experimental analysis in the evaluation over the period through 2025 is unlikely to be feasible or proportionate.

C.30 These projects are expected to have impacts in the short term on outcomes such as perceptions of work confidence and barriers to work. Bespoke primary data would be needed to measure these short-term outcomes and, although it is feasible and proportionate to collect such data (over the time period available) from supported individuals, it is relatively more challenging to collect equivalent information from young adults who are not being supported by the programme

(i.e. a control group). It is more difficult to identify such individuals, and response rates are likely to be low. Furthermore, analysis of project information has revealed that recruitment for the UKSPF projects in these study groups is not expected to be material until the latter stages of 2024 and early 2025. Therefore, there is likely to be insufficient time for an adequate time series of outcome data to be available from a sufficiently large sample of participants in both a treatment group and a control group to support robust quasi-experimental analysis over the period through 2025.

- C.31 Over a longer timeframe, these projects would be expected to have impacts on employment, on which secondary data is more readily available. Quasi-experimental analysis is therefore more feasible as part of an evaluation post 2025, illustratively considered over the period through 2028 (discussed below).
- C.32 It is therefore recommended that the evaluation to 2025 further explores and facilitates the viability of future quasi-experimental analysis, for example advising what appropriate monitoring data is collected and preserved and starting feasibility discussions with DWP.
- C.33 However, where this quasi-experimental analysis is feasible for individual projects, it will be included, and this will be determined following project selection in the implementation of this evaluation. This will depend on whether individual projects have sufficient sample sizes and clear methodologies for inclusion to allow for the development of a sufficiently large control group.

### **Detail on evaluation approach considered for post 2025**

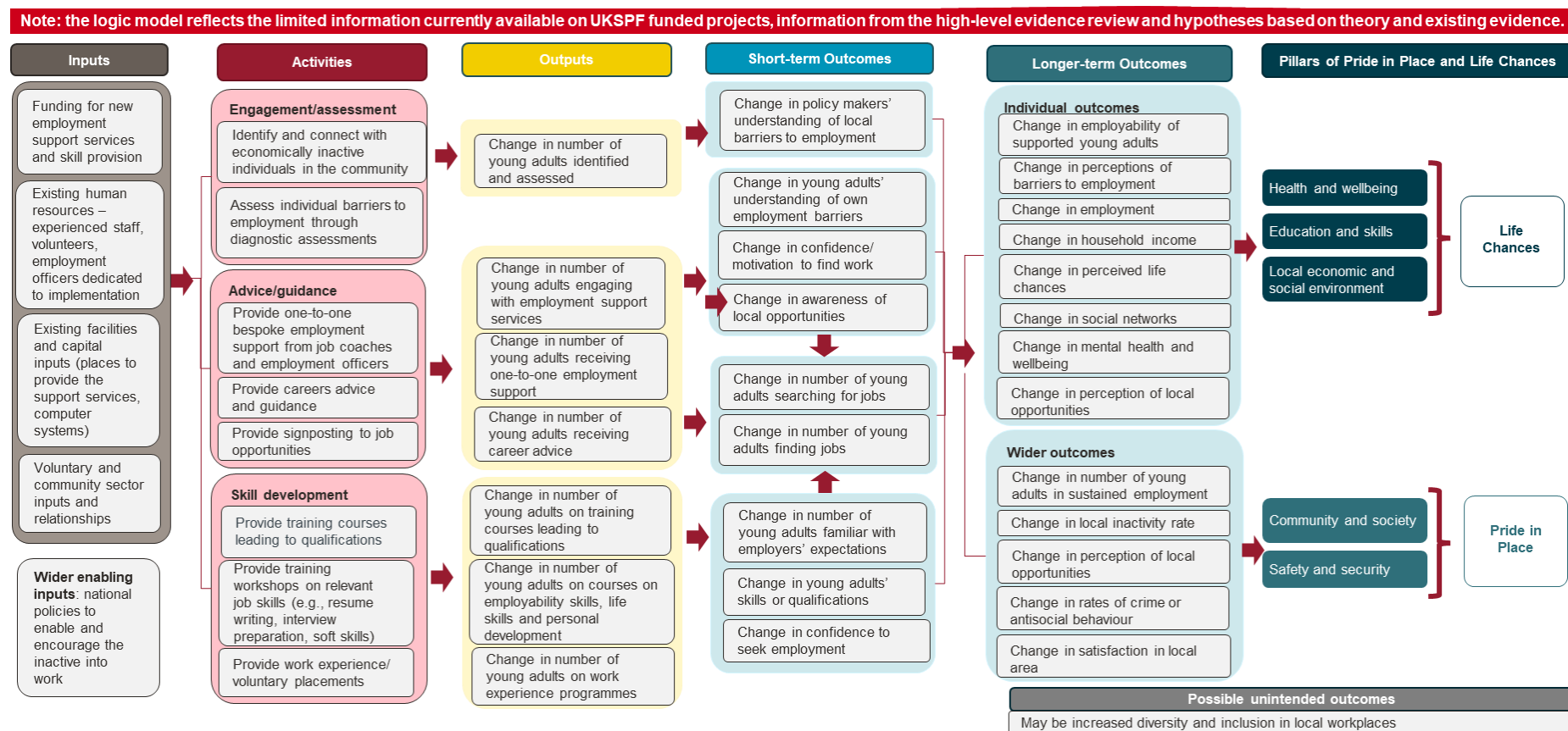
- C.34 Over a longer evaluation timeframe, illustratively considered to be through 2028, valuable additional evidence on the size of the impacts of these UKSPF-funded projects could be produced through an integrative evaluation that includes quasi-experimental methods.
- C.35 In particular, over a longer timeframe, such as with an additional three years through 2028, the projects in this study group would be expected to have an impact on young adults' employment outcomes, and secondary data on employment exists. Quasi-experimental analysis of the impacts of interventions is likely to be possible using administrative data such as that provided via the Employment Data Lab Service by the DWP.<sup>6</sup> Programme participants could be identified in the administrative data, and a matched control group formed of young adults with similar characteristics who did not participate in the

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<sup>6</sup> This is subject to the ability to match data on participants in the UKSPF projects within DWP Employment Data Lab.

programme. The employment outcomes of participants up to two years after the programme could be compared with the matched control sample to estimate the employment impact of the interventions. This could be combined with evidence from a further follow-up bespoke survey of participants to understand wider contextual factors and individual perceptions, and could provide rich evidence on the extent to which the intervention worked, how and for whom.

**Figure 2 Theory of change for Study Group 2: Projects to help local economically inactive young people into employment (excluding through volunteering)**



Source: Frontier Economics

## SG3: Projects to help local economically inactive young people into employment through volunteering

### Study group description

C.36 This study group comprises projects which aim to help young adults who are inactive or unemployed towards employment through volunteering.

C.37 An example description (provided by an LLA) of a relevant project is:  
*... support young people to access local volunteering placements within the community. It is envisaged that young people will gain the necessary skills and confidence to secure a volunteering role that would potentially progress onto employment or result in upskilling.*

### Summary of evaluability assessment

C.38 Table 9 sets out the assessment of this study group against the evaluation feasibility criteria. This is followed by additional detail on the proposed methodology for the impact evaluation, including an indication of what could be undertaken over a longer timeframe than the current evaluation (ending late 2025).

**Table 9      Assessment of SG3 against evaluation feasibility criteria**

Criteria	Assessment
Fills an evidence gap, and is of particular policy interest	There was a strong view from LLAs that economic inactivity was a core area where they felt they could benefit from greater evidence on 'what works'. There was consensus across DLUHC, DWP and DfE that there is a need for additional evidence, in particular on what types of interventions work, and that evidence of the impact on life chances through a local lens would be valuable. A comparison between the impacts of study group 3 (focused on volunteering) and study group 2 (other interventions to support inactive young adults) was therefore felt to be particularly valuable.



Criteria	Assessment
Potential overlap with other evaluations	There are no direct overlaps with ongoing evaluations.
Articulation of a valid theory of change	There is a robust theory of change through which these projects could be expected to improve life chances and, potentially, pride in place (alongside other important outcomes). A logic model based on available information is shown in Figure 3.
Suitable data for theory-based evaluation	Yes. Theory-based evaluation is feasible. It would be proportionate to collect quantitative and qualitative data from participating individuals.
Feasible to include quasi-experimental component within the theory-based evaluation	No. It is unlikely to be proportionate to include a component of quasi-experimental analysis in the evaluation due to the challenges of collecting data on short-term outcomes from 'control group' individuals.
Feasibility of quasi-experimental analysis over the longer term	Potentially. Quasi-experimental analysis may be feasible and proportionate over a longer timeframe. Impacts on employment could be estimated using a matching approach via the DWP Employment Data Lab.
Projects sufficiently large, and delivered within evaluation period	Yes. There are several projects being implemented by 2024/25 at the latest. Immediate impacts on outcomes such as work confidence and barriers to employment are expected to be observable.

## Contribution to evidence

C.39 There is some existing evidence on the impact of volunteering initiatives that aim to re-engage inactive young adults with the labour force. However, discussions with DWP, Department for Education (DfE) and local authorities highlighted a need for more evidence on what works, especially from a local lens. This evaluation aims to provide valuable new robust evidence on the impact of volunteering on a range of outcomes for young adults, including leading indicators of employment (such as skills, confidence to seek work and perceived barriers to employment), as well as expected life chances and pride in place outcomes.

## Detail on proposed evaluation approach for the period from 2023 to 2025

- C.40 Based on the evaluation feasibility assessment, it is recommended that an integrative evaluation approach is used to provide robust evaluation evidence over the period through 2025. This would maximise learning and enhance rigour by integrating evidence from different data sources and analytical approaches. The approaches incorporated for this study group would include descriptive analysis, before-versus-after analysis, and theory-based contribution analysis.
- C.41 Contribution analysis seeks to evaluate an intervention by verifying the relevant theory of change using robust quantitative and qualitative evidence. A logic model (based on project information available to date) for this study group is provided in Figure 3. The outcomes for pride in place and life chances are ultimately part of the missions to level up communities across the UK, as set out in the Levelling Up White Paper (HMG, 2022).
- C.42 The descriptive analysis, before-versus-after analysis and contribution analysis would be evidenced using data from three main sources:
- **Monitoring data**, which is expected to be available from programme providers on individuals' baseline qualifications and past employment histories, their engagement with the programme and their immediate employment outcomes.
  - **Bespoke surveys**, which will address necessary gaps in monitoring data (such as core data about the individuals to enable the evaluation to understand variations, where proportionate, across individuals with different characteristics). They will also be used to collect quantitative and qualitative data from supported individuals before and after their period of volunteering. Data will be collected on outcomes such as individuals' confidence to seek work; perceived barriers to employment and (in the latter survey) their employment outcomes including work placements; and perceptions of the impact of the programme on their life chances, pride in place and other important outcomes (such as wellbeing). These surveys would be conducted online and by telephone, and are expected to be fielded (subject to ethical considerations) to all individuals supported into volunteering by the programmes.
  - **Qualitative data** will be collected from supported individuals through focus groups (one per project, with around five to eight individuals attending) and from programme delivery organisations through in-depth semi-structured interviews (two per project). This qualitative data collection will support both the impact and process evaluation, to minimise the burden of the evaluation on respondents.

- C.43 Analyses of these data would be triangulated to provide robust evidence on what works to improve employability, address perceived barriers to employment, enhance perceived life chances, increase pride in place and change other important outcomes (such as wellbeing) for economically inactive young adults. The bespoke survey data would be used to support comparisons of outcomes over time ('before' and 'after' their volunteering placements), while the survey and qualitative data would provide evidence on lived experiences and self-assessed impacts of the support received. The evaluation would seek to evidence for whom the interventions have most impact, and under what conditions, comparing impacts both across individuals within projects and between projects.
- C.44 The evaluation feasibility assessment concluded that including a component of quasi-experimental analysis in the evaluation over the period through 2025 is unlikely to be feasible or proportionate.
- C.45 These projects are expected to have impacts in the short term on outcomes such as perceptions of work confidence and barriers to work. Bespoke primary data would be needed to measure these short-term outcomes, and although it is feasible and proportionate to collect such data (over the time period available) from supported individuals, it is relatively more challenging to collect equivalent information from individuals who are not being supported by the programme (i.e. a control group). It is more difficult to identify such individuals, and response rates are likely to be low. Furthermore, analysis of project information has revealed that recruitment for the UKSPF projects in these study groups is not expected to be material until the latter stages of 2024 and early 2025. Therefore, there is likely to be insufficient time for an adequate time series of outcome data to be available from a sufficiently large sample of participants in both a treatment group and a control group to support robust quasi-experimental analysis over the period through 2025.
- C.46 Over a longer timeframe these projects would be expected to have impacts on employment, on which secondary data is more readily available. Quasi-experimental analysis is therefore more feasible as part of an evaluation post 2025, illustratively considered over the period through 2028 (discussed below).
- C.47 However, where this quasi-experimental analysis is feasible for individual projects, it will be included, and this will be determined following project selection in the implementation of this evaluation. This will depend on whether individual projects have sufficient sample sizes and clear methodologies for inclusion to allow for the development of a sufficiently large control group.

## Detail on evaluation approach considered for post 2025

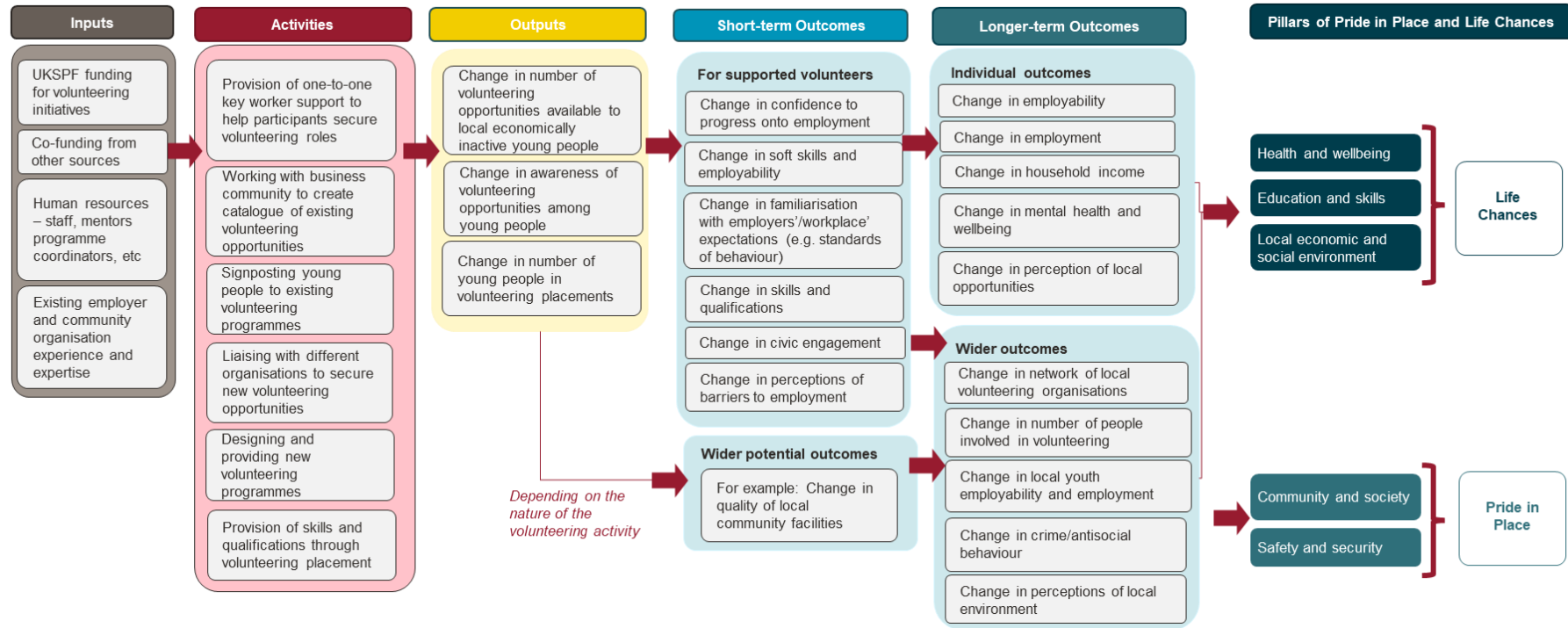
- C.48 Over a longer evaluation timeframe, illustratively considered to be through 2028, valuable additional evidence on the size of the impacts of these UKSPF-funded projects could be produced through an integrative evaluation that includes quasi-experimental methods.
- C.49 In particular, over a longer timeframe, such as with an additional three years through 2028, the projects in this study group would be expected to have an impact on individuals' employment outcomes, and secondary data on employment exists. Quasi-experimental analysis of the impacts of interventions is likely to be possible using administrative data, such as that provided via the Employment Data Lab Service by the DWP.<sup>7</sup> Programme participants could be identified in the administrative data, and a matched control group formed of individuals with similar characteristics who did not participate in the programme. The employment outcomes of participating individuals up to two years after the programme could be compared with the matched control sample to estimate the employment impact of the interventions. This could be combined with evidence from a further follow-up bespoke survey of participating individuals to understand wider contextual factors and individual perceptions, and could provide rich evidence on the extent to which the intervention worked, how and for whom.

