

Places for Growth

Formative Evaluation Report

24 July 2024

Abstract

This article summarises the findings of the process, impact, value for money evaluation and benefits realisation for the Cabinet Office's Places for Growth (PfG) programme. The evaluation found that PfG has been successful in delivering some of its stated objectives including core relocation targets and creating new career opportunities for people across the UK. However, there remain challenges in meeting senior civil servant relocation targets, limited capacity within departments to deliver on PfG ambitions, and a coherent strategy for placemaking in the PfG locations.

Keywords: Places for Growth, process evaluation, impact evaluation, value for money evaluation, Cabinet Office, relocations, SCS targets, Civil Service modernisation, levelling up, flexible working

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1 Executive Summary

The Places for Growth (PfG) programme was announced as part of Budget 2020. The subsequent Declaration on Government Reform¹ and Levelling Up White Paper² set out the ambition to relocate Government roles from London under the Places for Growth programme. The programme has a headline target of relocating 22,000 roles outside London by 2027³, alongside ensuring 50% of UK-based Senior Civil Servants (SCS) are located outside London by 2030. The programme also targets a more geographically diverse and representative Civil Service, including in senior leadership positions, while simultaneously aiming to generate wider impacts such as reducing people and estate costs, generating more representative policymaking, improving career opportunities outside London, and supporting the levelling up agenda.

This report sets out the findings from the formative process, impact, and value for money evaluation of the PfG programme. A theory-based realist evaluation method was adopted to respond to the process and impact evaluation questions, with further detail on this method and evaluation limitations identified within the scope and methodology section of this report. Evaluation findings are summarised against each question below:

1.1 Process Evaluation

Evaluation Question #1: During the initial years of PfG delivery, what worked well and for whom (people and places)? Why?

- **Structured governance has helped increase accountability against PfG's shared objectives:** The inclusion of PfG within key governance boards on overall role relocations has provided visibility and accountability within departments for the programme and promoted measurable progress towards certain relocation targets.
- **Clarity on PfG targets has generated momentum to achieve PfG's objectives in departments:** Both the original relocation targets and frequent status updates on progress have been communicated through the PfG governance structures and political announcements, providing a strong feedback mechanism and clarity around programme objectives for departments and programme officials.
- **The Darlington Economic Campus (DEC) serves as an exemplar for other PfG locations:** The DEC has served as a flagship model across the Civil Service for successful relocations, achieving above Civil Service averages for representation of SCS and HM Treasury policy roles outside London.

¹ Declaration on Government Reform, HMG, 2021

² Levelling Up the United Kingdom, HMG, 2022

³ At the programme's inception the headline target was relocating 22,000 roles by 2030 with 2027 taking effect in December 23

- **Other regional location strategies are also experiencing initial successes:** Beyond the DEC, various regional locations have seen some initial successes, with interview respondents noting the increased cross-department and cross-profession collaboration and increased pride in place.
- **Departmental support to adapt to changes brought about by PfG was generally perceived as effective:** Survey responses indicate a general satisfaction with support to adapt to changes brought about by PfG, with 41.3% of respondents 'Somewhat Satisfied' or 'Very Satisfied', while just 25.3% were 'Somewhat Dissatisfied' or 'Very Dissatisfied'. This support was strongest for those in relocated roles, compared to those in London or already based outside London.

Evaluation Question #2: During the initial years of PfG delivery, what did not work or work less well than expected? Why?

- **The proportion of SCS roles based out of London is lagging behind target:** As of November 2023, 30.9% of SCS roles are outside of London, and based on historic growth rates the targeted 50% by 2030 would be missed. Interview and survey responses indicated factors including the lack of an interim target; the persistent London-centric culture of the Civil Service; and SCS recruitment preferences for including London geography within advertised posts.
- **There is limited alignment in estate management between the Government Property Agency, PfG, and departments:** With GPA working to reduce the overall Civil Service estate, it was acknowledged that sometimes GPA or Departmental objectives have competed and challenged PfG delivery timeframes, affecting both estate and relocation commitments.
- **Limited central and departmental resource has presented difficulties for programme coordination such as the Heads of Place network:** Networks such as those led by the Heads of Place were viewed positively due to their coordination of departments and placemaking in locations. However, it was noted that many were performing PfG duties as a "*corporate contribution*", performing volunteer-led activities due to insufficient mainstream resource to drive PfG objectives within their respective departments.
- **Relocation support was inconsistently experienced causing satisfaction concerns:** Some survey respondents reported difficulties in the relocation process and timeframes, particularly in the effort required to find new housing, schooling, and other lifestyle factors in an area far from their current base. This was traced to different approaches and support being offered per department, providing varied experiences. It should be noted that given PfG relies largely on relocating churned roles rather than physically relocating civil servants, the impact is relatively narrow.
- **The definition of relocation was applied inconsistently by a small number of departments:** While the PfG programme maintains its own

definition of 'relocation', its decision to accommodate more than one reporting methodology from departments has resulted in inconsistency in relation to a small number of roles.

Evaluation Question #3: How did Covid-19 and post-pandemic work arrangements impact London and PfG locations?

- **The normalisation of flexible working and a wider talent pool may have positively impacted on PfG implementation:** Covid-19 reshaped workplace dynamics, accelerating flexible working and prompting relocations from London under the PfG programme. As seen from PfG outpacing its relocation target, the pandemic's effect therefore seems to have positively impacted PfG's progress towards key headline measures. Moreover, the shift to flexible recruitment may have expanded the Civil Service talent pool and may have contributed to the increased perception and confidence that individuals can hold effective leadership roles outside of London.

Evaluation Question #4: Were there any unexpected or unintended issues in the delivery of the intervention?

- **Disparities in departmental resourcing and delivery can lead to uneven efforts across departments and a "free riding" dynamic:** Interview feedback suggested that the fragmented execution of relocation strategies, support mechanisms, and outreach initiatives within the PfG programme influences outcomes. This variation in departmental resourcing and execution can result in a free-riding dynamic, where departments may rely on the overperformance of others to meet collective PfG targets, leading to uneven efforts and potentially impacting the overall success of the programme.
- **Ambiguity surrounding new directives sometimes hampered achieving PfG objectives:** New directives that occurred midway through the programme, such as the inclusion of the Plan for London in the programme, 60% office attendance mandate, and Civil Service headcount caps, created confusion around workforce and estate planning. The preference for return to office working may also hamper civil servants' confidence in the long-term viability of locations outside of London, due to the perceived revival of in-person relationships, which subsequently reinforces the centrality of London-based offices.

Evaluation Question #5: What lessons can be learned and applied to improve future PfG delivery? What can be improved?

- **Harmonise relocation plans with estate strategies:** Develop a harmonised operational framework aligning departmental relocation plans with the GPA's estate strategies and other departments holding large estates, such as HMRC and DWP. This will address logistical challenges and implementation issues. An integrated policy approach to align PfG objectives with new directives like the 60% office attendance mandate should also be considered. Regular policy

alignment workshops, a unified planning system, adaptable estate management solutions, and pilot schemes with feedback mechanisms would also help to harmonise estate strategies.

- **Strategically develop SCS talent pipelines:** Foster cross-departmental collaboration in building SCS talent pipelines through a centrally coordinated system or via regional cooperation, to address bottlenecks at the Grade 6 level and facilitate talent mobility across departments within non-London locations. This should be augmented with refinements to recruitment processes across co-located departments.
- **Standardise definition of relocation and methodology for tracking relocated roles:** Address inconsistencies in the interpretations of the term 'relocation' by a small number of departments to support transparent and accurate reporting of PfG outcomes.

Evaluation Question #6: How can departments be further supported to develop and deliver their relocation/placemaking programmes?

- **Enhance cross-departmental collaboration and central coordination:** Establish a standardised framework led by the Cabinet Office to ensure consistent implementation of PfG objectives across departments and the GPA, allowing central objectives to be consistently devolved and department-specific plans and benefits to be developed. This should be augmented with sufficient resource and capacity to facilitate collaboration.
- **Broaden relocation support:** Establish a Cabinet Office-led relocation hub or capability to offer comprehensive support to relocating civil servants, addressing disparities in relocation experiences. This would standardise the experience of civil servants on relocation packages, alongside targeting a more streamlined application route to expedite requests.

1.2 Impact Evaluation

Evaluation Question #1: Did PfG achieve the expected outcomes and to what extent?

A summary of the assessment against the ToC outcomes is provided below. The ToC can be found in Appendix A.

Table 1.1: Assessment of theory of change outcomes

Expected outcomes	Assessment	Strength of Evidence
Role Relocation		
Relocation of 15,000 department and public bodies roles outside Greater London by 2025	Achieved	Strong

Expected outcomes	Assessment	Strength of Evidence
Relocation of 22,000 roles outside Greater London by 2027	On track	Strong
50% UK based SCS outside of London by 2030	At risk	Strong
Reduced workforce in London to 75,000 by 2030	At risk	Strong
Policy Presence		
Increased Civil Service presence in the UK Nations	Partially Achieved	Moderate
Increased number of all policy making roles in the regions and nations	Inconclusive	Weak
Increased thematic skills-based campus and Government Hubs	Achieved	Strong
Workforce Efficiency		
Reduced rate of churn in delegated grades in the regions and nations	Not Achieved	Moderate
Less BAU activity requiring London Travel and increased Ministerial and Permanent Secretary presence outside of London	Not Achieved	Moderate
Estate Efficiency		
London estate reduced to 20 Buildings by 2026 and consolidation of regional estates into hubs	At risk	Strong
Reduced Carbon Emissions	Inconclusive	Weak

Evaluation Question #2: Did PfG achieve the expected impacts and to what extent?

A summary of the expected impacts against the ToC outcomes is provided below:

Table 1.2: Assessment of theory of change impacts

Expected Impact	Assessment	Strength of Evidence
A modern, geographically diverse, and representative Civil Service	Supported	Moderate

Expected Impact	Assessment	Strength of Evidence
Contributing to Levelling up agenda (local economic growth, job multiplier)	Supported	Moderate
Strengthening the union	Partially Supported	Moderate
Better policy making, closer to the communities it serves	Inconclusive	Weak
Career opportunities in the regions	Partially Supported	Moderate
Reduced people costs	Supported	Moderate
Reduced estate costs	Supported	Moderate
Cleaner and green Civil Service (contribute to reduced carbon emissions)	Inconclusive	Weak

Evaluation Question #3: To what extent have different approaches to relocation impacted in different ways on PfG locations?

- Departmental location strategies generate various benefits in locations:** The Darlington Economic Campus exemplifies a successful relocation model, catalysing local economic development and diversifying Civil Service perspectives. Sheffield's policy campus, Department of Health and Social Care's second headquarters in Leeds and multi-department hubs in major cities like Manchester enhance cross-department collaboration and community integration. Department-specific hubs such as the Home Office in Stoke-on-Trent, target local economic contributions and sector strengths. These varied approaches underscore PfG impacts on different locations, highlighting the significance of SCS presence and tailored relocation models in achieving region-specific objectives.

Evaluation Question #4: Has the intervention resulted in any unintended outcomes?

- Feelings of isolation among relocated civil servants:** Survey insights indicate that PfG inadvertently led to feelings of isolation among some relocated staff, in which they were placed in locations with no other team members. Interview responses suggest inconsistent strategies in location planning and informal office networks have sometimes left colleagues feeling disconnected.
- Insecurity from London-based civil servants:** Survey and interview insights indicate the PfG programme has inadvertently led to apprehension among

some London-based civil servants regarding their perception of career progression and the potential reduction of roles within the capital.

Evaluation Question #5: What generalisable lessons have we learned about impact?

- **Strategic approaches to culture and placemaking:** Beyond a focus on numbers and targets, there is an opportunity for more emphasis to be placed on culture and placemaking, since a key objective of PfG is to foster thriving, cohesive communities and support regional development. The importance of embedding civil servants was acknowledged, encouraging meaningful engagement with local communities (e.g., cultural centres), businesses (e.g., local business associations), and civic institutions (e.g., universities, places of worship), and cultivating a sense of belonging in new locations, which necessitates a coherent people culture and placemaking strategy specific to the localities.
- **Improved communication with London-based civil servants:** More transparent communication, management of expectations, and reassurance that career prospects are still abundant in London would help to reduce fears from London-based civil servants that SCS opportunities in London are becoming much more difficult to acquire.

1.3 Value for Money Evaluation

Evaluation question #1: What were the costs of delivering PfG? Has PfG been cost-effective (compared to alternatives/doing nothing)?

- **The central PfG programme has cost almost £6m to date:** From the inception of the PfG programme until December 2023 (FY 23/24), a total budget of £5.8m has been allocated, translating to £638.52 per role relocated as of Q3 2023. This includes spend on policy and communications, programme management, department engagement and delivery support, data and performance reporting and Heads of Place network from the point at which they joined PfG (August 2022). Per the limitations scoped in this report, this excludes expenditure incurred by participating departments from their respective budgets on implementation of the PfG programme.
- **Evidence suggests that the PfG may have been cost effective relative to a case where the roles were not relocated from London.** Rent and running cost data was provided for seven buildings in London with a total capacity of 22,325 that identified a cost per FTE of £2,508 (rent) and £4,198 (running costs). This compares favourably against the ten buildings provided for the PfG programme which had a total capacity of 8,338, and a cost per FTE of £1,684 (rent) and £1,853 (running costs). This suggests a net saving of £824 rent and £2,344 running costs per FTE in the PFG locations compared with London buildings.
- **This is also the case when considering salary costs of those in PfG regions compared to London.** Across all grades, salaries in the PfG

locations tend to be lower than in London, suggesting that the PFG programme may have contributed to lower people costs across the Civil Service than if those roles were to remain in London. It is notable that the differences are most pronounced in more senior grades, with salaries for G6/G7 and SCS roles being 23% and 18% lower compared with average costs in London.

Evaluation question #2: Is the intervention the best use of resources (compared to alternatives/doing nothing)

- **The PFG programme has demonstrated positive value for money in sampled locations, with an indicative benefit-cost ratio (BCR) of 3.9 to date.** This position is driven by substantial total benefits of £298.1m comprising net economic impacts of £152.3m (after accounting for economic displacement in London and the private sector in PFG regions), staff cost savings of £110.2m (£7,506 per FTE to date and £9,693 per FTE by 2030) and estate cost savings of £35.6m to date, as shown in Table 1.3 below. Furthermore, an indicative projected benefit-cost ratio for the first ten years of the PFG programme has been developed, identifying a BCR of the programme to date of 6.1, as shown in Table 1.4 below.

Table 1.3: Indicative benefit-cost ratio to 2023 (£m – 2023 Prices, Present Value)

Position	2021	2022	2023	Total
Benefits	32.1	106.9	159.0	298.1
Costs	11.6	30.1	34.4	76.1
Net Position	20.5	76.8	124.6	221.9
			BCR	3.9

Table 1.4: Indicative benefit-cost ratio to 2030 (£m – 2023 Prices, Present Value)

Position	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	Total
Benefits	32.1	106.9	159.0	181.1	200.6	217.5	234.1	250.7	267.3	283.9	1,933.3
Costs	11.6	30.1	34.4	30.2	31.8	33.4	34.9	36.3	37.7	39.0	319.4
Net Position	20.5	76.8	124.6	150.9	168.9	184.1	199.3	214.4	229.5	244.8	1,613.9
										BCR	6.1

- **The high BCR of the programme is a function of several key components:** The PFG programme is successfully targeting relocations at regions where new roles offered are higher than local pay⁴, providing economic benefits, and estate costs are lower. Additionally, whilst the PFG programme offers higher pay to local comparators, this is still at a lower value

⁴ An adjustment has been made to the number of roles relocated, to account for roles relocated from London that retain the London weighted salary for the first 2 years in their new post.

than London based staff providing staff cost savings. In place-based analysis, all relocated jobs are treated as additions to the local geographies in sampled locations.

- **The PfG programme remains on track to deliver the three projected benefits identified⁵ at the start of the programme:** These include anticipated improvements in staff and estate savings, along with economic benefits, all of which are on track to be realised by 2030.

Table 1.5: Comparison of initial projections versus current estimates of benefits by 2030

Initial Benefit Theme	Initial Projected Target ⁶	Current Estimate	Assessment
Staff Cost Savings (to 2030)	£672m	£825.2m	On track
Estate Cost Savings (pa by 2030)	£33m	£33.1m	On track
Local Economic Benefits (to 2030)	£260m - £1,370m	£881.3m	On track

- **Sensitivity analysis further confirms the programme's financial viability with positive BCRs across all scenarios ranging from 3.1 to 9.3:** Across all scenarios the BCR of the PfG programme is positive, including the low case scenario. This indicates that the programme's benefits exceed its costs in each case, suggesting the programme is financially viable and positively contributes to the overall PfG objectives.

Table 1.6: Indicative benefit-cost ratios to 2030 (£m – 2023 Prices, Present Value)

Position	Lower	Base	Higher
Benefits	860.0	1,933.3	3,333.5
Costs	279.1	319.4	358.1
Net Position	580.9	1,613.9	2,975.4
BCR	3.1	6.1	9.3

1.4 Benefit Realisation

Additionally, this report proposes a benefit realisation framework for the PfG programme.

- **A Benefit Framework has been developed to support future benefit realisation.** A comprehensive benefits framework has been produced to

⁵ [Letter from Alex Burghart MP on follow up evidence after the 28 March oral evidence session, 17 May 2023, Annex A.](#)

⁶ Projected benefits are discounted

guide future benefit realisation within the PfG. This framework categorises benefits stemming from identified outcomes and impacts in the theory of change, providing an important tool for all stakeholders involved in the programme. It includes 23 benefit profiles, distinguishing between monetisable and non-monetisable benefits. These profiles facilitate systematic assessment, aid in communication, and ensure consistent monitoring and evaluation processes.

- **The governance of benefit realisation within the PfG program involves the implementation of the Benefits Framework alongside a proposed benefits tracker:** This framework, overseen by a PfG Benefit Lead and supported by designated benefit profile owners, enables the quantification of impacts and identifies areas for improvement. A multi-year Monitoring and Evaluation Plan proposed ensures continual assessment and adaptation of the programme, supported by continued targeted research and stakeholder engagement to enhance programme effectiveness.
- **Key enabling activities to enhance benefit realisation for the PfG programme are captured, focusing on placemaking impact, successful civil service relocation, mitigating risks, regional variations in success, and strengthening benefits in PfG locations:** It provides recommendations to address challenges such as career progression concerns, inconsistent relocation support, lack of alignment with other directives, and limited alignment in estate management. Additionally, it emphasises understanding strategic workforce benefits, addressing recruitment challenges, retention monitoring, informed policymaking, improving ways of working, and establishing clear career pathways to ensure the long-term success of the PfG programme.

2 Introduction and Programme Background

2.1 Introduction

PfG was announced as part of Budget 2020. The subsequent Declaration on Government Reform and Levelling Up White Paper set out the ambition to relocate Government roles from London under the Places for Growth (PfG) programme. The programme has a headline target of relocating 22,000 roles outside of London by 2027⁷, alongside ensuring 50% of UK-based Senior Civil Servants (SCS) are located outside London by 2030. The programme also targets a more geographically diverse and representative Civil Service, including in senior leadership positions, while simultaneously aiming to generate wider impacts such as reducing people and estate costs, generating more representative policymaking, improving career opportunities outside London, and supporting the levelling up agenda.

The decision to evaluate PfG underscores the government's dedication to evidence-based policymaking, recognising the need for a thorough assessment, as confirmed at the Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee on 18 July 2023. This evaluation provides insights for policymakers on the programme's effectiveness and objectives to deliver a more modern, diverse, and inclusive Civil Service.

This formative evaluation and benefits realisation, whilst building on prior reports such as the Institute for Government's (IFG) evaluation of the impact of Civil Service relocation in Darlington, and lessons learnt from role relocation, represents the first-time process, impact, and value for money components of the programme have been evaluated along with a benefits realisation analysis.

2.2 Programme Background

The PfG programme, managed by the Cabinet Office, aims to relocate 22,000 roles (FTE) out of London by 2027, including an interim target of 15,000 roles to be relocated by 2025. PfG also targets 50% of UK-based Senior Civil Service (SCS) roles to be based outside London by 2030 (this would require 2,883 SCS to be outside London, compared to the 1,785 as of Q2 2023).

The Declaration on Government Reform⁸ sets out how the Government will look beyond London to all corners of the UK, to build a Civil Service that is representative of the country's communities. This includes having senior leaders working outside London. The PfG programme is a key component of delivery, with the aim of establishing a network of locations across the regions and nations of the UK where civil servants are rooted in local communities and developing policy reflective of the places they serve.

The programme's governance is overseen by the Portfolio Oversight Board, led by

⁷ The original target was by 2030, but given progress of the programme the Government announced 22,000 Government roles will now be relocated to places across the UK by 2027 - [Places for Growth Relocations Data 2020-2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

⁸ Declaration on Government Reform

the Second Permanent Secretary to His Majesty's Treasury. This board operates under the Location and Property Board, itself a component of the Civil Service Board. PfG also reports to the People Board, Civil Service Board, Reform Delivery Board, and the Union Policy Implementation (UPI) Committee on an ad hoc basis.

Since its inception following the Spending Review 2020 (SR 20), PfG has been allocated a budget of £5.8m up to December 2023 (FY 23/24). This funding covers various aspects of the programme including policy formulation, communications, programme management, engagement with departments, delivery support, data compilation and performance reporting. It also includes expenditure related to the Heads of Place network, which became part of PfG in August 2022.

Following the Spending Review 2021 (SR 21), each department committed to specific role relocation targets. The programme's integration into the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities' (DLUHC) *Levelling Up the United Kingdom* White Paper in 2022 further solidified its objectives. A number of departments have dedicated resources for PfG delivery, with coordination provided by the central PfG team within the Cabinet Office. The overall relocation targets for the whole of Government were agreed as part of the SR and departments set individual commitments to deliver relocations by 2025 and 2030(sic). Departments set their own location strategies according to their business needs and as part of internal workforce planning, but they do so within agreed programme design principles outlined in Appendix I. Progress is tracked through a Quarterly Relocation Tracker (QRT) report, which details the number of Government roles relocated and their new non-London locations.

PfG primarily uses London role churn as a mechanism for relocation, but it also counts civil servants who physically move out of London to a chosen location. To encourage relocation, a framework exists allowing departments to offer a package of support to cover relocation expenses up to £14,000, including £8,000 tax-free as well as two years of London weighting pay protection. Departments have ultimate discretion in whether or not to apply this relocation policy, as many departments do not have a ring-fenced budget for relocations.

The Plan for London (PfL) is managed concurrently to PfG by the same Senior Responsible Officer within the Cabinet Office. PfL aims to align London's property capacity with the anticipated workforce numbers by 2026 and 2030. This includes moving Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs) out of London unless a specific need is demonstrated, collocating within buildings where possible, sharing facilities like cafés and conference rooms between departments, and exiting central London properties by taking advantage of lease breaks, all in line with workforce reduction targets.

The PfG team has constructed a Theory of Change for Places for Growth that includes reference to the Plan for London as a key dependency. The Theory of Change sets out the inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes, and impact for the programme and is included in Appendix A. The headline policy objectives and programme targets are as follows:

1. Contribute towards the delivery of the Declaration on Government Reform and levelling-up agenda by relocating a minimum of 22,000 roles out of Greater London by 2030, with over 15,000 relocated by 2024/25.

2. Collaborate with departments to ensure roles within public bodies are located outside Greater London.
3. Support the majority of departments and public bodies to locate at least 50% of UK-based Senior Civil Service roles outside Greater London by 2030, addressing the current imbalance where the majority of senior roles are London based.
4. Increase UK Government presence, visibility and connection in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, by ensuring relevant policy and senior decision-making roles are located there to contribute to UK policy making.
5. Help to ensure that the Civil Service and administration of Government is more representative and better connected with communities including academia and the wider public sector across the UK.
6. Help address the recruitment and retention challenges facing the Civil Service by promoting PfG locations across the United Kingdom, including through local plans, as great places to live and work. London will remain a distinct Civil Service location with diverse career opportunities.
7. Support the reduction of estate costs by taking advantage of co-location opportunities as well as a reduction in people costs by increasing the number of Senior Civil Service and policy-focused roles relocating from Greater London.
8. Contribute to the reduction of carbon emissions and the building of a Civil Service that is cleaner and greener as part of the UK's net zero targets by supporting civil servants to work flexibly, closer to their homes, in sustainable buildings.

The core components of the programme include thematic campuses, whereby PfG is encouraging departments to recognise where clustering opportunities exist between departments in a location with related policy areas or skills expertise can be brought together. This cluster brings policy makers, functions and professions closer to their peers in other departments as well as locating them close to relevant industry and ALB stakeholders. A key example is the Darlington Economic Campus, (DEC), bringing together several departments into a single location around aligned policy themes. The Sheffield Policy Campus recognises the presence of a large proportion of the policy profession and encourages collaboration on shared policy priorities. The Department of Health and Social care has established its second headquarters in Leeds, and alongside NHS England and other health providers has formed a Health and Social Care Hub. Other locations are clustering skills for example there is a growing presence of digital skills in Manchester and an increasing focus on cyber in Belfast.

Another component of PfG is the Government Hubs, which are located in all four nations of the United Kingdom, providing a network of modern, digitally enabled, shared workspaces for the UK Civil Service. The initial roll out of hubs was instigated by HMRC but the second phase of the programme is being delivered via the Government Property Agency (GPA). The aim of the hubs programme is to create multi-occupancy government buildings which are close to major transport hubs in

regional cities across the UK which will enable and encourage Smarter Ways of Working, whole-life costs savings across the civil estate and be environmentally sustainable to help meet the government's Net Zero Carbon commitment. The rollout of hubs will allow the Civil Service to be much more adaptable to hybrid ways of working, utilising technology to enable benefits such as GovPass, which would allow civil servants to freely access any building across the Civil Service estate for which they hold the appropriate level of security clearance for.

PfG targets contribute toward cross-government strategies and policies, such as Levelling Up through the following activities:

- Levelling-up the Civil Service - improving social mobility by increasing opportunities for people from a wider range of backgrounds to better reflect the country.
- Providing economic boost in small cities and towns across the UK, through the relocation of Civil Service and public service roles; and
- Ensuring regional voices are built into national policy through building relationships and wider sector engagement, which is key to changing ways of working and building 'great people'.

3 Evaluation Scope and Methodology

3.1 Evaluation Scope and Questions

The scope of this formative in-flight evaluation of the Places for Growth (PfG) programme included three evaluation components as well as a concluding benefits realisation framework:

1. **Process Evaluation:** To assess PfG delivery to date, and identify lessons learnt and recommendations for PfG implementation going forward.
2. **Impact Evaluation:** To assess the extent to which impacts and outcomes have been delivered by the programme to date.
3. **Value for Money Evaluation:** To assess the cost effectiveness of the programme to date.
4. **Benefits Realisation:** Development of a realisation framework that will underpin the delivery and acceleration of benefits of the PfG programme.

Within Appendix A the programme Theory of Change has been shared, and Appendix B identifies how evaluation questions align to the Theory of Change. All analysis and figures presented in the report are benchmarked to December 2023.

Process evaluation

The process evaluation assessed the delivery of the PfG programme to date. The specific process evaluation questions covered in this report are:⁹

1. During the initial years of PfG delivery, what worked well and for whom (peoples and places)? Why?
2. During the initial years of PfG delivery, what did not work or worked less well than expected? Why?
3. How did Covid-19 and post-pandemic work arrangements impact London and PfG locations?
4. How did Covid-19 and post-pandemic work arrangements impact the Civil Service in London and PfG locations?
5. Were there any unexpected or unintended issues in the delivery of the intervention?
6. What lessons can be learned and applied to improve future PfG delivery? What can be improved?
7. How can departments be further supported to develop and deliver their relocation/placemaking programmes?

Impact evaluation

The impact evaluation analysed the outcomes and impacts resulting from the PfG programme as outlined in the theory of change, and whether they have been achieved.

⁹ For clarity in the presentation of key findings in Chapter 5, evaluation questions 3 and 4 have been consolidated.

The specific impact evaluation questions covered in this report are:

1. Did PfG achieve the expected outcomes and to what extent?
2. Did PfG achieve the expected impacts and to what extent?
3. How have the current PfG locations benefited from relocations so far?
4. To what extent can the outcomes be attributed to PfG? How much can be attributed to external factors? What would have happened anyway?
5. To what extent have different approaches to relocation impacted in different ways on PfG locations?
6. Has the intervention resulted in any unintended outcomes?
7. What generalisable lessons have we learned about impact?

Value for Money evaluation

The value for money evaluation analysed the effectiveness of the programme to date, exploring the following questions:

1. What were the costs of delivering PfG? Has PfG been cost-effective (compared to alternatives/doing nothing)?
2. What was the value-for-money of different PfG approaches (thematic clustering, hubs programme, campuses) considering its benefits and costs? Do the benefits outweigh the costs?
3. Is the intervention the best use of resources (compared to alternatives/doing nothing)?

Benefits Realisation

The benefits realisation analysis draws on the findings of the process, impact and VFM evaluations, to develop a suggested benefits framework, governance structures, and activities aimed at maximising the impact and value derived from the PfG programme going forward. The analysis focuses on 5 key themes:

1. An analysis of relocations with a focus on placemaking
2. Understanding the monetised benefits of Civil Service relocation
3. Quantifying the cost saving benefits of Civil Service relocation
4. Understanding non-monetised benefits of Civil Service relocation
5. Understanding Strategic Workforce benefits of Civil Service relocation

3.2 Evaluation Methodology

At the outset of the evaluation, a research design exercise was undertaken, where several evaluation approaches and methods were reviewed for their applicability and suitability given the formative nature of the evaluation, specific characteristics of the programme, and acknowledged data limitations. Two overarching evaluation approaches were initially considered:

1. **Theory-based:** an evaluation approach whereby a theory of change is used to draw conclusions on how and whether an intervention has contributed to observed outcomes and results.

2. **Experimental:** an evaluation approach where the extent of any causal relationships between an intervention and outcomes can be tested via statistical comparison of the baseline and final outcomes / results against a counterfactual (e.g., comparison group).

Typically, theory-based approaches are considered most appropriate for interventions that are situated in a dynamic environment, may vary in implementation and / or are implemented in a context that is likely to matter with complex causal pathways. In contrast, experimental approaches are more appropriate for interventions where there is an expected single outcome, and that the intervention remains static.

Given the characteristics of the PfG programme (e.g., multiple expected outcomes and impacts) and the formative nature of this evaluation, it would be difficult to measure impacts and attribute these to the activities of the intervention through an experimental approach. Moreover, there was lack of access to a suitable counterfactual comparator, making an experimental evaluation inappropriate for this evaluation. A theory-based approach was viewed as most appropriate, and a **realist evaluation method** adopted in which the programme logic and the underlying mechanisms are reviewed and evaluated, to understand the context of the programme, the mechanisms by which it takes effect, and the outcomes that can be observed.

The method is well suited to interventions that are context-dependent and have limited focus and/or geographic coverage. PfG's implementation is highly context-dependent, is a new policy initiative, and has a specific geographic range (and will need to be scaled up to understand how it could be implemented in different and new contexts). As a result, it fits the criteria for realist evaluation. Further theoretical and practical rationale are as follows:

Table 3.1: Theoretical and practical rationale for a theory-based realist evaluation

Theoretical rationale	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Theory-based evaluations allow linkages to be made between inputs, activities and outcomes and impacts. Through seeking to understand underlying mechanisms that lead to observed results, theory-based evaluation supports evidence-based decision making to inform the future of the PfG programme. 2. A Theory of Change had recently been developed for the programme; adopting a theory-based evaluation methodology would build on this consistent framework, ensuring the full programme benefits outcomes were assessed. 3. Theory-based evaluation offers a systematic approach that ascertains accountability, learning, and decision-making in programme development and implementation.
Practical rationale	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Insufficient data or time was available in this formative, in-flight evaluation to adopt a programme wide experimental or quasi-experimental counterfactual approach. A number of the longitudinal impacts were unlikely to have emerged, and events such as Covid-19 and a worsening macroeconomic

	environment, make identifying impact difficult to isolate and reduces the validity of these research methodologies.
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Limitation of Methodology

There are a number of limitations to a theory-based realist approach, which were considered as part of the evaluation design, as set out overleaf:

1. Theory-based evaluations do not allow for the determination of causation through comparison to a counterfactual. Therefore, in reviewing the outcomes of PfG, the context and enabling factors that may contribute to PfG's success have been captured.
2. The lack of a counterfactual increases the risk that observable differences in measured outcomes could be attributable to factors other than the PfG programme. It is therefore important that other factors that may influence outcomes have been considered and recorded, for example external macro-economic events or Government initiatives that may influence outcomes.
3. Theory-based evaluations assume the basis of theories and the theory of change itself are valid, and any underlying flaws could affect the quality of the evaluation.
4. As an in-flight review of theories, it is important to note as the programme progresses, observable impacts will emerge beyond this current evaluation period. The evaluation therefore is cautious in its conclusions, recognising that outcomes and impacts beyond this evaluation period will be captured through subsequent evaluations.
5. Theory-based realist evaluation does not often provide quantified impacts. Where data is available on observed outcomes it has been summarised, although the report is cautious against interpreting findings noting the lack of a counterfactual.

Beyond these limitations, the nature of a multifaceted spatial policy such as PfG implies there will be multiple variables that influence the outcomes of the intervention and increase the complexity of evidencing the intervention as the direct cause of any observed changes. For example, economic impacts will need to consider broader macro impacts such as Covid-19.

Value for Money

For the value for money evaluation, insights were integrated from the process and impact evaluations, for example:

1. Process Evaluation: assessed the efficiency of the programme by evaluating the extent to which resources used were economical. Additionally, it assessed the efficiency of resource deployment to achieve key programme outputs as outlined in the Theory of Change.
2. Impact Evaluation: assessed the effectiveness of the programme by measuring the delivery of outcomes and impacts outlined in the Theory of Change.

Specific research methods were then employed to carry out the VFM evaluation:

1. **Cost analysis:** Identifying the costs incurred by the programme and mapping them to specific outputs within the Theory of Change framework. This mapping facilitated a thorough assessment of the programme's economy and efficiency in achieving its intended outcomes.
2. **Benefit-cost ratio (BCR):** A BCR range was developed drawing on the findings from the process and impact evaluation. The BCR range provides a quantitative measure of the overall effectiveness of the resources allocated to the scheme. It should be considered alongside non-monetisable and other qualitative benefits.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

Data was collated utilising qualitative and quantitative techniques to yield a multi-dimensional view of the programme's process, impacts, and value for money. Evaluation questions were mapped to the programme theory of change (Appendix A), and corresponding evidence identified to respond to each evaluation question.

Table 3.2 sets out the data collection methods deployed to collect the relevant quantitative and qualitative data for this evaluation. Each data collection method was chosen for its approach to draw out reliable evidence that could inform one or more of the evaluation questions.

