



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Towns Fund evaluation: interim findings

Early process evaluation insights

October 2024





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List of acronyms and key terms

- **MHCLG:** Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.
- **FHSF:** Future High Streets Fund.
- **TD:** Town Deal.
- **Town Deal Board:** Each of the 101 places selected for a Town Deal was required to convene a Town Deal Board, which was responsible for working with the local authority to pull proposals together in the form of an investment plan for submission to MHCLG. Decision-making is overseen by the Town Deal Board, working in collaboration with a lead local authority acting as the accountable body. All decisions relating to funding are signed off by the Town Deal Board Chair and the Chief Financial Officer of the participating local authority. Town Deal Boards can comprise representatives from the private sector, local government, local MPs, former local enterprise partnerships, local businesses/investors, community/voluntary sector representatives, other public sector bodies, education providers and other relevant local organisations.
- **Towns Fund Delivery Partner consortium:** A group of six private sector organisations led by Arup. This consortium helped towns produce Town Investment Plans and develop business cases for projects.

Executive Summary

Frontier Economics and BMG Research were commissioned by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG – formerly the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) to undertake an evaluation of the Towns Fund. A [feasibility report for the Towns Fund evaluation](#) was published in January 2024, and the evaluation itself is expected to conclude in March 2026.

This report sets out **initial, indicative process evaluation findings from the first three case studies** undertaken as part of the evaluation. These indicative process evaluation insights relate to the design and planning, structure and delivery, and monitoring and evaluation of the Towns Fund.

The three case studies were selected from the set of completed projects and may not be representative of all projects that received Towns Fund funding. All findings should be considered preliminary and are subject to change following further analysis and data collection from 2024 to 2026.

Indicative insights – design and planning

The project teams interviewed for the three case studies reported that the design and planning process operated effectively. In particular:

- Local authorities considered wider plans and priorities for their local areas when designing and planning projects.
- For Town Deal recipients, effective collaboration between local authorities and delivery partners (including contractors completing the works on site and organisations running the facilities upon completion) when designing and planning projects meant there was an agreement on the designs, and the facilities built were fit for purpose. It also ensured delivery partners had input into the facilities they would run before construction work commenced.
- Engaging beneficiaries ahead of implementation was reported to be an important enabler of project design and planning, with consultation of local residents and businesses helping to ensure local support for the projects.
- For Town Deal recipients, the involvement of Town Deal Boards in developing investment plans and selecting projects helped to maximise benefits for the local area.

Stakeholders also reported key challenges experienced at the design and planning stages because of:

- tight timelines to submit investment plans, applications for funding and business cases
- limited existing resourcing within local authorities for drafting the documents

- limited expertise within local authorities in drafting business cases

However, project teams described Towns Fund capacity funding and the support received from the Towns Fund Delivery Partner consortium and MHCLG Area Leads as key factors in overcoming these challenges.

Indicative insights – structure and delivery

Project teams interviewed for the first three case studies reported a positive experience with project delivery, with the projects delivered broadly within planned budgets and timelines. Project teams reported that:

- engagement and delivery targets were agreed upon beforehand between delivery partners and local authorities, which helped keep delivery on track
- positive working relationships between stakeholders involved in delivery, fostered by regular site visits and communication, were important enablers of effective delivery
- beneficiary engagement targets set at the design and planning stage have been met or surpassed

There were a few challenges encountered during project delivery: some were contextual factors (inflation and COVID-19), and others related to the structure of the Towns Fund (capacity funding and futureproofing of projects). Stakeholders reported that:

- Inflation and the COVID-19 pandemic negatively affected delivery, leading to higher running costs and supply chain problems.
- Towns Fund capacity funding was not available to mitigate the impact of inflation on running costs during delivery since project teams had used this funding at the design and planning stage.
- Futureproofing the projects was challenging. In particular, no funding was allocated as part of the Towns Fund to continue supporting project operation and maintenance in the future. Additionally, project teams indicated that they were unaware of any other MHCLG or public funding available for this purpose.