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<sup>7</sup> This is subject to the ability to match data on participants in the UKSPF projects within DWP Employment Data Lab.

**Figure 3 Theory of change for Study Group 3: Projects to help local economically inactive young people into employment through volunteering**

Note: the logic model reflects the limited information currently available on UKSPF funded projects, information from the high-level evidence review and hypotheses based on theory and existing evidence.



Source: Frontier Economics

## **SG4: Projects that involve local businesses in helping the inactive into employment**

### **Study group description**

C.50 This study group comprises projects which aim to directly involve local businesses in helping local economically inactive people into employment.<sup>8</sup> The projects involve a variety of approaches, such as financial support for employers who hire individuals out of inactivity, financial support for work placements or apprenticeship schemes, directly connecting individuals with work opportunities through partnering employers, or providing advice to employers to help them connect with local inactive or unemployed people. Through increasing employability and employment (alongside other outcomes such as incomes, health and wellbeing) these projects seek to improve life chances, and potentially increase pride in place.

C.51 An example description (provided by an LLA) of a relevant project is:  
*... to offer 6-month supported work placements with local businesses to those unemployed or economically inactive. The placements will develop transferable employability skills to enrich participants to gain future sustained employment.*

C.52 The information available to date is sufficient to provide confidence that three projects that will share similar characteristics and will be feasible to robustly evaluate will be readily identified before the end of 2023.

### **Summary of evaluability assessment**

C.53 Table 10 sets out the assessment of this study group against the evaluation feasibility criteria. This is followed by additional detail on the proposed methodology for the impact evaluation, including an indication of what could be undertaken over a longer timeframe than the current evaluation (ending late 2025).

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<sup>8</sup> Economically inactive means someone who is not working nor actively seeking work. Depending on the projects selected for evaluation, the study group may include projects that aim to facilitate the movement towards employment of those who are currently unemployed (i.e. out of work but actively seeking employment) as well as those who are inactive.

**Table 10 Assessment of SG4 against evaluation feasibility criteria**

Criteria	Assessment
Fills an evidence gap, and is of particular policy interest	There was a strong view from LLAs that economic inactivity was a core area where they felt they could benefit from greater evidence on ‘what works’. A high level review of the literature revealed relatively less evidence on the impact of interventions that involve local employers. There was consensus across DLUHC and DWP that there is a need for additional evidence, and that evidence of the impact on life chances through a local lens would be valuable.
Potential overlap with other evaluations	There are no direct overlaps with ongoing evaluations.
Articulation of a valid theory of change	There is a robust theory of change through which these projects could be expected to improve life chances and, potentially, pride in place, alongside other important outcomes. A logic model based on available information is shown in Figure 4.
Suitable data for theory-based evaluation	Yes. Theory-based evaluation is feasible. It would be proportionate to collect quantitative and qualitative data from participating individuals and businesses.
Feasible to include quasi-experimental component within the theory-based evaluation	No. It is not proportionate to include a component of quasi-experimental analysis in the evaluation due to the challenges of collecting data on short-term outcomes from ‘control group’ individuals and the small sample sizes of participating businesses.
Feasibility of quasi-experimental analysis over the longer term	Potentially. Quasi-experimental analysis may be feasible and proportionate over a longer timeframe. Impacts on employment could be estimated using a matching approach via the DWP Employment Data Lab.
Projects sufficiently large, and delivered within evaluation period	Yes. There are several large projects being implemented by 2024/25 at the latest. Immediate impacts on outcomes such as employability and business perceptions are expected to be observable.

## Contribution to evidence

C.54 The majority of the existing evidence on policies to address economic inactivity focuses on the impact of interventions that provide support (of one form or another) to individuals. There is more limited evidence on the impact of policies that involve local employers. One such example is the Apprenticeship Grant (age 16 to 24) for employers, commissioned by the former Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, which found that the programme had positive outcomes for both participants and employers.<sup>9</sup> The evaluation of this study group therefore aims to contribute valuable new evidence on the impact of employer-focused interventions that aim to address economic inactivity.

## Detail on proposed evaluation approach for the period from 2023 to 2025

C.55 Based on the evaluation feasibility assessment, it is recommended that an integrative evaluation approach is used to provide robust evaluation evidence over the period through 2025. This would maximise learning and enhance rigour by integrating evidence from different data sources and analytical approaches. The approaches incorporated for this study group would include descriptive analysis, before-versus-after analysis and theory-based contribution analysis.

C.56 Contribution analysis seeks to evaluate an intervention by verifying the relevant theory of change using robust quantitative and qualitative evidence. A logic model (based on project information available to date) for this study group is provided in **Figure 4**. The outcomes for pride in place and life chances are ultimately part of the missions to level up communities across the UK, as set out in the Levelling Up White Paper (HMG, 2022).

C.57 The descriptive analysis, before-versus-after analysis and contribution analysis would be evidenced using data from three main sources:

- **Monitoring data**, which is **expected** to be available on the number of individuals and businesses engaging with the programme.
- **Bespoke surveys**, which will be used to collect data about the supported individuals to enable the evaluation to understand variations, where **proportionate**, across individuals with different characteristics. It will also collect quantitative and qualitative data from individuals who have been supported onto work placements at the start of their engagement and after

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<sup>9</sup> Great Britain. Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), 2013. Evaluation of the Apprenticeship Grant for Employers (AGE 16 to 24) programme.



they have finished their placement. Data will be collected on outcomes such as individuals' confidence to seek work; perceived barriers to employment, and (in the latter survey) their employment outcomes including work placements; and perceptions of the impact of the programme on life chances, pride in place and other important outcomes (such as wellbeing). These surveys would be conducted online and by telephone, and are expected (subject to technical considerations) to be fielded to all individuals engaged by the programme.

- **Qualitative data**, which will be collected from supported individuals through focus groups (one per project, with around five to eight individuals attending) and from programme delivery organisations through in-depth semi-structured interviews (one per project). In-depth interviews will also be conducted with participating businesses (two to five per project) at the start and end of the programme, to obtain data on firms' perceptions, attitudes and experiences, and their perceived impact of the programme. This qualitative data collection will support both the impact and process evaluation to minimise the burden of the evaluation on respondents.

C.58 Analyses of these data would be triangulated to provide robust evidence on what works to improve employability, address perceived barriers to employment, enhance perceived life chances and change other important outcomes for economically inactive individuals. It would also provide robust evidence on what works to change business perceptions and actions with regard to employing previously inactive people. The bespoke survey data would be used to support comparisons of individuals' outcomes over time ('before' and 'after' support) for those on placements, while the survey and qualitative data would provide evidence on lived experiences and self-assessed impacts of the support received. The data from interviews with participating businesses would be used to support comparisons of businesses' perceptions and behaviours over time, and to provide evidence on the lived experience and self-assessed impacts of the programme for businesses. The evaluation would seek to evidence for whom the interventions have most impact, and under what conditions.

C.59 The evaluation feasibility assessment concluded that including a component of quasi-experimental analysis for the projects in this study group would not be proportionate for this evaluation over the period through 2025.

C.60 This is because detailed data on the short-term outcomes suggested above (e.g. perceptions of work confidence and barriers to work) are not readily available from existing secondary sources and, while the proposed evaluation approach is to collect this data from individuals supported onto work placements through the bespoke surveys, it is relatively more challenging to collect

equivalent information from individuals who are not being supported by the programme (i.e. a control group). It is more difficult to identify such individuals, and response rates are likely to be low. In terms of the impacts of the projects on business perspectives, there are a relatively small number of businesses that will be engaged in the programmes, which does not lend itself to robust quasi-experimental evaluation. Furthermore, analysis of project information has revealed that recruitment for the UKSPF projects in these study groups is not expected to be material until the latter stages of 2024 and early 2025. Therefore, there is likely to be insufficient time for an adequate time series of outcome data to be available from a sufficiently large sample of participants in both a treatment group and a control group to support robust quasi-experimental analysis over the period through 2025.

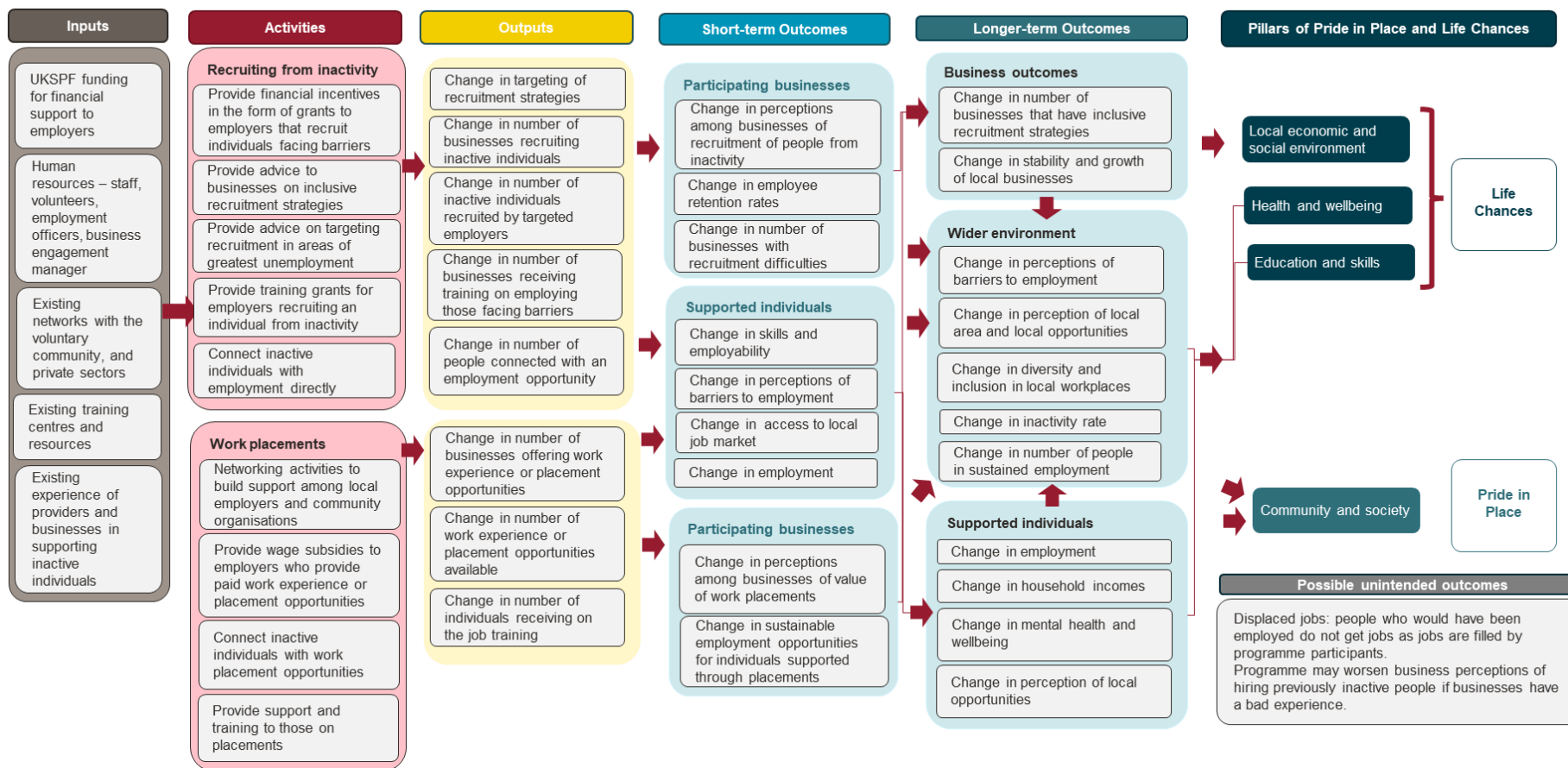
- C.61 However, where this quasi-experimental analysis is feasible for individual projects, it will be included, and this will be determined following project selection in the implementation of this evaluation. This will depend on whether individual projects have sufficient sample sizes and clear methodologies for inclusion to allow for the development of a sufficiently large control group.

#### **Detail on evaluation approach considered for post 2025**

- C.62 Over a longer evaluation timeframe, illustratively considered to be through 2028, valuable additional evidence on the size of the impacts of these UKSPF-funded projects could be produced through an integrative evaluation that includes quasi-experimental methods.
- C.63 In particular, over a longer timeframe, such as with an additional three years through 2028, the projects in this study group would be expected to have an impact on individuals' employment outcomes, and secondary data on employment exists. Quasi-experimental analysis of the impacts of interventions could be conducted using administrative data, such as that provided via the Employment Data Lab Service by DWP. Programme participants could be identified in the administrative data, and a matched control group formed of individuals with similar characteristics who did not participate in the programme. The employment outcomes of participating individuals up to two years after the programme could be compared with the matched control sample to estimate the employment impact of the interventions. This could be combined with evidence from a further follow-up bespoke survey of participating individuals to understand wider contextual factors and individual perceptions, and could provide rich evidence on the extent to which the intervention worked, how and for whom.

**Figure 4 Theory of change for Study Group 4: Projects that involve local businesses in helping the inactive into employment**

**Note: the logic model reflects the limited information currently available on UKSPF funded projects, information from the high-level evidence review and hypotheses based on theory and existing evidence.**



Source: Frontier Economics

## SG5: Programmes to support the digital development of local businesses

### Study group description

C.64 This study group comprises programmes which support local businesses to develop digital skills and digital technologies to improve business performance and productivity, and to ‘digitally level up’.<sup>10</sup> These programmes could be expected to improve life chances of local people in the longer term through improving local economic growth and employment and, potentially, improving pride in place through increased perceived prosperity of local businesses.