Table 3.2: Evaluation and data collection methods

Evaluation	Data collection method ¹⁰	Description
Process	Document analysis	Reviewed programme inception, delivery, and reporting documents to assess programme delivery, extracting valuable lessons learned and best practices for future improvement.
	Targeted interviews and focus groups	Leveraged targeted interviews and focus groups with civil servants to gain valuable insights into successful project delivery methods and key programmatic lessons learned.
	Civil Service survey	Gained detailed insights from civil servants regarding their perceptions on project delivery and lived experiences, drawing out key lessons learned and best practices.
Impact	Targeted interviews and focus groups	Interviews and focus groups with civil servants were also used to assess non-monetary impacts of the programme.
	Civil Service survey	Gathered perceptions on initial impacts from the PfG programme.

¹⁰ If further detail is required on interview and survey questions these can be supplied upon request

Evaluation	Data collection method ¹⁰	Description
	Review of programme performance metrics	Reviewed existing data, such as QRT reports or programme assessments, collected on key project outcomes to assess the extent to which crucial impacts have been achieved to date.
	Economic metrics	Economic data on employment multipliers
	Demographic data	Compared data points prior and post PfG programme implementation in the regions such as London share of Civil Service and diversity metrics to assess the extent of impact from PfG.
Value for Money	Data analysis of programme performance metrics	Reviewed existing data, such as QRT reports or programme assessments, collected on key value for money metrics focusing on cost-effectiveness and efficiency.
	Targeted interviews and focus groups	Interviews and focus groups with civil servants were also used to assess non-monetary benefits of the programme.

3.4 Location Selection

A sampling strategy was required to enhance the efficiency and manageability of the evaluation within the required timelines. A sample of 10 PfG locations were selected as they represented a manageable number of locations given the short, time-bound nature of this evaluation, while covering the majority of roles relocated, across a reasonable range of regions, towns, and cities. Specifically, the sample locations:

1. Covered 8,418 FTE relocated roles of a total of 14,365 relocated roles as of Q2 2023.¹¹ This translates to nearly 60% of total relocations to date.
2. Demonstrate strong regional representation in covering 7 of the 11 NUTS nations and regions (excluding London).

Table 3.3: Selected Sample of PfG locations

Location		Number of roles relocated	Portion of roles
In scope	Region	8,418	58.6%
Leeds (city)	Yorkshire and The Humber	1,469	10.2%
Manchester (city)	North West	1,261	8.8%

¹¹ When defining the sampling method, the latest available data was Q2 2023 data

Location		Number of roles relocated	Portion of roles
Glasgow (city)	Scotland	1,166	8.1%
Birmingham (city)	West Midlands	1,074	7.5%
Sheffield (city)	Yorkshire and The Humber	822	5.7%
Darlington (town)	North East	674	4.7%
Cardiff (city)	Wales	591	4.1%
Liverpool (city)	North West	566	3.9%
Bristol (city)	South West	556	3.9%
Warrington (town)	North West	239	1.7%
Out of scope			
125 Locations		5,706	39.7%

The risk of this approach, given that the locations were not chosen randomly, is that the sample is not representative of the wider Civil Service. Appendix E looks at available data and presents comparisons, in summary, showing sampled locations had a relatively small overall deviation from the wider Civil Service in terms of grades and department. However, the sampled locations were shown to have a higher concentration of relocated roles (as a proportion of total roles in the location) compared to out-of-scope locations. The inclusion of the out-of-scope locations would therefore have provided a useful perspective on the challenges and opportunities presented by the PfG programme, particularly with regards to local impacts and integration. Future evaluations would benefit from further exploring impacts in these locations.

3.5 Qualitative Data Collection

Qualitative data was collected through interviews and focus groups. While surveys of civil servants and businesses were also conducted, they gathered rich quantitative data. The methodology for collecting and analysing survey data is therefore detailed in the quantitative data collection section.

3.5.1 Interviews and Focus Groups

Purpose of interviews & focus groups and limitations to approach: Interviews and focus groups were conducted to elicit civil servants' views and experiences of the PfG programme. These allowed for in-depth discussions on, for example, perceptions of support provided by departments on relocation, the organisational context which has influenced the implementation of PfG, and their experiences of

policymaking in a flexible working context. The qualitative data generated from the interviews and focus groups on programme delivery supplemented quantitative data.

There are limitations to interviews and focus groups. They include the time-intensive nature of this data collection exercise, the potential for selection bias, and the need for careful moderation to ensure all individuals can communicate their views. The mitigations for these limitations are set out in Table 3.4 below.

Table 3.4 Limitations and mitigations for interview and focus group approach.

Limitation	Mitigation
Time requirement	All the key / relevant informants that would have relevant information on the programme were identified, and sufficient lead-time created to coordinate the interviews and focus groups within the project time frame.
Selection bias	A list of potential interviewees and focus group participants was created that represented a wide spread of different professions, geographies, grades, and roles impacted by PfG programme.
Need for expert moderation	Interview and focus group scripts were drafted that include sufficient detail and clarity on participation. Procedures were built in for anonymising the data collected.

Sampling approach: Purposive sampling (a non-random sampling method) was applied wherein personal judgement was applied to identify the most appropriate candidates. This was crucial in interviews and focus groups for selecting informants with rich in-depth knowledge, experience, and insights of the PfG programme. Purposive sampling provided a time and resource-efficient way to gather relevant insights from specific and accessible participants. Figure 3.1 and Figure 3.2 show the geographic and grade split of the interview and focus group participants, specifically the proportion based in London compared to non-London, as well as the number of SCS, compared to non-SCS. Table 3.5 provides a more detailed breakdown of the profiles of interviewees and focus group participants.

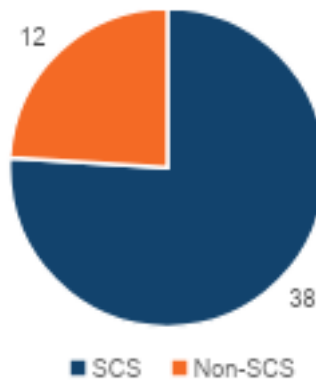
Both non-London and London-based civil servants were chosen, focusing on those most involved or with the best holistic knowledge of the PfG programme. Although this is not representative of the overall geographic distribution of roles, given the primacy of the evaluation questions around the perceptions of PfG in these localities, interviewing those with the greatest knowledge of programme implementation and perceived impacts was deemed appropriate. Furthermore, a large proportion of SCS informants relative to their actual representation within the Civil Service was chosen, given SCS informants are more aware of and attuned to wider Civil Service-wide strategies and departmental objectives than non-SCS informants.

Figure 3.1: Number of London-based compared to non-London based interview and focus group informants



(Description of Figure 3.1) Pie chart of interview and focus group informant profiles showing 28 as London-based and 22 as non-London

Figure 3.2: Number of SCS compared to non-SCS interview and focus group informants



(Description of Figure 3.2) Pie chart of interview and focus group informant profiles showing 38 as SCS and 12 as non-SCS

Table 3.5: Profiles of interview and focus group participants

Informant profile	Number of interviews conducted
Department PfG Leads	9
SCS	14
Permanent or Second Permanent Secretaries	2
Heads of Profession	9
People Function Leads	10
PfG Officials	5

Informant profile	Number of interviews conducted
London-based non-SCS	1
Total	50

Note: Eight unavailable respondents suggested alternatives to fill in for them. These alternatives are counted in the profile of the unavailable respondent.

Note: Profiles are non-exhaustive, but respondents are placed into the profile considered most salient to their role e.g., more than one London-based non-SCS, but others simultaneously held alternative informant profiles.

Sampling approach limitations: The evaluation's sampling strategy, employing purposive and snowball sampling, acknowledges potential biases from its non-probability nature and the influence of initial participants. While these methods aim to diversify and enrich the pool of informants, it should be noted that they do not reflect the Civil Service's demographic profile. Despite this, the in-depth, qualitative insights gathered offer valuable perspectives that help to explain causal mechanisms and enhance the overall evaluation. The triangulation of findings from interviews with document analysis and survey data offers a holistic view of programme impacts. Future research may consider more robust randomised sampling methods; for this time-constrained formative evaluation, purposive and snowball sampling was viewed the most appropriate method.

Process for conducting interviews & focus groups: Interviews and focus groups for gathering primary data were conducted until one of the following objectives was met: (i) a saturation of themes or (ii) the suggested maximum was reached. The suggested maximum number of informants was set at 52, which ensures a breadth of profiles across roles and locations within the Civil Service (e.g., People Function leads, Heads of Profession, Heads of Place, and other involved or interested parties), while also managing the practical constraints of time and resources.¹²

The interviews and focus groups were conducted virtually, via MS Teams, and followed a structured topic guide with questions and prompts to gather the relevant insight from interviewees, and to follow up on salient lines of enquiry. Interviewees and focus group participants gave both written and verbal consent to have their responses anonymously included in this report.

Data analysis approach: To analyse the qualitative data from interviews, the evaluation team familiarised themselves with responses, identifying phrases and trends with repetition, richness in insight, or realness in explaining experience. From this, 17 codes (or labels) were devised to categorise major and recurring themes, while simultaneously picking out key quotations. This coding system, essential for interpreting complex narratives, was shaped by the evaluation questions, the theory of change underpinning the PfG programme, and the recurring themes and narratives from the data. An explanation of each of the codes are provided below:

¹² Overall, 50 civil servants participated in an interview or focus group. An additional set of written responses was received, which summarised the views of several civil servants across a particular department. This took the total number of responses to 51; however, given the collaborative nature of the written response submission by multiple respondents within a department, these written responses were not included in the demographic statistics for the respondents.

1. Profile: Examines the background of individuals affected by or involved in the PfG programme, including age, role grade, and geographic location, to understand diverse impacts.
2. Strategies: Focuses on the overarching approaches adopted for PfG implementation, including the rationale behind location choices and role distributions.
3. Activities and operations: Looks into the day-to-day execution of PfG-related tasks, the logistical aspects of role relocations, and the operational challenges encountered.
4. Culture: Considers how PfG influences the organisational culture within the Civil Service, including changes in workplace dynamics and team cohesion.
5. Policymaking: Investigates the impact of geographical redistribution of roles on policy development processes and outcomes.
6. Career prospects: Assesses how PfG affects career trajectories, particularly the opportunities for advancement within the Civil Service.
7. London impacts and perceptions: Explores the specific implications of PfG for London-based roles and how these changes are perceived by the Civil Service community in the capital.
8. Diversity of perspectives: Evaluates how the geographical redistribution of roles under the PfG programme enriches the Civil Service with a broader range of insights and experiences.
9. Levelling up: Analyses how PfG contributes to the government's levelling up agenda by fostering economic growth and job creation in target regions.
10. Strengthening the union: Assesses how the PfG enhances cohesion and collaboration across the UK, including the devolved nations.
11. Covid-19: Examines the impact of the pandemic on PfG's delivery, including adjustments to flexible work and its implications for relocation plans.
12. Technology: Looks at how technological advancements and digital tools facilitate the PfG's goals, especially in supporting flexible work and collaboration across locations.
13. New directives: Discusses recent governmental directives that intersect with the PfG objectives, such as the 60% office attendance rule, and their impact on programme execution.
14. Governance and senior leadership: Focuses on the role of governance structures and senior leadership in steering PfG, including decision-making processes and leadership support.
15. Incentives for Relocation: Identifies the motivational factors or benefits provided to encourage civil servants to relocate, encompassing financial support, career development opportunities, and support services.
16. Estates efficiency: Evaluates the effectiveness and efficiency gains from PfG in terms of estate management, including the optimisation of office space and cost savings.
17. Lessons learnt and recommendations: Compiles insights and practical learnings drawn from the PfG programme to date, offering recommendations for future improvements.

Using the established codes, the evaluation team identified patterns, discrepancies, and nuanced insights related to the PfG programme's implementation and impact. These insights were tied back to the evaluation questions and report structure, to ensure insights were included in the most salient sections of the report.

3.6 Quantitative Data Collection

Quantitative data collection consisted of three specific methods:

- 1) Survey – Civil Servants
- 2) Survey – Local Businesses
- 3) Stakeholder Engagement and Data Sourcing

3.6.1 Survey – Civil Servants

Purpose of survey & limitations to approach: The survey was a data collection tool deployed to gather both quantitative and qualitative data on a large sample. The survey provided rich data on a number of topics relating to the process and impact evaluation questions. There are some limitations to a survey method, captured below alongside a set of mitigations as set out below in Table 3.6.

Table 3.6 Limitations and mitigations for survey approach

Limitations	Mitigations
Respondents providing false information	Added follow-up questions and corroborated responses with existing data to enhance accuracy.
Respondents with imperfect recall	Provided context in the survey preamble and questions to aid respondents' memory.
Respondents may misinterpret the question	Phrased questions clearly and simply, pre-tested the survey with a small group from government, and included definitions for complex terms (e.g., 'relocation').
Selection bias	Conducted analysis of the demographic profile of the respondents to contextualise the responses.

Sampling approach: The Civil Service-wide survey employed the convenience sampling method. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling method in which respondents are selected due to the ease of access for research. The survey was distributed to all civil servants (not just those impacted by the PFG) through various channels including: utilising PfG contacts within departments to disseminate in nine out of the ten sampled locations (excluding Warrington); through Estate Heads to motivate civil servants in regional offices; following up with interview and focus group informants to encourage survey circulation to staff members; physical survey invite posters in the 10 sampled locations; and announcements in departmental internal communications.

An overview of the relative proportions of each informant profile is outlined in Figure 3.3. A detailed description of the location and grade demographics of survey respondents is included in Appendix E.

Figure 3.3: Informant profiles of survey respondents



(Description of Figure 3.3) Pie chart of survey respondent informant profiles showing 7% as London, 57% pre-existing non-London, 21% don't know whether their role is relocated, 8% physically relocated, 5% internal churn role, 2% new joiner churn role. Total of 825 respondents.

Note: the survey received a total of 872 responses. However, 47 respondents either rejected the privacy notice or did not respond to a key filter question, and so were excluded from the analysis.

Sampling approach limitations: As noted in section 3.7, the survey's convenience sampling method, which is non-probability in nature, results in a demographic spread of respondents that does not precisely mirror the composition of the Civil Service composition regarding grade, department, and geographical distribution (detailed further in Appendix E). There is also a risk of selection bias, as the survey was reliant on participants opting-in rather than being randomly selected.

The findings from the survey were interpreted together with the in-depth, qualitative insights gathered from interviews and focus groups, to capture a more diverse range of perspectives and address the potential biases inherent in the survey data.

Process for conducting the survey: The survey was distributed via various channels including dissemination through PfG contacts within departments; utilising Estate Heads to engage all civil servants in regional offices; follow up with interview and focus group informants to encourage survey circulation to staff members; physical survey invites posters in the 10 sampled locations; and announcements in departmental internal communications.

The survey was designed and distributed using the Qualtrics XM platform and included the Cabinet Office Places for Growth privacy notice, as well as the privacy notice and consent form for EY's use of the Qualtrics XM survey platform. It was piloted with key stakeholders and departmental contacts prior to launching.

The survey was designed with logic features to filter participants into six profiles. The respondent profiles were:

1. London-based civil servants
2. Pre-existing non-London based civil servants
3. Physically relocated from London to a location outside London
4. Internal churn role (those transferring within the Civil Service into a role moved out of London through churn)
5. New joiner churn role (those who have recently joined the Civil Service, obtaining a role moved out of London through churn)
6. Other/Don't know if relocated (largely those that have taken a new role in the Civil Service but don't know if their role has been moved out of London through churn)

Data analysis approach: To analyse the survey data, both quantitative and qualitative analysis were utilised. Quantitative methods were used to compare responses between informant profiles and calculate an average response to each question. From this, descriptive analysis was utilised to discern the key themes.

Similarly, qualitative methods were used to assess open-ended questions. The evaluation team sifted through all qualitative responses, identifying phrases and trends with repetition, richness in insight, or realness in explaining experience. Codes were assigned to segments of data to capture the core messages; from this, themes were developed to identify patterns and tie these back to the evaluation questions and report structure. The relevant codes used to filter through the responses were as follows:

1. Ease of collaboration: Explores PfG's influence on collaboration among civil servants, focusing on how relocations and flexible working arrangements affect teamwork and inter-departmental projects.
2. Policymaking: Investigates the impact of geographical redistribution of roles on policy development processes and outcomes.
3. Team morale: Assesses how the PfG programme influences team cohesion, morale, and the overall work environment within relocated and existing teams.
4. Incentives for relocation: Identifies the motivational factors or benefits provided to encourage civil servants to relocate, encompassing financial support, career development opportunities, and support services.
5. Satisfaction with PfG: Gauges overall satisfaction levels among civil servants with the PfG programme, including perceptions of its effectiveness and impact on their professional lives.
6. Career prospects: Assesses how the PfG affects career trajectories, particularly the opportunities for advancement within the Civil Service.

7. Availability of office space: Evaluates how the PfG's relocations and the implementation of flexible working models have impacted the availability and use of office space.
8. Spread of power across the UK: Analyses the PfG programmes' role in distributing government power, examining how the relocation of roles impacts governance and decision-making across the UK.
9. Departmental support: Reviews the level of support and resources provided by departments to facilitate the successful implementation of PfG, including training and integration efforts.
10. Diversity of perspectives: Evaluates how the geographical redistribution of roles under the PfG programme enriches the Civil Service with a broader range of insights and experiences.
11. Quality of office resources: Assesses the adequacy and quality of resources and facilities available in new office locations, and their impact on employee productivity and satisfaction.
12. Covid-19: Examines the impact of the pandemic on the delivery of PfG, including adjustments to flexible work and its implications for relocation plans.
13. Familiarity with PfG: Measures the awareness and understanding of the PfG programme among Civil Service employees, highlighting areas where further communication and engagement may be needed.

Using the above codes, the evaluation team identified patterns, discrepancies, and relevant insights, and tied these back to the PfG programme's implementation and impact. Themes were then mapped to the structure of the evaluation report, to ensure insights were best placed to respond to each evaluation question.

3.6.2 Survey – Local Businesses

A digital business survey was shared with local businesses in close proximity to the sampled PfG locations to assess the PfG programme's impact on business operations, economic activities and business engagement where roles have been relocated to. The survey was distributed through growth companies using Qualtrics XM platform and piloted with the Cabinet Office prior to launching.

However, the business survey received only 28 responses (22 from businesses in Cardiff) – the response rate was lower than anticipated and insufficient for a comprehensive evaluation. This could be attributed to factors such as survey fatigue and the timing coinciding with the year-end period, or more an important reflection of the need for PfG and Civil Service leaders to do more to connect to local businesses. Despite this, the survey design provided some initial business perspectives on the PfG programme using in process and impact evaluation, however noting the number of responses findings are not made generalisable to all businesses.

3.6.3 Stakeholder Engagement and Data Sourcing

Quantitative data collection was undertaken through engagement with the Cabinet Office and GPA as well as exploring other data sources required for the evaluation.

Cabinet Office:

- Quarterly Relocation Tracker (QRT) Data: The central tracker (Q3 2023) has been used to understand the characteristics of roles that have relocated such as location, grade, and department.
- PfG Budget Data: The PfG programme budget data from the Financial Year 20/21 up to December (FY 23/24)

GPA:

- Carbon Emissions Data: This data focused on electricity usage and was available for a subset of buildings in both the sampled PfG locations and the London estate. It was used to assess environmental impacts related to energy consumption resulting from the PfG programme
- Estate Costs: Insights into the London and sampled PfG locations estate costs to estimate cost savings that have been captured from GPA data provided.

Other data sources:

- ONS/Oxford Economics Data: Indicators on the labour market in sampled PfG locations have been used as well as input output data to produce employment multipliers
- Civil Service Bulletin Data: Detailed insights into the PfG programme's impact on the wider Civil Service have been extracted from CS Bulletin data such as insights into salary costs to estimate people cost savings.

3.7 Assessment and Strength of Evidence

For the process and impact evaluation – the evaluation questions were mapped to the programme theory of change. A comprehensive list of the evaluation questions mapped to the theory of change can be found in Appendix B.

For each question, an assessment of the various interventions was undertaken, and a conclusion reached on effectiveness or extent of achievement of the programme to date with respect to the question, and the strength of evidence available supporting this assessment. The full assessment definitions can be found in Appendix C.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

A number of ethical considerations were important to ensure the integrity, confidentiality, and respect for all participants involved. These considerations informed the approach to data collection, analysis, and reporting, ensuring that the research adheres to the highest ethical standards. The following outlines the key ethical considerations addressed in this research:

1. *Informed consent*: All participants in interviews, focus groups, and surveys were fully informed about the purpose of the research, the nature of their participation, and how their data would be used. Consent was obtained prior to participation.
2. *Confidentiality*: Measures were taken to protect the identities of participants and the confidentiality of the information they provided. Personal identifiers

were removed or anonymised in the analysis and reporting stages to prevent any possibility of individual or organisational identification.

3. *Voluntary participation*: Participation in the research was entirely voluntary, with participants informed that they had the right to decline participation or withdraw from the study at any stage without any adverse effects.
4. *Minimisation of harm*: The research was designed and conducted to minimise any potential harm or discomfort to participants. This included sensitivity to the topics discussed, particularly around personal experiences and perceptions of the PfG programme.
5. *Data protection*: Adherence to data protection laws and guidelines was a priority, with all data collected, stored, and processed in a manner that protects against unauthorised access, use, or disclosure. This included secure data storage, restricted access to data, and compliance with relevant data protection regulations. All interview, focus group and survey informants had access to the Cabinet Office Privacy Notice, and signed a relevant consent form, detailing the data to be collected, stored, and used, and the rights of withdrawal.
6. *Transparency and accountability*: The research process was transparent, with clear communication to stakeholders about the research methods, findings, and limitations. The research team was accountable for ensuring the research was conducted ethically and responsibly, with mechanisms in place for addressing any ethical concerns that arose during the research.
7. *Consideration of bias*: Efforts were made to identify and mitigate any potential biases in the research design, data collection, analysis, and reporting phases. This included the use of multiple data sources and methods to triangulate findings and provide a balanced view of the PfG programme's impacts and outcomes.
8. *Respect for diversity*: The research recognised and respected the diversity of experiences and perspectives among Civil Service employees and other stakeholders. This included consideration of how different groups might be differently affected by the PfG programme and ensuring that diverse voices were heard and represented in the findings.

4 Process Evaluation

This chapter covers the process evaluation of the PfG programme, aimed at understanding the implementation and operational delivery of the programme to date. The assessment drew insights from multiple data sources, including:

- **Interviews & focus groups:** Participants comprised of 28 civil servants from London and 22 from outside London (including 38 SCS)
- **Survey:** 825 responses from across the Civil Service
- **Key PfG policy and delivery documents:** Institute for Government's *Settling in: Lessons from the Darlington Economic Campus for Civil Service relocation*, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities' *Levelling Up the United Kingdom White Paper*, Cabinet Office Quarterly Relocations Tracker internal reports, *Places for Growth Relocations Data 2020-2023* publication, *Government Estate: Annual Data Publication, 2022-23*.

The process evaluation focussed on the following questions:

1. During the initial years of PfG delivery, what worked well and for whom (peoples and places)? Why?
2. During the initial years of PfG delivery, what did not work or work less well than expected? Why?
3. How did Covid-19 and post-pandemic work arrangements impact London and PfG locations?
4. How did Covid-19 and post-pandemic work arrangements impact the Civil Service in London and PfG locations?
5. Were there any unexpected or unintended issues in the delivery of the intervention?
6. What lessons can be learned and applied to improve future PfG delivery? What can be improved?
7. How can departments be further supported to develop and deliver their relocation/placemaking programmes?

Evaluation questions 3 and 4 were combined given the similar nature of the findings. Findings are grouped under each of the evaluation questions in the subsequent sections, and consider the role planned outputs had in driving intermediate outcomes.

The findings analysed in the subsequent sections cover the outputs and intermediate outcomes as outlined in the ToC (see Appendix A). A view on how the strength of evidence was assessed is given in Appendix C.

Table 4.1: Theory of change expected outputs

ToC Grouping	PfG Expected Outputs
Engagement Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop communication and media outputs on the programme to be shared across government • Undertake engagement with departments on the programme • Undertake engagement with devolved nation governments on the programme • Undertake engagement with professions and functions • Undertake engagement with Civil Service support functions • Undertake engagement with Civil Service property functions
Departmental Shaping Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and enact an implementation plan for the Pfl programme • Develop strategies across workforce and estate to support PfG programme • Develop departmental principles that support the adoption of the PfG programme
SCS Shaping Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish an SCS taskforce focussed on role relocation • Develop SCS network across the regions
Governance and Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake QRT reporting • Establish governance boards to monitor progress and promote ministerial accountability • Developing and managing LDP delivery and Thematic Portfolios

Table 4.2: Theory of change intermediate outcomes

ToC Grouping	PfG Intermediate Outcomes
Shared Vision & Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieve departmental agreement on the strategic objectives and commitments to role relocations and locations • Increase collaboration on PfG programme and increase presence in regions
Better Workforce Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish attractive career pathways across the regions • Develop aligned estate and workforce planning that supports relocation programme.

ToC Grouping	PfG Intermediate Outcomes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify efficiencies in spending and opportunities for flexible working practices
Accessible Policy Levers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide tools and policy levers that increase confidence in workforce relocation, particularly for SCS Provide policy levers that address barriers to relocation and recruitment of civil servants outside of London.
Stronger Community Ties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achieve better links with communities & between national policy and Local Delivery Develop thriving Civil Service communities in regions and nations
Clear Programme Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish greater scrutiny and accountability for ALB location planning and strategy Establish strong governance and confidence in programme delivery

4.1 During the initial years of PfG delivery, what worked well and for whom (peoples and places)? What did not work well or less well than expected? Why?

Table 4.3: Summary of Process Findings

Outputs and Intermediate Outcomes	Worked well	Did not work well	Strength of Evidence
Engagement Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Departmental Engagement Communication of Objectives Departmental Support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some individuals reported low satisfaction with the relocation support Risk of deadweight on the relocation package Limited resource for the programme 	Moderate
Departmental Shaping Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Darlington Economic Campus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordination between workforce and estate strategies 	Moderate

Outputs and Intermediate Outcomes	Worked well	Did not work well	Strength of Evidence
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional hubs and second headquarters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Variable implementation across departments Interoperability and joint recruitment 	
SCS Shaping Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heads of Place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SCS relocations are behind target Resource to support SCS Shaping is Limited 	Strong
Governance and Reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Structured Governance QRT Report and Tracker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Definition ambiguity in relation to relocations methodology Sustainability of relocations 	Moderate

4.1.1 Engagement Activities

How were engagement activities undertaken?

PfG undertook the following activities to deliver engagement activities to date:

- Communication and media outputs on the programme were shared across government
- Engagement with departments on the programme
- Engagement with devolved nation governments on the programme
- Engagement with professions and functions
- Engagement with Civil Service support functions – This engagement mechanism has been covered by reference to departmental support and the ability for departments to adopt a policy to cover relocation expenses.
- Engagement with Civil Service property functions – PfG engagement with property functions is covered in section 4.1.2.

What worked well and for whom? Why?

Departmental Engagement

Responses from interviews and focus groups highlighted that the clarity of PfG relocation objectives, alongside the targets issued by Cabinet Office, and the ease of communication and progress feedback channels created strong alignment between

Cabinet Office and departments on progressing towards relocation targets. This was viewed as important in the programme’s initial success of surpassing the interim target of 15,000 relocated roles by 2025 and achieving 73% of the 2027 target for 22,000 relocated roles by Q3 2023. For example, a number of interviewees noted there was a “*very clear focus on the objective*” of relocating 22,000 roles, and that the “*main success has been setting ambitious targets across government departments and allocating these out to departments*”.

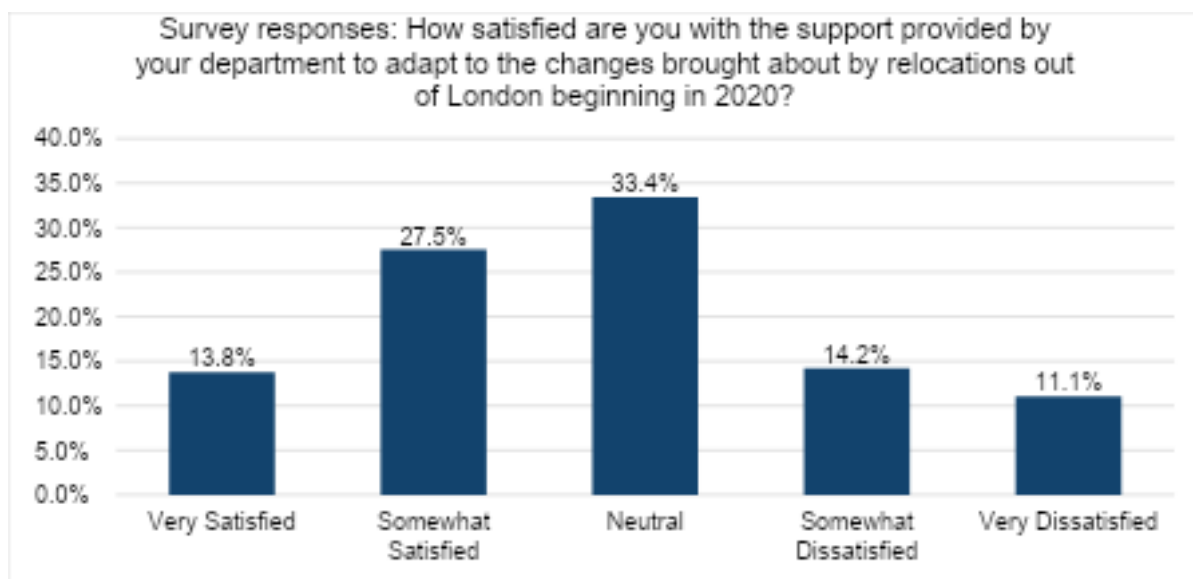
Communication of objectives across the Civil Service

The majority of Civil Service respondents to the survey displayed an awareness of the PfG programme and its aims, reflecting the strength of the programme's communication efforts. 73.4% of respondents indicated that they were to some extent familiar with PfG. The depth of open-ended written responses in the survey providing personal experience or opinion on the programme further demonstrates this understanding. This indicates some success in existing communication channels, including placement on Civil Service bulletins or departmental advertising of relocation benefits.

Departmental support

A higher proportion of survey respondents indicated satisfaction with the support offered by departments in navigating PfG-induced changes. As illustrated in Figure 4.1, 41.3% of those who responded to the survey reported feeling satisfied ('Very Satisfied' or 'Somewhat Satisfied') with departmental support, while a smaller segment, 25.3% on average, expressed dissatisfaction ('Somewhat Dissatisfied' or 'Very Dissatisfied').

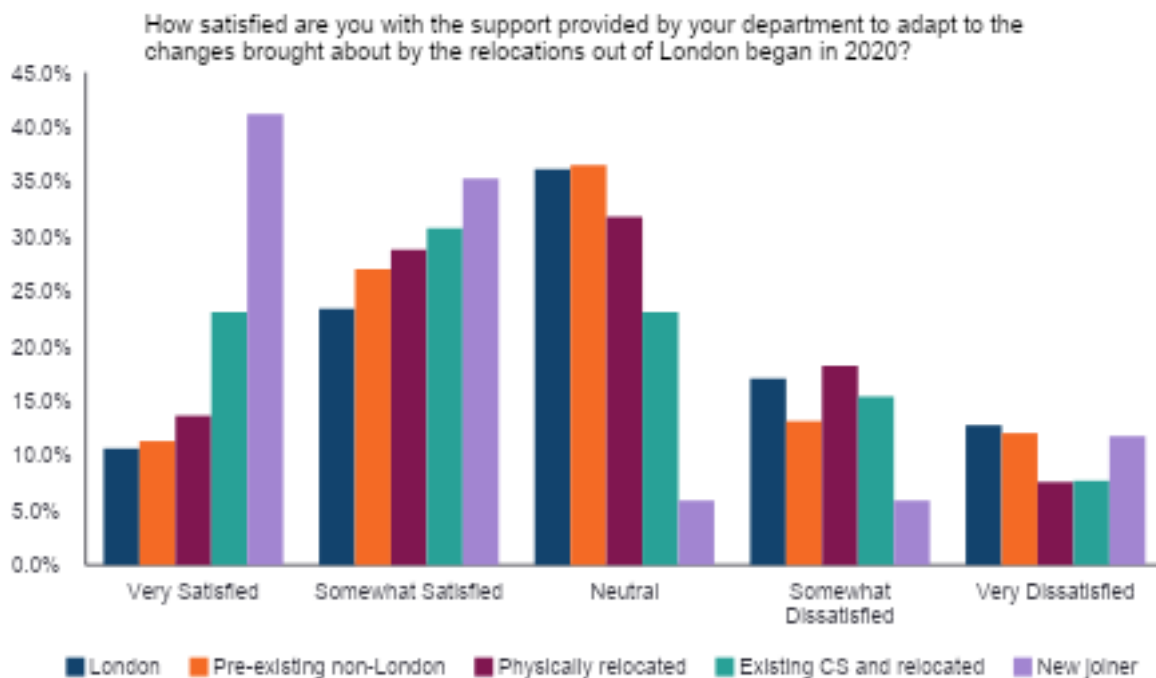
Figure 4.1: Survey – Satisfaction with departmental support to adapt to changes emerging from PfG



(Description of Figure 4.1) Column chart of survey response to satisfaction with departmental support, showing slight trend towards satisfaction. 14% very satisfied, 28% somewhat satisfied, 33% neutral, 13% somewhat dissatisfied, 11% very dissatisfied.

Higher levels of satisfaction were attributable to those in relocated roles, with physically relocated, internal churn role, and new joiner churn role respondents perceiving department support with greater satisfaction than London participants, as shown in Figure 4.2.

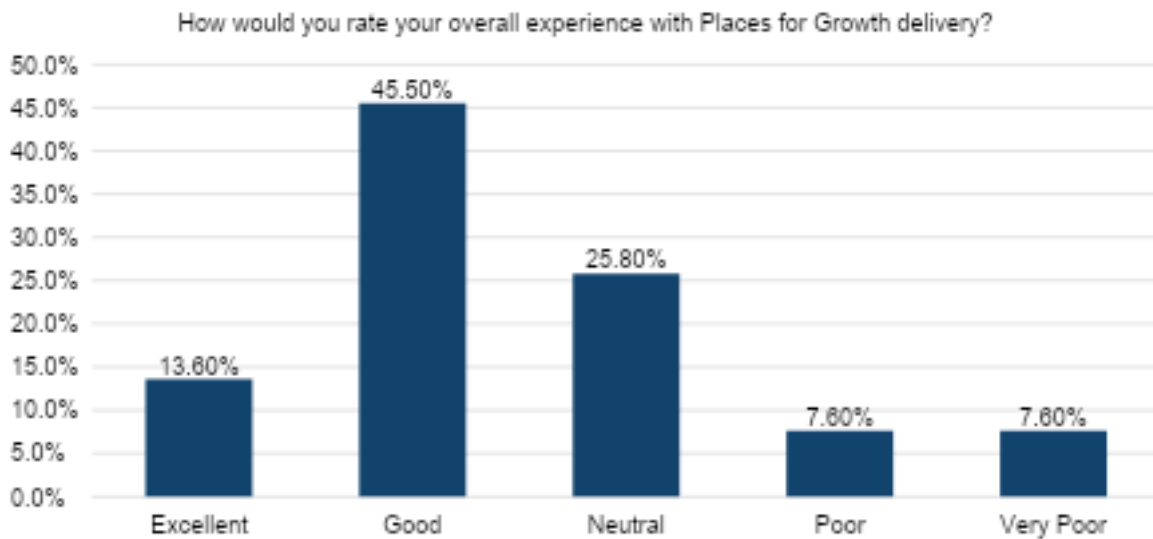
Figure 4.2: Survey – Satisfaction with departmental support to adapt to changes emerging from PfG per informant profile



(Description of Figure 4.2) Column chart of survey response to satisfaction with departmental support by informant profile. Internal and new joiner churn roles are more satisfied, with other profiles' most popular response being neutral.