Indicative insights – monitoring and evaluation

The reporting data and frequency requested by MHCLG were viewed by local authorities as proportionate to the funding allocated. This may be because the first three case studies were selected from the set of projects which had already completed and, therefore, may not be representative of all projects and their monitoring experiences. Local authorities are responsible for submitting mandatory monitoring reports to MHCLG every six months. Project teams also reported that effective monitoring and evaluation was enabled by:

- a cascading approach to collecting monitoring data and data quality checks put in place by the local authorities, which helped to ensure that accurate data was submitted to MHCLG in a timely manner

- providing Town Deal Boards with visibility of monitoring reports, which helped to ensure they were aware of project delivery progress and to identify solutions to any delays for Town Deal recipients

However, the frequency and reasoning of MHCLG's monitoring requirements post-project completion were not fully understood by project teams. In particular, they reported a lack of understanding as to how MHCLG used monitoring data once projects were completed and the sites were being used for their intended purposes and did not know how long projects needed to be monitored in order to meet MHCLG requirements.

Next steps

The next interim report is intended to be completed in Spring 2025. It is expected to include emerging process findings from an expanded set of case studies, as well as initial emerging findings from the intervention-level impact evaluation. The remainder of the evaluation timeline is expected to proceed in line with the timeline set out in [Section 8 of the feasibility report](#).

1 Introduction

The Towns Fund is one of several government funding schemes managed by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG – formerly the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, which was renamed on 9 July 2024) and aimed at stimulating growth in England by improving the economic performance of towns which are traditionally left behind. The Towns Fund has two major components: Town Deals and the Future High Streets Fund competition.

Frontier Economics and BMG Research were commissioned by MHCLG to undertake an evaluation of the Towns Fund. [A feasibility report](#) for this evaluation was published in January 2024, and the evaluation itself is expected to conclude in March 2026.

The evaluation of the Towns Fund is divided into three complementary evaluations: (i) an impact evaluation, (ii) a value for money evaluation, and (iii) a process evaluation. The impact and process evaluations are based in part on evidence gathered through 20 case studies of grouped projects from a given town/place.

This report sets out initial, indicative process evaluation findings from the first three case studies. These aim to generate learnings for any appropriate adaptations during the remainder of Towns Fund delivery and to provide a baseline for determining if what works changes over the funding period. The report is structured as follows:

- **Section 2:** background on the Towns Fund funding process
- **Section 3:** background on the process evaluation and analysis carried out for this report
- **Section 4:** indicative findings related to the design and planning of the Towns Fund
- **Section 5:** indicative findings related to the structure and delivery of the Towns Fund
- **Section 6:** indicative findings related to the monitoring and evaluation of the Towns Fund
- **Section 7:** next steps for the evaluation

This report does not include any findings from the impact or value for money evaluations, as the projects included in the first three case studies have all recently been completed, and more time is needed for the impacts to emerge. All process evaluation findings should be considered preliminary and are subject to change following further analysis and data collection from 2024 to 2026.

2 Background on the Towns Fund funding process

The UK government has identified that some towns and high streets are prospering while others are lagging. While different places face different sets of problems, those lagging often share similar issues, which reinforce each other and lead to a negative feedback cycle.

For these struggling towns and high streets, the government has identified that the following issues need to be addressed:

- physical and digital disconnection, especially to markets
- outdated land use and built environment
- insufficient skills and business support
- lack of strategic, local economic management

The presence of one or more of these issues can be associated with wider economic and social problems, including intergenerational unemployment or deprivation, crime and anti-social behaviour, poor mental and physical health outcomes, poor social mobility, depopulation, and low pride-in-place and civic participation.

The Towns Fund is one of several government funding schemes managed by MHCLG. It aims to address these issues and consists of two major funding programmes: Town Deals and the Future High Streets Fund.

- Town Deals: an allocation-based fund aimed at driving towns' economic regeneration to deliver long-term economic and productivity growth.
- Future High Streets Fund: a competition-based fund aimed at renewing and reshaping town centres and high streets ('places') to drive growth, improve the experience and ensure future economic sustainability.

A summary of the overall funding process for Town Deals and Future High Streets Fund is set out in Sections 2.1 and 2.2.

2.1 Town Deals

Town Deals funding allocations were determined by a formula which ensured each of the 101 towns selected for participation received up to £25m of funding (in exceptional circumstances, such as the £39m Blackpool Town Deal, they received more), depending on their level of need. Of the 1,082 towns in England, the 50% most income-deprived were

initially selected to form a shortlist. These 541 shortlisted towns were then scored and ranked, using a weighted formula, across seven criteria to reflect local needs and growth potential while considering their geographical location. At the end of the selection process, 101 towns were chosen.