C.65 An example description (provided by an LLA) of a relevant project is:  
*...provides a comprehensive digital skills programme for SMEs across the LLA. It will enable the businesses to enhance their growth, resilience and sustainability (as well as address the adverse impact of the pandemic) by adopting and effectively utilising digital technology within their day-to-day business practice. All the diagnostic, training, 1-2-1 support and networking measures are tailored to the needs of individual businesses.*

### Summary of evaluability assessment

C.66 Table 11 sets out the assessment of this study group against the evaluation feasibility criteria. This is followed by additional detail on the proposed methodology for the impact evaluation, including an indication of what could be undertaken over a longer timeframe than the current evaluation (ending late 2025).

**Table 11 Assessment of SG5 against evaluation feasibility criteria**

Criteria	Assessment
Fills an evidence gap, and is of particular policy interest	Focusing on this study groups would address an important evidence gap relating to business support that specifically involves digital upskilling (as opposed to the wider evidence on generalised business growth or business skills).
Potential overlap with other evaluations	There are no direct overlaps with ongoing evaluations. The evaluation of the MADE SMARTER programme is focused on the adoption of technology in the manufacturing sector.

<sup>10</sup> This study group is not confined to a particular type of digital skill or technology at this stage in the evaluation. Engagement with LLAs in the main evaluation stage may lead to a more focused set of skills and technologies if appropriate.

Criteria	Assessment
Articulation of a valid theory of change	There is a robust theory of change through which these projects could be expected to improve life chances and, potentially, pride in place, alongside other important outcomes over the long term. A logic model based on available information is shown in Figure 5.
Suitable data for theory-based evaluation	Yes. Robust theory-based evaluation using contribution analysis is feasible. It would be proportionate to collect quantitative and qualitative data from supported businesses.
Feasible to implement quasi-experimental component within the theory-based evaluation by 2025	No. Quasi-experimental analysis is unlikely to be proportionate before 2025 as it would not be proportionate to identify and collect data from suitably comparable 'control group' businesses.
Feasible to implement quasi-experimental component in longer term	Potentially. Quasi-experimental analysis would be feasible and proportionate over a longer timeframe, focusing on business growth and using a matching approach with ONS Business Structures Database data, subject to access to data.
Projects sufficiently large, and delivered within evaluation period	Yes. There are projects providing grant funding by 2024/25 at the latest. Impacts on short-run outcomes such as investment and expected business growth are expected to be observable.

## Contribution to evidence

C.67 There is relatively limited existing robust evidence on the impact of local programmes to improve digital technology use among businesses. The Department for Business and Trade (DBT) indicated that additional evidence in this space would be valuable. The few studies that do exist suggest that there are positive benefits. Office for National Statistics (ONS) data shows that businesses that adopt digital technologies exhibit productivity gains of up to 25%.<sup>11</sup> The Enterprise Research Centre utilises a difference-in-differences approach to evaluate the effect on Evolve Digital, an information-led digital support programme.<sup>12</sup> Findings show that the programme had a significant and sizeable positive impact on firms' confidence in their ability to identify relevant digital technologies and on firms' attitudes towards using digital technologies. This evaluation aims to provide valuable new evidence on the impact of digital support projects. In addition to providing much needed robust evidence of the impact of these projects on businesses' perceptions, digital technology use and growth expectations, this evaluation will also examine the impact of such packages of support on business owners' pride in place in their local area.

<sup>11</sup> ONS (2018), [Information and communication technology intensity and productivity](#)

<sup>12</sup> ERC Research Report, (June 2022), [Evaluation of the Evolve Digital programme](#) to promote digital adoption in family firms: A Randomised Control Trial

## Detail on proposed evaluation approach for the period from 2023 to 2025

- C.68 Based on the evaluation feasibility assessment, it is recommended that an integrative evaluation approach is used to provide robust evaluation evidence over the period through 2025. This would maximise learning and enhance rigour by integrating evidence from different data sources and analytical approaches. The approaches incorporated for this study group would include descriptive analysis, before-versus-after analysis and theory-based contribution analysis.
- C.69 Contribution analysis seeks to evaluate an intervention by verifying the relevant theory of change using robust empirical evidence. A logic model (based on project information available to date) for this study group is provided in Figure 5. The outcomes for pride in place and life chances are ultimately part of the missions to level up communities across the UK, as set out in the Levelling Up White Paper (HMG, 2022).
- C.70 The descriptive analysis, before-versus-after analysis and contribution analysis would be evidenced using data from three main sources:
- **Monitoring data**, which may be **available** from programme providers on businesses' participation and engagement with the programme, and use of certain technologies such as websites or apps.
  - **Bespoke surveys**, which will be used to collect quantitative and qualitative data from supported businesses at the start of their **engagement** with the programme and around a year later. Data will be collected on outcomes such as awareness of digital technologies, digital technology use, expected future technology use, revenues from e-commerce, social media presence, geographical spread of consumer markets reached, expectations of future business growth and (in the latter survey) the impact of the programme on these outcomes. The survey is expected to be conducted online and by telephone and to be fielded to all businesses being supported by the projects.
  - **Qualitative data**, which will be collected from supported businesses through focus groups (one focus group per project, with **around** five to eight businesses) and from programme delivery organisations through in-depth semi-structured interviews (one to two interviews per project). This qualitative data collection will support both the impact and process evaluation, to minimise the burden of the evaluation on respondents.
- C.71 Analyses of these data would be triangulated to provide robust evidence on what works to improve the digital skills, digital technology use and potential future growth of local businesses. The bespoke survey data would be used to support comparisons of outcomes over time ('before' and 'after' support), while

the survey and qualitative data would provide evidence on self-assessed impacts of the programme on key outcomes. The evaluation would seek to evidence for which sorts of businesses the interventions have most impact, and under what conditions, comparing impacts both across businesses within projects and between projects. This new evidence would be set in the context of the existing literature, drawing on any wider evidence that can be used to justify links in the theory of change that this evaluation cannot directly speak to.

- C.72 The assessment of evaluation feasibility concluded that it is unlikely to be feasible or proportionate to include a component of quasi-experimental design in the evaluation over the period through 2025.
- C.73 These projects are expected to have impacts in the short term on outcomes such as self-perceived digital skills, business e-presence or business use of digital technologies. Bespoke primary data would be needed to measure these short-term outcomes and, while it is relatively straightforward to collect such data from supported businesses, it is more challenging to collect equivalent data from comparable control group businesses. It is difficult to identify such businesses and obtain suitable response rates to data collection in a proportionate way unless there are particular features of the projects chosen that help (for example, if a programme offered is oversubscribed by businesses looking for support). Furthermore, analysis of project information has revealed that recruitment for the UKSPF projects in these study groups is not expected to be material until the latter stages of 2024 and early 2025. Therefore, there is likely to be insufficient time for an adequate time series of outcome data to be available from a sufficiently large sample of businesses in both a treatment group and a control group to support robust quasi-experimental analysis over the period through 2025.
- C.74 The particular projects being evaluated will be examined in detail to explore whether there is a control group that could be reached in a proportionate way. If there is, then those control businesses will be surveyed using an analogous bespoke survey to the treated businesses. This would yield some quasi-experimental evidence on the impact of that project on short-run outcomes to feed into the integrative evaluation.

### **Detail on evaluation approach considered for post 2025**

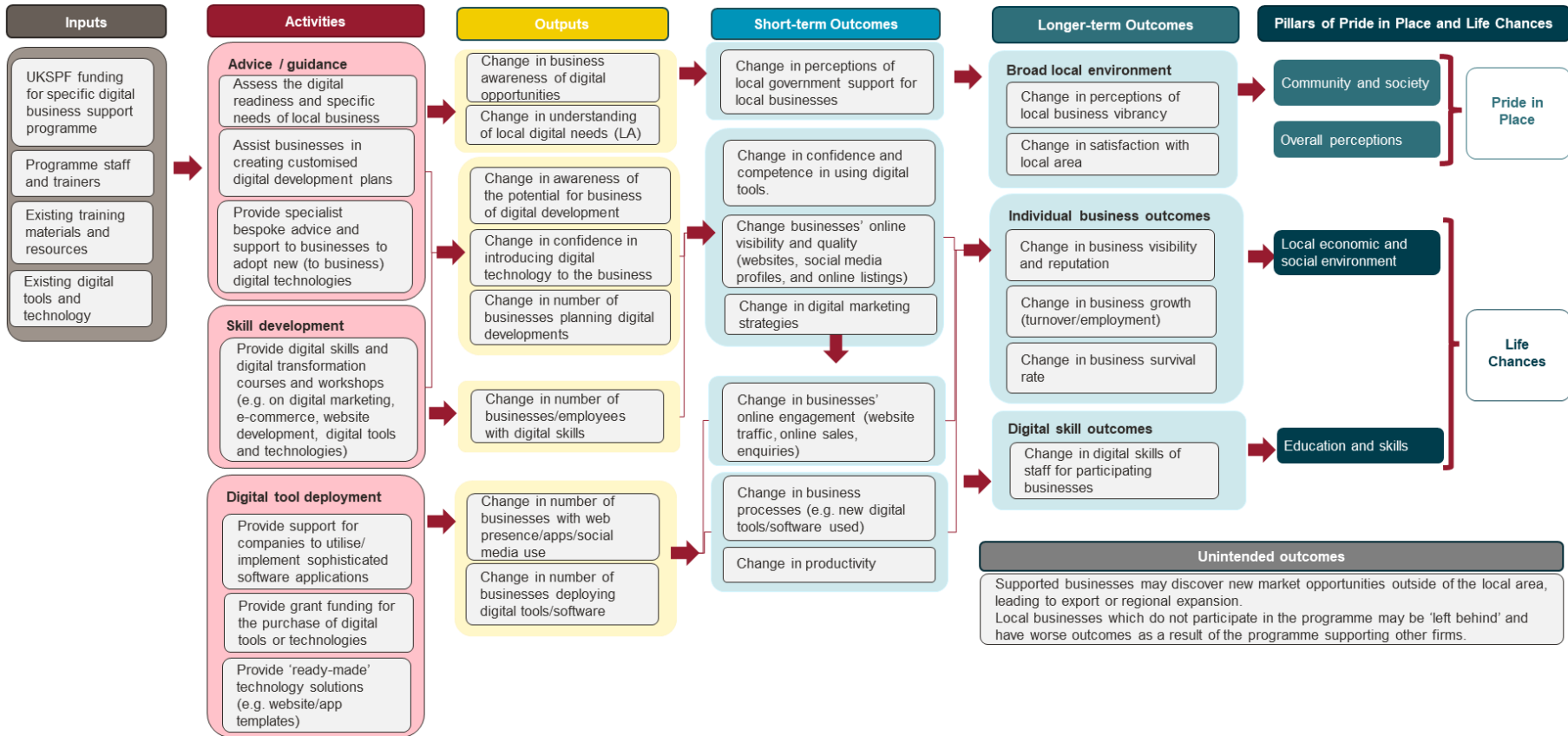
- C.75 Over a longer evaluation timeframe, illustratively considered to be through 2028, valuable additional evidence on the size of the impacts of these UKSPF-funded projects could be produced through an integrative evaluation that includes quasi-experimental methods.

C.76 In particular, over a longer timeframe, such as with an additional three years through 2028, the projects in this study group would be expected to have an impact on business outcomes such as survival and growth (in terms of turnover and employment), and secondary data on these outcomes are available from the ONS Business Structures Database. Quasi-experimental analysis could be conducted by identifying supported businesses (using their unique identifiers) in the ONS data, and then creating a matched sample of control businesses which were not involved in the projects but had similar baseline characteristics (such as business age, turnover, employment, past growth trajectory, sector and location). Changes in the survival and outcomes of these businesses over time could be compared to estimate the impact of the intervention. This could be combined with evidence from a further follow-up bespoke survey of supported businesses to understand wider contextual factors and perceptions, and could provide rich evidence on the extent to which the intervention worked, how and for whom.



**Figure 5 Theory of change for Study Group 5: Programmes to support the digital development of local businesses**

**Note: The logic model reflects the limited information currently available on UKSPF funded projects, information from the high-level evidence review and hypotheses based on theory and existing evidence.**



Source: Frontier Economics

## SG6: Programmes providing grants to local businesses

### Study group description

C.77 This study group comprises programmes which support local businesses through the provision of grants. These projects could be expected to improve local life chances in the longer term by increasing local business growth and employment. They could potentially improve pride in place through increased perceived prosperity of local businesses. Grants for decarbonisation will not be considered in this study group (as these are a focus of study group 7), while grants for digital technology adoption are unlikely to be considered (as these may be a focus of study group 5).

C.78 An example description (provided by an LLA) of a relevant project is:  
*...the purpose of the grant scheme is to provide businesses with grant finance for the purposes of increasing jobs, increasing visitor numbers, supporting enterprise, diversification and green energy opportunities.*

C.79 There are many such projects being funded by UKSPF, but the specifics of many projects are still being determined. The information available to date is sufficient to provide confidence that three projects that will share similar characteristics and will be feasible to robustly evaluate will be readily identified before the end of 2023.

### Summary of evaluability assessment

C.80 Table 12 sets out the assessment of this study group against the evaluation feasibility criteria. This is followed by additional detail on the proposed methodology for the impact evaluation, including an indication of what could be undertaken over a longer timeframe than the current evaluation (ending late 2025).

**Table 12** Assessment of SG6 against evaluation feasibility criteria

Criteria	Assessment
Fills an evidence gap, and is of particular policy interest	This evaluation would address an important evidence gap relating to the impact of bespoke grant programmes, designed to support local priorities, on local business outcomes.
Potential overlap with other evaluations	There are no direct overlaps with ongoing evaluations.

Criteria	Assessment
Articulation of a valid theory of change	There is a robust theory of change through which these projects could be expected to improve life chances and, potentially, pride in place, alongside other outcomes over the long term. A logic model based on available information is shown in Figure 6.
Suitable data for theory-based evaluation	Yes. Robust theory-based evaluation using contribution analysis is feasible. It would be proportionate to collect quantitative and qualitative data from supported businesses.
Feasible to implement quasi-experimental component within the theory-based evaluation	No. Quasi-experimental analysis is unlikely to be proportionate before 2025 as it would not be cost effective to identify and collect data from suitably comparable untreated businesses.
Feasible to implement quasi-experimental component in longer term	Potentially. Quasi-experimental analysis would be feasible and proportionate over a longer timeframe, focusing on business growth and using a matching approach with ONS Business Structures Database data, subject to access to data.
Projects sufficiently large, and delivered within evaluation period	Yes. There are projects providing grant funding by 2024/25 at the latest. Impacts on short-run outcomes such as investment and expected business growth are expected to be observable.