Survey responses show that of 66 respondents who had physically relocated from London, 59.1% of the 66 respondents rated their PfG experience as 'Good' or 'Excellent', with only 15.2% describing it as 'Poor' or 'Very poor'. Similarly, among 18 new joiner respondents, 72.6% reported a 'Good' or 'Excellent' experience with acquiring a PfG role, with none reporting a 'Poor' experience. These results are illustrated in Figure 4.3 and Figure 4.4.

Figure 4.3: Survey – Satisfaction with PfG delivery (physically relocated)



(Description of Figure 4.3) Column chart of physically relocated survey respondents' response to satisfaction with PfG delivery. Clear trend towards satisfaction, with 14% rating satisfaction as excellent, 46% good, 26% neutral, 8% poor, 8% very poor.

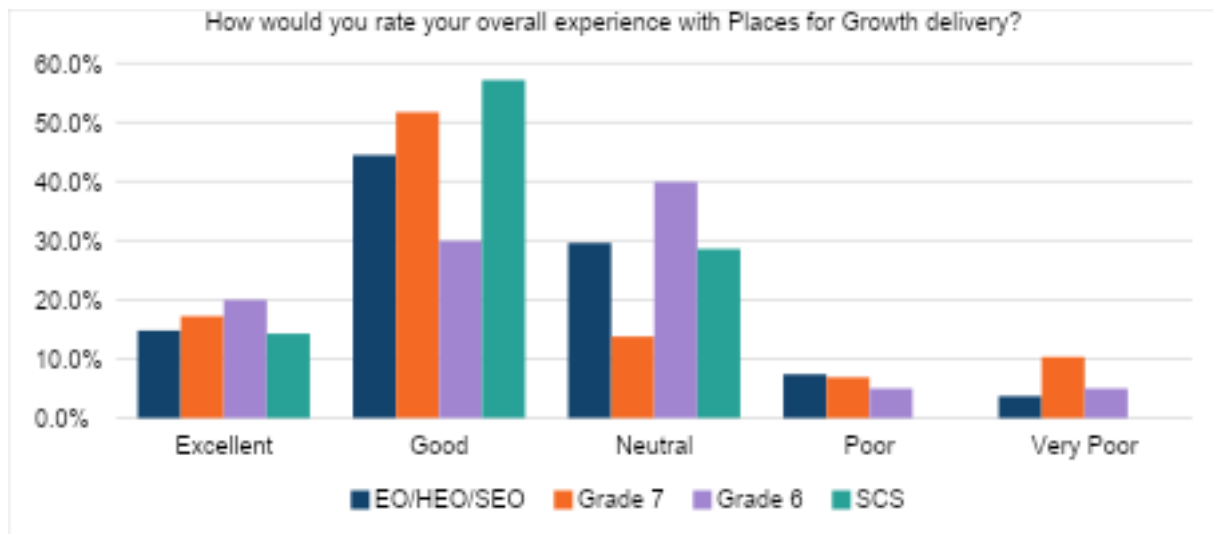
Figure 4.4: Survey – Satisfaction with PfG delivery (new joiner)



(Description of Figure 4.4) Column chart of new joiner churn role survey respondents' response to satisfaction with PfG delivery. Clear trend towards satisfaction, with 28% rating satisfaction as excellent, 44% good, 28% neutral, 0% poor, 0% very poor.

Survey responses differ minimally by grade, illustrating consistent positive experiences of those who relocated through PfG.

Figure 4.5: Survey – Satisfaction with PfG delivery (new joiners and physically relocated respondents), per grade



(Description of Figure 4.5) SCS, EO/HEO/SEO and Grade 7s following a similar trajectory, peaking at 'good' and falling towards 'poor' and 'very poor'. Grade 6s peak at neutral but still trend towards satisfaction

Table 4.4 illustrates when asked to rate on a scale of 1-10 their likelihood to recommend PfG relocation to a colleague (with 1 being the lowest and 10 the highest), two thirds of participants would score the programme 7 or above, a positive endorsement of their experience.

Table 4.4: Survey – Recommending PfG relocation to a colleague (physically relocated and new joiners)

On a scale of 1-10 (with 1 the lowest and 10 highest), would you recommend relocation under the Places for Growth programme to a colleague?		
Response	Number	Percentage
No Response	1	1.19%
1	3	3.57%
2	3	3.57%
3	1	1.19%
4	2	2.38%
5	11	13.10%
6	7	8.33%
7	12	14.29%
8	20	23.81%
9	9	10.71%
10	15	17.86%
Total	84	

What worked less well and for whom? Why?

Limited resource for the programme

From the initiation of the PfG programme until December 2023 (FY 23/24), the total budget allocated for the programme has amounted to £5,767,146. This includes spend on policy and communications, programme management, department engagement and delivery support, data and performance reporting, and the Heads of Place network from the point at which they joined PfG (August 2022).

Despite early success in reaching the interim relocation target on this limited budget, there is a consensus amongst the interviewees that PfG requires more resource. Some interviewees claimed PfG is “*massively underfunded*” and “*doing this on a shoestring.*”

Other interviewees have also noted that initiatives and interventions, such as the Heads of Place network and its associated SCS networks, relocation packages and relocation support, and relevant estate and workforce planning, would benefit from more financial support to help bolster the outcomes of PfG. As one interviewee noted, “*This requires a lot of leadership time, and one thing I recommend is ensuring that PfG locations are staffed with sufficient capability and senior leaders to make it a success.*” Additional detail is covered in section 4.1.3.

Some individuals reported low satisfaction with the relocation support

A divergence of experiences of relocation support was evidenced, often stemming from the fragmented provision across departments. This is captured in the qualitative feedback of relocated respondents:

- “*I did it all myself so it was difficult, emotional and stressful but I love it now I’m here. But there was no support from the relocation process at all.*”
- “*Being married to a civil servant from another department complicated matters, with differing relocation guidance. The lack of induction, integration with other departments, the local community, and a clear career progression plan was noticeable.*”
- “*The need for a dedicated HR person to manage the process was felt, rather than being shuffled from one point to another without clear direction.*”

These accounts reinforce the challenges some individuals face during relocation, especially when covering large distances. Wider relocation factors such as securing housing, schooling, and establishing local networks were flagged by survey respondents as requiring additional comprehensive, consistent guidance and support:

- “*Finding a suitable house near a good school and viewing properties when I was 4 hours’ drive away. Researching areas and locations within a commutable distance to the new office. Having time to do it all. Life admin like insurances, address changes, etc. Supporting my kids through the transition. Some tricky questions from colleagues who didn’t appreciate how difficult and emotional the whole thing was. Money was tight so managing finances throughout was a challenge.*”

- “Mainly practical challenges like researching places to live, house viewings.”

Finally, timeliness in processing relocation requests has been another area of concern, with reports of prolonged periods of uncertainty. For instance, some applications within the Home Office were noted to remain unresolved for up to seven months, exacerbating the stress and impeding the overall efficiency of the relocation process.

Risk of deadweight in relocation package

The relocation package may have mixed effectiveness in encouraging civil servants to relocate from London. PfG enables departments to provide a relocation package to incentivise departments, offering up to £14,000 (with £8,000 tax-free) worth of expenses and two years of London weighting pay protection. However, interviews reveal that the rationale for most physical relocations is other personal motives, such as returning to one’s hometown, being nearer to family or housing options, rather than the offer of a financial relocation package. This is highlighted in one response, in which the interviewee claimed they would “*only consider relocating if there was a location that I would already feel like moving to*”. The survey substantiates this, with respondents prioritising work-life balance improvements and better housing options over the relocation allowance, which ranks 8th and 7th out of 10 options as shown in the detailed rankings are outlined in Table 4.5 and Table 4.6.

Table 4.5: Survey – Physically relocated civil servant respondents ranking of relocation incentives

What were the primary incentives that motivated you to relocate?		
Order	Response	Average Score
1	Better housing options	2.33
2	Work-life balance improvements	3.52
3	Lower cost of living	3.68
4	Access to nature and green spaces	4.82
5	Shorter commute time	6.06
6	Cultural and recreational opportunities	6.24
7	Opportunities for career progression	7.08
8	Relocation allowance/bonus	7.44
9	Education opportunities for my family	7.82
10	Other (Please specify)	8.05
11	Higher salary	8.97

Note: Average score denotes the average ranking position of each response across all respondents. Lower scores denote a greater incentive to relocate, while higher scores denote a weaker incentive to relocate.

Table 4.6: Survey – London-based civil servant Civil servant respondents ranking of relocation incentives

What would incentivise you to take up a relocated role outside London?		
Order	Response	Average Score
1	Lower cost of living	2.97
2	Higher salary	3.27
3	Work-life balance improvements	3.32
4	Better housing options	3.63
5	Shorter commute time	3.95
6	Opportunities for career progression	4.00
7	Relocation allowance/bonus	4.08
8	Access to nature and green spaces	5.57
9	Education opportunities for my family	6.37
10	Cultural and recreational opportunities	6.42
11	Other (Please specify)	8.13

Note: Average score denotes the average ranking position of each response across all respondents. Lower scores denote a greater incentive to relocate, while higher scores denote a weaker incentive to relocate.

Moreover, some respondents reported either not receiving or being deemed ineligible for the relocation package, reinforcing its overall limited influence in encouraging relocations. The sentiment from interviews similarly reflects the package as more likely to support relocations for civil servants who were already considering the move, rather than actively prompting new relocation decisions. This is evidenced in specific interviewee responses, stating that:

- *“This is sort of an expense rather than an incentive in its own right”*
- *“£14,000 is good to cover a move they would likely have made anyway”*
- *“From a people lens, the package that’s available won’t encourage anyone who was not already wanting to move”*

Additionally, the structure of financial support could benefit from enhanced transparency. Specifically, maintaining the London allowance while relocating inhibits eligibility for pay rises, a policy some respondents were unaware of, leading to complaints about fairness and a call for greater transparency.

Instead, there is a call for the package to work alongside other facilitation strategies, such as greater support for those relocating to find things like accommodation, schooling for children, and other wellbeing benefits. This is reflected in some qualitative survey and interview responses:

- *“Finding a house a long way away is hard, time consuming and stressful”*
- *“[PfG should] promote the benefits of working regionally ... It is not just about the work, it is about overall health and wellbeing too.”*

- *“I would recommend better employer/employee incentives”*

Further research to understand the relative value of different levels of relocation support would be beneficial for efficiently allocating resource towards this enhanced support.

Engagement with devolved nation governments

As part of growing the UK Civil Service presence across all the nations of the UK, PfG engages regularly with the devolved administrations and the UK Government Territorial Offices. However, as departments are responsible for implementing PfG role relocations as part of their own location strategy, the PfG team does not direct departments to move specific numbers of civil servants to specific locations. PfG encouraged departments to commit to role relocations in locations across all four nations during the SR21 process, however, as one interviewee highlighted *“the movement of civil servants to Scotland, Wales and NI may help the union, these are not driven by PfG team directly”*. Consequently, the PfG team was identified as having more limited influence by some interviewees with the devolved administrations, indicating focus and capacity may be needed to encourage relocations or capture the benefits of increased Civil Service presence in the devolved nations.

Engagement with professions and functions

It was identified the relocation narrative and engagement activity could be enhanced to ensure all professions and functions across the Civil Service are equally committed and contributing to the PfG programme.

Different professions identified they would benefit from more communication over how the programme is aligned with their objectives. For example, interviewees reported that *“policy functions are the hardest to relocate”* and that due to limited availability of senior management, and the *“speed issues of upskilling in policy roles”* in locations lacking senior mentors there remain challenges in relocating policy roles.

One success in tailoring the PfG approach to professions is through recognising the importance of identifying concentrations of talent specialisms and pursuing that as part of thematic campus'. For example, one interviewee reported that PfG conducted analysis to evidence Human Resources (HR) talent in Manchester, linked to a respected HR degree at the University of Manchester that had encouraged the HR function to place greater emphasis on this location. This type of strength-based research would be good practice for obtaining buy-in across professions and functions for PfG relocations.

4.1.2 Departmental Shaping Activities

How were departmental shaping activities undertaken?

The PfG delivered departmental shaping activities primarily through:

- Develop departmental principles that support the adoption of the PfG programme – The departmental principles are outlined in Appendix I,

providing standards for selecting locations to relocate civil servants into, and guidance for delivering PfG in those locations

- Develop strategies across workforce and estate to support PfG programme.
- Develop and enact an implementation plan for the PfL programme – The Plan for London was outside of this evaluation scope.

What worked well and for whom? Why?

Darlington Economic Campus

Announced in 2021, the Darlington Economic Campus (DEC) has been an exemplar location and focal point for relocating roles from various departments, including HM Treasury, the Department for Business and Trade, and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. As of June 2023, the DEC hosted around 600 staff from multiple departments¹³ in addition to 700 staff from the Department for Education. This includes 35 SCS, among them two Director Generals and one of the Treasury's second permanent secretaries. The proportion of SCS at the DEC of 2.7% exceeds the Civil Service-wide average of 1.5%. Reflecting on the high SCS figures in the DEC, several interviewees have noted that the DEC was unique in the senior sponsorship it received. The spearheading of the DEC by then-Chancellor of the Exchequer, now Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak MP, was perceived as vital crystallising in "*political support*" and "*immediate senior moves*".

Insights from interviews support the view of the DEC as a flagship success story. In HM Treasury, the DEC has created a "microcosm" of the London office, in which the grade and profession mix, notably including SCS and the policy function, has been delivered at levels similar to London. Meanwhile, greater local stakeholder engagement and the growing number of Civil Service roles presents job opportunities for an untapped local labour market. These benefits are highlighted by interviewees, including:

- Building a more diverse talent pipeline: Outreach with local universities and schools "*builds a talent pipeline over time*" and "*brings the benefit of diversity in social economic background*". Moreover, it involves showcasing roles to students and children "*who wouldn't normally consider a career in the Civil Service*".
- Engaging with local stakeholders: When you spend time speaking to regional stakeholders, you "*build up a network of contacts*". Interviewees noted the importance of leaders from other locations like London continuing to engage with these regional stakeholders and with the employees in the regions.
- Expanding career opportunities: "*Previously, the roles that are now in Darlington would only have been available in London*".
- Supporting the local community: There is growing evidence that there is a multiplier effect on the local community, with the "*private sector looking to invest more and set up in the town*".

¹³ Institute for Government. Settling in: Lessons from the Darlington Economic Campus for civil service relocation

Analysis of policy documents corroborate the DEC's initial success. The IFG's *Settling in* report in June 2023 acknowledges the role of the DEC in demonstrating the potential of relocation to diversify Civil Service thinking, reshape policymaking by connecting it with different regional realities, and contribute to levelling up local areas. While acknowledging this progress, the report also recognises that further efforts are needed to solidify these early successes and evidence their impact.

Regional hubs and second headquarters

Inspired by DEC's initial outcomes, other regional locations are replicating lessons learned and the blueprint from the DEC model, adapting their regional context and helping to foster a shared vision across the Civil Service. Alternative location strategies include establishing multi-department hubs, second headquarters, or department-specific hubs in targeted locations, with majority viewed as having success to date.

For example, the establishment of the Sheffield Policy Campus represents a move to distribute traditionally London-centric policymaking roles and grow a policy centre of expertise outside of London. Similarly, the concept of multi-department and regional hubs continues to be adopted in cities like Manchester, Sheffield, Leeds, and Birmingham hosting shared spaces, increasing:

- Cross-department and cross-profession collaboration: For instance, in Sheffield an interviewee noted that *“two strategy units [from separate departments] have discussed joint development and fostered communications on department efforts to address the spending review. There is real opportunity and value in terms of how to place same functions in the same place to drive added value.”*
- Pride in place: Many interviewees have noted that PfG has raised the profile of places outside of London. One interviewee noted *“[PfG] has raised the profile of Wales”* whilst another noted that *“We have 400 people who are from Glasgow and know about Glasgow and have a sense of the place.”*

These impacts are revisited in Chapter 5.

Other strategies include new or rebranded departmental second headquarters, like the Cabinet Office in Glasgow and the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities in Wolverhampton. These target non-London locations as integral centres for policy activity and senior teams, alongside hosting department wide meetings and events. Survey evidence is supportive, one survey stated that *“places for growth has boosted our presence outside of London and legitimised non-London offices as central government not just regional hubs”*. This is viewed as beneficial for both the diversity of perspectives within the department, and for evidencing the feasibility of having roles, particularly senior roles requiring closer proximity to ministers, outside London.

Furthermore, the decision of some departments to open up locations in other nations – notably Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland – results in *“more people based in devolved nations”*.

Finally, new department-specific hubs are also emerging, strategically focused on levelling up and harnessing local sector strengths. A notable example is the Home Office's plan in Stoke-on-Trent. The plan aims to establish the Home Office as a key employer in the region, offering a range of career opportunities and contributing to the local economy. This initiative is part of a broader government strategy to intertwine the Civil Service's growth outside of London with the ambition to "*spread opportunity more equally across the UK*"¹⁴, as per the broader objectives of the Levelling Up agenda.

What didn't work well or less well than expected? Why

Coordination of strategies across workforce and estate

A hurdle for the PfG programme engagement has been coordination between estate strategies and the relocation strategies encouraged by PfG and those implemented by departments. Interviewees indicated a conflict between departmental approaches to PfG and the estate strategy of the Government Property Agency (GPA), given the independent objectives of relocating more roles into non-London locations, while simultaneously attempting to reduce the Civil Service estate across the country. This often makes departments hesitant to embark on relocations or commit to long-term property leases, citing the complexities involved in renegotiating property contracts in new locations, as well as the volatility of workforce strategies, which often change more rapidly than estate arrangements can accommodate. The resulting dilemma is summarised by one interviewee, who stated that "*GPA didn't want to acquire more regional property unless they were guaranteed roles would move. But equally, departments didn't want to move roles unless estate was there*".

The lack of alignment also presented challenges when ascertaining office capacity. One interviewee indicated that "*GPA sometimes struggle to have a real time view of progress*", while another recalled GPA identifying there was no available accommodation or capacity in a particular PfG location, yet the department's own investigation revealed that there was existing space held by other departments (likely as some departments manage some estate independently from GPA). These problems create additional barriers for aligning multiple departments into a coherent estate strategy.

While the PfG team has been commended by interviewees for voicing departmental concerns to GPA and expediting some contract alterations, there is a consensus that further efforts are needed to bridge alignment gaps. Some interviewees suggested a stronger, more collaborative relationship between departments and the GPA, and ensuring swift resolution of disputes, would smooth the PfG implementation process.

Communication directly between the PfG team and GPA could be improved further to address the above points. Moreover, one interviewee suggested that the PfG team "*are making commitments on GPA's behalf*", but the commitments cannot always be achieved. While this narrative was not widely reported and thus cannot be corroborated, the presence of such a view still serves to illustrate a perceived misalignment between PfG and GPA within the Civil Service. Consequently,

¹⁴ Levelling Up the United Kingdom White Paper

alignment between the objectives of PfG and the capability of GPA to accommodate these is necessary to ensure commitments are realistic and achievable. The need for alignment and better planning between GPA and PfG relocation strategy is returned to in Chapter 5.

Variable implementation across departments

Interviews indicate that implementation of relocation strategies, support mechanisms, and outreach initiatives has been fragmented or inconsistent, with each department adopting its own distinct approach. The PfG programme does have a set of design principles, acting as criteria for selecting locations and delivering PfG locally (Appendix I), including steers for co-location, career pathways, capabilities, and local engagement; however, more developed standards and strategies would be useful for aligning departments' approach to PfG. Several interviewees recommended enhanced central coordination between departments and the PfG team to streamline initiatives, thereby ensuring consistency, cost-efficiency, and the avoidance of duplicated efforts. As an example, one interviewee expressed frustration over the lack of a centrally coordinated strategy, suggesting, "*there are things that just make more sense for all to do together,*" and emphasised that avoiding task repetition in each department would be "*more cost-effective to the taxpayer too.*" Echoing this, one survey respondent noted that "*it feels like [departments] are left to work this out on their own rather than there being a central coordination support function*".

The business survey indicated too that a lack of a clear central focal point to engage with created challenges as a local stakeholder. For example, one respondent reported the Civil Service is "*difficult to engage with as a building as there's no unified place to share information across all floors and departments*", suggesting that engagement with local businesses is fragmented and complex.

Additionally, the implementation of PfG varies depending on the internal resources allocated by each department. For instance, departments like HM Treasury have dedicated 8 FTE's to setting up the DEC, HMRC has regional teams and CO has established senior regional leads, in contrast, other departments rely heavily on networks of volunteers leading to less comprehensive strategy and support. A more consistent approach to resourcing could provide greater alignment under centrally coordinated efforts like the Heads of Place network.

Moreover, the variation in resourcing and approach can lead to uneven outcomes across departments and could contribute to a free-riding dynamic. According to some interviewees, when departments exceed their PfG targets, it may foster a complacency in other departments, banking on the overperformance of their counterparts to meet the overall PfG targets. This point is returned to in section 4.3.1.

Interoperability and Joint Recruitment

Issues around interoperability and lack of joint recruitment campaigns in certain regions has hampered efforts for greater efficiency gains from co-locating with other government departments. Several interviewees have noted these challenges:

- *"A lot of basics of interoperability and making locations work in a different way [are not there] – for instance shared IT systems, [departments are on] different pay scales and can't recruit across departments and passes for buildings such as not being able to get into each other's buildings, and really difficult to send email across [a site]."*
- *"The other set of challenges are about how do we get benefit of this for outcomes – for instance different ways of thinking about policy issues, different viewpoints (new recruits external to CS), relationships with individuals and external partners, but how do you take advantage of this and co-location of departments? This requires deliberate strategy for what roles are co-located together."*

These points are reiterated in section 4.5.1 and Chapter 5 detailing how greater cross-departmental collaboration is needed to streamline PfG strategy.

4.1.3 SCS Shaping activities

How did the PfG programme deliver SCS shaping activities?

PfG primarily targeted two activities to drive SCS relocation and strengthen SCS leadership in regions:

- Departmental engagement and reporting - PfG works closely with departments to provide support, monitoring and reporting against the SCS relocation commitment to enhance accountability.
- Establish an SCS taskforce focussed on role relocation - The SCS taskforce is a PfG initiative comprising representatives from various departments focusing on innovating and testing new approaches to influence role relocations and disseminating learning through an effective practice toolkit.
- Develop SCS network across the regions - SCS networks are collaborative groups of SCS led by Heads of Place and are located in various regions aiming to foster a cross-departmental cultural shift.

What worked well and for whom? Why?

Heads of Place

The Heads of Place and the associated SCS networks have received praise for helping to assist in placemaking, building a collaborative culture and helping to establish inclusive networks within their regions. This has been particularly useful for supporting those relocating and for helping to oversee programme management in their respective regions. They also play a role in bringing departments together in aspects like outreach and talent development, thus encouraging a more unified Civil Service messaging to external parties. Interviewees commended the Heads of Place as *"incredible people doing great things"* and highlighted the importance of the role and the SCS networks that it fosters for the regions.

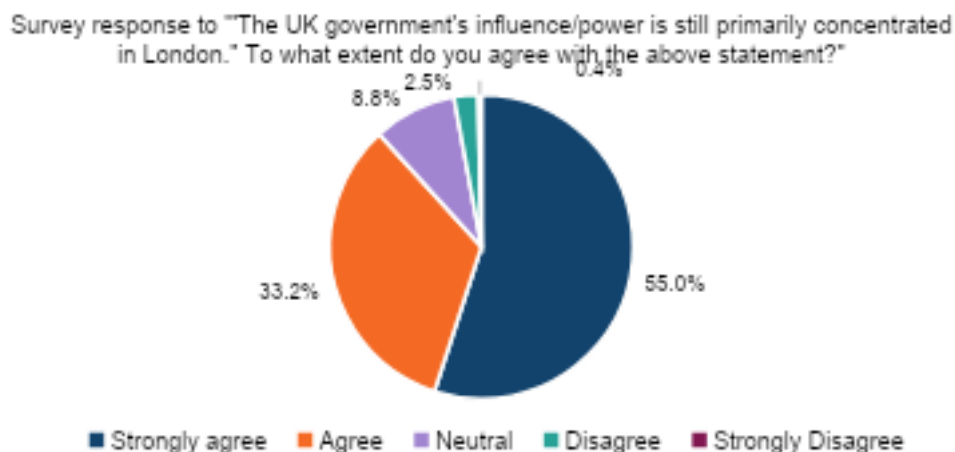
What did not work well and for whom? Why?

SCS relocations are below target

As of Q2 2023, 30.9% of UK-based SCS positions were outside London, compared with a PfG target of 50% by 2030. There is no interim target for SCS roles out of London akin to the equivalent interim target for total relocations exemplified by one interviewee who suggested that *“having no interim target on Senior Civil Servants locked in was a missed opportunity”*. An interim target may have assisted in progressing towards PfG’s objective by adding urgency and more immediate sense of accountability of departments against this measure, as the interim target for overall relocations seems to have engendered.

Exploring the rationale, participants shared a view that a prevailing London-centric orientation hampers the pace of SCS relocation. This is reflected in survey results, as illustrated in Figure 4.6 with 55% of those who responded to the survey strongly agreeing with the statement that *‘the UK government’s influence/power is still primarily concentrated in London’*, while a further 33% agreed to a lesser extent. From interview and qualitative survey insights, this perception is primarily due to the desire of civil servants to remain near ministers who typically reside in London for parliamentary duties. For example, one survey respondent stated that *“right now, the people that matter are in London and if you are in the regions and want to matter you need to travel to London,”* while another respondent emphasised that *“the location of ministers being in London for the majority of the working week still means that London feels like the centre of the Civil Service for getting business done.”* Further the requirement to travel back to London for BAU activity may deter relocation, one interviewee suggested that *“ministers still want to have meetings in London, so SCS will usually be required to be on trains more frequently”*.

Figure 4.6: Survey – Perception of UK government’s power being in London



(Description of Figure 4.6) Column chart of survey response to UK government's power being in London question. Clear affirmative response, with 55% responding strongly agree, 33% agree, 9% neutral, 3% disagree, 0% strongly disagree.

There were some observations that this is gradually changing in the post-pandemic era, with *“some ministers more willing to take calls online”* and fewer meetings that are *“purely face to face”*, however the prevailing sentiment held.

Moreover, while it is noted that certain ministers more regularly visit alternative office locations, encouraged by strategies such as departmental rebranding of second headquarters, one interviewee stated that these preferences were *“luck of the draw on minister”*. Another interviewee also noted that *“ministerial visits can be quite performative”* and given that parliamentary commitments necessitate the ministerial base in London, visits may remain infrequent.

Finally, perceptions of London as the nucleus of political power can ultimately hinder the progress of the PfG programme and risk perpetuating the notion that policy influence and career progression are confined to London. According to one interviewee, in HM Treasury around *“90% of roles that are advertised as Darlington and London, go to London”*. Reinforcing this, across 2023, 17.2% of new entrants to the Civil Service were recruited into London, which was the highest proportion of new entrants to any region. This highlights the persistent preference for recruiting into London and suggests that in order to achieve progress towards relocation targets, it may be necessary to remove London as a possible location on job adverts.

Some departments report using this method with some success, but it is not a widespread or standardised process across HMG. For example, in December 2023, of the SCS roles advertised in the UK, just 14% were advertised in non-London locations only, while 19% of roles were London only and the remainder offered across the country. Moreover, those offered solely out of London came from just eight departments, evidencing a lack of commitment across the Civil Service to rapidly progress towards SCS targets. These points are revisited within the recommendations of PfG section 8.

Resource to support SCS shaping activities

Referring back to efforts to strengthen SCS leadership in locations, Heads of Place are SCS officials who represent UK regions and help drive cross-departmental collaboration. They play a role in building networks and fostering a community culture, thereby advancing the PfG objectives. However interviewees claimed that Heads of Place frequently encounter challenges of isolation and insufficient resource, often taking on additional responsibilities beyond their official roles, for example:

- *“Put a bit more resource under Heads of Place - those Heads of Place are incredible people doing great things with scant resource.”*
- *“[There is] not enough dedicated resource attached to the programme”*
- *“[Heads of Place are] expected to spend 20% of time on the role which isn’t achievable.”*

This demonstrates a reliance on volunteer SCS networks from those who contribute their time and effort beyond regular duties. This is further reflected in one open-ended survey response, in which the respondent requested for *“more roles dedicated to making this work, at the moment it feels like people are having to do*

this as a corporate contribution, and it needs the resource and lived experience to make this a great success.”

Recent resourcing initiatives by the Cabinet Office, such as providing strategic advisors and additional Civil Service support to Heads of Place, mark positive advancements. Currently, supported by resource from five large departments, Cabinet Office provides each Head of Place with a strategic advisor, though some advisors support more than one Head of Place. Head of Place feedback suggests a need to provide more operational staff rather than solely increasing strategic advisors, since Heads of Place already serve a strategy function. This feedback underscores the necessity for increased resource, to provide enhanced coordination and tailored support for the PfG programme’s operational needs and strategic objectives, a point reiterated in section 4.5.1 and Chapter 5.

4.1.4 Governance and Reporting

How did governance of PfG delivery operate?

The programme undertook three core governance and reporting activities to deliver PfG:

- Quarterly Relocations Tracker (QRT) - To aid reporting against programme targets, a QRT was created by the PfG programme for completion by departments detailing the number of relocations completed in the previous quarter.
- Established governance boards to monitor progress and promote ministerial accountability - The PfG programme operates within a structured governance framework, reporting to the Portfolio Oversight Board led by the Second Permanent Secretary to His Majesty’s Treasury. This board, in turn, is accountable to the Location and Property Board, a subsidiary of the Civil Service Board. This is bolstered by networks such as the SCS taskforce. Moreover, while not part of the governance structure, locally, Heads of Place develop their own networks to manage local delivery in place, which supports PfG delivery.
- Developing and managing LDP delivery and Thematic Portfolios

The programme targets were also integrated into key policy agendas, notably reflected in DLUHC’s *Levelling Up the United Kingdom* White Paper in 2022, outlining departments’ relocation targets up to the years 2025 and 2030¹⁵. These are also included in internal reporting of performance on wider government reform, through the Cabinet Office Modernisation and Reform Unit, overseen by the Cabinet Secretary Delivery Board.

What worked well and for whom? Why?

Structured Governance

According to interviews with PfG and department officials, the structured oversight and consistent commitment ensured PfG was a priority for SCS’s and promoted effective delivery. One interviewee specifically noted that the “*well-run*” PfG

¹⁵ Levelling Up the United Kingdom White Paper

governance has brought together SCS, and in turn created “*strong buy-in*” across departments. The use of governance and networks such as the SCS taskforce to encourage SCS collaboration remains beneficial and enables “*connections elsewhere in the Civil Service*”, building up a cohort of committed SCS.

The programme's integration into key policy agendas such as Levelling Up underscored the political commitment to the PfG's objectives and established a framework for departmental accountability in achieving these relocation milestones. This was echoed by a respondent, who highlighted how the inclusion of PfG's objectives into DLUHC's White Paper was crucial in holding departments to account and ensuring they were consistently striving towards their relocation targets.

QRT Report

The QRT report was viewed as effective, reinforcing the accountability of departments to meet their commitments and providing a critical tool for tracking key measures within the programme. Since December 2023, quarterly reporting of departmental progress has been published on the PfG Gov.uk page to enhance accountability and transparency of the programme. Other datapoints and prospective reports are noted within the further support.

What worked less well and for whom? Why?

Definitional inconsistencies in relation to relocations

Survey and interview informants across departments both reflected a notable challenge in interpreting what constitutes a relocation, resulting from the breadth of the programme's definition, which sets out that a relocation can be classed as:

1. Civil servants that physically relocate along with their roles from London into a non-London region across the UK;
2. Internal Civil Service recruitment, in which a civil servant moves department or location into a non-London role that was previously based in London;
3. New joiners to the Civil Service that acquire a non-London role that was previously based in London; and
4. Newly created roles that could have been recruited into London, but the successful candidate (internal or external) is recruited into a non-London region in the UK.

In particular (4) was interpreted in varied ways within a small number of departments. While this variation was not widespread, and only related to a small proportion of overall relocated roles, it has led to confusion among People Function officials interviewed regarding which types of roles should be accounted for, with queries particularly about operational versus functional, policy, and administrative roles within the Civil Service. Where variations in interpretation did take place, they were driven by the limitations some departments face in their approach to data collection, making standardisation across all departments difficult without a wholesale change to how some departments collect workforce data. As one survey respondent pointed out, *"I would find it more reassuring if all departments were*

counting their PfG numbers in the same way. Until then, I feel the programme lacks integrity." This recommendation is returned to in section 4.4.3 and Chapter 5.

Sustainability of relocations

While Local Delivery Plans have seen clear success in monitoring and reporting through QRT Reporting, another key aspect is to ensure long-term sustainability of relocations. However, some concerns have arisen that relocated roles may slip back towards London either post-2024 elections, or after the end of the PfG programme. For example, one interviewee indicated they were *“Not reassured we’re past the point of no return on this”*, while another felt reassurance that PfG *“will last past this government”* would be beneficial. Reassurance would help to build a critical mass in non-London locations and balance roles in and out of London, particularly at SCS level, which in turn would encourage further relocation. Therefore, for civil servants planning their long-term career prospects, and to encourage a greater number of locations, better communication of the long-term plan for delivering relocations in regions would be useful.

4.2 How did Covid-19 and post-pandemic work arrangements impact London and PfG locations?

Table 4.7: Assessment of theory of change mapped to key process findings: Covid-19

Outputs	Assessment	Strength of Evidence
Departmental shaping activities: Normalisation of flexible working and a wider talent pool	Worked Well	Moderate

4.2.1 Influenced and Accelerated Relocation Decisions

The pandemic underscored the feasibility and prevalence of flexible working arrangements, challenging the traditional emphasis on in-person interactions. This acted as a catalyst for relocation under the PfG programme – though the scale of impact remains to be determined. As one People Function official noted, *“increased home working during the pandemic highlighted that dispersed teams can still collaborate and maintain a high level of contact.”* Similarly, a survey respondent reflected, *“I wouldn’t have thought of relocating up north had it not been for the Covid-19 pandemic.”* These pandemic-induced changes are indicated to have facilitated relocation uptake during the delivery of the programme.

4.2.2 Covid-19 Recruitment Processes Broadened the Talent Pool

The shift to flexible recruitment processes during the pandemic may have enabled the Civil Service to tap into a wider talent pool, making positions more accessible to candidates outside traditional geographic boundaries. This transition is evidenced by survey respondents' remarks:

- "Greater recruitment and more roles available outside of London as the ability to work flexibly was proven."
- "The recruitment was carried out online rather than having to travel to London for interviews, which made the process much more accessible."
- "The pandemic enabled my team to expand and allowed me to recruit the best people but not based on their ability to get to London."