Local authorities were requested to form a Town Deal Board to support the development of a Town Investment Plan that sets out a clear vision and strategy for the town. Decision-making is overseen by the Town Deal Board, working in collaboration with a lead local authority acting as the accountable body. All decisions relating to funding are signed off by the Town Deal Board Chair and the Chief Financial Officer of the participating local authority. Town Deal Boards can comprise representatives from the private sector, local government, local MPs, former local enterprise partnerships, local businesses/investors, community/voluntary sector representatives, other public sector bodies, education providers and other relevant local organisations. In November 2022, the [Town Deal Boards Supplementary Guidance](#) was published to set out MHCLG's expectations for Town Deal Boards as places move into the delivery phase of their Town Deal.

All Town Investment Plans were subject to the same assessment process carried out by MHCLG officials. This assessment looked at the overall vision and strategy for the town and the individual projects proposed. Once funding recipients had passed a Town Investment Plan assessment, MHCLG provided them with a Town Deal offer and commitment of funding up to £25m (or more, in exceptional circumstances).

Upon receipt of a Town Deal offer, places were invited to develop project business cases pertaining to the projects outlined in their Town Investment Plans. Business cases were developed by local areas and signed off by the lead local authority's Section 151 Officer. Most assurance was carried out by participating local authorities. However, MHCLG were sent a 'Summary Document' and 'Monitoring and Evaluation Plan' for review based on the content of the entire business case. Funding was released by MHCLG on a project-by-project basis following the successful review of each Summary Document and Monitoring and Evaluation Plan and according to the financial profiles included in their submission.

Capacity funding was provided by MHCLG for local authorities to support the development of investment plans, business cases, project plans and Summary Documents. This support included the option to use third-party consultants, where needed. Local authorities were also able to receive free support from the Towns Fund Delivery Partner consortium and other government agencies when working on investment plans, business cases and project plans.

Local authorities are accountable bodies for Town Deals funding and may deliver projects directly or appoint delivery partners to lead. Projects can be changed via Project Adjustment Requests during delivery. Previously, all Project Adjustment Requests needed departmental approval. However, since August 2023, local authorities have the freedom to make output, outcome and funding changes up to a threshold of 30%, provided they consult the relevant stakeholders and the changes have the support of the local MP or

MPs (if the deal affects multiple constituencies). For the purpose of monitoring, local authorities must submit progress reports to MHCLG every six months during project delivery and up to three years after the project ends. The Town Deal Board is responsible for overseeing the report submission and risks to project delivery.

2.2 Future High Streets Fund

Future High Streets Fund funding was determined through a competition, with 72 towns being successful and sharing over £830 million to deliver projects.

Local authorities had to follow a two-phase application process. For phase one, local authorities submitted an expression of interest for MHCLG to review. Expressions of interest outlined the challenges facing the town centre and a strategic vision to tackle these challenges. If the expression of interest was successful, the local authorities moved on to phase two. In phase two, local authorities were invited to develop and submit their business cases and project plans. MHCLG then assessed business cases in accordance with the [HM Treasury Green Book](#) appraisal criteria for capital funding.

Successful local authorities then appointed delivery partners or in-house teams, as required, to deliver their projects. Local authorities were able to get support from the High Streets Task Force during project delivery.

Previously, all Project Adjustment Requests needed departmental approval, but since August 2023, local authorities have the freedom to make output, outcome and funding changes up to a threshold of 30%, provided that relevant stakeholders have been consulted and the changes have the support of the local MP or MPs (if the deal affects multiple constituencies). As with Town Deals, local authorities are required to submit progress reports to MHCLG every six months for monitoring purposes during the delivery of Future High Streets Fund projects and up to three years post-completion.

3 Background on the process evaluation

The primary objective of process evaluations is to understand how interventions are delivered and whether any factors help or hinder their effectiveness. Process evaluations help to explain why impacts caused by interventions occur or if they might have occurred differently in other circumstances.

The evaluation framework for the Towns Fund process evaluation distils the Towns Fund into four themes:

- **Design and planning of the Towns Fund and associated interventions:** focusing on the design and planning of the Towns Fund and associated projects, including risk management, financial accountability and the design of the fund.
- **Structure and delivery of the Towns Fund and associated interventions:** focusing on the structure and implementation of the Towns Fund activities, with an emphasis on how the approach of Town Deals and the Future High Streets Fund may help facilitate outcomes and impacts.
- **Evaluation and monitoring of delivery and outcomes:** focusing on how delivery and outcomes are monitored and evaluated.
- **Management and governance of the Towns Fund:** focusing on overall governance and programme management, including risk management and financial accountability.