## Contribution to evidence

C.81 There is a large evidence base on assessing the impact of grants on businesses, but much of the literature focuses on grants aimed at boosting innovation. The What Works Centre undertook a systematic review of evaluations of policies that provided research and development (R&D) grants and subsidies to support innovation on businesses. The review demonstrates that R&D grants can have a positive impact on productivity, employment, firm performance and raising innovative activities.<sup>13</sup> Significant robust studies include Overman (2012)<sup>14</sup> and research by the Enterprise Centre.<sup>15</sup> This evaluation aims to contribute to the literature by focusing on bespoke grants aimed at supporting local businesses across the UK based on local priorities. In addition it will provide evidence on the impact of business grants on business owners' pride in place in their local area.

## Detail on proposed evaluation approach for the period from 2023 to 2025

C.82 Based on the evaluation feasibility assessment, it is recommended that an integrative evaluation approach is used to provide robust evaluation evidence

<sup>13</sup> <https://whatworksgrowth.org/resource-library/innovation/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/government-grants-employment-productivity/#:~:text=As%20always%20with%20these%20types,investment%20in%20the%20first%20place.>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.enterpriseresearch.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/ERC-ResPap61-VaninoRoperBecker-revised-V3.3.pdf>

over the period through 2025. This would maximise learning and enhance rigour by integrating evidence from different data sources and analytical approaches. The approaches incorporated for this study group would include descriptive analysis, before-versus-after analysis and theory-based contribution analysis.

C.83 Contribution analysis seeks to evaluate an intervention by verifying the relevant theory of change using robust empirical evidence. A logic model (based on project information available to date) for this study group is provided in Figure 6. The outcomes for pride in place and life chances are ultimately part of the missions to level up communities across the UK, as set out in the Levelling Up White Paper (HMG, 2022).

C.84 The descriptive analysis, before-versus-after analysis and contribution analysis would be evidenced using data from three main sources:

- **Monitoring data**, which would be expected to be available on the use of the grant and the amount of matched funding from businesses, as well as any key performance indicators that are stipulated in grant offers.
- **Bespoke surveys**, which will be used to collect quantitative and qualitative data from supported businesses when they apply for grant funding (if possible, or as soon as possible if not) and around a year later. Data will be collected on outcomes such as recent capital or R&D investment, growth projections and perceived barriers to growth, as well as (in the latter survey) the self-perceived impact of the grant on these outcomes. The survey is expected to be conducted online and by telephone and to be fielded to all businesses that have applied for grant funding.
- **Qualitative data**, which will be collected from supported businesses through focus groups (one focus group per project, with around five to eight **businesses**) and from the organisations administering the grant through in-depth semi-structured interviews (one interview per project). This will include qualitative self-assessment of the impact of the grants and the drivers of those impacts (or any lack of impact). This qualitative data collection will support both the impact and process evaluation to minimise the burden of the evaluation on respondents.

C.85 Analyses of these data would be triangulated to provide robust evidence on whether such grants work to change investment and improve perceptions of prospects for growth. The bespoke survey data would be used to support comparisons of outcomes over time ('before' and 'after' support), while the survey and qualitative data would provide evidence on self-assessed impacts of the grant received. The evaluation would seek to evidence for which sorts of businesses the grant funding had most impact, and under what conditions, comparing impacts both across businesses within projects and between

projects. This new evidence would be set in the context of the existing literature, drawing on any wider evidence that can be used to justify links in the theory of change that this evaluation cannot directly speak to.

- C.86 The assessment of evaluation feasibility concluded that it is unlikely to be feasible or proportionate to include a component of quasi-experimental design in the evaluation over the period through 2025.
- C.87 These projects are expected to have impacts in the short term on outcomes such as capital investments or premises size or quality (the exact short-term outcomes will depend on the particular projects being evaluated). Bespoke primary data would be needed to measure these and, while it is relatively straightforward to collect data from supported businesses, it is more challenging to collect equivalent data from comparable control group businesses. The particular projects being evaluated will be examined in detail, however, to explore whether there is a control group which could be reached in a proportionate way for any of the projects. For example, if a programme is significantly oversubscribed by businesses looking for support, then the bespoke survey could yield data from a group of unsupported firms, which could act as a control group in difference-in-differences analysis. This would yield some quasi-experimental evidence on the impact of that project on short-run outcomes that could feed into the integrative evaluation.

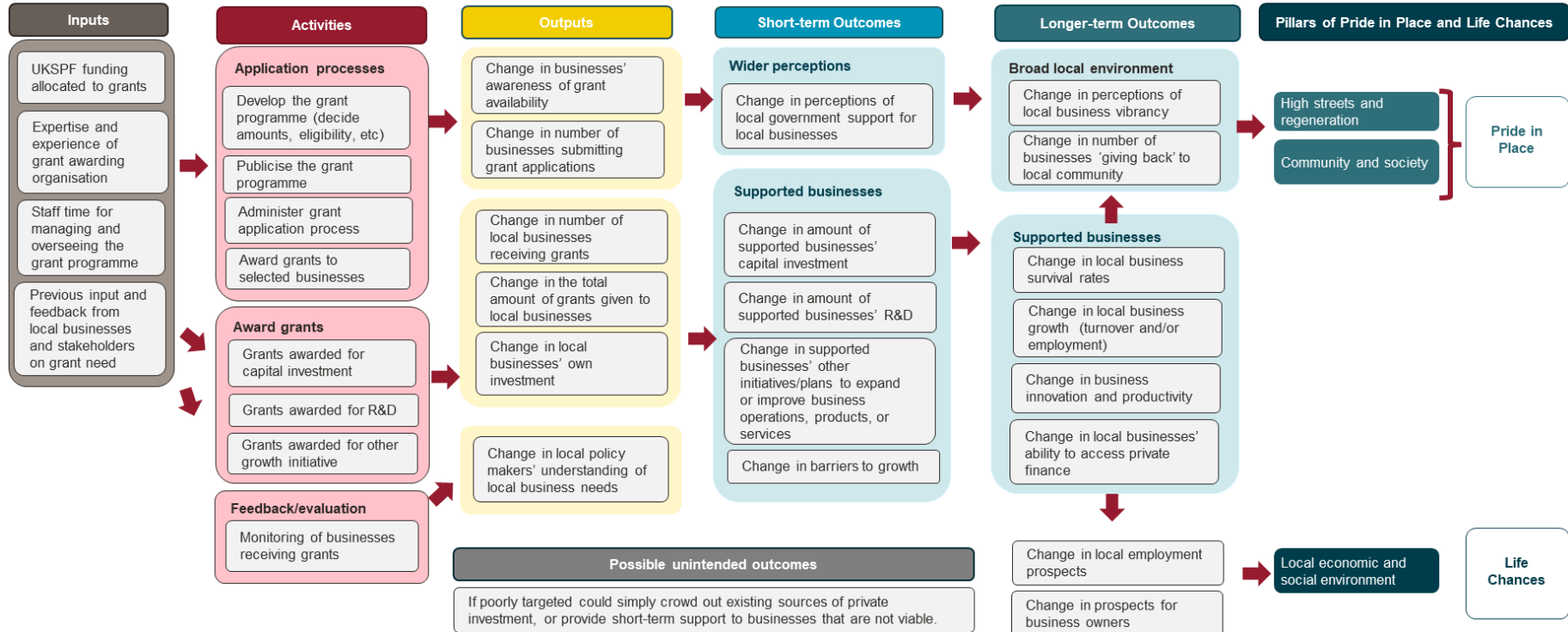
### **Detail on proposed evaluation approach post 2025**

- C.88 Over a longer evaluation timeframe, illustratively considered to be through 2028, valuable additional evidence on the size of the impact of these UKSPF-funded projects could be produced through an integrative evaluation that includes quasi-experimental methods.
- C.89 In particular, over a longer timeframe, such as with an additional three years through 2028, the projects in this study group would be expected to have an impact on business outcomes such as survival and growth (in terms of turnover and employment), and secondary data on these outcomes are available from the ONS Business Structures Database. Quasi-experimental analysis could be conducted by identifying supported businesses (using their unique identifiers) in the ONS data, and then creating a matched sample of control businesses which did not receive grant funding but had similar baseline characteristics (such as business age, turnover, employment, past growth trajectory, sector and location). Changes in the survival and outcomes of these businesses over time could be compared to estimate the impact of the intervention. This could be combined with evidence from a further follow-up bespoke survey of supported businesses to understand wider contextual factors and perceptions,

and could provide rich evidence on the extent to which the intervention worked, how and for whom.

**Figure 6 Theory of change for Study Group 6: Programmes providing grants to local businesses**

**Note: The logic model reflects the limited information currently available on UKSPF funded projects, information from the high-level evidence review and hypotheses based on theory and existing evidence.**



Source: Frontier Economics

## SG7: Projects to help businesses decarbonise through decarbonisation plans and grants

### Study group description

C.90 This study group comprises projects which support local businesses to decarbonise through the funding of decarbonisation plans and the provision of capital grant funding for environmental improvements recommended by those plans. These projects may improve pride in place over the longer term by increasing perceptions of the importance the local community places on the environment. They may also increase life chances over the longer term if the projects increase the survival rate of local businesses (and consequently local employment opportunities) by reducing energy costs.

C.91 An example description of a relevant project is:  
*...Energy Saving Grants aimed at removing financial barriers and enabling SMEs to make carbon savings through increased energy and resource efficiency. The grants are dependent upon the business having taken part in an energy efficiency audit.*

### Summary of evaluability assessment

C.92 Table 13 sets out our assessment of this study group against the evaluation feasibility criteria. This is followed by additional detail on the proposed methodology for the impact evaluation, including an indication of what could be done over a longer timeframe than the current evaluation (ending late 2025).

**Table 13 Assessment of SG7 against evaluation feasibility criteria**

Criteria	Assessment
Fills an evidence gap, and is of particular policy interest	This evaluation would contribute valuable evidence on the impact of policies to encourage businesses to decarbonise, which was highlighted by DBT and DESNZ as a current evidence gap.
Potential overlap with other evaluations	There are no direct overlaps with ongoing evaluations.
Articulation of a valid theory of change	There is a robust theory of change through which these projects could be expected to lead to environmental improvements and increased business efficiency, alongside other important outcomes. This may feed through into pride in place and local life chances. A logic model based on available information is shown in Figure 7.
Suitable data for theory-based evaluation	Yes. Robust theory-based evaluation using contribution analysis is feasible. It would be proportionate to collect quantitative and qualitative data from supported businesses.



Criteria	Assessment
Feasible to implement quasi-experimental component within the theory-based evaluation	Potentially. Recommend exploring whether difference-in-differences approach to evaluate the impact of grant provision is feasible for each project (given eligibility rules and timeframes).
Feasible to implement quasi-experimental component in longer term	Potentially. Recommend exploring whether difference-in-differences approach to evaluate the impact of grant provision is feasible for each project (given eligibility rules and timeframes).
Projects sufficiently large, and delivered within evaluation period	Yes. There are large projects being implemented by 2024/25 at the latest. Immediate impacts on immediate or planned decarbonisation investments would be observable.

## Contribution to evidence

C.93 There are a variety of existing programmes that directly enable or support decarbonisation of businesses in industry.<sup>16</sup> However, input from the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) indicated that there is currently a large evidence gap in evaluating the effectiveness of such programmes, particularly projects delivered locally. There is a specific need for more evidence on programmes that are aimed at assisting businesses with decarbonisation plans. These projects are particularly important as research shows that 90% of SMEs are keen to tackle climate change but find it difficult to know how or where to start to find the right solutions to reduce their carbon footprint.<sup>17</sup>

C.94 Previous literature has shown that decarbonisation grants and reducing the cost of deploying energy-efficient measures are effective measures in assisting businesses in their decarbonisation journey. For instance, the evaluation of the Climate Change Agreement Scheme showed that the scheme contributed to industrial competitiveness and business growth, together with a reduction in carbon emissions and associated benefits such as air quality.<sup>18</sup> The assessment of the Public Sector Decarbonisation, which included a range of support through loans and grants, shows that grants were the most effective measure, especially in terms of achieving direct lifetime carbon savings.<sup>19</sup> This evaluation will add value to the existing evidence by assessing the impact of projects that specifically provide businesses with financial support for decarbonisation plans and with capital improvements for decarbonisation. This will shed light on the barriers that businesses currently face in decarbonising their operations, which is valuable learning for future policies aimed at encouraging business decarbonisation. In addition, the evaluation will provide

<sup>16</sup> BEIS (2021), [Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy](#)

<sup>17</sup> Sage and International Chamber of Commerce (2022), [The Climate Impact of SMEs](#)

<sup>18</sup> BEIS (2020), [Evaluation of the second Climate Change Agreements scheme](#)

<sup>19</sup> BEIS (2023), [Phases 1, 2 and 3 of the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme: Accounting officer assessment](#)

evidence on the role of business support packages, and concern for the environment more generally, on business owners' pride in place in their local area.

### **Detail on proposed evaluation approach for the period from 2023 to 2025**

- C.95 Based on the evaluation feasibility assessment, it is recommended that an integrative evaluation approach is used to provide robust evaluation evidence over the period through 2025. This would maximise learning and enhance rigour by integrating evidence from different data sources and analytical approaches. The approaches incorporated for this study group would include descriptive analysis, before-versus-after analysis and theory-based contribution analysis.
- C.96 Contribution analysis seeks to evaluate an intervention by verifying the relevant theory of change using robust empirical evidence. A logic model (based on project information available to date) for this study group is provided in Figure 7. The outcomes for pride in place and life chances are ultimately part of the missions to level up communities across the UK, as set out in the Levelling Up White Paper (HMG, 2022).
- C.97 The descriptive analysis, before-versus-after analysis and theory-based contribution analysis would be evidenced using data from three main sources:
- **Monitoring data**, which would be available on the grants made to businesses, potentially on the results of firms' energy audits and on capital investments made subsequently.
  - **Bespoke surveys**, which will be used to collect quantitative and qualitative data from supported businesses at the point they apply for funding for an energy audit/decarbonisation plan (if possible, or as soon after if not) and one year subsequently. Data will be collected on outcomes such as **perceived** energy efficiency, past and planned spending on energy efficiency investments, source of funding for those investments, and perceptions of the local environment for businesses. The survey is expected to be conducted online and by telephone and to be fielded to all businesses that have applied for funding for an energy audit/decarbonisation plan.
  - **Qualitative data**, which will be collected from supported businesses through focus groups (one focus group per project, with around five to eight businesses) and from the organisations administering the **programmes** (one interview per project). This will include qualitative self-assessment of the impact of the grants. This qualitative data collection will support both the impact and process evaluation to minimise the burden of the evaluation on respondents.

- C.98 Analyses of these data would be triangulated to provide robust evidence on whether grants for decarbonisation audits and capital investments result in increases in energy efficiency (and therefore lower business costs) or changes in perceptions that might be important for pride in place. The bespoke survey data would be used to support comparisons of outcomes over time ('before' and 'after' support), while the survey and qualitative data would provide evidence on self-assessed impacts of the support received. The evaluation would seek to evidence for which sorts of businesses the interventions have most impact, and under what conditions, comparing impacts both across businesses within projects and between projects. This new evidence would be set in the context of the existing literature, drawing on any wider evidence that can be used to justify links in the theory of change that this evaluation cannot directly speak to.
- C.99 The assessment of evaluation feasibility concluded that it may be feasible to include a component of quasi-experimental design in the evaluation over the period through 2025, depending on the design of particular projects.
- C.100 For example, if grants for energy efficiency investments are only available to a subset of businesses for whom decarbonisation plans were funded (e.g. because the available budget is insufficient for all firms), then those businesses which do not receive grant funding for investment could act as a control group for those that do. Quantitative data collected through the bespoke surveys could then be used in a difference-in-differences approach (comparing outcomes between the two groups of businesses) which would provide evidence of the impact of grants for decarbonisation investments on firm decisions and perceptions.