4.2.3 Variations in Office Dynamics

The progression prompted by the pandemic toward flexible working impacted office dynamics in a multifaceted way. Some survey respondents observed a decrease in the vibrancy of office communities due to reduced attendance, noting, "It feels like a library despite lots of grassroots efforts to connect people," and, "The office feels quite cliquey." Conversely, other respondents believe that team relationships and morale have remained strong, and flexible working has enhanced their work-life balance, stating, "Flexible working achieves an improved work/life balance and drives a culture of office attendance where it truly adds value and enables improved collaboration over technology solutions." This variance in experiences underscores the importance of careful monitoring, made even more essential with the implementation of the new directive for 60% office attendance.

4.3 Were there any unexpected or unintended issues in the delivery of the intervention?

Table 4.8: Assessment of theory of change mapped to key process findings: unexpected issues

Outputs	Assessment	Strength of Evidence
Governance and reporting: Perverse incentives	Did Not Work Well	Weak
Departmental shaping activities: Ambiguity surrounding new directives	Did Not Work Well	Moderate

4.3.1 Departmental Free riding

Interview feedback suggests that the fragmented execution of relocation strategies, support mechanisms, and outreach initiatives within the PfG programme influences outcomes. This variation in departmental resourcing and execution can result in a free-riding dynamic, where departments may rely on the overperformance of others to meet collective PfG targets, leading to uneven efforts and potentially impacting the overall success of the programme. As one interviewee highlighted, "our department put together a whole programme team [for PfG] but we learned that some other departments didn't put as much effort into it because they saw that we had hit our targets". This may be explained by the fact some departments feel PfG is less targeted towards them, with one interviewee noting that the "programme seems very focused on departments that are very London focused", therefore potentially leading

to limited effort from departments that feel they are already operating with a good balance of civil servants out of London.

4.3.2 Ambiguity Surrounding New Directives

The recent announcement of the 60% office attendance mandate and the imposition of headcount caps in the Civil Service have prompted confusion among survey and interview respondents, particularly those in the People Function, leading to calls for a clearer understanding of how these directives intersect with PfG objectives.

Moreover, cynicism around their success has generated a slight hesitance to sign property leases, since the estate capacity required is dependent on the extent to which they are achieved. As evidence, one interviewee noted that making long-term commitments on building capacity can happen, *“but I can only make that happen if workforce numbers come down”*.

The introduction of the new 60% office attendance mandate has prompted concerns around estate capacity. For instance, survey responses included:

- *“It is impossible to hit the 60% working from the office target due to the lack of available desks.”*
- *“Not fit for 60% working in the office, we don't have enough desks for 40% never mind 50%”*

According to the *Government Estate: Annual Data Publication, 2022-23*, the number of assets in the UK government estate decreased by 2.5% from 186,079 to 181,526 from 2021 to 2022¹⁶. Further, in 2023, there were 306 unconditional property sales, amounting to £1.1bn. As a result, this creates uncertainty around how PfG relocations will continue into a diminishing estate, now 60% office attendance is a requirement.

It should be noted that the interview responses are subjective and actual office space may be sufficient, meaning concerns about feasibility may not fully reflect the actual usage of office space. Further research into the availability of office space particularly on peak business days should be conducted to assess the impact of this new directive.

Nevertheless, the 60% office attendance directive is also perceived by survey and interview respondents as problematic for flexible ways of working. This shift potentially disincentivises London-based civil servants from considering relocation, as it revives the value of in-person relationships and reinforces the centrality of London-based offices, a sentiment noted in section 4.1.3. It may also reduce the talent pool for roles, since the need to travel to the office more often may deter certain applicants.

Coupled with this return-to-office announcement is the directive to cap headcounts, which appears to have introduced ambiguity into the PfG strategy for many People Function officials who were interviewed, especially regarding whether roles earmarked for relocation should be filled anew or left vacant. Clarification is required

¹⁶ Government Estate: Annual Data Publication, 2022-23

as to which locations will be most strictly capped, for example one interviewee noted that where localities are allowed to grow outside London, this will “*likely help the [PfG] programme on a basic level*”, as restrictions in London may force departments to relocate some roles out of London to comply.

Finally, there is added confusion over the introduction of the Plan for London (PfL) initiative, which aims to reduce both the workforce and estate in London, while maintaining representation of all grades across London. The PfL programme falls within the same domain as PfG and is overseen by the same Senior Responsible Officer. PfL again raises questions for departments, particularly around aligning workforce and estate strategy, since it acts as a further cause of uncertainty for signing building leases. For example, one respondent noted that PfL “*threw strategies back in the air*” and it “*wasn’t apparent how PfG and PfL would link together*”. This reinforces that further clarification over the long-term alignment of PfG, PfL, and other directives would be useful for departments to integrate objectives into workforce and estate strategies. These recommendations for clarification on the alignment between PfG and related directives are returned to in Chapter 5.

4.4 What lessons can be learned and applied to improve future PfG delivery? What can be improved?

Table 4.9: Theory of change mapped to key process findings: Lessons learned

Outputs and Intermediate Outcomes	Linkage to Identified Challenge/Issue
<p>Shared vision & strategy: Harmonise relocation plans with estate strategies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Alignment between PfG, departments, and GPA ● Ambiguity surrounding new directives ● Perverse incentives ● Definitional ambiguity
<p>SCS shaping activities: Strategic development of SCS talent pipelines</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Proportion of SCS roles out of London ● Central coordination
<p>Governance and reporting: Standardisation and transparency in defining ‘relocation’</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Definitional ambiguity

4.4.1 Harmonised Operational Framework

Interview insights highlight that developing a harmonised operational framework that aligns departmental relocation plans with estate strategies from GPA and other departments holding large estates such as HMRC and DWP, will help address

logistical issues in implementation. This would bridge the gap, coordinating estate availability with recruitment timelines, ensuring that departmental moves are both strategically sound but also logistically feasible. The operational framework should incorporate objectives from other centrally owned directives such as the 60% office attendance mandate, Civil Service headcount caps, and the Plan for London. This would allow Government People Group to work with PfG and GPA to develop an integrated approach that can articulate how these directives complement the objectives of PfG.

Such an approach could include regular policy alignment workshops between Government People Group, the PfG team, GPA, the People Function in departments, and relevant policy units; a unified planning and reporting system that captures data on estate usage, relocation progress, and workforce changes; adaptable estate management (e.g., modular office designs and flexible leases); and pilot schemes coupled with robust feedback mechanisms.

4.4.2 Strategic Development of SCS Talent Pipelines

The presence of a diverse range of SCS roles in PfG locations is vital for breaking the perceived glass ceiling at Grade 6 or SCS1 (Deputy Director) level. Expanding the number of senior positions outside of London and ensuring these roles span various levels of seniority can enhance the visibility and attainability of career advancement opportunities in these regions. Having high-ranking officials such as Directors and Director General's actively involved and visible in PfG locations can set a clear example of upward mobility and foster a supportive environment for professional growth. This was crucial in the success of the DEC, with SCS clearly *"signed up to the vision of creating a community."* Therefore, visibility of senior leadership is a key component to replicate in other locations.

Further, fostering cross-departmental collaboration in developing SCS talent pipelines is essential to address the bottleneck often observed at the Grade 6 level. A siloed approach to talent development in the regions can lead to negative perceptions on career progression among civil servants, as opportunities for progression within their current department or location may be limited. To mitigate this, a coordinated, government-wide strategy could be implemented to broaden pathways into the SCS.

As an example, interdepartmental talent exchange programs could be established with a location focus, allowing civil servants to gain diverse experiences and skills that are valued at the SCS level. These programs would enable civil servants from different departments to work on joint projects, fostering a broader understanding of government operations and nurturing a more interconnected Civil Service. Additionally, the introduction of a centralised talent management system could streamline the identification and development of potential SCS candidates for differing locations across departments. Many People Function officials who were interviewed commented on the lack of interoperability on contractual or terms related hurdles between departments for hiring staff, even when there is mutual agreement and willingness to proceed.

It may also be feasible to enhance interoperability between departments while maintaining a regional focus. This would entail establishing regional talent pools that operate under a shared governance structure, where multiple departments participate in decision-making and oversight of regional talent pools. Such an approach would allow departments within a region to access a regionally centralised database of candidates who are interested in or suitable for SCS roles, facilitating cross-departmental mobility and recruitment.

Finally, removing London as an available location of job adverts may be necessary to ensure roles are filled across the country. Although some departments already employ this, given the proportion of SCS roles out of London is behind target, more widespread adoption may be required to overcome the general preference of hiring into London.

4.4.3 Upfront Definition of Key Measures and Objectives

A challenge identified was the variation in how some departments are interpreting the PfG-established definition of 'relocation.'. While this variation between departments was not widespread, and only related to a small proportion of overall relocated roles, this led to some inconsistencies in counting relocated civil servants and roles. PfG has a number of existing quality assurance methods in place to assure the accuracy of departmental data returns including departmental SCS sign off, PfG validation processes, support materials and engagement. However, addressing this issue requires a standardised counting methodology to ensure transparency in the programme's reported outcomes. This early definition or understanding of an agreed programme taxonomy is a key lesson learned for other multi-faceted, multi-department programmes in the future.

Specific to the PfG programme mechanisms or incentives could be established and coordinated centrally to ensure that every department adheres to counting standards such as department-specific performance metrics tied to tangible rewards or recognition. A centralised database or dashboard could be established to complement the Cabinet Office's existing QRT reporting mechanism – all departments would submit their relocation data to this platform, providing a real-time overview of progress and facilitating efficient reporting and monitoring.

4.5 How can departments be further supported to develop and deliver their relocation/placemaking programmes?

Table 4.10: Theory of change mapped to key process findings: Further departmental support

Outputs and Intermediate Outcomes	Linkage to Identified Challenge/Issue
<p>Shared vision & strategy: Enhance cross-departmental collaboration and central coordination</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Central coordination ● Programme resource and Heads of Place

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Alignment between PfG, departments, and GPA ● Definitional ambiguity ● Ambiguity surrounding new directives
Better workforce planning: Broaden relocation support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Relocation support ● Relocation Hub

4.5.1 Enhance Cross-departmental Collaboration and Central Coordination

As noted in section 4.1.2, interview feedback and both the Civil Service and business survey responses underscored the need for improved cross-departmental collaboration and central coordination to streamline the PfG programme and Civil Service outreach initiatives. Such an effort for collaboration, led by the Cabinet Office in the form of an expanded unit, could ensure consistency, eliminate redundancy, and foster a more cohesive strategy.

The need for a balanced approach was also highlighted. While central coordination is crucial, it is essential to respect the unique insights and expertise of individual departments. As one respondent suggested, "*permanent secretaries know what's best for their department, so they need a say in strategy.*" Sentiment from the survey emphasised the importance of a collaborative approach that blends central authority with departmental input. Beyond imposing targets, framing strategies in a way that showcases the benefits they bring to each department, could also enhance departmental buy-in and drive effective collaboration.

Further, the programme should articulate its strategies and decision criteria, particularly when it comes to the choice between cities versus towns and the rationale behind hubs, campuses, and second HQs. While the programme does currently have design principles used as criteria for selecting locations and guiding local implementation of PfG, as evidenced in Appendix I, these could be developed further. This should involve a comprehensive analysis of regional needs, potential for community integration, and strategic significance. This transparency could help in aligning the programme's objectives with its operational strategies.

Additionally, robust cross government and local communication channels could be used to facilitate frequent updates, sharing of best practices, and discussions on strategic direction. This would enable joint campaigns on aspects like community outreach and recruitment and would encourage quicker resolving of issues in interoperability such as with IT systems and security passes. Although channels do exist, more regular and informative PfG-focused forums and workshops, structured to enable departments to learn from each other, synchronise efforts, and generate collaborative ideas, would ensure successful strategies can more easily be replicated.

Finally, there is a consensus among interviewees that government should allocate sufficient resource to PfG, particularly to pivotal roles (e.g., Heads of Place) that facilitate cross-regional and departmental collaboration that aim to build sustainable

and thriving Civil Service communities across the UK. This would help transform goodwill efforts into more structured, well-supported initiatives, that could help PfG achieve its objectives.

4.5.2 Broaden Relocation Support

The variance in relocation experiences underscores the need for a centralised support structure that can offer a broader and standardised relocation package to further incentivise civil servants. This includes not just financial support but holistic regional offer alongside certainty about the longevity and stability of the programme, mitigating fears of a potential regression to a London-centric Civil Service post-PfG. Additional research to understand the relative value of different levels of support would be useful for efficiently allocating resource towards such enhanced support.

A 'PfG Relocation Hub' could be established, offering end-to-end support, including a standardised relocation guide, a dedicated helpline, and even a 'relocation concierge service' to assist with local area orientation. This hub would ensure that every civil servant embarking on a relocation journey receives consistent, comprehensive support, mitigating feelings of isolation and stress. To address the delays in processing relocation requests, a streamlined application system could be implemented, ensuring timely updates and resolutions. This system could feature a tracking interface, allowing applicants to monitor the status of their requests, thereby enhancing understanding and monitoring within the relocation process.

5 Impact Evaluation

This chapter covers the impact evaluation of the PfG programme, assessing the extent to which outcomes, the observable changes that may be attributed to the programme, and impacts, the broader long-term effects of these outcomes on the Civil Service and society at large, have been delivered to date.

The impact evaluation addresses the following questions:

1. Did PfG achieve the expected outcomes and to what extent?¹⁷
2. Did PfG achieve the expected impacts and to what extent?¹⁸
3. How have the current PfG locations benefited from relocations so far?
4. To what extent can the outcomes be attributed to PfG? How much can be attributed to external factors? What would have happened anyway?
5. Has the intervention resulted in any unintended outcomes?
6. What generalisable lessons have we learned about impact?

As outlined in section 3 the impact evaluation methodology employs a theory-based evaluation approach using realist methods, to identify any evidence supporting progress in delivering against the ToC outcomes and impacts on sampled PfG locations post-implementation, compared to pre-programme norms. In keeping with this approach, the performance of the sampled PfG locations have not been directly compared to similar comparison or control groups.

The outcomes and impacts identified in the programme TOC have been mapped against the evaluation questions. The evaluation then considers the extent to which available evidence supports an assessment that the outcome has been 'Achieved', 'Partially Achieved' or 'Not Achieved' or is 'On Track' or at 'At Risk'. Additionally, the evaluation also assesses whether the PfG programme has 'Supported', 'Partially Supported' or 'Not Supported' the delivery of the impact. Where sufficient evidence is not available the assessment is labelled as 'Inconclusive'. This assessment is further defined in Appendix C.

The evidence used in this assessment has been derived from multiple data sources, including:

Quantitative:

- **Quarterly Relocation Tracker (QRT) Data:** The central tracker (Q3 2023) has been used to understand the characteristics of roles that have relocated.
- **GPA Data:** Insights into estate costs and carbon emissions have been captured from GPA data provided.
- **ONS/Oxford Economics Data:** Indicators on the labour market in sampled PfG locations have been used.
- **Civil Service Bulletin Data:** Detailed insights into the PfG programme's impact on the wider Civil Service have been extracted from CS Bulletin data.

Qualitative:

¹⁷ Table 5.1 includes all the outcomes from the Theory of Change

¹⁸ Table 5.3 include all the impacts from the Theory of Change

- **Interviews & focus groups:** Participants comprised of 28 civil servants from London and 22 from outside London (including 38 SCS)
- **Survey:** 825 responses from across the Civil Service
- **Key PfG policy and delivery documents:** Institute for Government's *Settling in: Lessons from the Darlington Economic Campus for Civil Service relocation*, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities' *Levelling Up the United Kingdom White Paper*, Cabinet Office Quarterly Relocations Tracker internal reports, *Places for Growth Relocations Data 2020-2023* publication, *Government Estate: Annual Data Publication, 2022-23*.

5.1 Did PfG achieve the expected outcomes and to what extent?

The table below summarises the findings of the evaluation of outcomes:

Table 5.1: Assessment of theory of change outcomes

Expected outcomes per ToC	Assessment	Strength of Evidence
Role Relocation		
Relocation of 15,000 department and public bodies roles outside Greater London by 2025	Achieved	Strong
Relocation of 22,000 roles outside Greater London by 2027	On track	Strong
50% UK based SCS outside of London by 2030	At risk	Strong
Reduced workforce in London to 75,000 by 2030	At risk	Strong
Policy Presence		
Increased Civil Service presence in UK Nations	Partially achieved	Moderate
Increased number of all policy making roles in the regions and nations	Inconclusive	Weak
Increased thematic skills-based campus and Government Hubs	Achieved	Strong
Workforce Efficiency		
Reduced rate of churn in delegated grades in the regions and nations	Not Achieved	Moderate
Less BAU activity requiring London Travel and increased Ministerial and Perm Sec presence outside of London	Not Achieved	Moderate
Estate Efficiency		

Expected outcomes per ToC	Assessment	Strength of Evidence
London estate reduced to 20 Buildings by 2026 and consolidation of regional estates into hubs	At risk	Strong
Reduced Carbon Emissions	Inconclusive	Weak

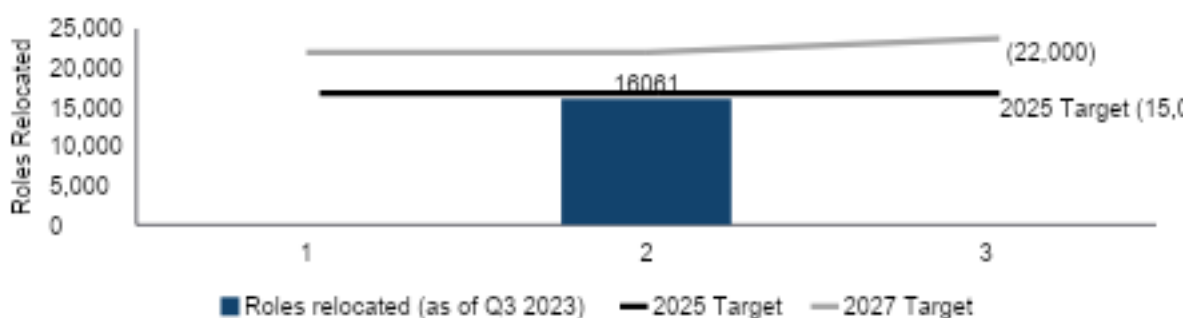
The findings are discussed in detail overleaf:

5.1.1 Role Relocation

- I. **Theory of change outcome:** *The Places for Growth programme will support the relocation of 15,000 and 22,000 department and public bodies roles outside Greater London by 2025 and 2027 respectively.*

Evidence: As of Q3 2023, 16,061 roles have been relocated under the PfG. This is already higher than the programme’s 2025 target of 15,000 roles. Based on the current trajectory, the programme is on track to deliver against its revised target of 22,000 relocated roles by 2027 (73% already achieved) (Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1: Relocation Milestones (as of Q3 2023)¹⁹



(Description of Figure 5.1) Column chart of roles relocated as of Q3 2023, showing 16,061 roles relocated, above the 2025 target of 15,000.

Departments have an important role in facilitating the relocation of roles and meeting the PfG programmes relocation targets. In the Spending Review 2021 (SR 21), each department committed to relocating a specific number of roles from London. As shown in Table 5.2 below, the HO, MoJ, BEIS, DLUHC, Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), and Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) have either delivered or exceeded their commitments outlined in SR 2021.

As of Q3 2023, however, two departments are particularly behind schedule, having relocated less than 30% of their commitments. Specifically, the Foreign, Commonwealth, and Development Office (FCDO) and the Attorney General's

¹⁹ QRT Data - [Places for Growth Relocations Data 2020-2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/data-and-statistics/places-for-growth-relocations-data-2020-2023)

Departments (AGD) have relocated only 1.7% and 26.5%, respectively, of their SR 2021 commitments. In total, 17 departments have relocated less than 5% of their London workforce to date, most notably Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) which has a large London based workforce.

Table 5.2: Roles relocated by departments (as of Q3 2023)²⁰²¹

Departments	Roles Relocated (Q3 2023)	% of total roles relocated	Number of roles in London (March 2023)	% of departmental SR 21 commitments
HO	3,444	21.4%	14,590	177.2%
MoJ	2,088	13.0%	15,655	173.0%
BEIS	1,253	7.8%	5,735	100.0%
CO	1,187	7.4%	5,585	68.2%
DLUCH	1,029	6.4%	2,180	112.2%
DHSC	923	5.7%	5,455	242.1%
OFGEM	728	4.5%	865	No target
DfT	629	3.9%	3,390	91.5%
DCMS	629	3.9%	1,640	89.5%
DEFRA	587	3.7%	2,645	106.3%
MOD	550	3.4%	4,255	57.3%
NCA	542	3.4%	1,565	39.0%
DWP	541	3.4%	9,190	136.2%
HMRC	389	2.4%	10,275	70.6%
DfE	348	2.2%	2,405	63.0%
DIT	318	2.0%	2,690	54.7%
AGD	228	1.4%	4,830	26.5%
HMT	224	1.4%	2,130	74.4%
CMA	138	0.9%	795	40.2%
UKSA	92	0.6%	320	74.8%
CC	80	0.5%	80	No target

²⁰ QRT Data - [Places for Growth Relocations Data 2020-2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/places-for-growth-relocations-data-2020-2023)

²¹ Civil Service Statistics - [Civil Service statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/civil-service-statistics)

Departments	Roles Relocated (Q3 2023)	% of total roles relocated	Number of roles in London (March 2023)	% of departmental SR 21 commitments
OFSTED	30	0.2%	315	57.6%
CLD	16	0.1%	350	No target
FCDO	6.4	0.0%	4,565	1.7%
ORR	4.0	0.0%	210	No target

Conclusion: *Achieved*: The Places for Growth programme has already met its 2025 target and is on track to deliver the 2027 target.

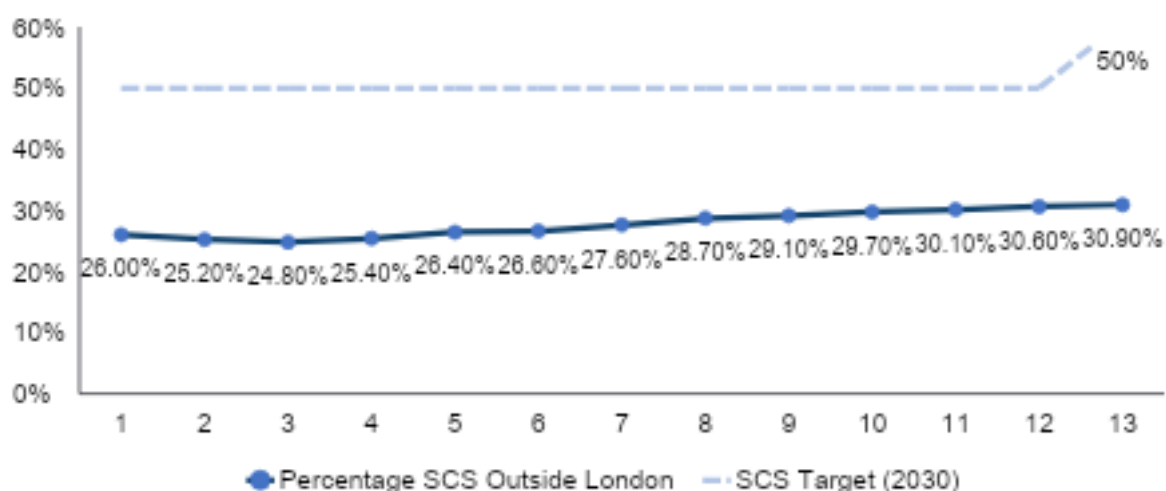
Strength of evidence: *Strong*: The data considered in this assessment directly addresses the theory of change hypotheses and provides strong evidence of achievement.

- II. **Theory of change outcome:** *The Places for Growth programme will result in significant Senior Civil Servants (SCS) representation across the country, with 50% of UK-based SCS roles located outside of London by 2030.*

Evidence: The proportion of UK-based SCS roles outside London has increased from 26% in 2020 to 30.9% in 2023. A projection, based on this rate of increase, would indicate that just 37.9% of UK-based SCS roles would be located outside London by 2030 (Figure 5.2), indicating the 2030 target of 50% is at risk.²²

²² The centrally managed Senior Civil Service incorporates only civil servants employed by civil service organisations i.e., Ministerial departments, Non-Ministerial departments, Executive Agencies and Crown NDPBs

Figure 5.2: Proportion of SCS based outside of London (Q2 2020 to Q2 2023)²³



(Description of Figure 5.2) Line chart of percentage of UK-based SCS outside London, showing 26% in Q2 2020, up to 30.9% as of Q2 2023, below the target of 50% by 2030.

Conclusion: At risk: Based on the current proportion of UK-based SCS outside of London and projections based on the rate of change across programme delivery, it does not appear that this target will be met by 2030 and this hypothesis is therefore highlighted as being at risk.

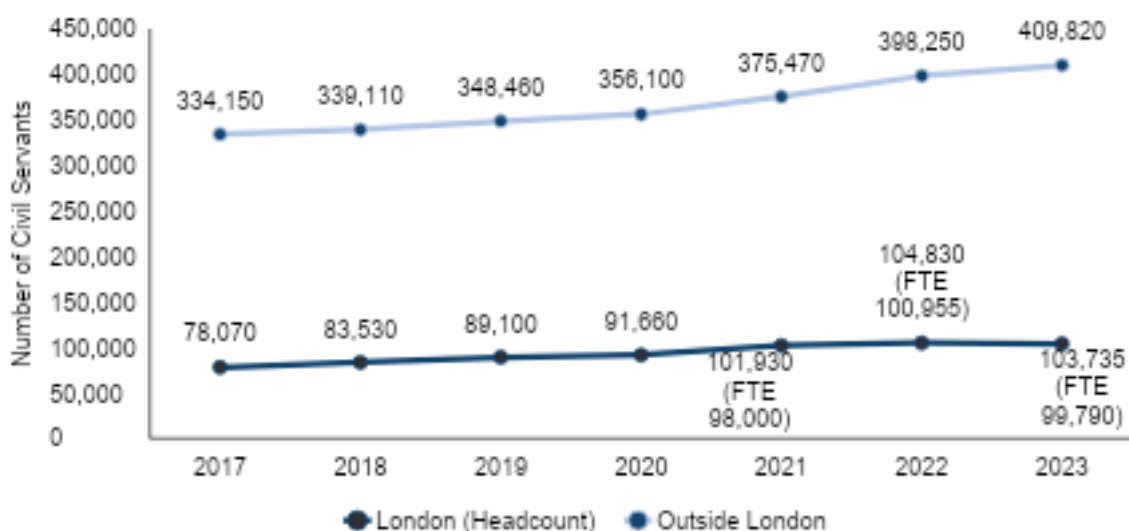
Strength of evidence: Strong: The data considered in this assessment directly addresses the theory of change hypothesis, accessing Civil Service workforce statistics to assess the achievement to date.

III. **Theory of change outcome:** *The Places for Growth programme will support a reduced workforce in London, with the number of roles reducing to 75,000 by 2030.*

Evidence: Since the inception of the PfG programme, while 16,061 roles have been relocated the Civil Service headcount in London has increased from 91,660 in 2020 when the PfG targets were set, to 103,735 by the end 2023. Therefore, the programme has delivered at the same time as roles and opportunities in London have continued to grow.

²³ Civil Service Statistics - [Civil Service statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

Figure 5.3: Civil Service workforce in London (2017 to 2023)^{24,25,26}



(Description of Figure 5.3) Line chart showing Civil Service headcount in London and outside from 2017-2023. London has grown from 78,070 to 103,735, while non-London has risen from 334,150 to 409,820, with a rise in rate of growth since 2020.

Conclusion: At risk: The ministerially agreed principle to reduce the number of civil servants based in London to 75,000 by 2030, a key aspect of the Plan for London programme, is currently at risk based on current headcount data. It is noted however, that the increase in Civil Service headcount in London should be viewed in the context of the increased demands preparing for EU Exit, and then management of the pandemic response during this period.

The Plan for London programme, which primarily targets the capital assets, also integrates aspects of the PfG programme, with department workforce numbers in Greater London (32 boroughs), including Central London, to be optimised to suit department needs.

Although the number of civil servants in London, based on FTE, did fall by 1,165 between 2022 and 2023 and the growth rate in civil servants outside of London slightly exceeded that in London between 2020 and 2023, a more rapid pace beyond the 2027 target will be required to achieve the 2030 milestone. Nevertheless, it is reasonable to assume that without the PfG programme the increase in Civil Service headcount in London would likely have been higher.²⁷

Despite this, it should also be noted that perceptions of London-based civil servants must be managed to ensure they remain confident that career progression remains achievable in London, through stronger communication and management of expectations. This is essential for retaining London-based civil

²⁴ Civil Service Statistics - [Civil Service statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

²⁵ FTE data only available from 2021 onwards

²⁶ Outside of London excludes Civil Servants working overseas and where data on regions is not reported

²⁷ PfG programmes focuses on FTE as opposed to headcount

servants, and for maintaining Civil Service operational needs and strategic priorities for effective service delivery. This sentiment is touched upon further in section 5.2.2.

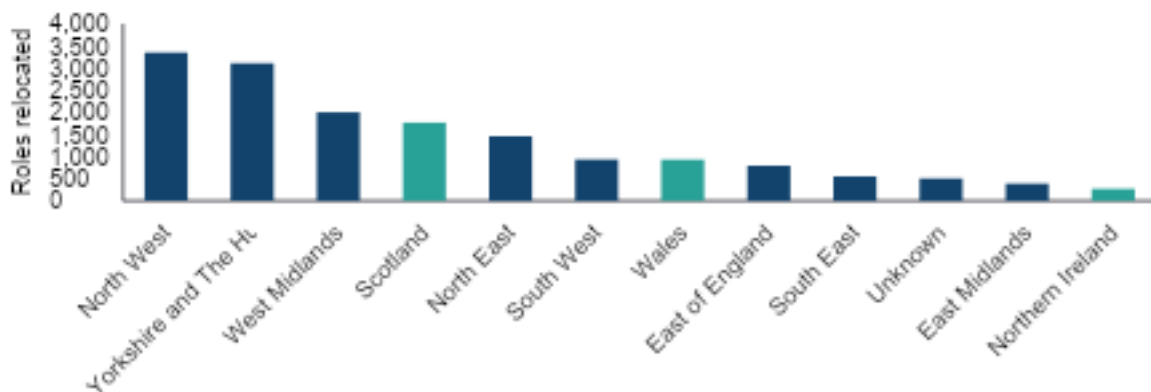
Strength of evidence: Strong: The data considered in this assessment directly addresses the theory of change hypotheses and allows a direct assessment of whether this hypothesis has been achieved to date.

5.1.2 Policy Presence

- I. **Theory of change outcome:** *The Places for Growth programme will contribute to increased Civil Service presence in the UK Nations.*

Evidence: Figure 5.4 below shows the number of roles relocated by region/nation of the UK, and the percentage of total roles relocated each region/nation has received. The North West (20.9%) and Yorkshire and the Humber (19.3%) have received the greatest proportion of roles. Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland account for 11.0%, 5.8% and 1.7% of relocated roles respectively as of Q3 2023.

Figure 5.4: Roles relocated by NUTS 1 region (as of Q3 2023)²⁸

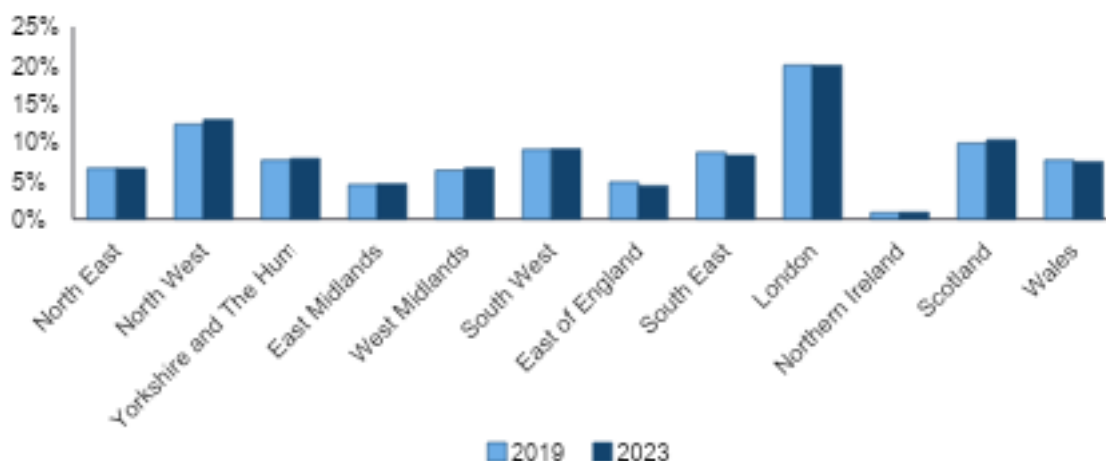


(Description of Figure 5.4) Column chart of where relocated roles have moved to by region, showing North West with 21% of roles, Yorkshire with 19%. Other notable figures are Scotland with 11%, Wales with 6%, and Northern Ireland with 1.7%.

The total proportion of Civil Service roles by region remains largely consistent with pre-PfG data (Figure 5.5). In particular, the Civil Service workforce share in London remains largely unchanged. However, given the increase in Civil Service headcount in London, PfG may have contributed to preventing an increase in London’s share of the overall Civil Service workforce.

²⁸ QRT Data - [Places for Growth Relocations Data 2020-2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/data-collections/places-for-growth-relocations-data-2020-2023)

Figure 5.5: Regional composition of the Civil Service workforce by region (2019 and 2023)²⁹



(Description of Figure 5.5) Column chart of regional composition of Civil Service workforce in 2019 and 2023, showing generally minimal changes, with no increase of more than 1%.

Conclusion: *Partially achieved:* The PfG programme has moved a substantial number of roles outside of London. Despite this, the regional share of the Civil Service workforce has not increased substantially in those areas. This is partly due to an increased number of new roles in London over the same period. To bolster regional composition more significantly, continued role relocation to these regions, will need to be combined with a reduction in the number of roles in London.

Strength of evidence: *Moderate:* Data from the Civil Service statistical bulletin, facilitates an assessment of regional presence, through analysing the regional share in workforce headcount. This allows the assessment to consider the extent to which regional share has increased across nations, due to the PfG programme. It does not however allow the evaluation to consider other considerations of increased presence, such as whether the relocated civil servants are visible in these nations and whether their presence results in increased regional engagement. The strength of evidence is therefore only moderate for this assessment.