This interim report explores the emerging findings for the first three themes. The fourth theme (management and governance of the Towns Fund) is not included in this report as the data required has yet to be collected and will be incorporated in future reports. Moreover, findings related to the structure and delivery of the Towns Fund only focus on indicative insights on the delivery aspect and the results related to the evaluation and monitoring only focus on indicative insights on the monitoring aspect. This is due to there being insufficient data available at present to inform robust findings on the structure and evaluation aspects. The next interim report, which will contain further information on the structure, evaluation, and management and governance of the Towns Fund, is expected to be completed in Spring 2025.

The initial process evaluation findings are based on interviews/focus groups with local authorities, delivery partners, Town Deal Board members and bid consultants from the first three case studies (two Town Deals and one Future High Streets Fund). The case studies were selected to ensure a range of project types and geographic areas were included in the evaluation. More information on the case study selection process is available in [Section 5 of the feasibility report](#). Data collection for these case studies took place from January to April 2024 and reflects the experience, to date, of the stakeholders interviewed. The stakeholders interviewed for the three case studies include seven local authority representatives, seven delivery partner organisation representatives, four Town Deal

Board members, four bid consultants and three individuals classified as 'other relevant stakeholders'.

A case and theme-based approach ('framework' analysis) was used to analyse the in-depth interviews and focus group data. It involved the evaluators:

- familiarising themselves with the evidence
- developing a framework to organise emerging themes (where columns represent themes and rows represent individual participants or focus groups)
- summarising the qualitative data according to the key themes and sub-themes
- working through the summarised data to explore the full range of processes, experiences and views, and to seek similarities, differences and their reasons.

[Section 7 of the feasibility report](#) provides more detail on the Towns Fund process evaluation's aims and objectives, the evaluation framework used and the evaluation methodology.

4 Indicative insights – design and planning

4.1 Aspects that worked well

Overall, the project teams interviewed for the case studies reported that the design and planning process was effective, underpinned by regular communications, meetings and a clear task division between local authorities, bid consultants and delivery partners. Local authorities typically led the development of investment plans (for Town Deals), expression of interest/applications (for the Future High Streets Fund) and business cases. Additionally, bid consultants were appointed to assist with the development of investment plans/ applications and business cases.

When designing investment plans and selecting projects, local authorities considered wider plans and priorities of their local areas. They sought to identify projects for Towns Fund funding which addressed these priorities. For example, project teams assessed local issues that hindered economic growth or quality of life and subsequently identified projects that would address these challenges. For Town Deal recipients, project identification involved local authorities conducting competitive bid rounds in which delivery partners applied for project funding. The applicants were then required to indicate which investment plan priority their project addressed.

For Town Deal recipients, the involvement of Town Deal Boards in developing investment plans and selecting projects helped to maximise benefits for the local area. According to local authorities, Town Deal Boards provided constructive feedback on investment plan drafts, strengthening their submissions. Town Deal Boards were also involved in project selection by supporting local authorities in assessing delivery partners' applications and by jointly agreeing to whom to award the grants.

Town Deal Boards consist of a wide range of local stakeholders from the public, private and third sectors. Local authorities identified suitable members to include in their Town Deal Boards using a [list of stakeholder types](#) provided by MHCLG, which outlined both mandatory and optional stakeholders to be included. The wide range of interests and sectors represented on Town Deal Boards ensured local consensus on the most effective way Towns Fund funding should be allocated in the investment planning and project selection stages. Local authorities reported that this helped to maximise the overall benefits for the local area. Local authorities also described the individuals they approached to be part of the Town Deal Board as responsive and willing to join.

For Town Deal recipients, effective collaboration between local authorities and delivery partners when designing and planning projects meant there was agreement on the designs and the facilities built were fit for purpose. This collaboration also ensured delivery partners had input into the facilities they would run before construction work had commenced. This was enabled by regular communication between local authorities and delivery partners, including in-person meetings and site visits. Delivery partners indicated

that local authorities were willing to receive and consider their input when designing and planning the project or trusted them to lead the design and planning stage.

End beneficiaries, including local residents and businesses, were consulted on project plans ahead of implementation to ensure local support for projects. They were consulted by local authorities and delivery partners (sometimes supported by Town Deal Boards) in two ways:

- Formal consultations: Local authorities and delivery partners set a date and public building or online forum where the consultation would be held. Local authorities publicised this information beforehand.
- Informal and ad-hoc consultations: Local authorities approached their existing engagement groups, or Town Deal Board members approached residents in the street to seek their opinions on project plans.