### **Detail on evaluation approach considered for post 2025**

- C.101 Over a longer evaluation timeframe, illustratively considered to be through 2028, valuable additional evidence on the size of the impacts of these UKSPF-funded projects could be produced through an integrative evaluation that includes quasi-experimental methods.
- C.102 One potential risk to the evaluation over the period through 2025 is that businesses may implement energy saving or decarbonisation investments with a delay – particularly those businesses that are self-funding investments rather than receiving grant funding. The evaluation through 2025 can account for this in some ways, for example by collecting data on expected future investments among firms that receive and do not receive grant funding. However, business owners' expectations may not always be accurate. Extending the analysis for another one to two years would allow a more robust assessment of the impact

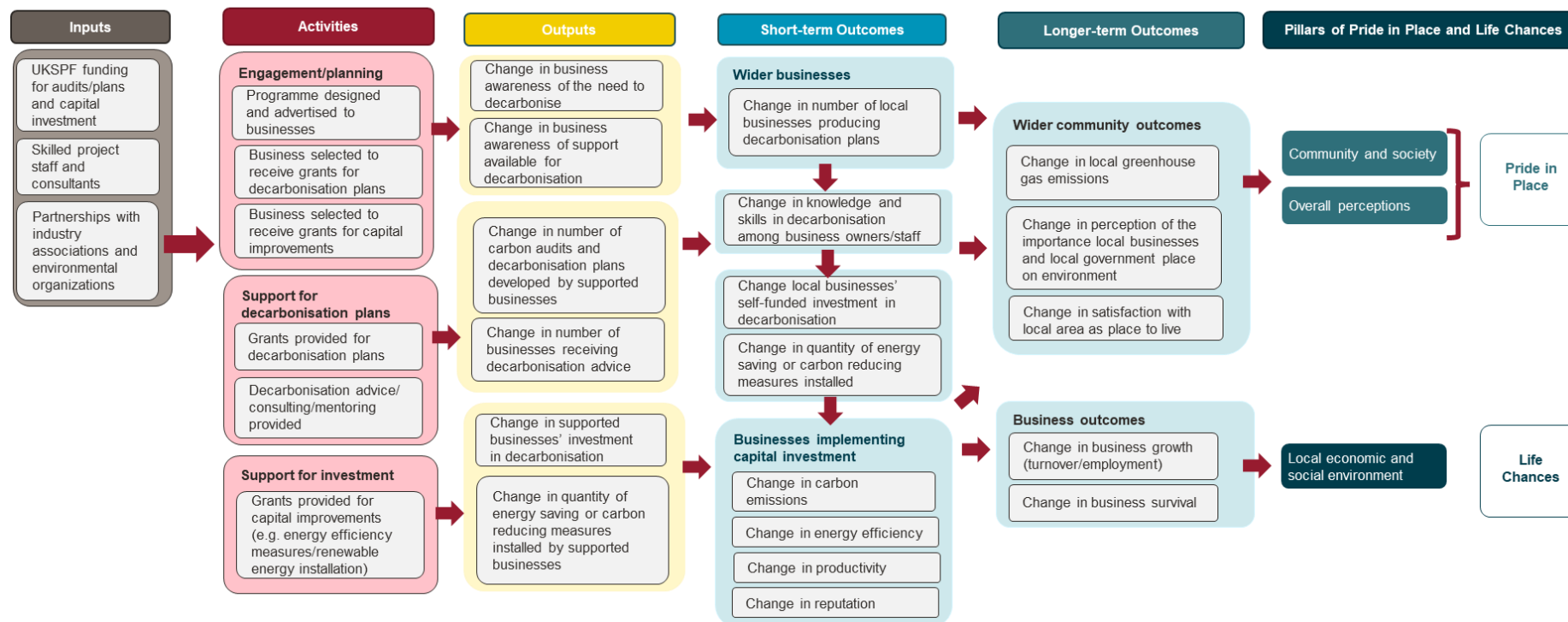
of grant funding on decarbonisation investments. This would require additional bespoke data collection (for example in 2026) from firms which did and firms which did not receive investment grant funding.

C.103 Furthermore, over a longer timeframe, illustratively considered to be through 2028, the projects in this study group could be expected to have an impact on business outcomes such as survival and growth through the lowering of energy costs. Secondary data on these outcomes (in terms of employment and turnover) are available from the ONS Business Structures Database. Quasi-experimental analysis could be conducted by identifying supported businesses (using their unique identifiers) in the ONS data, and then creating a matched sample of control businesses which did not receive grant funding but had similar baseline characteristics (such as business age, turnover, employment, past growth trajectory, sector and location). Changes in the survival and outcomes of these businesses over time could be compared to estimate the impact of the longer-run impacts of the intervention.

C.104 These analyses could be combined with the evidence from a further follow-up bespoke survey of supported businesses to understand wider contextual factors and perceptions, and could provide rich evidence on the extent to which the intervention worked, how and for whom.

**Figure 7 Theory of change for Study Group 7: Projects to help businesses decarbonise through decarbonisation plans and grants**

**Note: The logic model reflects the limited information currently available on UKSPF funded projects, information from the high-level evidence review and hypotheses based on theory and existing evidence.**



Source: Frontier Economics

## **SG8: Major refurbishment of community buildings**

### **Study group description**

C.105 This study group comprises projects that provide capital funding to deliver major refurbishments of community buildings, including community centres, libraries, village halls and other community buildings.<sup>20</sup> The use and existence of these community buildings might be expected to influence pride in place and other important outcomes (such as wellbeing), and in some cases might affect life chances, depending on the activities which the building is used for.

C.106 An example description (provided by the LLA) of a relevant project is:

*...Re-open and refurbish a previously closed community centre, consult with the community on their needs and desires for this community asset, whilst providing social activities encouraging health and well-being.*

### **Summary of evaluation feasibility criteria assessment**

C.107 Table 14 sets out the assessment of this study group against the evaluation feasibility criteria. This is followed by additional detail on the proposed methodology for the impact evaluation, including an indication of what could be undertaken over a longer timeframe than the current evaluation (ending late 2025).

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<sup>20</sup> A strict definition of major was not used so that the responses to the request for information were not solely from the LLAs with the most UKSPF funding. LLAs were to consider what constituted a major refurbishment for their communities.

**Table 14 Assessment of SG8 against evaluation feasibility criteria**

Criteria	Assessment
Fills an evidence gap, and is of particular policy interest	Yes. There is very limited high quality quantitative evidence on what works for community buildings to deliver pride in place and improvements in life chances (where relevant). There is, in particular, a gap in understanding the conditions under which such interventions successfully lead to these impacts and for whom.
Potential overlap with other evaluations	There is some potential for overlap with the evaluations of the Levelling Up Fund and the Community Ownership Fund. The DLUHC UKSPF team is actively monitoring this. Overlap with the evaluation of the Towns Fund is more limited, in part due to the focus of this evaluation on pride in place and life chances. Risk of overlapping projects and areas being chosen for evaluation is mitigated through regular engagement between the respective evaluation teams.
Articulation of a valid theory of change	Yes. There is a robust theory of change through which these projects could be expected to lead to changes in pride in place and life chances (for some) and other important outcomes (such as wellbeing and social networks). A logic model based on available information is shown in Figure 8.
Suitable data for theory-based evaluation	Yes. Robust theory-based evaluation using contribution analysis is feasible. It would be proportionate to collect quantitative and qualitative data from local residents near buildings receiving investment. In addition, monitoring data on usage may be available.
Feasible to include quasi-experimental component within the theory-based approach	Yes. It is feasible to identify 'control' community buildings and collect quantitative and qualitative data from local residents near these buildings. In addition, synthetic control groups can be identified in the Community Life Survey (CLS) data. These data can be used to support difference-in-differences analysis.
Feasibility of quasi-experimental analysis over the longer term	Yes. A longer time period for evaluation provides the opportunity for more data on usage after the capital programmes are completed, and for usage and awareness to affect pride in place.
Projects sufficiently large, and delivered within evaluation period	Yes. There are large community building projects currently being implemented to be completed within the evaluation period. Immediate impacts on leading indicators of pride in place outcomes are expected to be observable, alongside changes in other important outcomes.

## Contribution to evidence

C.108 There is limited evidence on the impact and effectiveness of investment in community buildings on pride in place and life chances. The What Works Centre for Wellbeing conducted a systematic evidence review of interventions that improve or create community infrastructure that impacts social relations and/or community wellbeing.<sup>21</sup> The findings showed that community hubs have a positive impact on a range of outcomes, including social relations, community wellbeing and individual wellbeing. This evaluation aims to contribute valuable

<sup>21</sup> Bagnall, A.M. and Southby, K. (2023). Systematic review of community infrastructure (place and space) to boost social relations and community wellbeing: Five year refresh.

new evidence by assessing the impact of community building investments on pride in place life chances for local residents and the users of these facilities.

### **Detail on proposed evaluation approach for the period from 2023 to 2025**

C.109 Based on the assessment against the evaluation feasibility criteria, it is recommended that an integrative evaluation approach is used to provide robust evaluation evidence over the period through 2025. This would maximise learning and enhance rigour by integrating evidence from different data sources and analytical approaches. The approaches incorporated for this study group would include descriptive analysis, before-versus-after analysis, quasi-experimental analysis and theory-based contribution analysis.

C.110 Contribution analysis seeks to evaluate an intervention by verifying the relevant theory of change using robust quantitative and qualitative evidence. A logic model (based on project information available to date) for this study group is provided in Figure 8. The outcomes for pride in place and life chances are ultimately part of the missions to level up communities across the UK, as set out in the Levelling Up White Paper (HMG, 2022).

C.111 The evaluation would draw on data from three main sources:

- **Monitoring data**, which is expected to be available from the owners or operators of the community buildings, for example on usage of the facilities before and after the refurbishment.
- **Your Community, Your Say (YCYS) survey**, which will be used to collect quantitative and qualitative data from local residents before and after the capital investment in the community building. Data will be collected on outcomes such as awareness and use of the community building, satisfaction with local amenities and pride in place and (in the latter survey) perceptions of the impact of the refurbishment on these outcomes. These surveys would be fielded to residents living within a **particular** radius of the community building (with the exact radius depending on the project in question), targeting 500 responses from local residents in each survey.<sup>22</sup> The survey is anticipated to use a push to web approach supplemented with paper questionnaires, unless the geographical area of the project

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<sup>22</sup> The appropriate sample size for detecting a statistically significant effect (if one were to exist) is very difficult to know with certainty. As this is novel research and evaluation, there is limited information on which to estimate the expected size of the effect. It is therefore not possible to calibrate the appropriate sample size with any accuracy. A sample size of 500 per project strikes an appropriate balance between sufficient information for analysis and proportionate resourcing. While it cannot be known for sure that 500 observations will be enough, the evaluation can analyse the data at study group level to increase the sample from 500 to 1500: this is one of the benefits of taking a study group approach with three projects.



requires more targeted surveying approaches (e.g. telephone or face-to-face) to achieve responses.

- **Qualitative data**, which will be collected from local **residents** and community building users through focus groups (one per project, with five to eight individuals attending) and from programme delivery organisations through in-depth semi-structured interviews (two per project). In addition, one observation day per project will be undertaken where appropriate. This qualitative data will serve both the impact and process evaluations to maximise efficiency and reduce burdens on LLAs and local delivery partners.

C.112 Analyses of these data would be triangulated to provide robust evidence on what works to increase the use of community buildings, increase satisfaction with local amenities and the local area, and improve pride in place. The survey data would be used to support comparisons of outcomes over time ('before' and 'after' the capital investment), while the survey and qualitative data would provide evidence on the lived experience of local residents and building users and the self-assessed impacts of the refurbishments. The evaluation would seek to evidence for whom the interventions have most impact, and under what conditions, comparing impacts both across individuals within projects and between projects.

### **Detail on proposed quasi-experimental component**

C.113 The evaluation feasibility assessment concluded that it is feasible to include a component of quasi-experimental analysis in the evaluation over the period through 2025. The specific quasi-experimental approach recommended is difference-in-differences analysis. The core principle of this approach is that there is quantitative data available on an outcome of interest both for those 'treated' by the intervention and for a 'control' that can be argued to represent the 'counterfactual' – that is, what the treated group would have looked like in the absence of the intervention. The difference-in-differences analysis uses these data to compare the change over time between the treated and control groups, and attributes any measured difference to the intervention.

C.114 The treatment group for each project will be formed of residents living within a radius (e.g. those living within a 15-minute walk) of the community building that is receiving investment. These residents will include both users of the community building and non-users. Non-users may be affected by the investment, for example through changes in their perceptions of their local environment or community. The appropriate radius will be determined through liaison with the local authority or delivery body for each project. It will be based on an understanding of the expected beneficiary population and could vary by

project. Data for the control group will be collected using the YCYS survey (described above).

1. There are two sources for a control group that are recommended. One control group will be defined as residents living in an equivalent radius of a similar community building that was not refurbished. One such 'control building' will be identified for each project, ideally through discussion with the relevant local authority (**potentially** including buildings where an application for funding was considered but ultimately rejected by the local authority). Alternatively, potentially suitable control buildings may be identified through open source data, such as the Community Centres database, and by working with LLAs and DLUHC to identify where buildings have not received any recent and substantial investment.<sup>23</sup> Data from residents local to these control buildings would be collected using the YCYS survey, which would be conducted in an analogous way in these locations, for direct comparison with the treated areas. The quasi-experimental evaluation will seek to estimate the average effect on outcomes (as set out in the theory of change in Figure 8) such as the changes in the use of community **buildings**, satisfaction with community buildings, civic participation, perceptions of community spirit and satisfaction with the local area as a place to live.<sup>24</sup> These average changes can be estimated using a range of metrics captured in the YCYS survey, which will include a short set of bespoke questions specifically designed for the evaluation of this study group. There are risks to implementing this approach. One significant risk is whether an appropriate control building can be identified; when a comparison is being made between only two areas, the strength of that **control** building as a counterfactual is vital.

2. To mitigate this risk, a second control group is also recommended: a synthetic control group drawn from the Community Life Survey (CLS). A synthetic control group will be defined as the 10% of lower super output areas (LSOAs) that are 'most similar' to the LSOA in which the community building being improved is located. Similarity will be based on census characteristics, baseline measures of pride in place and similar levels of access to community buildings (the latter may be identified using open source data such as the Community Centres database).<sup>25</sup> This control group has the advantage that it is not reliant on only one control location (but the disadvantage that it pools together many locations that may include some that are less comparable to the treatment area). The

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<sup>23</sup> <https://www.data.gov.uk/dataset/a015a8e2-0354-460d-8ece-266229232271/community-centres>

<sup>24</sup> The exact questions will depend on the projects selected for evaluation as, depending on the use of the community building, slightly different outputs and outcomes may be expected (as set out in Figure 8).

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.data.gov.uk/dataset/a015a8e2-0354-460d-8ece-266229232271/community-centres>

CLS and the YCYS contain some comparable measures of pride in place (such as whether someone is proud of their local area and their sense of community). This means that a difference-in-differences analysis can be conducted for some outcomes of interest using the YCYS data collected from the 'treatment' areas and the CLS data collected from 'control' areas.