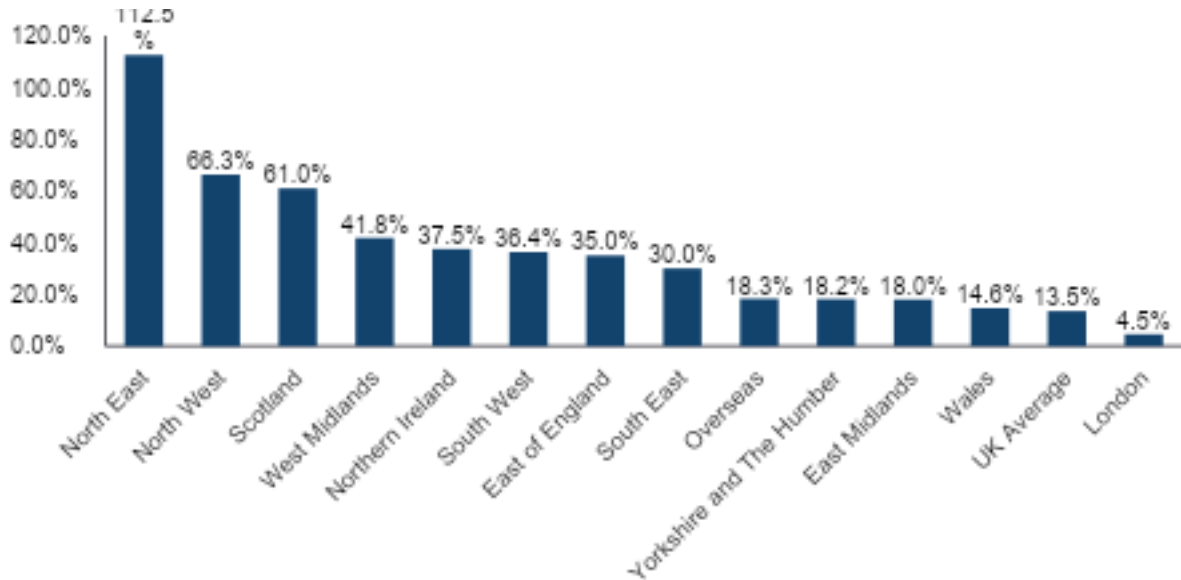
II. Theory of change outcome: *The Places for Growth programme will support an increased number of all policy making roles in the regions and nations.*

Evidence: The number of policy roles located outside of London increased by 32.2% between 2021 and 2023, compared to growth of 4.5% similar roles in London during the same period. Of note, as of Q3 2023, policy roles located in the North-East increased from 360 in 2021 to 756 in 2023 (112.5%), Scotland,

²⁹ Civil Service Statistics - [Civil Service statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

Northern Ireland, and Wales also experienced increases in policy roles of 61.0%, 37.5%, and 14.6% respectively (Figure 5.6).

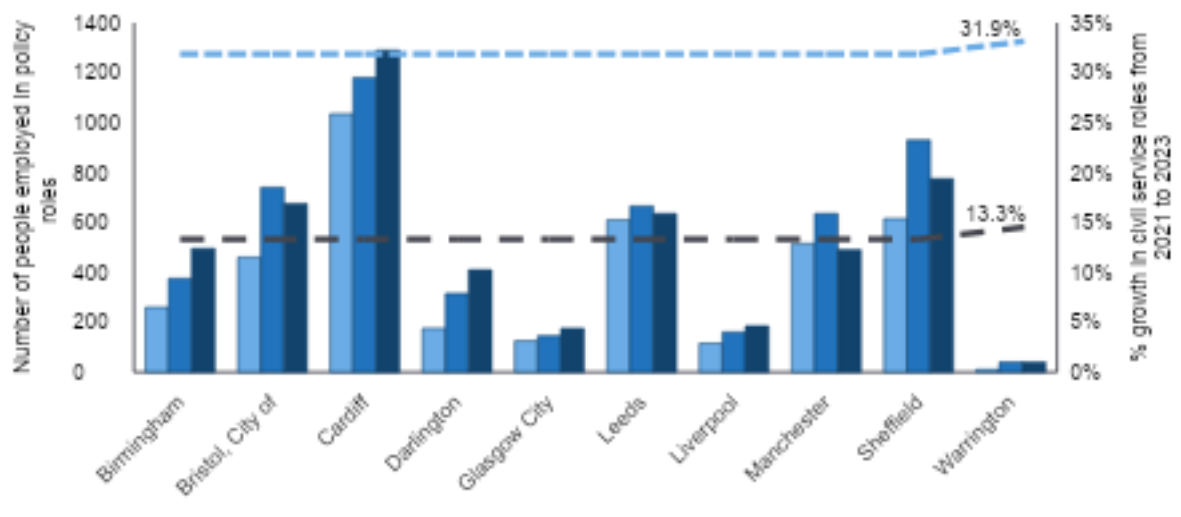
Figure 5.6: Percentage increase in people employed in policy roles (2021 to 2023)³⁰



(Description of Figure 5.6) Column chart of percentage increase in policy roles in each region, from 2021 to 2023. North-East highest with a 113% increase, North-West 66%, Scotland 61%, down to London with a 4.5% increase. the UK average sits at 13.5%.

Furthermore, across the sampled PfG locations in this study, there were increases in the number of policy roles across most locations. For these sampled locations, 8 out of 10 saw an increase in policy roles over this period, with Warrington and Darlington, the sampled towns achieving the largest relative increases with an additional 30 roles (300%) and 225 roles (121.6%) respectively. On average the percentage increase in number of policy roles was higher in PfG sampled locations, than the wider Civil Service by 18.6 percentage points from 2021 to 2023, with larger variations across certain locations suggesting the sample may not be representative.

Figure 5.7: Number of people employed in policy roles in sampled PfG locations (2021 to 2023)³¹



(Description of Figure 5.7) Column and line chart showing civil servants employed in policy roles in sampled locations from 2021 to 2023. Average growth is much higher in sampled locations compared to overall Civil Service

Conclusion: *Inconclusive:* The evidence presented above suggest that there have been considerable increases in the number of policy roles outside of London across the entire Civil Service. There is also some evidence that policy roles grew more rapidly than the wider Civil Service in PFG sampled locations. However, due to the potential lack of full representativeness of these locations, caution is needed in generalising these findings to the entire Civil Service

It is also difficult to isolate the impacts of the PFG programme on this increase, as the information contained in the QRT data does not specify the types of roles relocated under the PFG programme. Therefore, while there are positive trends observed, the extent to which this hypothesis is achieved is uncertain.

Strength of evidence: *Weak:* While the observed change is consistent with the policy goals of the PFG programme, better data on skills and professions, particularly in policy roles, would be necessary to robustly track the delivery of this PFG outcome.

III. Theory of change hypothesis: *The Places for Growth programme will contribute to an increase in the number of thematic skills-based campuses and Government hubs.*

Evidence: The Darlington Economic Campus, Leeds Health and Care Hub and Sheffield Policy Thematic Campus, have all been set-up as part of the PFG programme.

Conclusion: *Achieved:* The PFG programme has contributed to the increase in the number of skills-based campus and Government Hubs.

Strength of evidence: *Strong:* Three thematic skills-based campuses have been delivered.

5.1.3 Workforce Efficiency

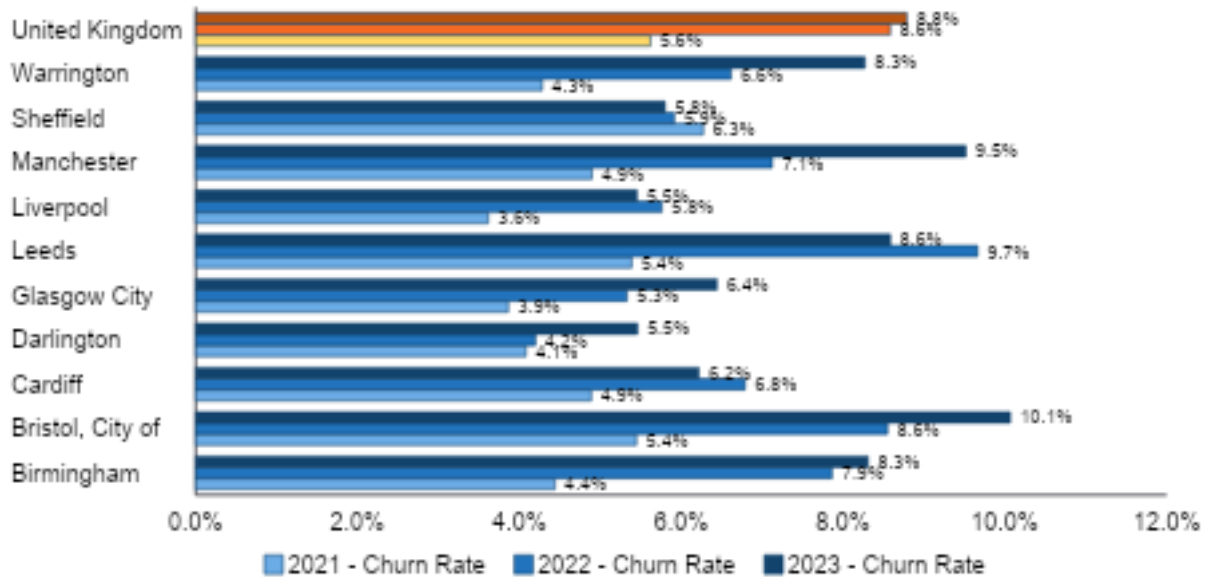
I. Theory of change outcome: *The Places for Growth programme will help reduce the rate of churn in delegated grades in the regions and nations.*

Evidence: The analysis was limited to assessing churn rate as a measure of workforce efficiency in line with the ToC. Across the sample of PFG locations, churn rates³² have increased for all regions except Sheffield. Bristol and Manchester recorded the highest increase in churn rates during this period in

³² The annual rate at which employees leave or are replaced within an organisation. It is calculated by dividing the number of departing Civil Servants in a year by the total number of Civil Servants currently in their positions.

2023, both cities surpassed the UK Civil Service average of 8.8%, with Bristol at 10.1% and Manchester at 9.5% (Figure 5.8).

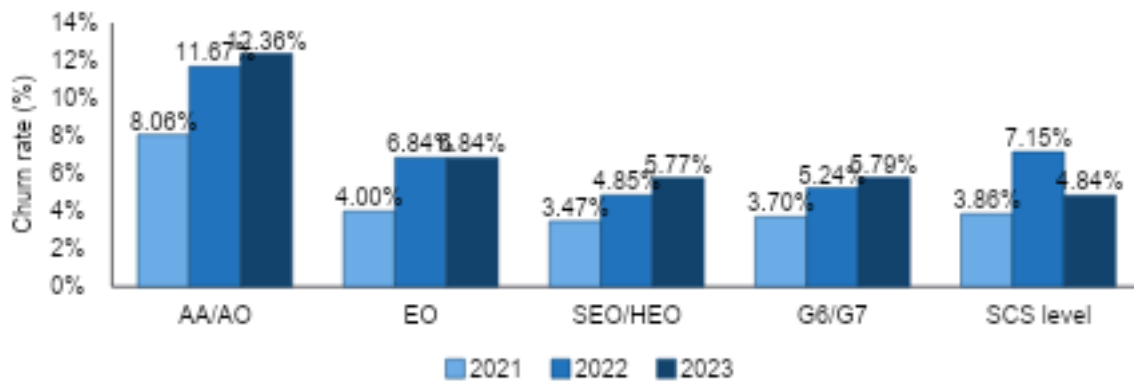
- Figure 5.8: Annual churn rate by sampled PfG location (2021)



(Description of Figure 5.8) Bar chart of churn rate by sampled PfG locations. The UK average grew from 5.6% in 2021 to 8.8% in 2023. Only Sheffield saw churn rates fall across the three years.

The churn rate has risen across all grades in the Civil Service, and particularly in junior roles (Figure 5.9).

Figure 5.9: Churn rate by delegated grade (2021 to 2023)³³



(Description of Figure 5.9) Column chart of churn rate by delegated grade from 2021 to 2023, showing overall churn rates increased at every level. For SCS though, the churn rate did fall between 2022 and 2023.

Conclusion: *Not achieved:* Analysis of Civil Service workforce data, suggests that churn rates have not decreased in PfG locations since the programme's

³³ Civil Service Statistics - [Civil Service statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

inception. It is noted however, that churn rates in PFG locations should be seen in the context of increased Civil Service wide churn since 2021 and higher churn across the wider economy; all sectors of the UK economy saw increased churn in 2021 and 2022 reflecting a very tight labour market as the economy re-opened following the pandemic.

Strength of evidence: *Moderate*: Data from the Civil Service statistical bulletin, allows churn rates to be compared pre and post programme inception for PFG locations. However, it is not possible to isolate the impact the PFG programme has explicitly on churn rates (positive or negative) separate from other internal policy initiatives or external factors.

- II. **Theory of change outcome:** *The Places for Growth programme will contribute to less BAU activity requiring London travel and increased Ministerial and Permanent Secretary presence outside of London.*

Evidence: Findings from interviews and surveys indicate a continued need for SCS working in PFG locations to attend in-person meetings in the capital to ensure close proximity to ministers and other senior figures (section 4.1.3).

One survey respondent highlighted this point, claiming “*I have to travel to London and other locations disproportionately compared to London based colleagues, who hardly ever travel.*” While some Ministers and Permanent Secretaries express a commitment to increased travel beyond London, such as visiting department second headquarters, this travel is commonly perceived as “*performative*” and “*inconsistent*”.

Conclusion: *Not achieved*: Based on the insights from the interviews and surveys conducted, there is no evidence to suggest that the PFG programme has resulted in less BAU activity requiring London travel nor increased Ministerial and Permanent Secretary presence outside of London. Where changes have been observed, it is also likely that they have been driven by increased remote working adoption, which occurred because of the Covid-19 pandemic, rather than the PFG programme.

Strength of evidence: *Moderate*: Insights from the surveys and interviews provide anecdotal evidence to assess this hypothesis with, however, more granular data on travel activity would be required for a more comprehensive assessment of this objective.

5.1.4 Estate Efficiency

- I. **Theory of change outcome:** *The Places for Growth programme will support the London estate reducing to 20 buildings by 2026 and consolidation of regional estates into hubs.*

Evidence: The current count of buildings in the London estate is 63. This is expected to fall to 40 buildings by 2026 based on disposals planned, compared to a target of 20.³⁴

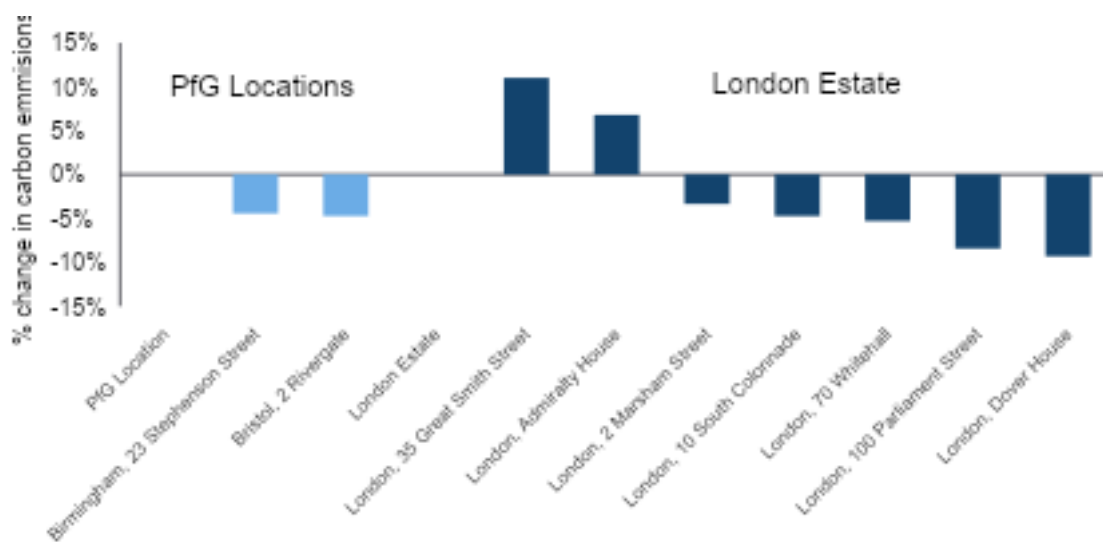
Conclusion: At risk: Based on current projections for the London Estate, the achievement of this outcome appears to be at risk. It is noted that accelerations of disposal are forecast, with the Plan for London scheme aiming to further reduce property capacity. The PfG programme is therefore dependent on this programme to meet this target.

Strength of evidence: Strong: Forecast building disposals have been used to directly assess the extent to which this benefit is being achieved.

II. Theory of change outcome: *The Places for Growth programme will help reduce carbon emissions across the government estate.*

Evidence: There is little available evidence to suggest that the PFG programme has materially impacted carbon emissions. It has been possible to identify potential for some limited reductions in carbon emissions per worker from 21/22 to 22/23 based on electricity consumption³⁵ across PfG locations and certain buildings in the London estate. This data showed that carbon emissions have fallen in a small sample of PFG locations, although similar declines can be observed in some buildings across the London Estate.

Figure 5.10: Reduction in carbon emissions per worker in estates based on electricity usage (2021/22 to 2022/23)^{36,37}



³⁴ GPA data provided on all London Offices. The reduction in London estate was calculated by assessing when buildings were being planned to dispose of.

³⁵ Carbon emissions resulting from the electricity consumption in a building have been calculated by utilising the electricity usage data within the Government estate and employing a greenhouse gas (GHG) convertor.

³⁶ GPA Data on EPC rating of the London Estate and various PfG locations

³⁷ DESNZ and BEIS Greenhouse gas reporting: conversion factors - [Greenhouse gas reporting: conversion factors 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/greenhouse-gas-reporting-conversion-factors-2022)

(Description of Figure 5.10) Column chart of carbon emissions per worker based on electricity usage in two PfG locations and the London estate. One building in Birmingham and Bristol fell, along with most of the London estate. Just two of the London estate buildings experienced an emissions rise.

Conclusion: *Inconclusive*: Due to a lack of comprehensive data across all estate locations, it is challenging to attribute a reduction in carbon emissions directly to the PfG programme. Although electricity usage captures carbon emissions to some extent, in isolation, it is not necessarily a robust indicator to assess carbon emissions. Efforts should be directed to agree key indicators and hence robustly monitor and assess environmental performance across PfG locations and the London estate to gain a clearer understanding of the programmes impact on carbon emissions.

Strength of evidence: *Weak*: As outlined above, there is a lack of comprehensive data to form an assessment of this outcome.

5.2 Did PfG achieve the expected impacts and to what extent?

The expected impacts resulting from the PfG programme are outlined in the ToC and have been analysed in the subsequent sections. For each impact, this evaluation assesses whether the PfG programme has ‘supported’ the delivery of this impact, has ‘partially supported’ delivery of the impact, has ‘not supported’ it or is ‘inconclusive’ based on existing evidence.

Table 5.3: Assessment of theory of change impacts:

Expected Impact	Assessment	Strength of Evidence
A modern, geographically diverse, and representative Civil Service	Supported	Moderate
Contributing to Levelling up agenda (local economic growth, job multiplier)	Supported	Moderate
Strengthening the union	Partially Supported	Moderate
Better policy making, closer to the communities it serves	Inconclusive	Weak
Career opportunities in the regions	Partially Supported	Moderate
Reduced people costs	Supported	Moderate
Reduced estate costs	Supported	Moderate

Cleaner and green Civil Service (contribute to reduce carbon emissions)	Inconclusive	Weak
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5.2.1 Expected Impacts Supported

A modern, geographically diverse, and representative Civil Service

- I. **Theory of change impact:** *The PfG programme will contribute towards the Civil Service becoming a modern workforce, which is up-to-date and adaptable, utilising current technologies and practices to facilitate departmental collaboration and a vibrant workplace culture.*

Evidence: Survey data indicates that PfG has supported the creation of a modernised culture in the Civil Service, enabling collaboration in hubs and campuses. Interview and survey respondents note increased cross-departmental and cross-professional collaboration, with respondents highlighting improved connections and easier networking outside traditional silos. For example, survey responses highlight:

- *“We are better at cross-departmental working in the new office where the default is cross-team working rather than traditional siloes”*
- *“I know so many people within the department and outside of my own team that I would never have connected with”*
- *“It has made it easier to make connections with others than when more people were based in London.”*

There is also evidence that cross location collaboration has been enhanced and inclusivity has been promoted. For example, one survey respondent mentioned:

“Extremely positive and valued culture of inclusion and collaboration, PfG has boosted our presence outside of London and legitimised non-London offices as central government not just regional hubs.”

These features are most obvious in the creation of new hubs and campuses, such as the Darlington Economic Campus, and the Sheffield Policy Campus. For example, the IfG report on the Darlington Economic Campus³⁸, highlight that the DEC is helping to foster cross-departmental collaboration, reduce power struggles between departments, and build strong relationships across the campus. Similarly, according to interviews, *“thematic campuses have encouraged more cross-working between departments”*, Specifically, the DEC has helped to *“[break] down all the silo’s between multiple departments”*, encouraging *“cross-campus learning and development”* and helping civil servants make connections to other departments they otherwise would not make. Meanwhile, in Sheffield, *“two strategy units [from separate departments] have discussed joint development and fostered communications on department efforts to address the spending review”*, illustrating the efforts already being made to collaborate between departments.

³⁸ Settling in: Lessons from the Darlington Economic Campus for civil service relocation

These findings are supported by the Civil Service People Survey results³⁹, that evidence a steady increase in those stating they collaborate with other government departments and agencies, from 33.8% in 2020, up to 35.6% in 2022, as well as 79.7% of respondents in 2022 stating that technology enables an ease of collaboration with colleagues. This shift is partly facilitated by technology, with the move to online working accelerated by Covid-19 enabling teams to maintain strong relationships.

Conclusion: Supported: As outlined above, there is evidence that the PfG programme has helped support a more modernised culture across the Civil Service work, promoting additional collaboration, and has supported the adoption of new technology.

Strength of evidence: Moderate: The conclusion relies on survey data and insights from interviews, which may be subject to self-reporting biases, and the insights obtained from interviews might be influenced by individual interpretations. Furthermore, the sample size may not be representative of the entire Civil Service, potentially compromising the generalisability of the findings. Despite these challenges, the evaluation provides useful insights and a starting point for further, more granulated research into this area.

II. Theory of change impact: *The PfG programme will help the Civil Service operate across different regions, ensuring presence and engagement in various parts of the country. This diversity aims to avoid concentration in a single location, promoting regional inclusivity and representation.*

For this impact, we consider geographical diversity to mean the spread of the Civil Service across different regions of the country.

Evidence: As explored in section 4.1.1, based on roles relocated under the PfG programme the Civil Service has increased its expansion across UK nations and has inherently become more geographically diverse.

Conclusion: Supported: Based on the number of roles relocated across different regions and nations, the evidence suggests that the PfG programme has positively supported the Civil Service operating across different regions.

Strength of evidence: Moderate: While the evidence supports the assessment that the PfG programme has positively supported the Civil Service operating across different regions, there is more limited evidence available supporting an assessment of whether an increased number of roles has supported increased presence and engagement.

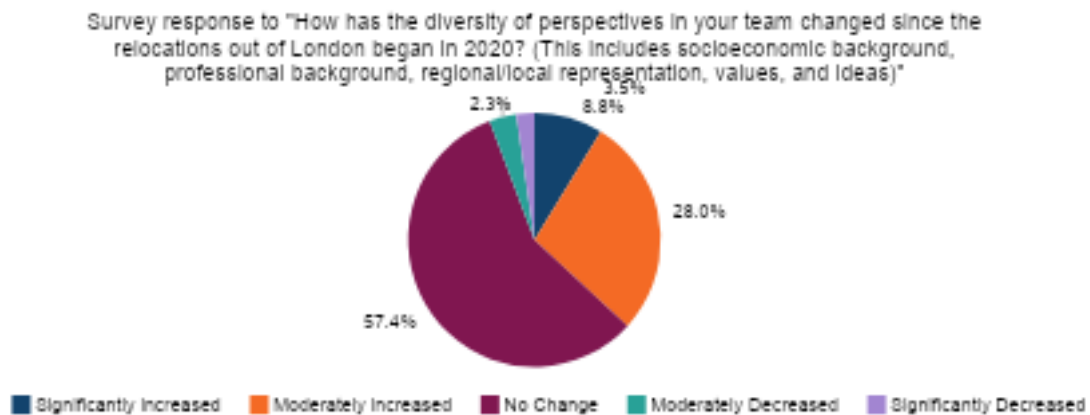
III. Theory of change impact: *The PfG programme will support the Civil Service becoming more reflective of the broader population it serves. This involves ensuring diversity in terms of demographics, backgrounds, and perspectives, aiming to represent and understand the needs and interests of the entire population.*

³⁹ Civil Service People Survey: 2022 results

For this impact, we consider different aspects of diversity, specifically measures of diversity in terms of perspectives and demographic measures of diversity (e.g. ethnicity).

Evidence: According to interviews, the PfG programme's move beyond London has brought a valuable shift, integrating a wider array of socioeconomic and geographical backgrounds into the workforce, incorporating "*far more regional accents*". From the Civil Service survey, there was also a perceived uptick in the diversity of perspectives since relocations began noted by some respondents. As seen in Figure 5.11, 36.8% of respondents indicated an increase in diversity of perspectives since relocations began, while only 5.8% suggested it may have decreased, however 'no change' was the most popular response type (57%) outweighing those who had perceived an increase in diversity of perspectives.

Figure 5.11: Survey – Survey responses to perception of the change to diversity of perspectives since PfG relocations began



(Description of Figure 5.11) Pie chart of the survey response to the perceived change to diversity of perspectives since PfG. 9% responded that this significantly increased, 28% increased, 57% neutral, 4% decreased, 2% significantly decreased.

This trend was prevalent across all informant profiles (Figure 5.12).

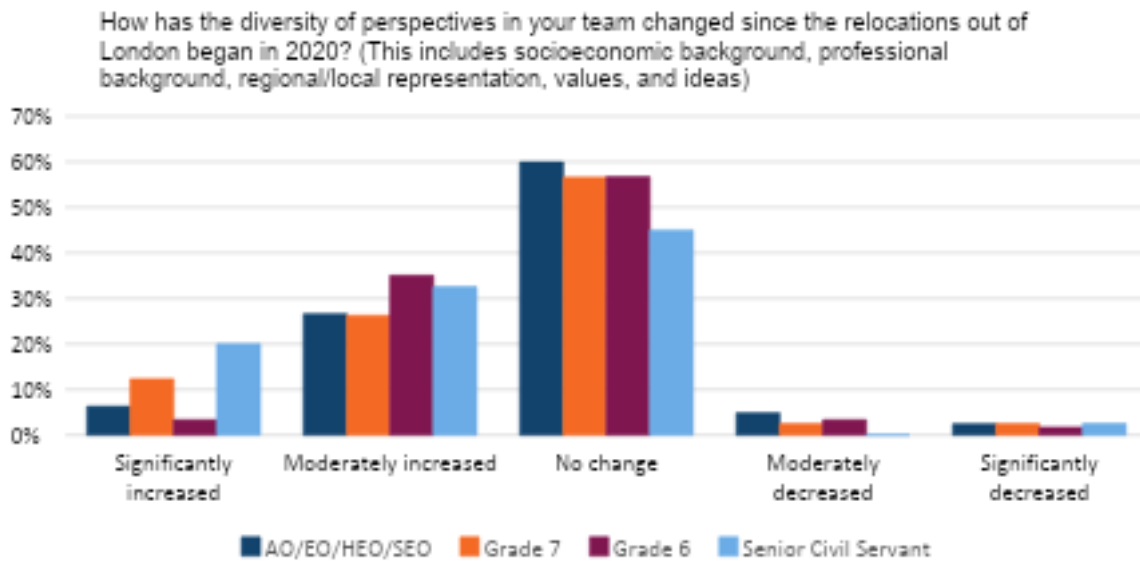
Figure 5.12: Survey – Perception of the change to diversity of perspectives since PfG relocations began, per informant profile



(Description of Figure 5.12) Column chart of survey response by informant profile of perceived changes to diversity of perspectives since PfG, showing clear trend towards an increase, particularly in churn role respondents, but a large proportion of results suggest no change.

There are, however, some variations in response by grade (Figure 5.13) with respondents in higher grades being more likely to perceive a positive change in diversity of perspectives since PfG relocations began.

Figure 5.13: Survey – Perception of the change to diversity of perspectives since PfG relocations began, per grade



(Description of Figure 5.13) Bar chart showing perceived change to diversity of perspective by grade. No change is the most popular response for all grades. All grades follow a very similar trend, with a slight weighting towards increased perspectives.

The data does however illustrate that “no change” was the most popular response, across grades.

Demographic diversity

Regional-level data on diversity indicators for assessing sampled PfG locations before 2021 is unavailable, and the QRT data does not track roles relocated by diversity, specifically regarding characteristics and minority groups. Therefore, the evaluation focused on analysing the change in the share of diversity metrics compared to the UK average from 2021 to 2023.

The employment of individuals declaring a disability, from ethnic minority backgrounds and identifying as LGBO in PfG locations has increased by 2.3% (1,200 Civil Servants), 1.8% (2,830 Civil Servants), and 1.1%, respectively – greater than the average Civil Service increase of 2.2% (10,230 Civil Servants), 0.8% (8,330 Civil Servants), and 1.1%. However, the proportion of individuals employed from an ethnic minority background and those with a declared disability remains below the Civil Service average (Table 5.4).

Table 5.4: Diversity metrics in sampled PfG locations compared to the Civil Service (2021 vs 2023)

Diversity Indicator	PfG locations			Overall Civil Service		
	2021	2023	Difference	2021	2023	Difference
Ethnic Minority	12.8%	14.7%	1.8%	14.3%	15.4%	1.1%
Disabled	13.3%	15.7%	2.3%	13.6%	15.8%	2.2%
LGBO	5.9%	7.1%	1.1%	5.6%	6.4%	0.8%

Despite progress in diversity, concerns raised in interviews persist about potential reduction of minority group representation in moving to destination regions.

This arises from the perception that while London's Civil Service recruitment may not fully reflect its demographic diversity, the city still provides a more diverse environment than many other UK regions on some measures (e.g., ethnicity). Centralising roles in traditionally less diverse areas through hubs and campuses raises the perceived risk of sacrificing diversity, especially for underrepresented groups, to achieve a broader geographic spread. However, it's worth noting that London may already overrepresent these underrepresented groups compared to the UK, being younger, more ethnically diverse, and more "diverse" overall. London was the most ethnically diverse region in England and Wales (53.8% of the population is white).⁴⁰

Additionally, some interviewees argue that recruitment into select centres like Manchester and Birmingham may not provide the desired level of broader thought diversity possible from moving away from London, since it excludes large portions of the country located in smaller cities or towns, and only recruits those with a similarly inclined metropolitan urban perspective.

Conclusion: *Partially Supported*: The PfG programme has positively impacted the diversity of thought and integrated a wider array of socio-economic backgrounds into the Civil Service. This is evidenced by employee interviews and the 2022 Civil Service People survey, which reflects a strong commitment to creating a diverse and inclusive workplace. Despite progress in demographic diversity aligned with the wider Civil Service concerns remain about potential reductions in minority group representation in destination regions, highlighting the ongoing need for balanced diversity strategies.

Strength of evidence: *Moderate*: To assess the extent to which the PfG programme has contributed towards improving the representativeness of its workforce, this evaluation has relied on survey data and insights from interviews. This limits the strength of findings, as previously stated.

Contribution to Levelling Up agenda

⁴⁰ Census 2021 - [Census - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://www.ons.gov.uk)

- I. **Theory of change impact:** *The PfG programme will support the levelling-up agenda, through moving employment and associated economic activity to regions outside of London.*

Evidence: In the sampled locations, the 9,188 roles relocated represent less than 0.3% of total employment (Table 5.5). The direct contribution of the PFG programme to levelling up will be minimal.

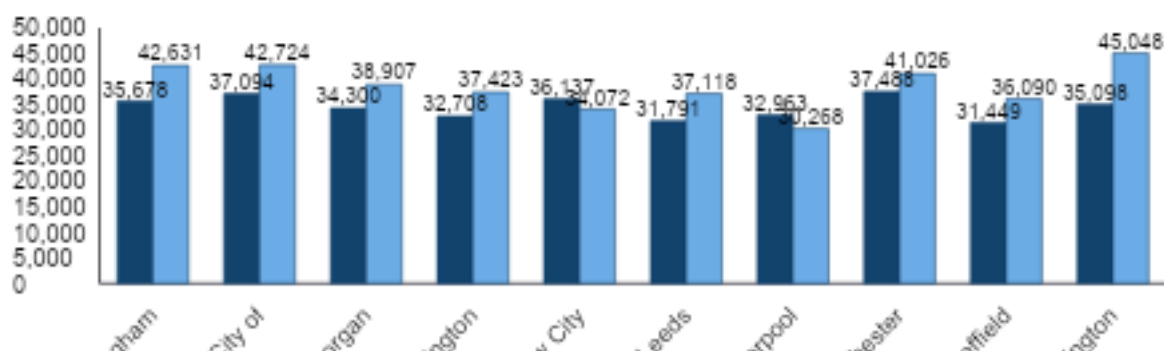
Table 5.5: Roles relocated in PfG sampled locations as a percentage of total employment in the respective area⁴¹⁴²

PfG Locations	Roles Relocated (Q3 2023)	Total Employment	% of total employment
Leeds	1,668	509,060	0.33%
Manchester	1,443	436,760	0.33%
Glasgow City	1,341	448,010	0.30%
Birmingham	1,120	585,110	0.19%
Sheffield	906	288,250	0.31%
Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan	689	229,510	0.30%
Darlington	661	56,520	1.17%
Liverpool	607	287,030	0.21%
Bristol, City of	586	325,520	0.18%
Warrington	167	154,780	0.11%

However, to the extent PfG role relocations have provided higher paying job opportunities to the sample regions, there will be some incremental economic value arising from the increased spending power.

For the majority of sampled PfG locations, the weighted average salary of relocated roles is greater than the current average salary in that location (with Liverpool and Glasgow being the exceptions). The largest differential in salaries is in Warrington, where the weighted average salary of relocated roles is £45.1k compared to the average salary of £35.1k in the region.

Figure 5.14: Average salary vs weighted average salary of relocated roles in sampled PfG locations (2023)⁴³⁴⁴



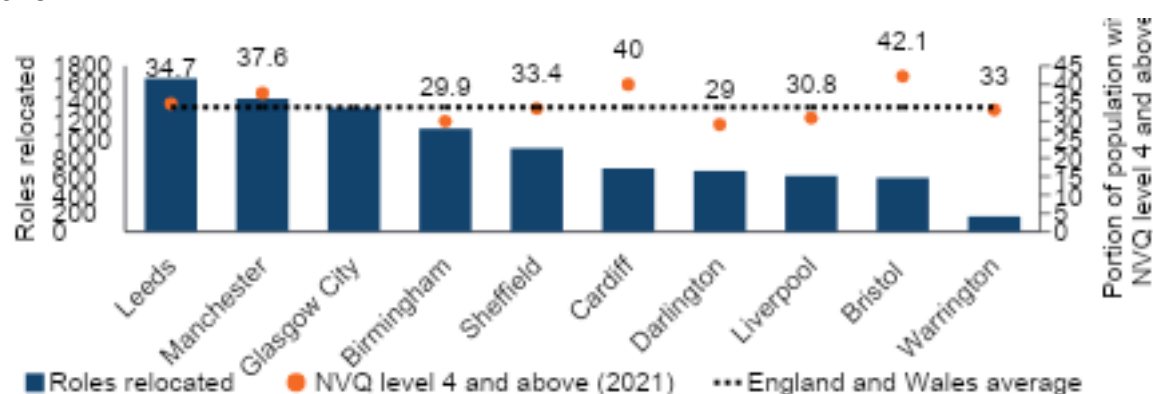
(Description of Figure 5.14) Column chart of average salary compared to weighted average salary of new entrants in sampled PfG locations. Only Glasgow and Liverpool have a lower weighted average of new entrants' salary.