Engaging beneficiaries ahead of implementation was reported to be an important enabler of project design and planning. Project teams explained that consultations had good attendance rates, and that there were high levels of interest in and backing of the projects among local residents and businesses. Consultations helped spread awareness of the projects among beneficiaries and allowed beneficiaries to raise concerns with contractors and local authorities, who could then address them.

4.2 Aspects that worked less well

Project teams reported key challenges at the design and planning stage. In particular, project teams faced difficulties due to:

- tight timelines to submit investment plans, applications for funding and business cases
- limited existing resourcing within local authorities for drafting the required documents
- limited expertise within local authorities in drafting business cases, including a lack of knowledge about which elements needed to be included in their business cases and how to calculate benefit-cost ratios

Project teams described the Towns Fund capacity funding as a key factor in overcoming these challenges. In particular, the capacity funding allowed project teams to hire external consultants to support the drafting of investment plans, applications for funding and business cases. This helped project teams meet tight timelines and overcome internal resource constraints. It also allowed project teams to obtain the external expertise needed to fill the gaps in their existing knowledge as to how to draft and what information to include in business cases.

The support received from the Towns Fund Delivery Partner consortium and MHCLG Area Leads was also viewed as helpful in preparing business cases and overcoming the reported challenges. Local authorities attended sessions run by the Towns Fund Delivery Partner consortium. They also approached MHCLG Area Leads for support with business cases, mainly with regard to what information they needed to include in the submission and how to calculate benefit-cost ratios.

5 Indicative insights – structure and delivery

Indicative insights concerning the structure of the Towns Fund are not reported at this stage, as sufficient data to inform robust findings is not available. Insights on structure will be reported when more data becomes available. As a result, this section focuses on emerging insights related to the delivery of the Towns Fund.

5.1 Aspects that worked well

Overall, the project teams interviewed for the first three case studies reported a positive experience with project delivery, with the projects being delivered broadly within planned budgets and timelines. However, this may be because these case studies were selected from the set of projects which had already been completed and, therefore, may not be representative of all the projects and their delivery experiences. The findings in this section should be interpreted considering this potential limitation, and they are subject to change as the case studies continue and projects that have experienced delays begin to be included.

Delivery partners and local authorities agreed on engagement and delivery targets in advance, which helped with delivery schedules. Project delivery consisted of contractors being appointed through a competition process via existing frameworks to carry out construction and refurbishment works, followed by delivery partners or in-house project deliverers operating the newly redeveloped facilities.

During the delivery stage, Town Deal Boards (for Town Deals projects) and MHCLG Area Leads (for all projects) provided oversight and supported local authorities in addressing issues identified through project monitoring. However, the involvement of Town Deal Boards and MHCLG Area Leads was minimal during the delivery stage due to two factors: the delivery partners or in-house project delivery teams were responsible for project delivery, and projects were delivered in line with their investment and project plans without any major delivery problems arising. Stakeholders reported that Town Deal Boards worked with local authorities to address any minor issues identified through project monitoring (more details are available in Section 6).

Positive working relationships between stakeholders involved in project delivery were identified as key enablers of effective delivery. Stakeholders included local authorities, appointed contractors and delivery partners. These positive relationships were fostered through a combination of:

- project teams (including local authorities and delivery partners where relevant) visiting sites regularly during delivery to verify the progress first-hand
- clear and open communication between all parties involved

- local authorities and delivery partners responding to delivery issues in a timely manner

The project teams that were interviewed indicated that beneficiary engagement targets, which were set at the design and planning stage, have been either met or surpassed. This included engagement from harder-to-reach groups, such as people with disabilities and older people. Beneficiary engagement was supported by the local authorities and delivery partners promoting projects on social media, holding public consultations, and organising guided site visits.

5.2 Aspects that worked less well

Inflation and the COVID-19 pandemic were contextual factors that negatively affected delivery, leading to higher running costs within project sites and supply chain problems. These supply chain problems had knock-on effects on delivery timelines. Given the scale of these unexpected cost impacts, local authorities' risk management processes could not adequately anticipate them. While the impact of inflation on running costs was still notable at the time the fieldwork for this interim report was being carried out, the project teams reported that supply chain issues caused by the COVID-19 pandemic improved over time and they were eventually able to source the equipment they needed for their projects.