C.115 Further methods for control groups will be considered depending on the specific projects selected. This may include distance decay using bigger radii around the invested facilities (similar to concentric circles).<sup>26</sup> In this case, distance-based isochrones would be defined around the intervention, and the data from isochrones further away will be used to compare against isochrones closer to the intervention.

C.116 There remain some risks to the practical application of these difference-in-differences approaches (for example, if projects are delayed). Furthermore, being novel in their attempt to detect very localised impacts on new metrics of interest such as pride in place, there are risks around the power of the proposed approaches to detect impact. (Further detail on risks and mitigations can be found in Annex D.) It is therefore valuable that these quasi-experimental approaches are implemented as one component in a broader, robust and detailed theory-based evaluation.

C.117 As part of this risk mitigation and to maximise learnings, the quasi-experimental difference-in-differences approach will be conducted for each project and the pride in place and life chances observations will be pooled across three projects within the study group. The different Communities & Place study groups' (SG8, SG9 and SG10) pride in place and life chances observations can also be pooled and average impacts estimated, although the differences across the projects may limit the robustness of these results.

### **Detail on proposed evaluation approach post 2025**

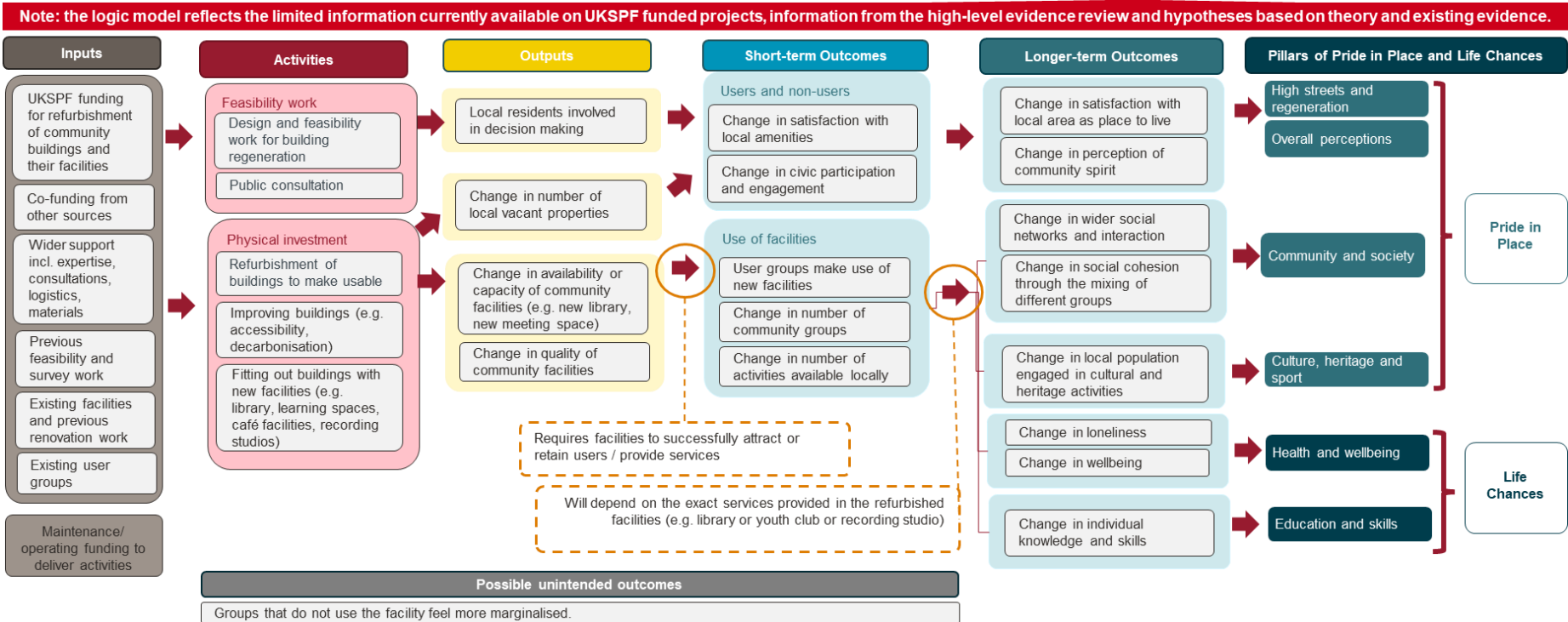
C.118 Over a longer timeframe, such as with an additional three years through 2028, valuable additional evidence could be generated on the longer-term impacts of these UKSPF-funded projects. This could include whether there are impacts on life chances, through health, wellbeing, education and skills. It would also allow evidence to be produced on whether any short-term impacts on pride in place are temporary or sustained.

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<sup>26</sup> Perfectly concentric circles are unlikely given access barriers such as rivers, motorways, etc. Where this analysis is used, the appropriate local impact areas will be defined given the local geography.

C.119 This evidence could be produced using the same integrative evaluation approach that is recommended for the evaluation over the period through 2025, including quasi-experimental analysis, if bespoke data collection through the YCYS survey is repeated.

**Figure 8 Theory of change for Study Group 8: Major refurbishment of community buildings**



Source: Frontier Economics

## SG9: Large investments in sports centres, pavilions or pitches

### Study group description

C.120 This study group comprises projects that provide capital funding for large investments in sports facilities such as sports centres, pavilions or sports pitches.<sup>27</sup> The use and existence of these facilities might be expected to influence pride in place, improve health and wellbeing, and ultimately feed through into life chances and other important outcomes.

C.121 An example description (provided by the LLA) of a relevant project is:  
*...Large investments in sports or leisure facilities, including new sports pitches or pitch redevelopment. - Joint project with football association, project to put in some new 3G pitches and will be accessible to community & the college.*

### Summary of evaluation feasibility criteria assessment

C.122 Table 15 sets out the assessment of this study group against the evaluation feasibility criteria. This is followed by additional detail on the proposed methodology for the impact evaluation, including an indication of what could be done over a longer timeframe than the current evaluation (ending late 2025).

**Table 15 Assessment of SG9 against evaluation feasibility criteria**

Criteria	Assessment
Fills an evidence gap, and is of particular policy interest	There is limited high quality quantitative evidence on the extent to which sports facilities influence pride in place. There is more evidence on impacts on wellbeing and health, but robust, quantitative evidence remains limited. There is, in particular, a gap in understanding the conditions under which such interventions successfully lead to these impacts and which types of sports facilities most effectively do this.
Potential overlap with other evaluations	There is some potential for overlap with the evaluation of the Levelling Up Fund. The DLUHC UKSPF team is actively monitoring this. Overlap with the Towns Fund evaluation is more limited.
Articulation of a valid theory of change	Yes. There is a robust theory of change through which these projects could be expected to lead to changes in pride in place, life chances and other important outcomes (such as wellbeing and social networks). A logic model based on available information is shown in Figure 9.
Suitable data for theory-based evaluation	Yes. Robust theory-based evaluation using contribution analysis is feasible. It would be proportionate to collect quantitative and qualitative data from local residents near sports facilities receiving

<sup>27</sup> A strict definition of large was not used so that the responses to the request for information were not solely from the LLAs with the most UKSPF funding. LLAs were to consider what constituted a large investment in sports facilities for their communities.

Criteria	Assessment
	investment. In addition, monitoring data on usage is expected to be available.
Feasible to implement quasi-experimental component to the evaluation by 2025	Yes. It is feasible to identify 'control' sports facilities and collect quantitative and qualitative data from local residents near these. In addition, synthetic control groups can be identified in the CLS data. These data can be used to support difference-in-differences analysis.
Feasible to implement quasi-experimental approach in longer term	Yes. A longer time period for evaluation provides the opportunity for more data on usage after the capital programmes are completed, and for usage and awareness to affect pride in place and life chances.
Projects sufficiently large, and delivered within evaluation period	Yes. There are large sports facilities projects currently being implemented to be completed within the evaluation period. Immediate impacts on leading indicators of pride in place, alongside other outcomes, are expected to be observable.

## Contribution to evidence

C.123 The What Works Centre provides an evidence review on the impact of sport participation on young people.<sup>28</sup> The review finds that participation in sport can promote wellbeing enhancement in youth groups, as well as social cohesion and social reinforcement. While there is a significant number of evaluations that focus on the impact of sport participation on wellbeing,<sup>29</sup> there is less evidence on evaluating the local impact of projects aimed at developing 3G pitches and investing in sport pavilions. This evaluation will contribute to the existing literature by focusing on the impact of such projects, with a particular focus on measuring the effect on pride in place for local residents.

## Detail on proposed evaluation approach for the period from 2023 to 2025

C.124 Based on the assessment against the evaluation feasibility criteria, it is recommended that an integrative evaluation approach is used to provide robust evaluation evidence over the period through 2025. This would maximise learning and enhance rigour by integrating evidence from different data sources and analytical approaches. The approaches incorporated for this study group would include descriptive analysis, before-versus-after analysis, quasi-experimental analysis and theory-based contribution analysis.

C.125 Contribution analysis seeks to evaluate an intervention by verifying the relevant theory of change using robust quantitative and qualitative evidence. A logic model (based on project information available to date) for this study group is

<sup>28</sup> <https://whatworkswellbeing.org/resources/sport-dance-and-young-people/>

<sup>29</sup> See for instance: [https://www.sportengland.org/guidance-and-support/evaluation-and-learning?section=report\\_library](https://www.sportengland.org/guidance-and-support/evaluation-and-learning?section=report_library)

provided in **Figure 9**. The evaluation would draw on data from three main sources:

- **Monitoring data**, which is expected to be available from the owners or operators of the sports facilities, for example on usage of the facilities before and after the investment.
- **Your Community, Your Say (YCYS) survey**, which will be used to collect quantitative and qualitative data from local residents before and after the capital investment in the sports facility. Data will be collected on outcomes such as awareness and use of the facility, satisfaction with local **amenities** and pride in place, and (in the latter survey) perceptions of the impact of the investment on these outcomes. These surveys would be fielded to residents living within a particular radius of the sports facility (with the exact radius depending on the project in question), targeting 500 responses from local residents in each survey.<sup>30</sup> The survey is anticipated to use a push to web approach supplemented with paper questionnaires, unless the geographical area of the project requires more targeted surveying approaches (e.g. telephone or face-to-face) to achieve responses.
- **Qualitative data**, which will be collected from local residents and sports facility users through focus groups (one per project, with five to eight individuals attending) and from programme delivery organisations through in-depth semi-structured interviews (two per project). In addition, one observation day per project will be undertaken where appropriate. This qualitative data will serve **both** the impact and process evaluation, to maximise efficiency and reduce burdens on LLAs and local delivery partners.

C.126 Analyses of these data would be triangulated to provide robust evidence on what works to increase the use of sports facilities, increase satisfaction with local amenities and the local area, and improve pride in place. The survey data would be used to support comparisons of outcomes over time ('before' and 'after' the capital investment), while the survey and qualitative data would provide evidence on the lived experience of local residents and facility users and the self-assessed impacts of the investment. The evaluation would seek to evidence for whom the interventions have most impact, and under what

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<sup>30</sup> The appropriate sample size for detecting a statistically significant effect (if one were to exist) is very difficult to know with certainty. As this is novel research and evaluation, there is limited information on which to estimate the expected size of the effect. It is therefore not possible to calibrate the appropriate sample size with any accuracy. A sample size of 500 per project strikes an appropriate balance between sufficient information for analysis and proportionate resourcing. While it cannot be known for sure that 500 observations will be enough, the evaluation can analyse the data at study group level to increase the sample from 500 to 1500: this is one of the benefits of taking a study group approach with three projects.



conditions, comparing impacts both across individuals within projects and between projects.

### **Detail on proposed quasi-experimental component**

C.127 The evaluation feasibility assessment concluded that it is feasible to include a component of quasi-experimental analysis in the evaluation over the period through 2025.

C.128 The specific quasi-experimental approach recommended is difference-in-differences analysis. The core principle of this approach is that there is quantitative data available on an outcome of interest both for those 'treated' by the intervention and for a 'control' that can be argued to represent the 'counterfactual' – that is, what the treated group would have looked like in the absence of the intervention. The difference-in-differences analysis uses these data to compare the change over time between the treated and control groups, and attributes any measured difference to the intervention.

C.129 The treatment group for each project will be formed of residents living within a radius (e.g. those living within a 15-minute walk) of the sports facility receiving investment. These residents will include both users of the sports facility and non-users. Non-users may be affected by the investment, for example through changes in their perceptions of their local environment or community. The appropriate radius will be determined through liaison with the local authority or delivery body for each project. It will be based on an understanding of the expected beneficiary population and could vary by project. Data for the control group will be collected using the YCYS survey (described above).

C.130 There are two sources for a control group that are recommended.

1. One control group will be defined as residents living in an equivalent radius of a similar sports facility that did not receive significant investment over the same period. One such 'control facility' will be identified for each project, ideally through discussion with the relevant local authority (**potentially** including sports facilities where an application for funding was considered but ultimately rejected by the local authority). Alternatively, potentially suitable control facilities may be identified through open source data, such as the Active Places database, and by working with LLAs and DLUHC to identify where buildings have not received any recent and substantial investment.<sup>31</sup> Data from residents local to these control sports facilities would be collected

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<sup>31</sup> <https://www.activeplacespower.com/opendata>

using the YCYS survey, which would be conducted in an analogous way in these locations, for direct comparison with the treated areas.

The quasi-experimental evaluation will seek to estimate the average effect on outcomes (as set out in the theory of change in Figure 9) such as the changes in the use of sports **facilities**, satisfaction with sports facilities, perceptions of community spirit and satisfaction with the local area as a place to live. These average changes can be estimated using a range of metrics captured in the YCYS survey, which will include a short set of bespoke questions specifically designed for the evaluation of this study group.

There are risks to implementing this approach. One significant risk is whether an appropriate control sports facility can be identified; when a comparison is being made between only two areas, the strength of that control building as a counterfactual is vital.

2. To mitigate this risk, a second control group is also recommended: a synthetic control group drawn from the CLS. A synthetic control group will be defined as the 10% of LSOAs that are 'most similar' to the LSOA in which the sports facility receiving investment is located. Similarity will be based on census characteristics, baseline measures of pride in place, and similar levels of access to sports facilities (the latter may be identified using open source data such as the Active Places database).<sup>32</sup> This control group has the advantage that it is not reliant on only one control location (but the disadvantage that it pools together many locations that may include some that are less comparable to the treatment area). The CLS and the YCYS contain some comparable measures of access to sports facilities and pride in place (such as whether someone is proud of their local area and their sense of community). This means that a difference-in-differences analysis can be conducted for some outcomes of interest using the YCYS data collected from the 'treatment' areas and the CLS data collected from 'control' areas.

C.131 Further methods for control groups will be considered depending on the specific projects selected. This may include distance decay using bigger radii around the invested facilities (similar to concentric circles).<sup>33</sup> In this case, distance-based isochrones would be defined around the intervention, and the data from

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<sup>32</sup> <https://www.activeplacespower.com/opendata>

<sup>33</sup> Perfectly concentric circles are unlikely given access barriers such as rivers, motorways etc. Where this analysis is used, the appropriate local impact areas will be defined given the local geography.

isochrones further away will be used to compare against isochrones closer to the intervention.