The impact of relocated roles may also be more pronounced in smaller regions where relocated roles account for a greater portion of total employment. Relocated roles represent the largest portion of a locality's total employment in Darlington, where PfG roles are 1.2% of employment in 2021.

However, larger cities tend to provide the size and sustainability necessary for the Civil Service, providing secure labour markets and talent pipelines essential for its scale as shown in figure 5.17. Among the 9 PfG locations sampled, cities such as Leeds, Manchester, Cardiff, and Bristol stand out, having a large portion of the population holding NVQ level 4 and above qualifications, exceeding national averages. Conversely, towns like Warrington, with comparatively lower total employment figures than cities, present challenges regarding skill levels within the local workforce as well as the scale required for the Civil Service. In Warrington, the proportion of the population with high-level qualifications falls below national averages, indicating potential skill gaps that may impede the integration of relocated roles.

While larger cities have a more broader talent pool and overall labour force, smaller towns may struggle to meet the skill requirements of these roles. Nonetheless, targeted investment in creating high-skilled opportunities locally can help address this disparity and retain skilled individuals within these smaller locations such as towns.

Figure 5.15: Sampled PfG location portion of the population with NVQ level 4 and above⁴⁵



(Description of Figure 5.15) Column and scatter chart of portion of population with NVQ level 4 and above in sampled PfG locations. Three of the locations are above the England and Wales average, with seven slightly under.

The impact of the PfG programme on levelling up was also assessed by calculating sector-specific employment multipliers (Type I multipliers – Supply

⁴⁵EY analysis, ONS Workforce Qualification Levels across England and Wales

Chain impacts) at a regional level.⁴⁶ Higher multipliers in a local area indicate more supply chain activity linked to employment.⁴⁷

The majority of the selected PfG locations (in the sample group) appear to have local supply chains that are well suited to taking advantage of public administration jobs in the area as shown in Figure 5.16. Most PfG locations having a higher employment multiplier than the national average. The existing local sectoral composition determines the degree to which spillover effects occur from relocating PfG jobs. Areas with high interaction between existing sectors and the public administration sector will experience more impactful supply chain effects and therefore a greater indirect economic impact.

Furthermore, according to the survey of businesses conducted, respondents noted the added investment and jobs created through roles being relocated:

“The setting up of the new hub has attracted many additional businesses and services to relocate closer to the area and increase the number of Value-added jobs and other service providers within the city centre”

“The new government hub acts as a magnet to attract value added investment, high value jobs and skills to the city, we would be delighted to see more hubs to be brought into Cardiff”

However, higher employment multipliers are typically associated with cities rather than towns. Leeds stands out with the highest multiplier 1.39, implying every additional ten roles could potentially trigger an estimated 3.9 full-time equivalent (FTE) supply chain jobs suggesting economic impact potential.⁴⁸

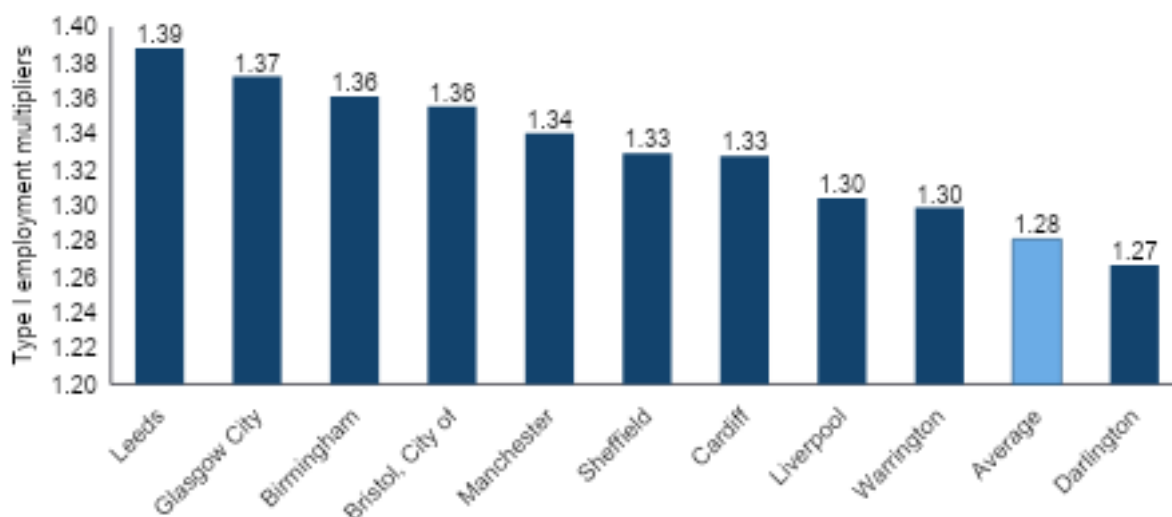
⁴⁶ EY analysis, ONS Input-Output Tables

⁴⁷ The calculations involved applying location quotients of current sectoral employment in the area to national sectoral economic multipliers

⁴⁸ Employment multiplier is examined based on the ‘Public Administration and Defence’ sector

Conversely, Darlington is the sole region below the national average. There may be less spillover effects; however, the PfG programme could diversify employment in Darlington, given the sectoral composition differs considerably from the roles. However, this should be considered alongside the effort to recruit in these smaller local markets which is likely higher and requiring more recruitment resource.

Figure 5.16: Type I employment multipliers in sampled PfG locations⁴⁹



(Description of Figure 5.16) Column chart of type I employment multipliers in sampled PfG locations. Leeds is the highest at 1.39. All locations are above the national average of 1.28, except Darlington at 1.27.

Conclusion: Supported: The PfG programme has made a positive, albeit modest, contribution to the levelling up agenda. While the number of relocated roles is relatively small compared to total employment in many PfG locations, they have provided access to higher-paying jobs in the sampled regions, especially in larger cities such as Leeds, Manchester, Cardiff, and Bristol. Smaller towns may face challenges while integrating these relocated roles due to potential skill gaps in their local workforces. However, these regions could see a pronounced impact as high-paying roles account for a larger portion of total employment. Careful consideration should be given to the impact the PfG programme may have on the local economy, employment opportunities, and skill development efforts. Future success in levelling up will largely depend on how well these factors are managed and maximised in both larger cities and smaller towns.

Strength of evidence: Moderate: The evaluation primarily focused on salary data to determine the impact on levelling-up, rather than its broader economic repercussions. This is primarily because the effects on the overall economy may not be measurable at this stage and might require a more extended period to become noticeable.

Reduced people costs

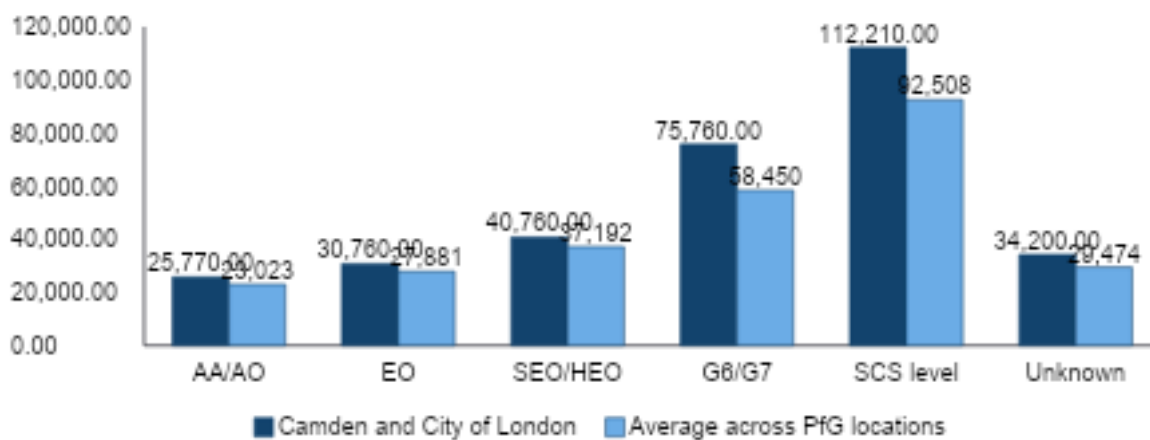
⁴⁹ ONS, EY analysis

I. **Theory of change impact:** *The PfG programme will help support reductions in people costs by reducing salary costs for relocated workers.*

Evidence: To assess the impact of role relocations on people costs, average costs per grade in London vs an average across the sample of PfG locations were assessed⁵⁰.

The analysis shows that across all grades, salaries in the PfG locations tend to be lower than in London, suggesting that the PFG programme may have contributed to lower people costs across the Civil Service. It is notable that the differences are most pronounced in more senior grades, with salaries for G6/G7 and SCS roles being 23% and 18% lower compared with average costs in London. This suggests greater savings could be made by relocating a higher proportion of these roles. This analysis, however, does not consider relocation financial packages nor the retention of London-weighted salaries⁵¹, which would tend to offset any people-cost savings via relocation. It is understood from the Cabinet Office that most roles relocated were filled by new hires rather than from physical relocation of existing civil servants. However, these considerations are addressed in section 6.2 of the value for money evaluation.

Figure 5.17: Salary costs by grade in London vs sampled PfG locations^{52 53}



(Description of Figure 5.17) Column chart of salary costs by grade in London compared to sampled PfG locations. London is higher at all grades, with the most stark difference at grade 6 and 7, where London salary is £18k higher, and SCS where London salary is £19k higher.

⁵⁰ This average has been calculated by developing a weighted average cost per grade in PfG locations, which is determined by the portion of role relocations per grade in each location.

⁵¹ Guidance was for London weighting to remain for 2 years; however, this was not universally applied across departments. Given the lack of information to which departments had implemented this, the figure provided is the permanent reduction in staff costs resulting from the PfG programme

⁵² QRT Data - [Places for Growth Relocations Data 2020-2023 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/data-sets/places-for-growth-relocations-data-2020-2023)

⁵³ Civil Service Statistics - [Civil Service statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/civil-service-statistics)

Conclusion: Supported: Based on the data assessed, it does appear that across all grades, salary costs are lower on average in the sample of PfG locations compared to London.

Strength of evidence: Moderate: This evaluation has identified that salary costs on average are lower in relocated roles than they would have been in London. However, it has not identified any actual budgetary savings across the Civil Service from the relocations.

Reduced estate costs

- I. **Theory of change impact:** *The PfG programme will help support reductions in estate costs by moving workers into lower cost buildings.*

Evidence: To evaluate the reduction in estate costs enabled by the PfG programme, it would be necessary to compare estate costs in sampled PfG locations with those in London. However, it was not possible within the scope of this evaluation to identify information on estate costs for the sampled PfG locations. Therefore, this evaluation considers the actual reduction in London estate costs.

The annual running costs of the London estate have reduced since the implementation of the PfG programme. In 2017, the annual running cost of the Central London estate was £794m. This figure subsequently declined by 8.3% to £728m in 2020, the year when role relocations began. London estate costs fell to £597m in 2023, a fall of 18% since 2017. This decline in estate costs would of course have been substantially impacted by Covid-19 and the associated increased adoption of flexible working by the Civil Service. However, it is also consistent with the policy objectives of the PFG and a number of other government initiatives. These include:

1. The Government Hubs and Whitehall programme - enabling a new, smaller Whitehall Campus, enabled through the PfG programme moving Civil Services roles out of London. The SR 21 settlement for the programme was to support the Creation of Hub capacity by 2025 to relocate 9,326, increasing to 16,400 of the 22,000 PfG roles moving out of London and the South East by 2030.⁵⁴
2. Plan for London - aiming to consolidate further with only 16 buildings to remain in and around Whitehall.⁵⁵

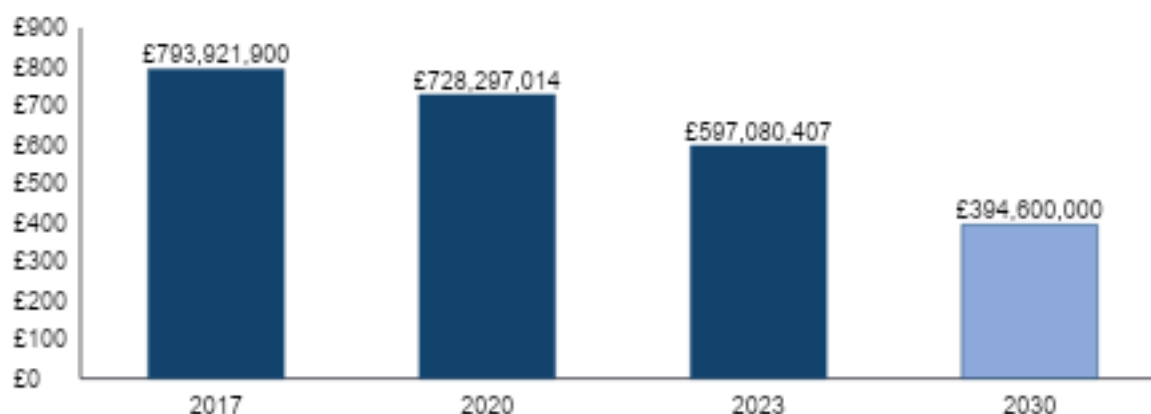
The Government aims to further reduce the running costs of the London Estate to £395m by the end of 2030, although this is linked to the operation of 17 core buildings remaining in Whitehall. Further relocations under the PFG programme can also be expected to contribute to this reduction in costs.

In total, London Estate costs have fallen by £197m since 2017, with an additional £202m in savings expected to be realised by 2030 (Figure 5.18).

⁵⁴ [25 August 2022: Government Hubs and Whitehall Campus Programme Accounting Officer assessment - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

⁵⁵ [Government Property Strategy \(HTML\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Figure 5.18: Annual estate running costs⁵⁶



(Description of Figure 5.18) Column chart of annual estate running costs from 2017 projected to 2030. In 2017, costs were £794million, in 2023, costs were £597million, and in 2030, costs are projected as £395million.

Conclusion: Supported: Based on the evidence presented, the delivery of the PfG programme is likely to have contributed to the reductions of London Estate costs, as one of a number of government initiatives like the Government Hubs and Whitehall programme, and the Plan for London which focus on consolidation and reduced estate presence in and around Whitehall. However, Covid-19 will also have played an important role in these reductions.

Strength of evidence: Moderate: Data on estate costs, supports the hypothesis that estate costs have reduced, however, it is difficult to isolate and ascertain the impact of the PfG programme on this reduction particularly as the overall Civil Service FTE in London has increased since inception of the PfG programme.

5.2.2 Expected Impacts Partially Supported

Strengthening the union

- I. **Theory of change impact:** *The PfG programme will help strengthen the union through increased Civil Service presence in devolved nations.*

Evidence: The PfG programme has expanded the Civil Service's presence in devolved nations. Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland account for 18.5% (2,970 roles) of all relocated roles as of Q3 2023 (Figure 5.19).

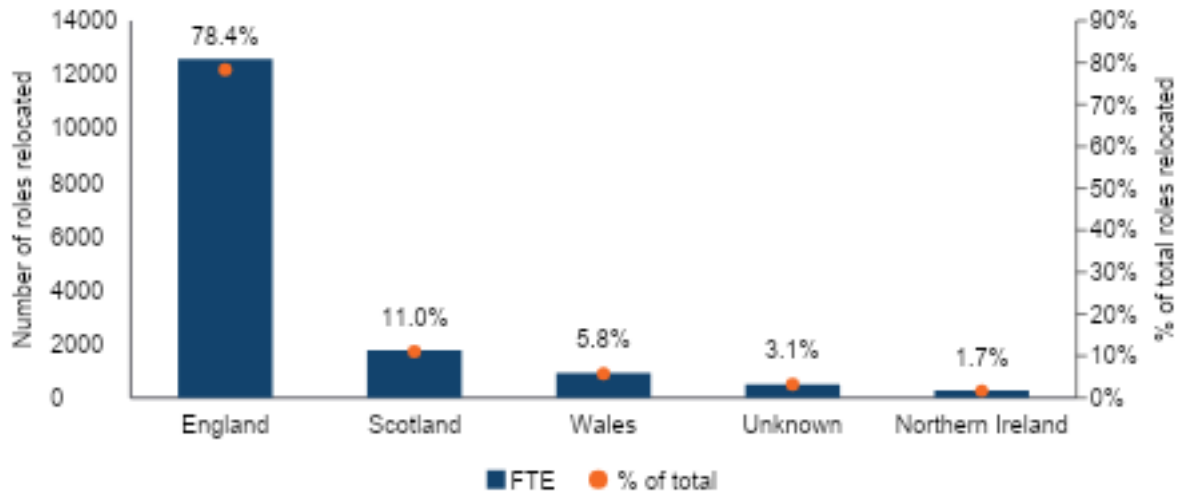
There has been an increase in the number of civil servants by 23.3%, 21.8%, and 13.4% in Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, respectively, from 2019 to 2023, with Northern Ireland and Scotland surpassing the UK average (16.7%) as shown in Figure 5.4 in the policy presence section.⁵⁷

⁵⁶ GPA Data on annual running costs for the London Estate

⁵⁷ Civil Service Statistics - [Civil Service statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/civil-service-statistics)

Additionally, the Civil Service workforce share in Scotland from 2019 to 2023 has increased by 0.4% but remained unchanged in Northern Ireland and decreased in Wales by 0.2%.⁵⁸

Figure 5.19: Roles relocated by UK nation (as of Q3 2023)

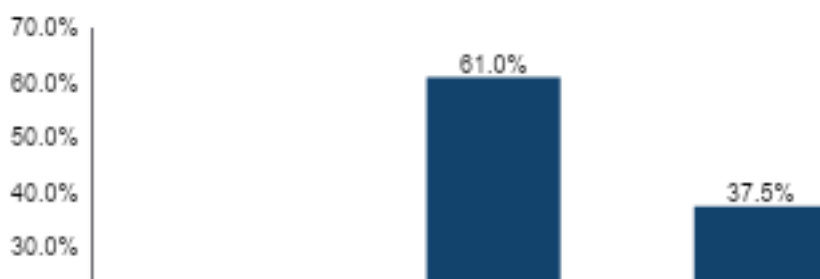


(Description of Figure 5.19) Column and scatter chart of roles relocated by UK nation, showing Scotland with 11% of relocated roles, Wales with 5.8%, and Northern Ireland with 1.7%.

According to interview respondents, *“being visible and present in these areas”* is perceived to have engendered an increased feeling that the Civil Service is a *“force for good”* for the devolved nations, and *“ultimately improves the UK wide capability of the Civil Service”* by incorporating more representative perspectives.

Interviews also highlighted an increase in interaction between UK civil servants and officials from devolved governments, creating diverse perspectives and enriching policymaking across the UK. This increased collaboration aligns with the shift in policy roles post PfG implementation, with the slowest growth observed in England compared to other UK nations. This implies that the PfG programme, by increasing numbers in devolved nations and strengthening connections with their governments, has spurred a more widespread distribution and growth of policy roles. This approach to policymaking is noted as being more regionally nuanced, as interviewees noted that PfG has ultimately supported *“improving UK wide capability of the Civil Service,”* and that *“policy development has been more in tune with those countries.”* However, there is currently insufficient evidence to fully assess the impact of the PfG programme on policymaking processes and outcomes, primarily due to the programme’s relatively recent implementation and the need for longitudinal studies to observe changes over time.

Figure 5.20: Percentage change in people employed in policy roles (2021 to 2023)⁵⁹



(Description of Figure 5.20) Column chart of percentage change in people employed in policy roles by UK nation, showing Wales with a 14.6% increase, Scotland 61% increase, and Northern Ireland 37.5% increase.

Conclusion: *Partially supported:* Based on quantitative evidence the PfG programme appears to have increased Civil Service presence in devolved nations, including of policy roles. There is also some qualitative evidence that the programme has increased the Civil Service's visibility in these regions and fostered a greater sense of the institution being a "force for good", able to represent the region in UK Government, and tackle key local issues.

Strength of evidence: *Moderate:* There is currently insufficient evidence to fully assess the impact of the PfG programme on policymaking processes and outcomes, primarily due to the programme's relatively recent implementation and the need for longitudinal studies to observe changes over time.

Career opportunities in the regions

I. **Theory of change impact:** *The PfG programme will help contribute towards improved career opportunities outside of London*

Evidence: Evidence from interviews and the Civil Service staff survey indicates that the PfG programme seems to have enhanced the Civil Service's engagement with educational institutions, broadening career opportunities in the regions.

This initiative is reflected in survey responses, suggesting that the programme may have played a role in opening new career avenues. For instance, one respondent claimed *"I have had job opportunities that hands down I would not have had otherwise ... I don't think I would have been a civil servant without the programme,"* while another suggested that *"prior to Places for Growth, opportunities for myself within the Civil Service would have been limited"*. One interviewee echoed this sentiment, citing anecdotal evidence that *"some people in Wolverhampton have said, I never thought I'd work for Civil Service,"* concluding that *"these new and advertised roles definitely do attract new people."*

Recruiting external talent for regional offices, however, appears to present its own set of challenges. Interview feedback points to the complexity of job adverts and a perceived bias towards internal candidates as potential obstacles. Respondents have indicated concerns such as, *"Putting adverts on Civil Service jobs and expecting the market to come to you isn't sufficient"* and *"The level of assurance is way too high, particularly for SCS."* These factors might discourage local talent from applying, possibly limiting the diversity of perspectives within the Civil Service.

Nonetheless, there is an indication from the interviews that PfG may have catalysed more structured interactions with local communities and businesses, particularly in smaller towns and cities. One interviewee's reflection, *"before it was individual not systemic,"* suggests a shift towards more strategic local engagement. These interactions appear to have contributed to the Civil Service's presence and reputation in PfG locations, potentially enhancing its role and image in these communities.

Further, as noted in section 4 the PfG programme has created higher paying opportunities in the PfG sampled locations, however perceptions of changes to career prospects since relocations began varying among different groups of respondents.

Those already based outside London, and those acquiring churned roles outside London, perceived changes to career prospects more positively, with an average of 43% of respondents indicating that career prospects moderately or significantly increased. This suggests that relocating more roles out of London has had initial success in demonstrating to civil servants that opportunities for career progression outside London are improving. However, respondents who physically relocated tend to perceive the changes in career prospects more negatively, with a median response of ‘moderately decreased’. This reveals that there is still much more to be done to reinforce career progression across the country, since those that have directly experienced prospects in London and outside, suggest that in leaving London, their prospects have diminished. This is covered in more detail below, and in section 4.1.3, as well as recommendations in section 4.4.2 and Chapter 5.

Table 5.6: Survey – Perceptions on changes to prospects for career progression since PfG relocations began

How do you feel your prospects for career progression have changed since the relocations out of London began in 2020? (Note this refers to the possibility and likelihood of promotion)							
	London	Pre-existing non-London	Physically Relocated	Internal churn role	New joiner churn role		Mean
Significantly increased	5.0%	9.2%	0.0%	20.0%	27.8%		12.4%
Moderately Increased	1.7%	18.4%	3.0%	37.5%	16.7%		15.5%
No change	53.3%	33.3%	42.4%	20.0%	44.4%		38.7%
Moderately decreased	18.3%	3.6%	31.8%	15.0%	5.6%		14.9%
Significantly decreased	10.0%	3.2%	21.2%	2.5%	5.6%		8.5%

Interviews and survey responses indicate many civil servants link career progression to being based in London

A major concern for respondents is the high percentage of SCS roles that remain concentrated in London. Interviews reveal that the talent pipelines leading into SCS positions, particularly for Grade 6 and 7 roles, are predominantly London-centric. At the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), for example, over 90% of applications for their Future Leaders Scheme (FLS), a programme designed to cultivate the next generation of SCS, were from individuals based in London, with

almost 98% of successful candidates also coming from the capital. However, there is inconsistency between departments as overall, FLS comprises 50% London and 50% non-London based candidates.

According to interview informants, several factors contribute to this perception. Firstly, London's multitude of departments offers extensive opportunities for career progression through inter-departmental mobility, regional career mobility is viewed as more limited. Secondly, London's vibrant private sector presents a broader spectrum of career prospects outside the Civil Service, influencing both relocation decisions and future career trajectories. One interviewee voiced concerns about being "*stuck in their current role forever*" if they relocate, pointing to the need to consider "*the job after this job*".

Additionally, the disparity in salary across departments poses a retention challenge, especially when lower paying departments lack a local presence. This issue, although present in London, is amplified in the context of relocation, where the lure of higher salaries in certain departments might lead to a 'brain drain' from those offering lower remuneration.

Lastly, some SCS members express concerns about the potential rollback of the PfG initiative post-2024 elections, fearing a return to a London-centric model. This apprehension underscores the desire for a sustained commitment to the PfG initiative that "*will last past this government*". Such continuity is crucial for civil servants contemplating relocation and their long-term career prospects.

London-based civil servants have expressed sentiments of insecurity regarding their career prospects in light of the PfG initiative.

While some London-based respondents see the PfG relocations as an opportunity for broader Civil Service reform, many are fearful that their career progression might be hindered by the programme. One London-based civil servant reflected being compelled to leave the Civil Service for the private sector when they realised the only roles they could be promoted to were based in Darlington. This case emphasises the worry among London-based civil servants that the PfG programme might narrow the number of SCS roles in London. At the same time, several SCS who were interviewed saw these concerns as exaggerated, maintaining the resilience of the capital and that opportunities for progression will continue to abound.

Conclusion: *Partially supported*: Based on the presented evidence, the PfG programme has made moderate advances towards the hypothesis that it has widened regional career opportunities, reducing the London-centric nature of career progression in the Civil Service, and has engineered stronger ties with local institutions, contributing to meaningful local engagement and providing stable local jobs.

However, the programme faces hurdles, including persisting perceptions of London-centric career progression, concerns about salary disparities, and some feelings of insecurity from London-based civil servants that feel career prospects are diminishing in London. Also, there are concerns about the potential bias towards internal candidates in job advertisements, which could deter local talent. Therefore,

while the programme has achieved some successes, opportunities for improvement remain, especially in career progression and talent acquisition, to fully realise improved career opportunities outside London and across the whole Civil Service.

Strength of evidence: Moderate: To assess the extent to which the PfG programme has contributed towards improving career opportunities outside London, this evaluation has relied on survey data and insights from interviews. This limits the strength of findings, as previously stated.

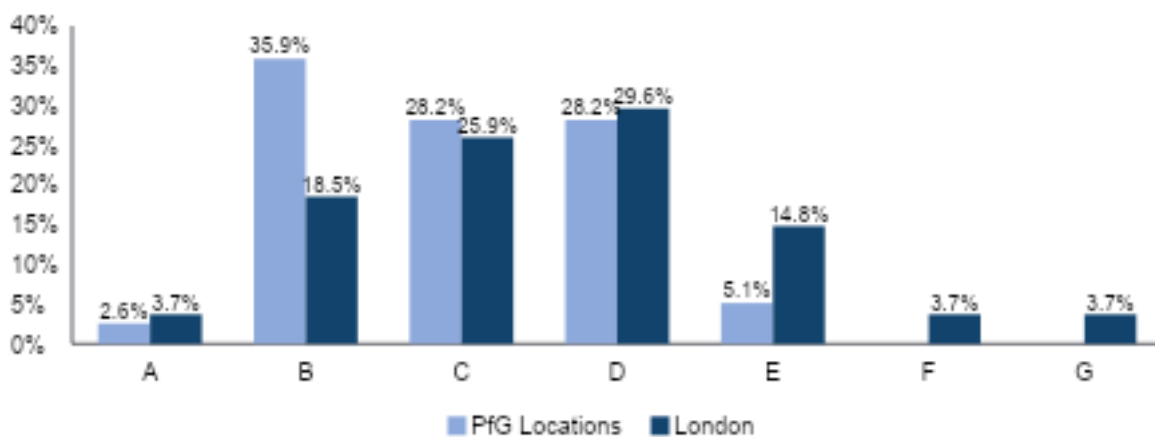
5.2.3 Expected Impacts Not Supported or Inconclusive

Cleaner and green Civil Service (contribute to reduce carbon emissions)

- I. **Theory of change impact:** *The PfG programme will contribute toward a cleaner and greener Civil Service, through supporting a reduction in carbon emissions.*

Evidence: There is some evidence that in sampled PfG locations buildings are more energy efficient than in London. For example, Figure 5.24 illustrates, that the majority of buildings in sampled PFG locations (92.3%) are rated as energy efficient (B, C, or D), whereas in London, a smaller proportion (74.1%) fall within these categories. Conversely, a smaller percentage of buildings in PfG locations (5.1%) are rated as less energy efficient (E or below) compared to London (22.2%).

Figure 5.21: Sampled PfG locations vs London, EPC band ratings (of those rated), % of total buildings⁶⁰



(Description of Figure 5.21) Column chart of EPC band rating of buildings in sampled PfG locations and in London. Percentage of buildings at each band is relatively similar, except at band B in which PfG locations have notably more.

This higher level of energy efficiency may be consistent with a reduction in carbon emissions. However, it's important to consider a wider view of the environmental impact of the PfG programme, which includes assessing its influence on travel-related emissions.

⁶⁰ GPA Data on EPC rating for the London and sampled PfG locations

Examining programme measures such as the commuting patterns of relocated individuals and their consequent impact on carbon emissions from survey responses highlights a prevailing sentiment: public transport outside of London is perceived as unreliable, necessitating alternative modes of transportation such as vehicles which may not always be environmentally friendly. Respondents highlighted concerns such as:

"Infrastructure and service of train stations and companies to these places outside London is rather poor compared to the norm in London."

"Outside of London, if your means of transport to the office is disrupted (e.g., strikes or bad weather), there is no other option. It's not like having the option of bus, tube, or train."

Conclusion: *Inconclusive:* There is some observable evidence that points to improved energy efficiency in buildings within sampled PfG locations, with a higher proportion of these buildings categorised as energy efficient compared to London locations.

However, the programme's overall environmental impact also requires the consideration of factors beyond energy efficiency, such as travel-related emissions. Respondents to the survey have cited concerns regarding transportation infrastructure outside London, often causing reliance on less green alternatives like personal vehicles.

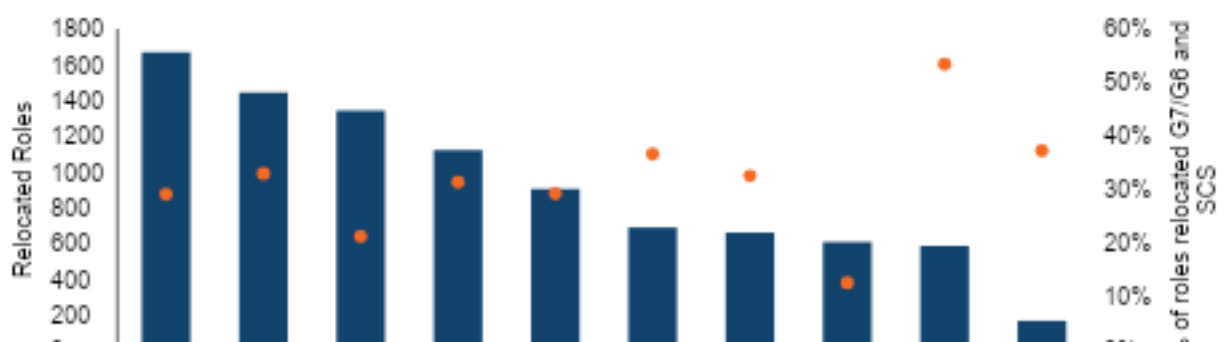
Strength of evidence: *Weak:* Due to data limitations, particularly on commuting details, a comprehensive estimation of the programme's environmental impact is not feasible at present.

Better policy making, closer to the communities it serves

- I. **Theory of change impact:** *The PfG programme will help contribute towards better policy making, with civil servants closer to the communities they serve.*

Evidence: There has been an increase in the number of roles classified as G7/G6 and SCS, across all sampled PfG locations. Experienced hires in the regions may lead to better policy making in the areas as they typically bring in knowledge, skills and experience from previous roles and sectors. Bristol has a notably higher concentration, with 53.4% (297 roles) of roles relocated being G7 and above. Conversely, Liverpool exhibits a comparatively lower percentage, with only 12.7% of relocated roles (72 roles) falling into the G7 and above classification (Figure 5.22).

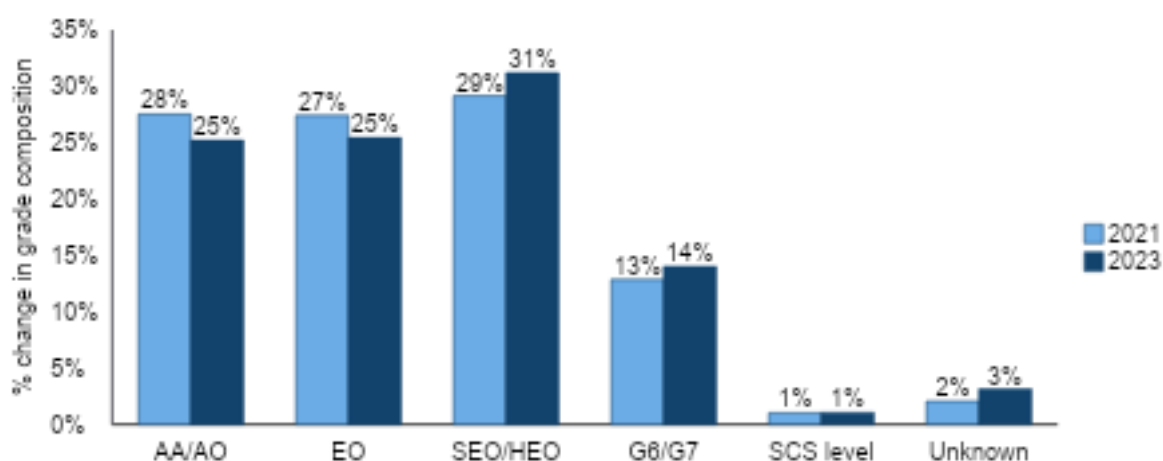
Figure 5.22: Relocated roles that were G7/G6 and SCS in sampled PfG location (as of Q3 2023)⁶¹



(Description of Figure 5.22) Column and scatter chart showing relocated roles and the proportion that were G7 and above in sampled locations. Bristol and Warrington have highest proportion of G7 and above, but lowest overall number of roles. Leeds has most roles relocated, but a fairly average proportion G7 and above.

Furthermore, between 2021 to 2023, there was an increase in the proportion of SEO/HEO and G6/G7 in the sampled PfG locations, by 2% and 1% respectively. However, the share of SCS roles in the overall workforce of PfG sampled locations remained the same. There were corresponding falls in Junior grades such as AA/AO and EO by 3% and 2% respectively. (Figure 5.23).

Figure 5.23: Change in grade composition in PfG locations (2021 vs 2023)⁶²



(Description of Figure 5.23) Column chart showing change to grade composition in PfG locations between 2021 and 2023. Minimal changes, with AA/AO falling, EO falling, SEO/HEO rising, grade 6 and 7's rising, and SCS remaining at 1%.