Project teams reported that Towns Fund capacity funding was not available to mitigate the impact of inflation on running costs during delivery, as project teams had used this funding at the design and planning stage to pay consultants to draft investment plans, funding applications and business cases. Project teams described adjusting delivery timelines rather than adjusting the projects through project adjustment requests. However, given the limited sample of projects included in the interim process evaluation, this may not be representative of all projects that received Towns Fund funding.

Project teams also reported futureproofing to be a challenge. In particular, no funding was allocated as part of the Towns Fund to continue supporting future project operation and maintenance. Additionally, project teams indicated they were unaware of other MHCLG or public funding available for this purpose.

6 Indicative insights – monitoring and evaluation

Indicative insights concerning the evaluation of the Towns Fund are not reported at this stage, as sufficient data to inform robust findings is not available at present. Insights on evaluation will be reported at a later date, when more data becomes available. As a result, this section focuses on emerging insights related to the monitoring of the Towns Fund.

6.1 Aspects that worked well

The local authorities viewed the reporting data and frequency requested by MHCLG as proportionate to the funding allocated, and project teams considered the monitoring requirements a justified feature of accessing public funding. The local authorities interviewed reported that they are responsible for submitting mandatory monitoring reports to MHCLG every six months. The data provided by local authorities to MHCLG in these submissions was typically related to project finances (i.e. spending to date), progress against delivery outputs, and outcomes. The release of funding, as well as the requirements for monitoring and evaluation of the outputs and outcomes, are aimed at the local authorities committing and defraying spend, completing the project, using the asset and realising the outputs, outcomes and benefits.

Local authorities have adopted a cascading approach to collecting monitoring data and established data quality assurance plans. This has ensured the data submitted to MHCLG is accurate and up-to-date. Under this cascading approach, local authorities ask delivery partners and contractors to provide spending, milestones, and completion data. The data is then verified by the local authorities and inputted into the MHCLG reporting format before submission. Quality checks conducted by local authorities include in-person site visits to assess the progress of redevelopment works and verification of the financial information provided by delivery partners and contractors against invoices and milestones achieved to date. Once project sites were operational, delivery partners started collecting data on outcomes (for example, site usage) for the local authorities to integrate into MHCLG monitoring reports. Local authorities communicating timelines to delivery partners in advance helped ensure timely submission of monitoring data. This allowed sufficient time for delivery partners to submit the data to local authorities and for local authorities to conduct quality checks.

For Town Deals, local authorities gave Town Deal Boards visibility of monitoring reports for formal sign-off before these were submitted to MHCLG – this was a requirement of the Towns Fund. Doing so helped ensure that the Town Deal Boards were regularly informed about the progress of the project delivery. When this monitoring activity identified delivery issues, such as project delays, these were discussed by the local authorities and the Town Deal Boards to find a solution or plan to overcome them. However, the project teams

interviewed described how their monitoring did not reveal major delivery issues that would significantly impact timelines, such as delays of multiple months or contractors and delivery partners not delivering what they were asked; any performance issues identified were minor. As the first three case studies were drawn from a list of projects that had already been completed, this finding may not be representative of all the projects that received Towns Fund funding.

6.2 Aspects that worked less well

Project teams did not fully understand the frequency and reasoning of MHCLG's monitoring requirements post-completion. The local authorities and delivery partners interviewed had previous experience with public funding and the associated monitoring requirements. However, while they understood that monitoring is necessary for accessing public funding, some questioned the ultimate purpose of monitoring for MHCLG once projects were established. In particular, they reported a lack of understanding of how MHCLG used monitoring data once projects were completed and the sites were being used for their intended purposes. In addition, they did not know how long projects needed to be monitored in order to meet MHCLG requirements. Overall, while project teams were not opposed to the monitoring requirements, they wanted more information on why they were being asked to collect and report data after the projects were completed.

7 Next steps

The evaluation is expected to conclude in March 2026 and will focus on projects that finish by April 2025. The next steps in the evaluation include:

- engaging with local authorities selected for case studies to build on the emerging evidence set out in this report
- collecting additional baseline data for the impact evaluation, particularly on pride-in-place and local wellbeing, to complement the data collected through the project monitoring requirements
- refining the economic methodology for the impact evaluation

The next interim report is planned for completion in Spring 2025. It is expected to include emerging process findings from an expanded set of case studies and initial emerging findings from the intervention-level impact evaluation. The remainder of the evaluation timeline is expected to proceed in line with the timeline set out in [Section 8 of the feasibility report](#).