C.132 There remain some risks to the practical application of these difference-in-differences approaches (for example, if projects are delayed). Furthermore, being novel in their attempt to detect very localised impacts on new metrics of interest such as pride in place, there are risks around the power of the proposed approaches to detect impact. (Further detail on risks and mitigations can be found in Annex D.) It is therefore valuable that these quasi-experimental approaches are implemented as one component in a broader, robust and detailed theory-based evaluation.

C.133 As part of this risk mitigation and to maximise learnings, the quasi-experimental difference-in-differences approach will be conducted for each project and the pride in place and life chances observations will be pooled across three projects within the study group. The different Communities & Place study groups' (SG8, SG9 and SG10) pride in place and life chances observations can also be pooled and average impacts estimated, although the differences across the projects may limit the robustness of these results.

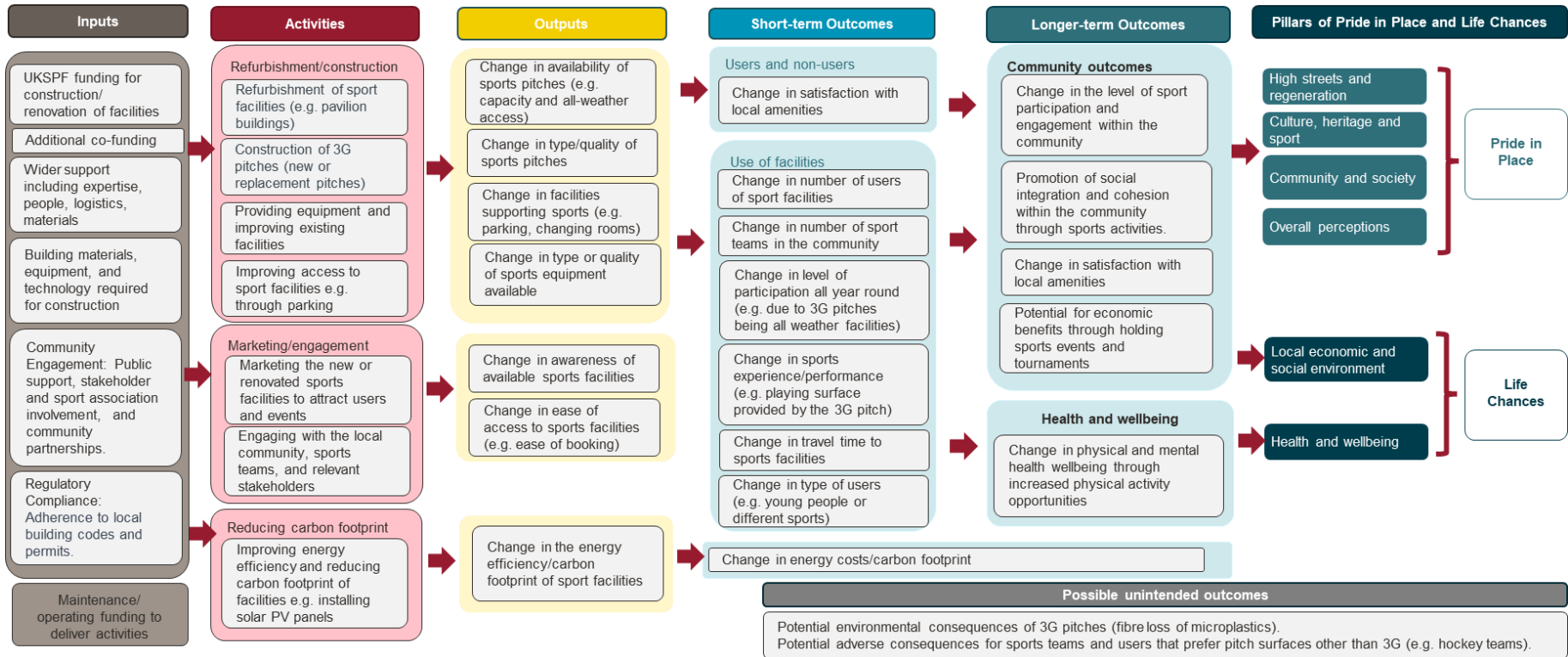
#### **Detail on proposed evaluation approach post 2025**

C.134 Over a longer timeframe, such as with an additional three years through 2028, valuable additional evidence could be generated on the longer-term impacts of these UKSPF-funded projects. This would allow more time for impacts to be felt and provide an opportunity to explore longer-term effects, including on life chances through health and wellbeing. It would also allow evidence to be produced on whether any short-term impacts on activity or pride in place are temporary or sustained.

C.135 This evidence could be produced using the same integrative evaluation approach that is recommended for the evaluation over the period through 2025, including quasi-experimental analysis, if bespoke data collection through the YCYS survey is repeated.

**Figure 9 Theory of change for Study Group 9: Large investments in sports centres, pavilions or pitches**

Note: the logic model reflects the limited information currently available on UKSPF funded projects, information from the high-level evidence review and hypotheses based on theory and existing evidence.



Source: Frontier Economics

## SG10: Significant improvements to, or the provision of new, playground equipment

### Study group description

C.136 This study group comprises projects that provide capital funding for significant improvements to, or the provision of, new playground equipment.<sup>34</sup> The use and existence of the playgrounds might be expected to influence pride in place for adults and improve health and wellbeing, and might ultimately feed through into improved life chances for both adults and children.

C.137 An example description (provided by the LLA) of a relevant project is:  
*...A new huge destination play area planned for [x] in [y] would replace the existing one, with the splash pad remaining in place. Brand new play equipment and a carefully designed accessible space for children of all ages.*

### Summary of evaluation feasibility criteria assessment

C.138 Table 16 sets out the assessment of this study group against the evaluation feasibility criteria. This is followed by additional detail on the proposed methodology for the impact evaluation, including an indication of what could be done over a longer timeframe than the current evaluation (ending late 2025).

**Table 16 Assessment of SG10 against evaluation feasibility criteria**

Criteria	Assessment
Fills an evidence gap, and is of particular policy interest	There is very limited high quality quantitative evidence on the extent to which playgrounds impact on pride in place, life chances and other important outcomes. There is, in particular, a gap in understanding the conditions under which investment in playgrounds leads to these impacts.
Potential overlap with other evaluations	There is some potential for overlap with the evaluation of the Levelling Up Fund and the evaluation of the Community Ownership Fund. The DLUHC UKSPF team is actively monitoring this. Overlap with the Towns Fund is more limited.
Articulation of a valid theory of change	Yes. There is a robust theory of change through which these projects could be expected to lead to changes in pride in place, life chances and other important outcomes (such as wellbeing and social networks). A logic model based on available information is shown in Figure 10

<sup>34</sup> A strict definition of significant was not used so that the responses to the request for information were not solely from the LLAs with the most UKSPF funding. LLAs were to consider what constituted a significant investment for their communities.

Criteria	Assessment
Suitable data for theory-based evaluation	Yes. Robust theory-based evaluation using contribution analysis is feasible. It would be proportionate to collect quantitative and qualitative data from local residents near playgrounds receiving investment.
Feasible to implement quasi-experimental component in theory-based evaluation by 2025	Yes. It is feasible to identify 'control' playgrounds and collect quantitative and qualitative data from local residents near these. In addition, synthetic control groups can be identified in the CLS data. These data can be used to support difference-in-differences analysis.
Feasible to implement quasi-experimental approach in longer term	Yes. A longer time period for evaluation provides the opportunity to examine whether any short-term impacts on pride in place and other outcomes are temporary or sustained.
Projects sufficiently large, and delivered within evaluation period	Yes. There are large playground projects currently being implemented to be completed within the evaluation period. Immediate impacts on indicators of pride in place are expected to be observable.

### Contribution to evidence

C.139 There is limited evidence on the impacts of playground improvements. A small number of evaluations have shown that upgrades to playgrounds have an impact on physical activity. This evaluation would provide new robust evidence on the impact of playground upgrades across a range of outcomes, including physical activity, but also perceptions of the local area among both users and non-users. There is no existing evidence on the role playgrounds play in pride in place, so this would be a valuable contribution.

### Detail on proposed evaluation approach for the period from 2023 to 2025

C.140 Based on the assessment against the evaluation feasibility criteria, it is recommended that an integrative evaluation approach is used to provide robust evaluation evidence over the period through 2025. This would maximise learning and enhance rigour by integrating evidence from different data sources and analytical approaches. The approaches incorporated for this study group would include descriptive analysis, before-versus-after analysis, quasi-experimental analysis and theory-based contribution analysis.

C.141 Contribution analysis seeks to evaluate an intervention by verifying the relevant theory of change using robust quantitative and qualitative evidence. A logic model (based on project information available to date) for this study group is provided in **Figure 10**. The outcomes for pride in place and life chances are ultimately part of the missions to level up communities across the UK, as set out in the Levelling Up White Paper (HMG, 2022).

C.142 The evaluation would draw on data from three main sources:

- **Monitoring data**, which is expected to be available from the owners of the play facilities on what was available before and after the **investment**.
- **Your Community, Your Say (YCYS) survey**, which will be used to collect quantitative and qualitative data from local residents before and after the **playground** investment. Data will be collected on outcomes such as awareness and use of the playground, satisfaction with the equipment and environment and pride in place, and (in the latter survey) perceptions of the impact of the investment on these outcomes. These surveys would be fielded to residents living within a particular radius of the playground (with the exact radius depending on the project in question), targeting 500 responses from local residents in each survey.<sup>35</sup> The survey is anticipated to use a push to web approach supplemented with paper questionnaires, unless the geographical area of the project requires more targeted surveying approaches (e.g. telephone or face-to-face) to achieve responses.
- **Qualitative data**, which will be collected from local residents through focus groups (one per project, with five to eight individuals attending) and from local authorities or local representatives through in-depth semi-structured interviews (two per project). In addition, one observation day per project will be undertaken where appropriate. This qualitative data will serve both the impact and process evaluation, to maximise efficiency and reduce burdens on LLAs and local delivery partners.

C.143 Analyses of these data would be triangulated to provide robust evidence on the extent to which playground investments work to increase playground use, social interactions and satisfaction with the local area, and improve pride in place. The survey data would be used to support comparisons of outcomes over time ('before' and 'after' the investment), while the survey and qualitative data would provide evidence on the lived experience of local residents and playground users and the self-assessed impacts of the investment. The evaluation would seek to evidence for whom the interventions have most impact, and under what conditions, comparing impacts both across individuals within projects and between projects.

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<sup>35</sup> The appropriate sample size for detecting a statistically significant effect (if one were to exist) is very difficult to know with certainty. As this is novel research and evaluation, there is limited information on which to estimate the expected size of the effect. It is therefore not possible to calibrate the appropriate sample size with any accuracy. A sample size of 500 per project strikes an appropriate balance between sufficient information for analysis and proportionate resourcing. While it cannot be known for sure that 500 observations will be enough, the evaluation can analyse the data at study group level to increase the sample from 500 to 1500: this is one of the benefits of taking a study group approach with three projects.

## Detail on proposed quasi-experimental component

C.144 The evaluation feasibility assessment concluded that it is feasible to include a component of quasi-experimental analysis in the evaluation over the period through 2025. The specific quasi-experimental approach recommended is difference-in-differences analysis. The core principle of this approach is that there is quantitative data available on an outcome of interest both for those 'treated' by the intervention and for a 'control' that can be argued to represent the 'counterfactual' – that is, what the treated group would have looked like in the absence of the intervention. The difference-in-differences analysis uses these data to compare the change over time between the treated and control groups, and attributes any measured difference to the intervention.

C.145 The treatment group for each project will be formed of residents living within a radius (e.g. those living within a 15-minute walk) of the playground receiving investment. These residents will include both playground users and non-users. Non-users may be affected by the investment, for example through changes in their perceptions of their local environment or community. The appropriate radius will be determined through liaison with the local authority or delivery body for each project. It will be based on an understanding of the expected beneficiary population and could vary by project. Data for the control group will be collected using the YCYS survey (described above).

C.146 There are two sources for a control group that are recommended.

1. One control group will be defined as residents living in an equivalent radius of a similar playground that did not receive significant investment over the same period. One such 'control location' will be identified for each project, ideally through discussion with the relevant local authority (potentially including playgrounds that were considered for investment but ultimately not taken forwards by the local authority). Alternatively, potentially suitable control locations may be identified through open source data, such as the UK Playgrounds database,<sup>36</sup> government data on parks and playgrounds,<sup>37</sup> or Ordnance Survey data.<sup>38</sup> Data from residents local to these control locations would be collected using the YCYS survey, which would be conducted in an analogous way in these locations, for direct comparison with the treated areas.

The quasi-experimental evaluation will seek to estimate the average effect on outcomes (as set out in the theory of change in Figure 10) such as the changes

<sup>36</sup> <https://ukplaygrounds.co.uk/>

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/find-your-local-park>

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/products/os-open-greenspace>



in the use of playgrounds, perceptions of community spirit and satisfaction with the local area as a place to live. These average changes can be estimated using a range of metrics captured in the YCYS survey, which will include a short set of bespoke questions specifically designed for the evaluation of this study group.

There are risks to implementing this approach. One significant risk is whether an appropriate control location can be identified; when a comparison is being made between only two areas, the strength of that control building as a counterfactual is vital.

2. To mitigate this risk a second control group is also recommended: a synthetic control group drawn from the CLS. A synthetic control group will be defined as the 10% of LSOAs that are 'most similar' to the LSOA in which the playground investment is located. Similarity will be based on census characteristics, baseline measures of pride in place, and similar levels of access to playgrounds (the latter identified using open source data as set out above). This control group has the advantage that it is not reliant on only one control location (but the disadvantage that it pools together many locations which may include some that are less comparable to the treatment area). The CLS and the YCYS contain some comparable measures of pride in place (such as whether someone is proud of their local area and their sense of community). This means that a difference-in-differences analysis can be conducted for some outcomes of interest using the YCYS data collected from the 'treatment' areas and the CLS data collected from 'control' areas.

C.147 Further methods for control groups will be considered depending on the specific projects selected. This may include distance decay using bigger radii of distance travelled around the invested facilities (similar to concentric circles).<sup>39</sup> In this case, distance-based isochrones would be defined around the intervention, and the data from isochrones further away will be used to compare against isochrones closer to the intervention.

C.148 There remain some risks to the practical application of these difference-in-differences approaches (for example, if projects are delayed). Furthermore, being novel in their attempt to detect very localised impacts on new metrics of interest such as pride in place, there are risks around the power of the proposed approaches to detect impact. (Further detail on risks and mitigations can be

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<sup>39</sup> Perfectly concentric circles are unlikely given access barriers such as rivers, motorways, etc. Where this analysis is used, the appropriate local impact areas will be defined given the local geography.

found in Annex D.) It is therefore valuable that these quasi-experimental approaches are implemented as one component in a broader, robust and detailed theory-based evaluation.

C.149 As part of this risk mitigation and to maximise learnings, the quasi-experimental difference-in-differences approach will be conducted for each project and the pride in place and life chances observations will be pooled across three projects within the study group. The different Communities & Place study groups' (SG8, SG9 and SG10) pride in place and life chances observations can also be pooled and average impacts estimated, although the differences across the projects may limit the robustness of these results.