Although an increase in senior presence in sampled PfG locations may imply better policy making this is not always the case. Roles relocated to operational departments like HMRC and DWP, despite their involvement in decision-making, may not always involve direct policymaking responsibilities. Moreover, even if some of these roles involve policymaking, the evidence is insufficient to determine whether policy design and strategy are conducted and implemented at a local level.

While diverse perspectives and increased regional engagement are recognised as positive strides that could “*improve the diversity of thought in policy making*”, their tangible impact on shaping more representative policies is anecdotal and challenging to quantify. This challenge is especially pronounced in the relocation of policy roles, which traditionally required close proximity to ministers, making them predominantly London-centric and resistant to change, as noted by some SCS.

Nonetheless, there is an acknowledgment of gradual progress, with both a broader range and number of roles materialising outside of London, suggesting the PfG programme is indeed facilitating the relocation of policy positions. Sheffield, for instance, is emerging as a focal point for Civil Service relocation, with the

⁶² Civil Service Statistics - [Civil Service statistics - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/civil-service-statistics)

establishment of the Sheffield policy campus that hosts multiple departments in a single location, centred around the policymaking profession.

Conclusion: *Inconclusive:* While the PfG programme has led to greater SCS presence across PfG locations, it doesn't necessarily follow that there has been an improvement in policy making. Feedback from interviews and surveys suggests it's premature to conclude substantial changes in policymaking due to the PfG programme.

Strength of evidence: *Weak:* There is not direct data to facilitate the assessment of whether policy making has become better, or more aligned to community needs. To fully assess the PfG programme's impacts on policymaking, longitudinal studies should be conducted in the future to observe changes over an extended period.

5.3 To what extent have different approaches to relocation impacted in different ways on PfG locations

The PfG programme's diverse relocation strategies have yielded distinct impacts across various UK regions. The Darlington Economic Campus (DEC), with around 600 staff from multiple departments⁶³, including a notable 35 SCS, is perhaps the best example, for the potential of strategic relocation. As noted in interviews, DEC's effectiveness stems from its ability to replicate London's office dynamics, particularly in grade and profession mix. According to interviewees, the benefits of DEC are multifaceted, enhancing local talent pipelines through engagement with educational institutions, introducing diverse perspectives to policymaking, fostering extensive local stakeholder networks, and creating a multiplier effect on the local economy. The IFG's *Settling in* report acknowledges these successes while calling for sustained efforts to solidify these early gains.⁶⁴

Similarly, Sheffield's policy campus and multi-department hubs in cities like Manchester, Leeds, and Birmingham demonstrate the PfG's adaptability. These hubs have promoted cross-department collaboration, heightened local pride, and fostered a sense of unity and belonging among civil servants. The concept of departmental second headquarters, exemplified by the Cabinet Office in Glasgow and the DLUHC in Wolverhampton, has helped to “[legitimise] non-London offices as central government not just regional hubs,” as noted in one survey response.

PfG also has an impact on strengthening the union with departments establishing a presence in Scotland, NI and Wales, helping to strengthen connections with Whitehall and diversifying perspectives within departments. Additionally, department-specific initiatives like the Home Office's plan in Stoke-on-Trent align with the broader Levelling Up agenda, aiming to integrate the Civil Service's growth with regional economic development.

⁶³ [arlington-economic-campus-civil-service-relocations.pdf \(instituteforgovernment.org.uk\)](#)

⁶⁴ [darlington-economic-campus-civil-service-relocations.pdf \(instituteforgovernment.org.uk\)](#)

5.4 Has the intervention resulted in any unintended outcomes?

The interviews and survey suggested some unintended outcomes of the programme – specifically around feelings of isolation amongst relocated staff, and some insecurity from London-based civil servants.

Feelings of isolation among some relocated civil servants

In implementing PFG, some departments have pursued a “*location agnostic approach*”, leading to instances in which there were “*single team members in single locations, which is not good for working, or for wellbeing.*” Although this ensures the department has geographical spread across the UK, it results in feelings of isolation and works against building strong team relationships. Survey responses reflect this, stating:

- *“It's difficult to feel as connected as I'd like to the rest of my team which is entirely based in London. It's easy to feel that they receive informal networking benefits from seeing each other face to face, while I don't.”*
- *“I would have respected a decision for my managers to come and visit me and spend a day in my local office rather than me having to travel to them or London each time.”*
- *“I didn't meet my line manager in person for nearly four months”*

Conversely, other departments have pursued strategies to group teams together into major hubs or campuses. This reportedly benefits team building and culture, for example one Darlington-based respondent stated, “*The Darlington campus is a great place to work - there is a great atmosphere, people regularly mingle across departments and there are a lot of talks, workshops and social events to get involved in every week.*” However, it has the simultaneous effect of concentrating talent into select locations, effectively “*putting eggs in two campuses not one*”, by having London and only one other location, diminishing the geographic spread across the nation.

These different strategies with both positive and negative impacts demonstrate the need for careful strategic planning, tailoring approaches to specific teams and departments, while also ensuring support is available for all those relocated, to assist with integration into their new office community.

Insecurity among London-based civil servants

The PFG programme may have inadvertently stirred apprehension among London-based civil servants concerning their career prospects. This anxiety stems from perceptions of a potential reduction in available roles within the capital. As illustrated previously in Table 5.6, 28.3% of London-based survey respondents noted a moderate or significant decrease to career prospects, compared to just 6.7% responding conversely. This led to calls for more “*communication and support for those staff that will remain London based*”.

These concerns obviously need to be put into the context of the expansion in the Civil Service headcount in London, and the retention of the majority of SCS roles within the Capital. Furthermore, several interviewed SCS perceive these apprehensions as overblown. One SCS claimed that although fears are understandable, there are “*still plenty of jobs advertised in London*”, and another noted that “*London still has the most opportunities*”, suggesting nervousness is a “*false perception*”. This perspective suggests a need for the programme to better communicate and manage expectations about the distribution of roles and the evolving landscape of career advancement within the Civil Service, to manage the perceptions of both London-based and non-London civil servants.

5.5 What generalisable lessons have we learned about impact?

Moving beyond relocation numbers to focus on culture and placemaking

A fundamental insight is the significance of integrating civil servants into the local environment, not just physically but socially and culturally. Establishing roles like dedicated mentors and community liaisons can help integration, ensuring that civil servants become active, engaged members of their new localities. Community integration plans, involving partnerships with local businesses, educational institutions, and civic groups, have underscored the mutual benefits of relocation. These collaborations not only facilitate a smoother transition for relocated staff but also stimulate local development and economic growth. Such efforts underscore the multifaceted impact of PfG, demonstrating that its success is tied to the well-being and prosperity of local communities.

Adaptability to External Factors

External factors such as changes in the labour market and unforeseen events such as the Covid-19 pandemic can notably impact programme outcomes. The programme's ability to adapt to these external factors highlights the importance of flexibility and agility in responding to dynamic challenges to maintain momentum and achieve desired outcomes and impacts.

Improved communication with London-based civil servants

Understandable fears have emerged from London-based civil servants concerning career progression, given the perception that SCS opportunities are diminished in light of relocation of roles outside of London. To manage this, better communication would ensure London-based civil servants are aware of the continuing opportunities for career progression. Given London still represents the largest proportion of the Civil Service, career prospects remain strong. Therefore, transparent communication to manage expectations and advertise opportunities would reassure London-based civil servants who may feel anxious about their career prospects.

6 Value for Money Evaluation

This value for money evaluation explores three evaluation questions, namely:

1. What were the costs of delivering PfG? Has PfG been cost-effective (compared to alternatives/doing nothing)?
2. What was the value-for-money of different PfG approaches (thematic clustering, hubs programme, campuses) considering its benefits and costs? Do the benefits outweigh the costs?
3. Is the intervention the best use of resources (compared to alternatives/doing nothing)?

The evaluation of questions one and three utilise available cost information alongside evidence underpinning the benefits articulated within the programme's theory of change (ToC) to develop an indicative range for a Benefit Cost Ratio of the programme. Benefits have been classified as monetised or non-monetised, where benefits cannot be monetised, a qualitative assessment has been undertaken.

In light of the data limitations flagged below, question two has not been evaluated. The Benefits Framework in Section 7 makes recommendations on data requirements and analysis methods to respond to this question in future research. Appendix G provides further detail on the methodological approach to assess the value for money of the PfG programme.

The evaluation drew insights from multiple data sources, including:

- **Quarterly Relocation Tracker (QRT) Data:** The central tracker (Q3 2023) has been used to understand the characteristics of roles that have relocated.
- **GPA Data:** Insights into the London and sampled PfG locations estate costs to estimate cost savings that have been captured from GPA data provided.
- **CO PfG Budget Data:** The PfG programme budget data from the Financial Year 20/21 up to December (FY 23/24)
- **Civil Service Bulletin Data:** Detailed insights into salary costs in the Civil Service to estimate people cost savings.

Findings are grouped under each of the evaluation questions in subsequent sections.

Limitations specific to this Value for Money Evaluation

Several limitations apply to this evaluation:

Data Availability

Data availability has constrained aspects of the analysis including:

- **Cluster and Hubs analysis** - The assessment of evaluation question 2 was constrained by data availability, most notably that staffing, estates, and cost data was not categorised against clusters, hubs, and campuses.
- **Staff cost savings** – Lack of data on recruitment and training costs prevented a precise assessment of the net benefits derived from reduced salaries in PfG locations. An alternative benchmark figure was used, based on

a literature review. As any benefits related to reduced churn have yet to be evidenced this was excluded from the benefits analysis.

- **Relocation costs** – Data on the actual take up of relocation expenses was not available, so it has been assumed that all London staff relocating to the regions claim the full £14k expenses package that departments are able to make available to staff. This will likely overstate actual take up – and hence lead to an underestimate of PfG programme benefits.
- **One-off estate costs and savings** – No data was provided on one-off building costs related to relocations such as refurbishment or construction. These are assumed to be recovered by rental costs for buildings across the period of the programme. Nevertheless, exclusion of this data point may lead to an overestimate in benefits from the PfG programme.
- **Departmental Costs** – It was not possible to separately identify PFG related resource costs incurred by departments. These are primarily expected to include existing staff who worked on relocation campaigns, planning and local integration activities in advance of, and during relocation.
- **Ongoing estate costs and savings** – As a number of existing buildings were utilised to relocate staff, existing and relocated staff may operate from the same building creating data quality risks.

Benefit Attribution

It is acknowledged that other government departments will have played a role in realising the benefits of the PfG programme, most notably Government Property Agency (GPA) and individual Departments. Therefore, there is a risk that some benefits are double counted, particularly between the PfG and GPA. The implementation of the proposed benefits framework should protect against such risks in the future. This limitation has been mitigated by the upper and lower bound detailed within the sensitivities.

Granularity of Cost Information

The VFM analysis is constrained by the completeness of cost information. For example, the central budget figure does not account for the expenditure incurred by participating departments, so assumptions have been developed to provide an estimate of these costs. Again, this has been mitigated by sensitivity analysis.

Approach

Given the uncertainty on costs and benefits outlined above a careful approach has been taken in the analysis. A first step involves establishing point estimates based on available data and assumptions. These point estimates provide a baseline understanding of the potential costs and benefits associated with the PfG programme. However, recognising the inherent variability and data limitations, a sensitivity analysis has also been conducted. By varying parameters such as the future trajectory of roles relocated, cost assumptions and benefit attribution scenarios, a range of possible estimates has been derived. This allows for a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the potential range of costs and benefits associated with the PfG programme.

6.1 What were the costs of delivering PfG? Has PfG been cost-effective?

From the inception of the PfG programme until December 2023 (FY 23/24), a total budget of £5.8m has been allocated, translating to £638.52 per role relocated as of Q3 2023. This includes spend on policy and communications, programme management, department engagement and delivery support, data and performance reporting and Heads of Place from the point at which they joined PfG (August 2022). Per the limitations, this excludes expenditure incurred by participating departments from their respective budgets on implementation of the PfG programme.

Cost data was provided for 31 buildings across the ten sampled PfG locations. While these costs, including rental and running costs, are not directly incurred by PfG but by individual Departments, they have been factored into the BCR given they directly relate to delivery of the PfG objectives. The total rental and annual costs across these buildings amounted to £25.2m and £53.9m in PfG location (£79.1m).

The approach taken to assess estate cost savings within the PfG programme involved a comparison of accommodation costs per FTE between the 10 PfG locations and London locations.

Rent and running cost data was provided for seven buildings in London with a total capacity of 22,325 that identified a cost per FTE of £2,508 (rent) and £4,198 (running costs) per FTE. This compares favourably against the ten buildings provided for the PfG programme which had a total capacity of 8,338, and a cost per FTE of £1,684 (rent) and £1,853 (running costs).

This suggests a net saving of £824 rent and £2,344 running costs per FTE in the PFG locations compared with London buildings. This evidence suggests that the PFG has been cost effective relative to a case where the roles were not relocated from London. Salary costs were also considered, as outlined in 5.2.1.

6.2 Is the intervention the best use of resources?

To assess whether the intervention was the best use of resources, an indicative benefit cost ratio has been developed from a comparison of the costs of programme delivery, compared with the monetised benefits (e.g., reduced estate and staffing costs, and additional economic activity). Additionally non-monetised benefits have been assessed for their contribution toward value for money.

Following a comprehensive assessment of both monetised benefits and costs the PfG programme's BCR across all scenarios ranges from 3.1 to 9.3. This indicates a positive net position and BCR of the PfG programme, particularly in the low case scenario. These findings highlight that the programme's benefits exceed its costs in each case, suggesting the programme is financially viable and positively contributes to the overall PfG objectives.

Table 6.1: Net Position and Benefit-cost ratio (BCR) for PfG programme

Position	Low	Base	High
Total Discounted Benefits	860.0	1,933.3	3,333.5
Total Discounted Costs	279.1	319.4	358.1
Net Position	580.8	1,613.9	2,975.4
BCR	3.1	6.1	9.3

Monetised benefit appraisal

Benefits that can be captured in monetary equivalent terms allow the comparison of relative costs and benefits resulting from an intervention, and the development of a benefit-cost ratio (BCR).

In the context of the PfG programme, both economic and financial net benefits can be monetised. Economic benefits capture changes in direct and indirect employment, whilst financial benefits capture changes in people costs and estate costs as well economic displacement in London as per table 4 and 5 below:

Table 6.2: Monetised benefits of the PfG programme

Type		Benefits
Financial	People	Reduction in staffing costs
	Estate	Reduction in running costs Reduction rental costs
Economic	Employment	Impact of new jobs - Direct - Indirect (multiplier impact)

Table 6.3: Monetised costs of the PfG programme

Type		Costs
Financial	Programme	Programme costs
	People	Relocation costs Increase in recruitment and training costs
Economic	Displacement	Impact in London from reduction in roles

The original programme case identified the following expected benefits from the programme⁶⁵:

⁶⁵ [Letter from Alex Burghart MP on follow up evidence after the 28 March oral evidence session, 17 May 2023, Annex A.](#) – The analysis was undertaken by McKinsey.

1. Savings in staff costs (by virtue of paying lower salaries outside London) totalling **£672 million** over 10 years.
2. Estate costs in PfG locations are lower than in London. There is a projected annual average saving of £1,500 per full-time equivalent relocated which equates to **£33 million** annual estate savings as a result of PfG. This target is assumed to be for the 2030 year.
3. Local economic benefits in areas where Civil Service posts have been relocated to, ranging from £26 million to £137 million annually, and equating to between **£260 million to £1.4 billion** benefit over a 10-year period.

The VFM evaluation considers the extent to which the evidence suggests that these benefits have been or are expected to be achieved over a ten-year period.

Benefits have been estimated on an annual basis, between 2021 and 2023, for a sample of 10 PfG locations. These are Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, Darlington, Glasgow, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Sheffield, and Warrington⁶⁶.

i. Staff cost savings

The PfG programme targeted reduced staffing costs across the Civil Service, with these reflecting lower salaries outside of London, and excluding the London weighting uplift. To quantify this benefit, the reduction in salary costs that has occurred as a result of PfG relocations has been calculated. Further detail of the methodology can be found in appendix G.

As summarised in the table below, to date the PfG programme has potentially contributed £110.2m of savings as a result of lower staff costs.

Table 6.4: Current delivery of staff cost savings (£m – 2023 Prices, Present Value)

Position	2021	2022	2023	Total
Lower staffing costs	8.7	37.4	64.0	110.2

A projection for staff cost savings across the programme to 2030 has been developed, utilising the estimated profile of relocated roles over this period. This evidences cost savings would be greater in later years, following the delivery of relocation targets, and the cessation of pay protection measures. As demonstrated in the table, if PfG delivers its role relocation target by 2030 and pay protection measures cease, then potentially £825.2m of staff cost savings could be to be achieved.

Table 6.5: Forecast delivery of staff cost savings (£m – 2023 Prices, Present Value)

Position	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	Total
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⁶⁶ Appendix E provides a comparison of the profile of Civil Servants in these 10 locations (covering 60% of PFG roles relocated), compared with the UK average for the entire Civil Service. This suggests that these are reasonably representative in terms of grade mix to the UK as a whole, although they do tend to have a relatively high proportion of relocated roles than the remaining PFG locations.

Lower staffing costs	8.7	37.4	64.0	77.2	87.8	95.3	102.7	110.0	117.4	124.7	825.2
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For every new role hired in 2023 by the PfG programme in the sampled locations, the staff savings per FTE was projected at £7,506.⁶⁷ Outlined in table 6.6 is the breakdown of that saving by grade.

Table 6.6: Forecast delivery of staff cost savings per FTE, per grade - 2023

Grade	Average salary in London	Average salary across sampled PfG locations	Average savings per FTE
AA/AO	£25,770	£23,069	£2,700
EO	£30,760	£27,882	£2,877
SEO/HEO	£40,760	£37,131	£3,628
G6/G7	£75,760	£58,450	£17,310
SCS Level	£112,210	£92,264	£19,946
Unknown	£34,200	£29,560	£4,640

As show in table 6.7, by 2030, the average staff saving per FTE is projected at £9,693.⁶⁸

Table 6.7: Forecast delivery of staff cost savings per FTE

Position	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Cumulative Staff Savings (£m) *	8.7	46.2	110.2	187.4	275.1	370.4	473.0	583.1	700.4	825.2
Cumulative FTE (#) **	1,598	6,773	14,681	22,829	31,615	41,041	51,105	61,807	73,149	85,129
Average Staff Savings per FTE (£)	5,465	6,816	7,506	8,207	8,702	9,025	9,256	9,434	9,575	9,693

*Figures adjusted to PV, 2023 prices

**80% of roles are new hires in sampled PfG regions, cumulative figures used as to account for savings accrued over time as individuals stay in their roles

Summary

⁶⁷ An adjustment has been made to the number of roles relocated, to account for roles relocated from London that retain the London weighted salary for the first 2 years in their new post. Current figures are based on an 80:20 split with 20% of roles relocated taken up by civil servants who have physically relocated from London

⁶⁸ For each sampled location, a weighted average PfG salary was calculated, accounting for staff numbers per grade. A weighted average London comparator based on grade numbers was also developed, and the difference between the PfG and London salaries was calculated. This difference varies by location and year, reflecting the profile of new hires.

- The PfG programme has potentially achieved £110.2m in savings to date, from reduced staff costs.
- Anticipated cost savings are expected to be greater in later years as relocation targets are met and pay protection measures cease. Current anticipated total staff costs savings could reach £825.2m over a ten-year period, exceeding the original £672m programme target.

ii. Estate cost savings

Moving civil servants outside London was expected to lead to lower estate costs, with an estimated saving of £1,500 per FTE⁶⁹. The impact of the PfG programme to date has been estimated based on the number of roles relocated, and a comparison of relative estate costs from a sample of PfG locations compared with some London benchmarks. Further detail on the methodology can be found in appendix G.

The PfG programme is therefore estimated to have potentially contributed £35.6m of savings to date due to changes in estate costs.

Table 6.8: Current delivery of estate cost savings (£m – 2023 Prices, Present Value)

Position	2021	2022	2023	Total
Lower rental costs	2.3	10.1	15.6	27.9
Lower running costs	0.6	2.9	4.1	7.6
Net Position	2.8	13.0	19.7	35.6

Total benefits that might be delivered by the programme over a ten-year period since its inception have also been estimated, based on the profile of relocated roles delivered over the period, £226.9m of estate savings could be realised.

Table 6.9: Forecast delivery of estate cost savings (£m – 2023 Prices, Present Value)

Position	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	Total
Lower rental costs	2.3	10.1	15.6	17.1	18.6	20.1	21.6	23.1	24.7	26.2	179.3
Lower running costs	0.6	2.9	4.1	4.5	4.9	5.3	5.7	6.1	6.5	6.9	47.5
Net Position	2.8	13.0	19.7	21.6	23.5	25.4	27.3	29.3	31.2	33.1	226.9

Summary

- The PfG programme has potentially achieved £35.6m Estate Cost savings to date through reductions in rental and running costs.

⁶⁹ [Letter from Alex Burghart MP on follow up evidence after the 28 March oral evidence session, 17 May 2023, Annex A.](#)

- The PfG programme could deliver £226.9m Estate Cost savings across the lifetime of the project. Against the original £33.0m target for Estate Cost Savings in 2030, the programme is forecast as on track with a projection of £33.1m in 2030.

iii. Local economic benefits

Civil Service relocations are expected to drive benefits in the local economy through bringing higher paying roles to the target regions, with average pay of relocated roles being higher than existing average private sector salaries. To measure direct economic impact, the total salaries for new PfG roles was estimated, less previous salaries received for private sector roles in the target region. Previous salaries were calculated based on average private sector pay in the target location. Indirect economic impact was also calculated, to capture the uplift in compensation of employees in the supply chain of the target locations. In accordance with accepted practice, induced economic impacts have not been included in this analysis. Further detail on the methodology can be found in appendix G.

The relocation of Civil Service jobs could displace existing jobs in the private sector. To account for this, only 90% of the PfG roles are considered to be additional, with the remaining 10% displacing jobs already existing in the private sector.⁷⁰ This is a prudent assumption, applied consistently across the sample. However, it is recognised this could vary based on local factors; scale of new recruits who were previously unemployed or students, vibrancy of local private sector, or city or town for example. Towns have relatively smaller and less diversified local economies making them susceptible to existing economic activities being displaced or crowded out by the influx of new roles.

Additionally, relocating roles from London to other locations implies that those jobs are displaced from the local London economy. This displacement may have implications for workforce dynamics and economic activity within London. To account for this, it is assumed that 10% of Civil Service roles moved out of London are not replaced.⁷¹

Considering displacement, the PfG programme had potentially supported £152.3m of additional local economic benefits by the end of 2023:

Table 6.10: Current delivery of net local economic (£m – 2023 Prices, Present Value)

Position	2021	2022	2023	Total
Direct employment impact	16.1	44.5	59.3	120.0
Indirect employment impact	4.4	11.9	15.9	32.3
Net Position	20.6	56.5	75.3	152.3

⁷⁰ Guidance based on [Research to improve the assessment of additionality \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk) – a 10% lower level figure has been applied in the analysis given roles relocated are predominantly relocated into larger cities. Cities tend to offer more diverse and dynamic labour markets which can often absorb new job opportunities effectively. Nevertheless, a sensitivity analysis has been conducted to account for variation in this assumption.

⁷¹ Similar to displacement estimated within PfG sampled locations, a 10% figure has also been applied to displacement in London.

A forecast for the total local economic benefit that will be supported by the PfG programme over its lifetime has been developed based on the expected number of roles to be relocated. This position is estimated over the 10-year period since PfG inception. As outlined below, based on this estimate, £881.3m of local economic benefits could be supported by the programme cumulated over 10 years, which is in line with the estimate at the outset of the programme.

Table 6.11: Forecast delivery of local economic benefits (£m – 2023 Prices, Present Value)

Position	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	Total
Direct employment impact	16.1	44.5	59.3	64.9	70.5	76.3	82.1	87.9	93.6	99.4	694.7
Indirect employment impact	4.4	11.9	15.9	17.4	18.9	20.5	22.0	23.6	25.1	26.7	186.5
Net Position	20.6	56.5	75.3	82.3	89.4	96.8	104.2	111.5	118.7	126.0	881.3

Summary

- The PfG programme has successfully driven local economic benefits in affected regions, primarily through increased economic activity supported by relocated roles, with an estimated £152.3m in local economic benefits realised by the end of 2023.
- The programme's approach of bringing higher-paying roles to PfG locations has contributed to this economic impact, as evidenced by the average pay of relocated roles surpassing existing regional averages.
- It is forecasted that the PfG programme could lead to a total of £881.3m in local economic benefits over its 10-year period, at the upper of the range of initial estimates set out at the start of the programme.

Summary of Benefits

As summarised above, the set of benefits arising from the PfG scheme include a reduction in staffing costs in PfG locations relative to roles in London, a reduction in estate costs, in terms of lower rental and running costs, and the economic benefits associated with roles.

The total benefits generated from the scheme between 2021-2023 potentially amounted to £298.1m as at year end 2023. Throughout the first 10 years of the scheme to 2030, it is forecast that total benefits could amount to £1,933.3m.

Table 6.12: Current delivery of benefits (£m – 2023 Prices, Present Value)

Position	2021	2022	2023	Total
Lower staffing costs	8.7	37.4	64.0	110.2

Lower estate costs - rental costs	2.3	10.1	15.6	27.9
Lower estate costs - running costs	0.6	2.9	4.1	7.6
Net economic benefits	20.6	56.5	75.3	152.3
Total benefits	32.1	106.9	159.0	298.1

Table 6.13: Forecast delivery of benefits (£m – 2023 Prices, Present Value)

Position	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	Total
Lower staffing costs	8.7	37.4	64.0	77.2	87.8	95.3	102.7	110.0	117.4	124.7	825.2
Lower estate costs - rental costs	2.3	10.1	15.6	17.1	18.6	20.1	21.6	23.1	24.7	26.2	179.3
Lower estate costs - running costs	0.6	2.9	4.1	4.5	4.9	5.3	5.7	6.1	6.5	6.9	47.5
Net economic benefits	20.6	56.5	75.3	82.3	89.4	96.8	104.2	111.5	118.7	126.0	881.3
Total benefits	32.1	106.9	159.0	181.1	200.6	217.5	234.1	250.7	267.3	283.9	1,933.3

iv. Costs

Monetised Costs

The PfG programme is considered to have three monetised cost types; programme costs related to the overall policy and programme management, relocation costs incurred by Departments, and recruitment and training costs.

Programme Costs

From the inception of the PfG programme until December 2023 (FY 23/24), a total budget of £5.7m has been allocated, translating to £638.52 per role relocated as of Q3 2023 assuming all roles relocated have been taken up by new joiners. This includes spend on policy and communications, programme management, department engagement and delivery support, data and performance reporting and heads of place from the point at which they joined PfG (August 2022). On this spend trajectory, £18.3m would be spent by 2030.

Relocation Costs

The relocation policy enabled departments to provide a £14k relocation expense for each London based worker who chose to relocate. As data was not provided on

actual take-up of this fee per location, an assumption has been taken that all London based staff who physically relocated (20% of total roles relocated to date, an upper bound estimate)⁷² would receive the maximum available expenses. This therefore represents a prudent cost estimate totalling £25.4m to date, and £40.2m across the lifetime of the programme.

Recruitment and Training Costs

To fill new roles in the regions, additional recruitment and training costs would be incurred by the Departments. A cost per new role has been identified, multiplied by the number of new roles to conclude a total cost of £45.2m to date, and £260.9m across the course of the programme.

Aggregating the monetised costs, the programme is estimated to have cost £76.1m to date:

Table 6.14: Cost position of programme to date (£m, Discounted to 2023 Prices)

Position	2021	2022	2023	Total
Programme costs	1.8	1.9	1.9	5.5
Relocation costs	5.1	12.1	8.2	25.4
Recruitment and training costs	4.7	16.2	24.3	45.2
Total Costs	11.6	30.1	34.4	76.1

Across the period of the programme to 2030, these costs are estimated at £319.4m:

Table 6.15: Cost position of programme to 2030 (£m – 2023 Prices, Present Value)

Position	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	Total
Programme costs	1.8	1.9	1.9	1.9	1.8	1.9	1.9	1.8	1.8	1.9	18.3
Relocation costs	5.1	12.1	8.2	2.2	2.2	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.1	2.0	40.2
Recruitment and training costs	4.7	16.2	24.3	26.1	27.7	29.4	30.9	32.4	33.9	35.3	260.9
Total Costs	11.6	30.1	34.4	30.2	31.8	33.4	34.9	36.3	37.7	39.0	319.4

Non-monetised Costs

⁷² Estimation provided by the Cabinet Office

Non-monetised costs are also considered based on insights developed in the impact evaluation, however due to data limitations noted in the above sections these have been excluded from the analysis these include:

Increased churn of relocated positions

The pandemic has had a profound impact on workforce dynamics, including increased churn rates across all sectors of the UK economy saw increased churn in 2021 and 2022 reflecting a very tight labour market as the economy re-opened following the pandemic. This situation has implications for costs, as increased turnover can lead to higher recruitment and training expenses, potentially affecting operational budgets. However, analysing churn rates during the pandemic requires careful interpretation due to the unique circumstances and rapid changes in workforce behaviours. Factors such as temporary layoffs, furloughs, and government support programmes may influence turnover figures, making it challenging to discern the underlying trends accurately to the PfG programme.

Feelings of isolation in relocated posts impacting worker productivity

Where individual team members are placed in isolated locations away from their team, they may experience a sense of disconnection. This can affect their engagement, collaboration, and overall productivity as they navigate challenges in integrating into new teams or communities. These costs associated with this arise from intangible impacts on employee well-being, team dynamics, and productivity, making them difficult to measure directly in monetary terms.

v. Benefit-cost ratio

To derive a BCR, a number of assumptions have been made to estimate both costs and benefits, to compensate for gaps in the data set, and for the formative nature of the evaluation. Therefore, there is considerable uncertainty relative to both costs and benefits of the programme. To reflect this uncertainty, while a point estimate for the BCR is derived below, a number of sensitivities on different input parameters have been conducted, and it is the resulting range for the BCR that is most relevant in understanding the VFM for the PfG programme to date.

Therefore, an initial BCR is calculated below, based on performance to 2023, and forecast to 2030, which will represent ten-years since PfG's inception. For the anticipated 10-year BCR, a discount factor of 3.5% has been employed to determine the programme's net present value (NPV), effectively discounting both the costs and benefits.

The initial estimate for the BCR for the programme sits at 3.91 to date, suggesting positive value for money. The benefits presently exceed the costs by £221.9m.

Table 6.16: Indicative benefit-cost ratio assumption (£m – 2023 Prices, Present Value)

Position	2021	2022	2023	Total
Benefits	32.1	106.9	159.0	298.1
Costs	11.6	30.1	34.4	76.1

Net Position	20.5	76.8	124.6	221.9
BCR				3.91

Based on estimates of further role relocations between 2024 and 2030, the full scale of benefits and costs that are likely to be delivered by the programme is estimated. This position is summarised in the table below, arriving at an overall BCR of 6.1. Again, this indicates that programme benefits are expected to be higher than its costs, and hence represent value for money.

Table 6.17: Forecast cost of PfG programme (£m – 2023 Prices, Present Value)

Position	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	Total
Total Discounted Benefits	32.1	106.9	159.0	181.1	200.6	217.5	234.1	250.7	267.3	283.9	1,933.3
Total Discounted Costs	11.6	30.1	34.4	30.2	31.8	33.4	34.9	36.3	37.7	39.0	319.4
Net Position	20.5	76.8	124.6	150.9	168.9	184.1	199.3	214.4	229.5	244.8	1,613.9
BCR											6.1

Sensitivity Analysis

As discussed above, given the uncertainty regarding both costs and benefits of the programme, sensitivity analysis has been conducted that varies economic and financial assumptions to provide a range for the BCR. Upper and lower bounds have been defined to reflect the inherent uncertainty in assumptions and data limitations.

By varying parameters such as the future trajectory of roles relocated, cost assumptions and benefit attribution scenarios, a range of possible estimates have been derived. The low scenario represents a conservative estimate reflecting fewer roles relocated in the future, higher costs, and reduced benefits. In contrast the high scenario reflects optimistic conditions with a higher number of roles relocated in the future, lower costs, and increased benefits.

In designing the high and low case seven core parameters have been changed, as overleaf:

Table 6.18: Core parameter changes undertaken for sensitivity analysis

Sensitivity	Lower	Base	Upper
Roles Relocated (Timing – 22,000 by date stated)	2030	2027	2025

Sensitivity	Lower	Base	Upper
Relocation Expense	100% uptake of £14,000 relocation expense	100% uptake of £14,000 relocation expense	No uptake of relocation expense
Estate Cost Savings Attribution	50% of benefits from estate cost savings attributed to PfG	100% of benefits from estate cost savings attributed to PfG	100% of benefits from estate cost savings attributed to PfG
People Costs (wages to rise faster in private sector than public sector so people moving into less productive jobs)	Wages to rise faster in private sector than public sector so people moving into less productive jobs	No change – salary uplift over forecast period remains the same	Wages to rise faster in public sector than private sector
Proportion of roles relocated from London	30%	20%	10%
Economic Displacement – Crowding out of private sector jobs	20%	10%	0%
Economic Displacement – Impact in London	20%	10%	0%

Across all scenarios the net position and BCR of the PfG programme is positive, particularly in the low case scenario, indicating the programme is financially and economically viable.

Table 6.19: Net Position and Benefit-cost ratio (BCR) for PfG programme

Position	Low	Base	High
Total Discounted Benefits	860.0	1,933.3	3,333.5
Total Discounted Costs	279.1	319.4	358.1
Net Position	580.8	1,613.9	2,975.4
BCR	3.1	6.1	9.3

Non- monetised benefit appraisal

While monetised benefits provide a quantifiable measure of the PfG programme's impact, it is also essential to consider non-monetised benefits that may not be easily expressed in financial terms but are nonetheless valuable outcomes of the programme.

The PfG Theory of Change (ToC) identified 23 individual benefits that the programme was expected to deliver, of which 6 were monetisable, and 17 were non-monetisable benefits.

This section provides more detail on each of the non-monetised benefits considering:

- how the PfG programme delivers the claimed benefit
- evidence on how the benefit contributes toward the value for money case

Against each benefit, the strength of evidence is assessed as to whether the programme is delivering value for money to date as well as identifying whether the benefit is economic (related to broader socio-economic benefits) or financial (cost savings or efficiency gains).

Whilst the programme has potential to impact civil servant productivity, either through compositional changes of the workforce or direct effects on productivity, these have not been considered as they are outside the scope of this evaluation.

i. Role relocation

Table 6.20: Strength of evidence for non-monetised benefits related to role relocation

Non-monetised Benefit Theme	Economic or Financial Benefit	Strength of Evidence of PfG Delivery To Date
Increased regional representation	Economic	High
High quality jobs	Economic	High
Access to wider and diverse talent pool	Economic	Medium
Business growth	Economic	Medium
Increased diversity	Economic	Low

Two benefits were evaluated as contributing toward a high value for money:

- **Increased regional representation:** PfG's establishment of thematic campuses in regions like Darlington, Sheffield, and Leeds demonstrates a clear effort to enhance regional representation and empower local decision-making. These are demonstrating the potential to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of government operations and therefore contribute toward VFM.
- **Higher quality jobs:** Relocating roles to PfG locations offers higher-quality employment opportunities outside London, leading to improved job quality and economic prospects for local communities promoting inclusive growth. For the majority of sampled PfG locations, the weighted average salary of relocated roles is greater than the current average salary in that location evidencing the programme's commitment to promoting economic prosperity in regions.