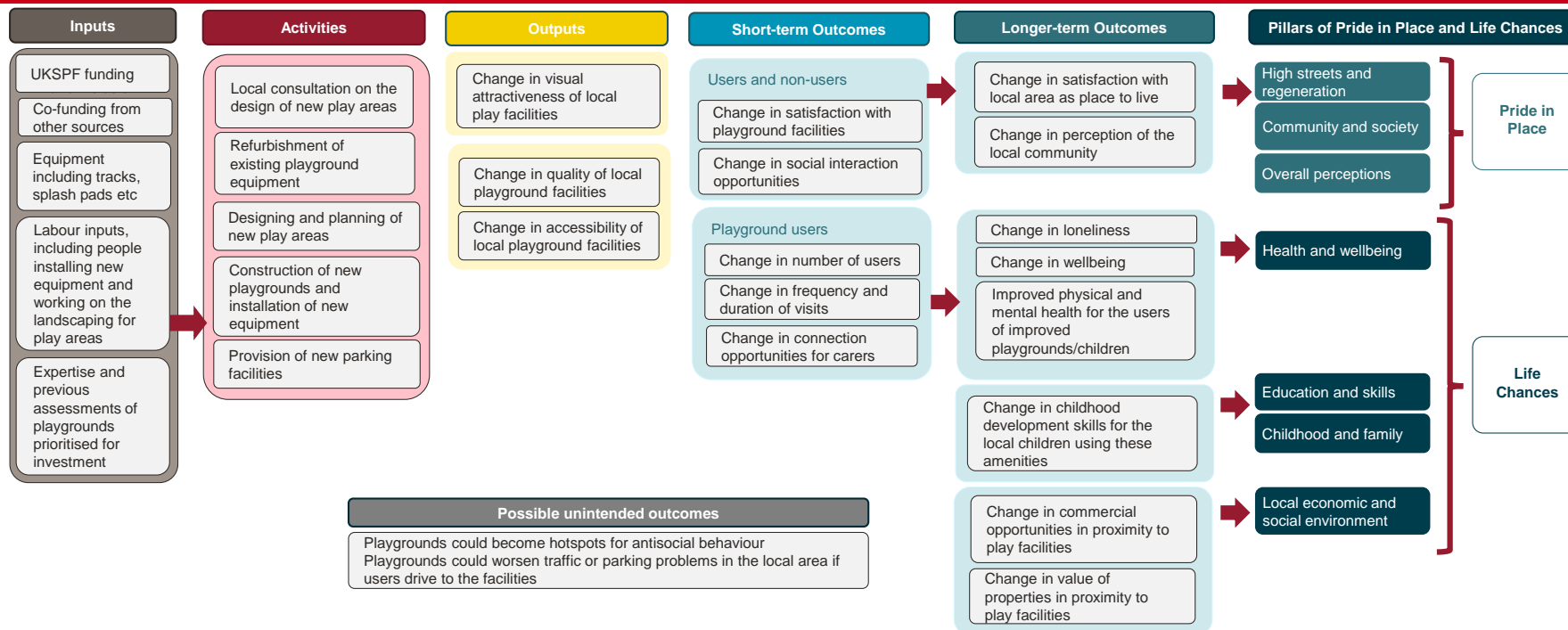
### **Detail on proposed evaluation approach post 2025**

C.150 Over a longer timeframe, such as with an additional three years through 2028, valuable additional evidence could be generated on the longer-term impacts of these UKSPF-funded projects. This could include whether there are impacts on life chances through health, wellbeing, education and skills. It would also allow evidence to be produced on whether any short-term impacts on pride in place are temporary or sustained.

C.151 This evidence could be produced using the same integrative evaluation approach that is recommended for the evaluation over the period through 2025, including quasi-experimental analysis, if bespoke data collection through the YCYS survey is repeated.

**Figure 10 Theory of change for Study Group 10: Significant improvements to, or the provision of new, playground equipment**

**Note: the logic model reflects the limited information currently available on UKSPF funded projects, information from the high-level evidence review and hypotheses based on theory and existing evidence.**



Source: Frontier Economics

## ***Study groups considered but not shortlisted for evaluation***

C.152 Given the wealth of information collated on the projects being delivered with UKSPF funding allocations during this feasibility stage, several study groups were considered as being potentially feasible for evaluation but were ultimately not shortlisted. These were important to consider because they represent important interventions that align well with the aims of UKSPF. However, when considered against the selection criteria they were not selected in favour of the ten that were recommended.

C.153 There were five study groups considered as part of the longlist. There was one additional study group within the People & Skills pillar:

- Targeted **support** to address economic inactivity among women

C.154 There were two additional study groups within the Supporting Local Businesses pillar:

- **Growth hubs**
- Business support programmes that involve mentoring or training for businesses

C.155 And there were two additional study groups within the Communities & Place pillar:

- **Volunteering** projects with a focus on improving the local environment
- New Closed Circuit Television (CCTV)

C.156 These groups were ultimately not shortlisted because they were primarily either seen as contributing substantially less to the evidence base on what works or because a more detailed examination identified that they were less feasible for this evaluation.

### **Study groups not shortlisted primarily due to more limited scope for learning**

C.157 For both growth hubs and CCTV, evaluation could be feasible. However, both groups were ultimately not recommended due to lower scope for the evaluation to add to the existing evidence base.

C.158 **Growth hubs**: this intervention type of delivering advice to support local business growth is prevalent across the country. However, this type of

intervention is the focus of a major evaluation of growth hubs from 2015-2020 published by DBT as well as ongoing monitoring and evaluation, and hence there is limited scope for this evaluation to add to the evidence base through this evaluation.<sup>40</sup>

C.159 An evaluation of growth hubs could mirror the methods set out across the recommended study groups for Supporting Local Businesses:<sup>41</sup> a theory-based approach using contribution analysis. It is unlikely that it would be proportionate to collect the necessary counterfactual data for a quasi-experimental element of the contribution analysis from unsupported businesses within the timelines of the current evaluation, but quasi-experimental analysis of the impacts on business growth could be conducted over the longer term.

C.160 **New Closed Circuit Television (CCTV)**: although this is a prevalent type of investment across a large number of local authorities, there is a wealth of published evidence on these interventions. This includes a Home Office evaluation of the impact of CCTV,<sup>42</sup> an evaluation of CCTV by Wolverhampton Council<sup>43</sup> and a review of the evidence of the effect of CCTV on the involvement of children and young people in crime and violence.<sup>44</sup> While the existing literature has focused on the impacts on crime, rather than also considering the wider effects on pride in place, it was felt that this additional contribution to the evidence would not be in proportion to the cost of additional evaluation.

C.161 An evaluation of CCTV could mirror the methods set out across the recommended study groups for Communities & Place:<sup>45</sup> a mixed methods approach, including theory-based contribution analysis and, integrated within it, quantitative evidence from quasi-experimental approaches.

### **Study groups not shortlisted primarily as not feasible for this evaluation**

C.162 Targeted support to address economic inactivity among women, business support programmes that involve mentoring or training for businesses, and volunteering projects with a focus on improving the local environment were all

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<sup>40</sup> DBT and BEIS (2023), Evaluation of the growth hubs: 2015 to 2020, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evaluation-of-the-growth-hubs-2015-to-2020>

<sup>41</sup> Study groups 5, 6 and 7

<sup>42</sup> Gill et al. (2005), The impact of CCTV: fourteen case studies, <https://library.college.police.uk/docs/hordsolr/rdsolr1505.pdf>

<sup>43</sup> City of Wolverhampton Council (2022), City of Wolverhampton Council Closed Circuit Television Evaluation, <https://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-04/Wolverhampton-CCTV-Evaluation-Report-2022.pdf>

<sup>44</sup> Gaffney et al (2023), Youth Endowment Fund, CCTV Toolkit technical report, [https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/CCTV-Technical-Report\\_June-2023.pdf](https://youthendowmentfund.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/CCTV-Technical-Report_June-2023.pdf)

<sup>45</sup> Study groups 8, 9 and 10.

ultimately not recommended for this evaluation as a robust evaluation would be challenging.

C.163 **Targeted support to address economic inactivity among women:** several local authorities are planning to implement projects focused on helping economically inactive women towards employment. In discussions about where this intervention-level evaluation could generate the most learnings, DWP identified programmes that address economic activity as an important area. However, the evaluation feasibility assessment raised concerns that the sample sizes of women supported by these UKSPF-funded projects may not be adequate to form a sufficiently robust study group.

C.164 Business support programmes that involve mentoring or training for businesses: although several local authorities are funding projects of this type, and additional evidence on the benefits of these programmes would be valuable, the evaluation feasibility assessment identified three potential problems. First, these projects are often part of a package of interventions, which makes attribution of effects difficult to determine. Second, in many projects, the support was likely to be offered to a small number of businesses, potentially making the effects of the mentoring hard to detect robustly. Finally, differences in delivery approaches and programme details may make it more difficult to create a meaningful study group from the available projects.

C.165 Volunteering projects with a focus on improving the local environment: several local authorities plan to allocate UKSPF funding to projects that support local volunteering activity. Volunteering projects focused on improving the local environment were thought to be more likely to have observable impacts on pride in place, and hence the focus of this study group. However, the evaluation feasibility assessment revealed that most of these projects were relatively small, making it both less likely that impacts on pride in place could be robustly detected and more challenging to collect the necessary data.

C.166 A smaller-scale evaluation of these three study groups would be possible using a theory-based approach. For example, contribution analysis could be undertaken, including:

- Descriptive work on **context** and scale of target cohorts;
- Primary research to understand experience of participants and businesses/organisations; and
- Case study analysis (to generate evidence on lived experience and focusing on context of what happened and **for** whom).

# Annex D Risk registers, data protection and ethics

- D.1 This annex sets out the general risks and mitigations across the evaluation for process, impact and value for money. There is a further risk register for the specific risks and mitigations for the impact evaluation quasi-experimental method.
- D.2 This annex also sets out the plans for data protection and ethical research.

## D.3 Risk registers

**Table 17** General risk register and mitigations

Criteria	Likelihood	Impact	Assessment
Difficulties recruiting participants for interviews and focus groups			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ This will be mitigated by allowing sufficient time for recruitment and fieldwork, offering participants flexibility in terms of the mode of participation (in person, online, via phone) and re-assuring participants in relation to confidentiality and anonymity.</li> </ul>
Poorly designed research instruments will lead to unreliable data and could mean that some insights may be missed.			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Research instruments will be agreed with DLUHC ahead of fieldwork to ensure they meet policy and research objectives, and they may be adapted over the course of the fieldwork to enhance their effectiveness. In all cases they will balance the need for complexity without overburdening participants/respondents.</li> </ul>

Criteria	Likelihood	Impact	Assessment
Insufficient survey responses leading to smaller sample sizes	Yellow	Yellow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Engagement with LLAs and delivery bodies will help identify targeting for primary research so that recipients are likely to be engaged with and affected by the intervention.</li> <li>■ Expertise and experience of BMG and Kantar in managing primary data research to encourage sufficient responses.</li> <li>■ Information and learnings will be triangulated across sources to ensure that no single data source is excessively relied upon.</li> </ul>
Interview participants do not have information needed for impact or process evaluation questions	Yellow	Yellow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Clearly explain purpose of interview and topic for discussion in advance to enable preparation and for the most appropriate participant to be identified.</li> <li>■ Provide email follow-ups to share further information.</li> <li>■ Welcome more than one participant per interview to maximise information elicitation.</li> </ul>
Access to local stakeholders challenging, especially volunteers	Red	Yellow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Where local projects rely on volunteers, identify the volunteers and other key project participants via the local project manager.</li> <li>■ Apply best practice Market Research Society principles, be open and transparent in what we would like to discuss, seek informed consent to participate and book any engagement for a convenient time. The benefits to them from participating will be explained, with full opportunity for them to ask questions.</li> </ul>
LLA drops out or stops project during the evaluation	Yellow	Red	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The asks of LLAs and local delivery bodies will be as limited as possible, focusing on facilitation of access to relevant stakeholders and users/participants.</li> <li>■ Regular and consistent communications will be clear on the asks of the participation.</li> </ul>



Criteria	Likelihood	Impact	Assessment
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The benefits of ongoing learnings and participation will be made clear.</li> </ul>

**Table 18 Risk register and mitigations for quasi-experimental method in the impact evaluation**

Criteria	Likelihood	Impact	Assessment
Effects not sufficiently large to robustly estimate			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The use of the primary data through surveying will directly elicit self-reported impact from the community buildings to mitigate against the risk that an impact is not identifiable in wider metrics (e.g. general pride in place).</li> </ul>
Smaller than expected sample sizes			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Pooling the project data together will provide impact estimates at the study group level which will be valuable for learnings about what works.</li> </ul>
Appropriate counterfactual community buildings not identifiable			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The CLS can be used with a synthetic control group.</li> <li>■ The fall-back option is to use a before-and-after comparison of the treatment groups, within the theory-based analysis.</li> </ul>
Quasi-experimental analysis is unforeseeably infeasible for all three projects			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The theory-based method will still include quantitative and qualitative evaluation analysis.</li> </ul>



## D.4 Data protection

Protocols will be in place to ensure that all activities for the process, impact and value for money evaluations are conducted in line with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Particular considerations will include:

- Working with LLAs and delivery partners to ensure that beneficiaries are asked for consent to be contacted by BMG for the evaluation.
- Providing all necessary information for beneficiaries and others taking part in the evaluation (e.g. local authority staff, contractors, volunteers) to provide informed consent. This will include information on how the data will be used and BMG's Privacy Notice (which provides information on the rights of data subjects and how to contact BMG in relation to these rights).
- Ensuring all data is processed, stored and transferred securely, in line with BMG and Frontier's information security procedures.

## D.5 Ethics

In addition to the data protection considerations outlined above, ethical considerations will include:

- **Confidentiality.** Beneficiaries and local residents will be given assurance that they will not be identifiable in reporting. Assurances will be provided to LLAs and delivery staff to reflect the limits of confidentiality as, while individuals will not be named or quotes directly attributed, it may be possible in some circumstances for individuals to be identifiable in reporting given the limited number of projects in each study group (though every effort will be made to remove or adapt details which could lead to identification, while upholding the integrity of the data).
- **Minimising harm to end beneficiaries.** Beneficiary groups are likely to include potentially vulnerable individuals and there is potential for research topics to cause distress (for example, discussion of economically inactive residents' circumstances). All communications will emphasise the voluntary nature of the research and make clear that participants can withdraw at any time. For qualitative research encounters, researchers will offer to pause or terminate interviews if participants become distressed.
- **Minimising harm to LLAs and partner delivery bodies.** Results will be reported in an anonymised form to DLUHC to ensure that LLAs are not adversely affected by taking part in the research. LLAs will be informed that interactions with DLUHC will not be affected by their participation in the research or the findings of the evaluation.
- **Enabling participation.** Support will be provided where needed to facilitate participation. This will include providing alternative modes of participation (for example, telephone as an alternative to online surveys or qualitative interviews, face-to-face where needed), ensuring survey question wording is as simple as possible and flexibility in data collection timings. Other accessibility needs will also be accommodated wherever practical (such as by making adaptations for visual, auditory or language needs).