Two benefits were evidenced as delivering a medium contribution toward value for money:

- **Access to wider and diverse talent pool:** Under the PfG programme government roles are relocated across the UK, this diversifies the talent pool within the Civil Service, bringing professionals from different backgrounds and skill sets together. This delivers value for money by enhancing innovation, creativity, and problem-solving capabilities within teams, ultimately leading to

more effective and efficient delivery of services to the public. Survey insights in the process evaluation indicate PfG has adopted post pandemic recruitment processes that have broadened the talent pool.

- **Business growth:** The establishment of a new government hub or thematic campus can make a region more attractive for businesses. This stimulates economic activity and promotes economic development and can contribute to long-term socio-economic gains. Survey and interview responses highlight some promising signs of increased business activity and investment decisions as a result of departmental locations.

One benefit was evidenced for delivering a low contribution toward value for money:

- **Increased diversity:** Relocating roles across the UK through the PfG programme casts a wider net over the UK providing greater opportunity of those from diverse backgrounds across the whole of the UK to join the Civil Service. This in turn brings a range of perspectives, experiences, and talents to government operations, enabling innovation, creativity, and better decision-making processes. Analysis highlights the increase in share of ethnic diversity of civil servants in PfG locations, compared to the Civil Service average post-implementation. As well as, a perceived uptick in thought diversity based on survey findings since relocations began.

ii. Policy Presence

Table 6.21: Strength of evidence for non-monetised policy presence

Non-monetised Benefit Theme	Economic or Financial Benefit	Strength of Evidence of PfG Delivery to Date
Improved policy coordination in hubs/campuses	Economic	High
Increased thought diversity	Economic	Medium
More engagement with local stakeholder / communities	Economic	Medium
More trust and confidence in government through localised decision making	Economic	Low
Greater public awareness and understanding of policies	Economic	Low
Knowledge capacity in the regions	Economic	Low
Better local community service delivery i.e., better infrastructure	Economic	Low

One benefit was evidenced as contributing toward a high value for money:

- **Improved policy coordination in thematic campuses:** By bringing together policymakers, experts, and stakeholders from diverse sectors and departments, the programme facilitates knowledge exchange, joint problem-solving, and coordinated policy action. Qualitative evidence from surveys and targeted interviews consistently highlights the breakdown of

departmental silos, indicating a high likelihood of achieving improved policy coordination, supporting the programme's impact on cost-effectiveness.

Two benefits were evidenced as delivering a partial contribution toward value for money:

- **Increased thought diversity:** PfG targets bolstering innovation and creativity in policy development and implementation, bolstering problem-solving capabilities, and encouraging evidence-based decision-making by relocating role across the UK. The survey evidenced 38% of civil servants reported an increase in thought diversity since relocations began, while only 4% suggested a potential decrease.
- **More engagement with local stakeholders / communities:** By relocating roles outside of London civil and public servants, through networking, community outreach and general policy making, are able to engage with local stakeholder and communities. The extent of engagement however does vary; the Darlington Economic Campus serves as a model for strategic relocation, surveys and interviews reveal fragmented engagement in other areas.

Four additional non-monetised benefits within the policy presence outcome grouping have been proposed as having a low impact on value for money:

- **More trust and confidence in government through localised decision making:** The establishment of government hubs and thematic campuses in various regions by the PfG programme aims to bring decision-making closer to the communities affected enhancing transparency and accountability. Limited evidence was identified of this influencing value for money.
- **Greater public awareness and understanding of policies:** The PfG programme has the potential to enhance public awareness and understanding of policies through its localised decision-making approach and improved community engagement. While this benefit aligns with the programme's objectives, evidencing its impact on value for money remains limited.
- **Knowledge capacity in the regions and nations:** The relocation of Civil Service roles under the PfG programme intends to bolster knowledge capacity in regions beyond the UK, enabling civil servants to accelerate evidence and understanding of local areas. Evidence to date that this is delivering cost effectiveness or efficiencies is limited.
- **Better local community service delivery i.e., better infrastructure:** As government hubs and thematic campuses are established in various regions, an opportunity exists to invest in local infrastructure projects like transportation, healthcare, and education. To date the programme has primarily focussed on office moves according to qualitative evidence from surveys, and therefore evidence of wider community service delivery improvements is inconclusive.

iii. People Efficiency

Table 6.22: Strength of evidence for non-monetised benefits related to people efficiency

Non-monetised Benefit Theme	Economic or Financial Benefit	Strength of Evidence of PfG Delivery to Date
Increased worker satisfaction	Economic and Financial	Medium
Retaining regional talent	Economic	Low

One benefit was evidenced as partially contributing toward value for money:

- **Increased worker satisfaction:** This would contribute toward lower churn, higher productivity, and better workforce wellbeing. Despite the observed increase in churn rates, survey findings in the process evaluation highlight there is high satisfaction among individuals undergoing relocations or adapting to changes prompted by the PfG programme. This suggests that the programme has been effective in facilitating relocations and providing adequate support to those affected.

One benefit was evidenced as providing a low contribution toward value for money:

- **Retaining regional talent:** As roles are relocated to regions outside of London, ensuring those taking up the roles do not leave the Civil Service or return to London is important to retain talent locally. Churn rates rose across all PfG locations and survey analysis in the impact evaluation indicates London is still perceived as the best location for career advancement for many civil servants.

iv. Estate Efficiency

Table 6.23: Strength of evidence for non-monetised benefits related to estate efficiency

Non-monetised benefits	Benefit	Strength of Evidence of PfG Delivery to Date
Reduced carbon emissions	Financial	Low
Global environmental leadership	Economic and Financial	Low

Two benefits were evidenced as providing a low impact toward value for money:

- **Reduced carbon emissions:** The relocation of roles to buildings with higher energy efficiency standards can contribute to reduced carbon emissions, aligning with the principles of value for money by promoting cost-effective environmental solutions. To date evidence is weak on carbon emissions and impacts such as staff travel commuting to and from London and the mode of transportation used has not been estimated.
- **Global environmental leadership:** By relocating roles to greener, environmentally friendly buildings outside of London, the PfG programme has

the potential to demonstrate decarbonisation leadership and replicability. However, the programme's impact is not yet evidenced as having a global impact, particularly when compared to other climate initiatives undertaken by the UK government.

7 Benefit Realisation

The benefits realisation section of this report outlines the benefits framework, governance structures, and activities aimed at maximising the impact and value derived from the PfG programme. This includes defining specific monetised and non-monetised benefits of the PfG programme, establishing effective governance mechanisms, and implementing enabling activities to enhance benefit realisation of the PfG programme.

7.1 Benefit Framework

To underpin the future realisation of Benefits, a Benefit Framework has been developed, and appended to this report (see Appendix B).

This framework provides a comprehensive categorisation of the benefits resulting from the outcomes and impacts identified in the theory of change. This will be critical for all stakeholders to the PfG programme, providing a thorough understanding of benefits, alongside the methodical technique of assessing each benefit, captured in individual benefit profiles.

The continued use and refinement of the benefits profiles forms a vital component of the wider benefit realisation approach, allowing the Cabinet Office to communicate, monitor and assess delivery in a consistent manner.

Within the Benefits Framework, 23 benefit profiles are detailed providing:

- Categorisation as to whether they are monetisable, non-monetisable, quantifiable, or qualitative.
- Linkage to sub-categories within the Theory of Change classification have been identified for each benefit and explicit 'benefit owners' and anticipated key stakeholders have been identified for.
- Measurement methodologies have been determined, supplemented by relevant key performance indicators. Each benefit is also associated with a reporting approach and frequency, enhancing monitoring efficiency.
- Interdependencies amongst the benefits have also been detailed, and wherever feasible, target values and benefit realisation timelines have been assigned.
- The final segment of this document accommodates a RAG (Red, Amber, or Green) rating, indicating the feasibility of achieving each benefit. This design enables systematic planning, monitoring, and delivery of the programme's benefits.

Figure 7.1: Example Benefit Profile from the Benefit Framework

Category	Definition	Profile
Benefit Name	<i>Name of the benefit</i>	(2) Employment created
Monetised or Non-monetised?	<i>Stating if the benefit is monetary or non-monetary</i>	Non-monetised (quantitative)
Benefits Classification	<i>Associated ToC outcome grouping</i>	Role Relocation
Benefit Description	<i>Explanation of the benefit</i>	The relocation of civil servants is expected to create jobs outside of London
Benefit Owner(s)	<i>People/Entities accountable for benefit delivery and realisation</i>	Cabinet Office and other departments in PFG regions
Key Beneficiaries	<i>The main stakeholders expected to receive the benefit</i>	Individuals and local businesses in PFG regions
Measurement Methodologies	<i>Proposed approaches for measuring and tracking the benefit e.g., surveys, time in motion studies (TIM) etc.</i>	QRT data – number of roles relocated ONS data – Input Output Multiplier Methodology to calculate employment multipliers
Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) & Measurement Units	<i>Example KPIs and measurement units for the benefit</i>	Number of civil servants relocating outside of London % of roles relocated as portion of total employment in region Employment multipliers in the region i.e. every X roles relocated could increase local jobs in supply chains by XX FTE
Inter-dependency on other benefits	<i>Dependency on which other benefits to help achieve this benefit</i>	(5) Higher quality jobs, (1) Economic Activity (GVA)
Reporting Methods & Frequency	<i>How the benefit will be reported and how often</i>	Performance Summary Report: • Number of roles relocated – quarterly • Employment multipliers – annually
Already tracking?	<i>Yes/No for whether the benefit is already being tracked</i>	Yes
Baseline (Current) Value	<i>The current value associated with the benefit</i>	16,061 roles relocated (as of Q3 2023)
Target Value / Objective	<i>The target value associated with the benefit</i>	22,000 roles to be relocated by 2027
Deadline for Full Benefit Realisation	<i>The date by which the benefit is expected to be fully realised</i>	2027
RAG Rating and Rationale	<i>Rating the feasibility of the benefit being realised on time and explaining the reason for the rating</i>	16,061 roles were relocated since programme inception – the expectation is that the remaining 5,939 roles will be relocated before the 2027 deadline

(Description of Figure 7.1) Employment created benefit profile showing the benefit classification, beneficiaries, KPI's, reporting methods, current and target values, RAG rating and more.

7.2 Governance of Benefit Framework

An embedded, holistic approach to benefits should triangulate three components, underpinned by a strong and effective governance structure:

Implementation of a Benefit Framework

A PFG benefits tracker is proposed, updated at regular intervals that can then integrate into a wider monitoring and evaluation cycle. This should be underpinned by the profiles within a Benefit Framework; allowing the prompt quantification of monetary benefits to assess the scale of the impacts of the PFG scheme, alongside the identification of areas in which the scheme is not delivering sufficient impact, so targeted interventions can be implemented. A tracker of proposed frequency of tracking per Benefit is shown in Appendix B.

The tracker would re-calculate monetary benefits when inputs, such as the number of roles relocated, are updated, alongside appropriate thresholds for non-monetised benefits within the tool.

This is key for communicating benefits clearly to ministers and wider stakeholders, enabling the tracking of progress against measurable objectives.

Multi-year Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

A multi-year Monitoring and Evaluation plan for the PFG programme would provide:

- Confidence that longitudinal impacts emerging over the lifetime of the programme will be fully evaluated against the intended objectives, and lessons are continuously shared across PFG and other programmes.

- Ensures that the programme is monitored and evaluated against the latest policy position. As programme ambitions, the theory of change or cross-Government priorities change (such as the 60% mandate), longitudinal evaluations promote frequent evaluations against progress.
- A consistent, standardised approach to evaluation across multiple years, that ensures that appropriate focus and capability is applied and allows the use of more sophisticated counterfactual methodologies, such as difference-in-differences to estimate the impact of the PfG programme by comparing changes over time between treated and control groups
- Allow gaps in the academic research in relation to public sector office moves to be closed through more detailed insights on the impacts of policy over longer periods.

Noting the ten-year programme plan, it is recommended an evaluation plan is initially targeted around the 2027 interim targets for the programme:

- **Interim Process Evaluation (completed spring 2027):** Revisiting the process evaluation to identify in-flight process improvements in the decision-making criteria around locations, support, and workforce planning augmented with an exploration of required inputs for the programme. This should not preclude more targeted interim process evaluations during this period – for example on the process of setting up specific thematic hubs.
- **Interim Impact Evaluation Reports (completed summer 2025 and spring 2027);** Conducting two impact evaluations of the programme, noting its complexity and scale of influence on the Civil Service, will ensure that lessons learned can be rapidly applied to the evolving PfG policy and programme, shaping, and intervening on policy direction.
- **Interim Value for Money Reports (completed summer 2025 and spring 2027):** Value for money provides a core element of the delivery of the programme and justification of programme, departmental and wider stakeholder resources. With benefits closely tied to role relocations, two value for money evaluations between this Value for Money report and the 2027 target date will provide holistic financial appraisal, alongside key qualitative measures.

Targeted Research and Stakeholder Alignment

Such a longitudinal programme as PfG also benefits from specific, targeted research and case studies. Emergent through work to date has been:

- A best practice example, in the Institute for Government's impact review of the Darlington Economic Campus. Extending this approach to other office or departmental moves, particularly a City comparator to understand how impacts differ, would provide a new lens on the thematic campus model and clusters. Research on the location selection, site or building selection, partnership working; place capacity; and project delivery all contribute toward vital lessons learned.
- To date business engagement and impacts have been difficult to ascertain through this M&E review. A business study, seeking to understand from a broad range of sectors that should expect to benefit from the programme; through both construction or refurbishment through to induced impacts such as local retail.

- Social research and surveys with stakeholders and community members to identify how moves can drive greater social impact in these regions.

Governance and Capacity

The effective governance of the Benefit Framework should entail:

- **Benefit Profile Owners:** As outlined in the framework, nominated accountable leads for each benefit, overseeing data capture, quality, and reporting. Ensuring these individuals are provided with the capacity, technology and support needed to capture and track benefits.
- **A PfG Benefit Lead:** An individual with the capacity to engage with benefit profile owners and run the quarterly process of updating the tracker and develop reports.
- **Governance Forum:** Agreeing the correct forums for reporting of Benefits and Monitoring and Evaluation. This forum should have appropriate levels of seniority to intervene where performance is below expectations and unlock issues and mitigations for the programme.

7.3 Activities to Enhance Benefit Realisation

In this section key enabling activities have been outlined to aid the realisation of identified benefits for the PfG programme. These have identified the success factors, and apparent enabling activities to help address key issues identified as part of the formative evaluation. The recommendations are focussed on the broader benefits and grouped into key themes:

Enhance PfG's placemaking impact

The PfG programme aims to influence placemaking by supporting positive economic and social outcomes in PfG locations. In the formative evaluation, key success factors were identified for successful Civil Service relocations, along with a number of enabling actions to help reduce some of the identified risks associated with relocation.

i. Successful Civil Service relocation:

Successful relocation of Government roles will be one of the principal levers to support long—term placemaking, as relocated civil and public servants having long, successful careers in their relocated location, will ensure they stay in the region and ultimately contribute to placemaking. From the formative evaluation, four success factors have been identified, which help ensure that Civil Service relocation is successful:

- **Role suitability and fit:** Government relocations are most successful when employees are placed in positions that align to departmental needs and support the delivery of organisational objectives.
- **Community engagement and integration:** It was identified that Government role relocations are most successful when the relocated civil or public servant develops a sense of belonging to the local area. This is supported by community engagement and integration schemes.

- **Cross-departmental and cross-profession working:** In the process evaluation, it was noted that relocations were most successful when they encouraged cross-departmental and cross-profession working, helping encourage synergies across the Civil Service that might not have happened without the PfG programme such as those in Darlington, Sheffield, and Leeds.
- **The normalisation of flexible working:** The increase and normalisation of flexible working that occurred as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, made a positive impact to PfG implementation. It broadened the talent pool available to the programme and enhanced the perception and confidence that effective leadership roles can be fulfilled outside of London.

It's crucial to leverage these success factors across the PfG programme. To continue driving successful Civil Service relocations, four key recommendations have been identified to help maximise relocation success and ultimately support placemaking objectives in affected regions.

- **Enabling Action 1: Undertake a more strategic and structured approach to role relocation:** Implement a clear strategic plan for allocating roles to relocated regions, emphasising the importance of forming region-specific teams. This approach ensures a more structured formation of departmental teams in each region, instead of simply advertising individual roles across the country.
- **Enabling Action 2: Develop local community engagement schemes:** Design and implement community engagement schemes in relocation areas, which support relocated civil servants to adapt better to the region.
- **Enabling Action 3: Formalise the encouragement of cross-functional collaboration:** Institute formal practices that promote collaboration across departments and professions. Creating systemic channels for cross-functional communication and cooperation not only fosters knowledge sharing and synergy within the Civil Service but also leverages the relocation process to build a more integrated and innovative workforce.
- **Enabling Action 4: Continue to promote flexible working practices across the Civil Service** It's important to maintain the momentum towards flexible work arrangements gained during the Covid-19 pandemic. By continuing to normalise flexible working, the Civil Service can tap into a larger and more diverse talent pool, strengthening the perception that effective leadership is possible beyond traditional offices.

ii. Risks to Civil Service relocation:

Civil Service relocation carries multifaceted risks that demand careful consideration for effective mitigation. Without proper management of these risks, it may be challenging to continue relocating roles beyond current achievements, and there is a risk of relocated civil servants leaving their posts. Therefore, it's crucial within the PfG programme to address these challenges to ensure the sustainability and longevity of relocations. In the formative evaluation, three key risks have been identified that require attention to secure the long-term success of relocations.

- **Career progression concerns outside of London:** There's a prevailing concern among civil servants that their career progression may not advance as swiftly or extensively outside of London. Although the PfG programme is

reliant on natural churn of existing civil servants this apprehension may deter them from relocating or lead them to consider relocation as a temporary move, adversely affecting the long-term success of the relocation programme.

- **Inconsistent experience of relocation support:** The process evaluation revealed that survey respondents experienced difficulties with the relocation process, including issues with the timelines. This inconsistency in the relocation support led to a decline in satisfaction with the entire process. While the relocation expense policy is held by the Cabinet Office the process is managed by departments and is a key issue to be addressed.
- **Lack of alignment with other directives:** It was highlighted that new directives that occurred midway through the programme such as the Plan for London, 60% Office mandate and Civil Service headcount caps created confusion around workforce and estate planning. Some of these schemes hampered civil servants' confidence in the long-term viability of locations outside of London, due to the perceived revival of in-person relationships.

To address these key risks, three enabling actions have been identified, to mitigate these risks and support long-term success of relocations.

- **Enabling Action 5: Enhance talent programme for regional progression:** Establish further robust professional development programs and clear advancement pathways for individuals in regions outside London. This can involve setting up mentoring or coaching initiatives, providing regular performance-feedback mechanisms, and ensuring that promotion opportunities are clearly communicated and accessible to all employees regardless of their location.
- **Enabling Action 6: Improve the consistency of relocation support:** Cabinet Office should work with departments to enhance relocation support by providing clear timeframes and refining the process to make it more user-friendly. Provide regular updates and open lines of communication about the process to help maintain expectations and improve satisfaction levels.
- **Enabling Action 7: Encourage harmony with new directives:** Whenever new directives are introduced strive for harmony with the ongoing relocation efforts. Provide comprehensive briefings detailing how these new directives align with and support the overarching goals of the PfG programme. This approach can help reduce confusion and boost civil servants' confidence in the long-term viability of locations outside London.

Enabling Action 8: Continued SCS job advertisements outside of London: Ensure that job advertisements for SCS roles are consistently located outside of London, meeting the 50% target of SCS positions outside of London. This approach can reinforce the commitment to senior positions outside of London highlighting career progression opportunities breaking the perceived glass ceiling at Grade 6 or SCS1 (Deputy Director) level. This will alleviate civil servants' concerns about hindered career progression from relocation, enhancing visibility and attainability of career advancement opportunities in these regions, therefore, encouraging more professionals to consider and accept long-term moves.

iii. Regional variations in success

From the formative evaluation, there was some evidence that suggests the effects of Civil Service relocations have varied across regions. This is likely to impact the placemaking impact of the scheme in different locations. The key finding related to this point, is summarised below.

- **The Darlington Economic Campus serves as an exemplar for PfG locations:** From both the survey and targeted interviews it was highlighted that the Darlington Economic Campus has served as a flagship model across the Civil Service for growing Civil Service roles in new locations and relocating existing civil servants from London. It has the most distinctive brand of all PfG locations as it is a thematic campus.

Based on this finding, the following enabling action is recommended to support further benefit realisation from the PfG programme.

- **Enabling Action 9: Continue to develop regionally branded thematic campuses:** Based on the success of the Darlington Economic Campus, it is recommended that the PfG programme should continue to prioritise developing similarly branded thematic campuses with a deliberate degree of specialism in other regions, including Sheffield and Leeds. Given the unique characteristics of each region, a bespoke evaluation should be conducted to assess the feasibility and potential impact of such campuses. Establishing distinctive, regional Civil Service campuses could result in notable benefits. By replicating these models, other locations could also experience successful relocations, reinforcing the Civil Service presence outside of London. This strategy would not only distribute economic growth but also establish new regional identity marks, promoting the PfG programme's objectives nationwide.

iv. Enhancing benefits in PfG locations

From the formative evaluation two key issues were highlighted that if addressed, could strengthen delivery of the PfG programme, enhancing benefit realisation and supporting placemaking objectives. These key issues were:

- **Limited alignment in estate management between the Government Property Agency, PfG and Departments:** There is not a harmonised operational framework that aligns departmental relocation plans with GPA's estate strategies. This is preventing benefits being maximised in relation to the programme, having an adverse impact on PfG delivery timelines and impacting estate and relocation commitments.
- **Limited resource in some areas has reduced potential progress:** The process evaluation revealed that many individuals are carrying out PfG tasks as a corporate contribution rather than a dedicated responsibility within their corresponding departments. This lack of dedicated resources hampers the forward momentum of PfG initiatives. Bolstering capacity in these areas could enhance the realisation of programme benefits.

To address these challenges and strengthen the PfG programme's delivery, the following enabling actions related to estate management alignment and resource allocation can be implemented:

- **Enabling Action 10: Develop estate management strategic objectives across GPA, PfG and other departments, that is supported by a unified framework for delivery.** This can facilitate the exchange of information, resources, and best practices. By creating a culture of transparency and cooperation, this can streamline decision-making processes, identify synergies between initiatives, and mitigate potential conflicts or duplications of effort. This initiative could enhance the programme's benefits as an enabler of other initiatives such as the Plan for London and Whitehall Campus programme, speeding up delivery and ensuring commitment fulfilment.
- **Enabling Action 11: Formalisation of roles and responsibilities outside of the dedicated team:** To counter resource limitations, formalise roles and responsibilities of the supporting staff outside the dedicated PfG team. Ensure they have adequate time for deliverables, recognition within their department, and clear lines of accountability and ownership. This updated approach can drive efficiency, foster responsibility, and increase overall programme effectiveness.

Understanding Strategic Workforce Benefits of Civil Service Relocation

In the context of the PfG programme, strategic workforce benefits play an important role in improving the Civil Service's talent composition and capabilities within the regions where roles are relocated to. Strategic workforce benefits arising from the PfG programme include tapping into a wider talent pool, promoting increased diversity, mitigating recruitment challenges, facilitating more informed policymaking, optimising operational approaches through ways of working, and creating clear career pathways.

Talent Pool

Access to a better talent pool is important for the Civil Service, particularly through the PfG programme. The initiative, aimed at facilitating growth and development in regions across the UK as part of the levelling up agenda, highlights the necessity for the Civil Service to have access to a proficient workforce to effectively support these efforts. Through the formative evaluation, a key risk has been identified that requires attention to ensure this workforce benefit continues to be realised:

- **Towns may have a narrow pipeline, potentially facing challenges attracting and retaining skilled workers:** Based on the formative evaluation, it's evident that there are disparities in the local labour force between cities and towns, posing challenges for the Civil Service's access to a diverse talent pool. While cities typically boast secure and skilled labour markets conducive to scalability, towns can often struggle to attract skilled professionals due to lower-skilled local labour markets, often falling below the UK average in terms of qualifications (NVQ Level 4 and above).

To effectively address this issue and ensure that towns can fully benefit from the PfG programme, the following enabling actions are proposed:

- **Enabling action 1: Leverage insights from current community engagement partnerships:** Learn lessons from established partnerships with community organisations in PfG locations such as Darlington and Sheffield to increase awareness of Civil Service opportunities to those currently in the

local labour force. This could involve organising networking events, workshops, or information sessions to highlight the benefits, career progression opportunities, and positive impact of Civil Service roles on local communities. This approach will educate and encourage individuals in towns to pursue careers within the Civil Service.

- **Enabling action 2: Educational training programmes:** Create partnerships with local schools and universities to offer insight, work experience events, and department tours within government buildings using insights from existing partnerships in established PfG locations. Additionally, conduct policy workshop sessions aimed at bridging the talent gap and improving recruitment prospects. These initiatives are geared towards ensuring the development of essential skills and knowledge, thereby contributing to a robust labour pipeline for the Civil Service in the region's future.

Civil Service Diversity

By relocating roles in the Civil Service to the regions and nations outside of London, the expectation is to increase diversity, both in terms of protected characteristics and thought. By doing so, the PfG programme not only ensures representation and inclusion but also cultivates a dynamic environment where a wide range of perspectives can be considered, leading to more comprehensive and effective policy solutions. Through the formative evaluation, however, a couple of key issues have been highlighted that are hindering the programme's ability to realise these benefits:

- **Relocated roles in cities may not offer the expected level of thought diversity** - Evidence from targeted interviews in the formative evaluation indicates that recruitment into specific centres like Manchester and Birmingham may fail to capture the desired level of thought diversity, as it predominantly attracts individuals with a metropolitan urban perspective, excluding large portions of the population residing in smaller cities or towns. To address these two key issues, the following enabling actions are recommended to support further benefits realisation from the programme:
- **Enabling action 3: Implementing a decentralised attraction strategy with a focus on smaller cities and towns:** Instead of focusing on specific urban centres like Manchester and Birmingham, attraction activities such as outreach and networking events could be expanded to include nearby smaller cities and towns. By casting a wider net, the Civil Service can attract candidates with varied backgrounds and perspectives.
- **Enabling action 4: Proactive outreach and engagement with diverse communities:** Departments in PfG regions can establish partnerships with community organisations and ethnic minority groups in regions and nations where roles are being relocated. By actively engaging with these communities, the organisation can raise awareness about Civil Service opportunities and encourage participation from individuals of diverse backgrounds.

Recruitment Challenges

The implementation of the PfG programme during the Covid-19 pandemic helped alleviate recruitment challenges related to physical location and travel for prospective candidates, given the shift to flexible work. This shift improved the accessibility of the

recruitment process, as indicated by insights gathered from focused interviews and surveys conducted in the formative evaluation. However, despite these advancements, challenges in recruitment continue to persist.

- **External recruitment challenges:** Survey respondents in the process evaluation noted difficulties in recruiting externally for roles relocated to areas traditionally lacking a Civil Service presence. This is also a long standing and well documented issue for the Civil Service.⁷³ Survey respondents cited an inherent bias favouring internal recruitment, attributed to a perceived higher level of assurance associated with the onboarding process. For instance, obtaining security clearance, especially for SCS positions, can delay joining the Civil Service and can therefore lead to attrition of successful external candidates.
- **Critical views on the interview process:** Respondents also highlighted negative perceptions of the interview process. Job advertisements were perceived as challenging to comprehend for individuals outside the Civil Service while meeting the criteria was seen as notably easier for those with prior Civil Service experience.

Based on these key issues, the recommendations to ease the recruitment process are:

- **Enabling Action 5: Regional alignment over departmental approach:** Instead of individual departments conducting their own outreach efforts, aligning departments by region and nation would better address the unique challenges of each area, particularly in locations with historically low Civil Service presence. Additionally, existing practice is already underway in locations such as Darlington and Sheffield of which insights should be leveraged.
- **Enabling action 6: Improved clarity in the application process:** Enhancing transparency in the recruitment process, providing clear information about job opportunities and career progression paths, and offering comprehensive support to candidates at every stage of the application process including through to induction where external candidates may need a more tailored approach.

Retention

With roles being relocated to the regions and nations it's important to ensure the long-term sustainability of these roles to effectively achieve the programme's objectives. This creates great continuity and stability in the region or nation, whilst also translating to cost savings.

As outlined in the formative evaluation report the analysis shows that churn rates have increased across the majority of PfG locations with most surpassing the UK average. However, these churn rates should be seen in the context of increased Civil Service wide churn since 2021 and higher churn across the wider economy; all sectors of the UK economy saw increased churn in 2021 and 2022 reflecting a very tight labour market as the economy re-opened following the pandemic.

⁷³ [Opening up: how to strengthen the civil service through external recruitment | Institute for Government](#)

Therefore, while no key issue has been identified to date, the recommendation is:

- **Enabling action 7: Continuous monitoring of retention rates:** Monitor retention rates as Covid-19 implications subside and adjust policies to address turnover issues effectively.

Informed Policy Making

Effective policy making is important for addressing the diverse needs of the UK population and driving economic growth. Through decentralising the Civil Service operations by relocating roles outside of London this helps promote regional development but also presents an opportunity to better align policies with local needs and priorities. Nevertheless, a key issue remains in order to maximise this benefit.

- **Limited data availability:** The impact evaluation identified a critical gap in assessing the impact of relocating civil servants outside of London on policy outcomes. The quarterly relocation tracker (QRT) fails to specify the types of roles relocated under the PfG programme. This impedes the ability to measure the effectiveness of policies reflecting the wider needs of the UK population.

To effectively address this key issue and ensure more informed policymaking is maximised under the PfG programme, the following enabling actions are recommended:

- **Enabling action 8: Improve data collection methods:** Improve data collection methods across departments to ensure comprehensive information on the skills and professions of relocated civil servants under the PfG programme is captured, and samples are representative and avoid selection bias. This will enable the realisation of benefits associated with the programme, paving the way for further enabling actions, supplemented by longitudinal studies, for more informed policy making to be maximised.
- **Enabling action 9: Engage stakeholders using Darlington as a blueprint:** Utilise the Darlington Economic Campus as a model for stakeholder engagement, as it has been identified as a flagship example in both surveys and targeted interviews. Drawing from the success of Darlington, engage stakeholders effectively to ensure their input and participation in the PfG programme, thereby enhancing its effectiveness and impact.

Ways of Working

A frequently mentioned benefit highlighted in both survey responses and targeted interviews is the breakdown of silos facilitated by cross-departmental collaboration through the PfG programme. PfG locations, exemplified by Darlington, Sheffield and Leeds showcase notable progress in this regard however, challenges hinder the integration of cross-departmental working.

- **Challenges in integration:** Respondents in surveys conducted in the process evaluation note that non-universal security passes, GDPR barriers in document sharing, and a need for resource constrained SCS involvement in community-building pose obstacles to effective collaboration and information sharing among departments within PfG locations.

To address these challenges and strengthen the PfG programme's delivery, the following enabling actions related to increased integration can be implemented:

- **Enabling action 10: Create a comprehensive integration strategy:** This strategy should include standardising security pass access, addressing GDPR compliance issues, and creating active SCS involvement in community-building efforts. By adopting a holistic approach, civil service departments can overcome barriers and promote a culture of cooperation and innovation across PfG regions.
- **Enabling action 11: Continue to invest in technology and infrastructure:** Continue investing in technology and infrastructure to support modern ways of working. This includes upgrading digital tools and systems, implementing Audio-Visual (AV) capabilities, and providing necessary training and support to employees.
- **Enabling action 12: Continue to create a collaborative culture:** Promote collaboration and innovation across departments within PfG regions through initiatives such as cross-departmental working groups, knowledge-sharing forums, and innovation challenges. Encouraging employees to collaborate and share ideas enables a culture of continuous improvement and creativity.

Career Pathways

Clear and equitable career pathways are essential for talent retention and advancement within the PfG programme. However, perceptions of career progression vary among employees, posing challenges to talent retention efforts.

- **London is often still perceived as the best location for career advancement:** There is a need to provide transparent career advancement pathways and address perceptions of inequity in career progression.

Enabling actions include:

- **Enabling action 13: Provide clear end-to-end career advancement pathways:** Establish transparent career advancement pathways from entry-level positions to senior leadership roles and communicate them effectively to employees. This includes offering formal career development programs, mentoring, and coaching support, and tailored training opportunities targeted outside London.
- **Enabling action 14: Recognise and incentivise talent:** Recognise achievements and incentivise talent retention and relocation within PfG regions. This ensures equitable career development opportunities for all employees and reinforces the value of talent within PfG region.

8 Implications for Future Policy

The findings of the formative evaluation have highlighted several implications for future policy direction, drawn from findings process and impact evaluation. Addressing the observed challenges should enhance the programme's impact and support the PfG in reshaping the geographical distribution of Civil Service roles and fostering a more connected and resilient Civil Service.

Programme oversight and control to foster cross-departmental collaboration.

Many interviewees have highlighted the benefits of more robust programme oversight and control to drive efforts across the whole of government. Central oversight on key aspects such as standards, relocation activity and reinforcing departmental accountability facilitates a better coordinated approach, ensuring consistent implementation of PfG objectives across departments and maximising the programme's impact by leveraging collective resources and capabilities. In areas such as workforce and property planning however, departmental autonomy should remain respected, with permanent secretaries leading to ensure collective ownership and buy-in to the objectives as well as adapting any plans to departmental contexts. Effective communication channels for sharing insights and aligning efforts, along with enhanced central and regional resourcing will further unlock programme benefits.

Aligning departmental relocation plans with estate strategies.

There is a need to harmonise estate availability with relocation timelines, particularly in light of other directives such as the 60% office attendance directive, Civil Service headcount caps, and the Plan for London. Potential actions include regular policy alignment that brings together the PfG team, GPA, the People Function in departments, and relevant policy units. Establishing a consolidated planning and reporting system is critical for effectively tracking estate use, relocation status, and workforce adjustments. Adopting flexible estate management solutions, such as modular office layouts and adaptable lease agreements were reflected on as contributing toward futureproofing and efficient use of space. Additionally, initiating pilot projects with robust feedback mechanisms will facilitate the testing and refining of relocation measures.

Enhancing relocation support structures for the workforce.

The disparities in relocation experiences of civil servants underscore the need for a standardised 'PfG Relocation Hub', rather than Departments individually leading relocation activity. This would offer a more consistent, holistic set of support levers, considering a relocation concierge service for local area orientation, templated relocation guide and a dedicated helpline. The hub could also serve as a "centre of expertise" that could disseminate cross-departmental learning and adoption of internal leading practices. Additionally, to reduce delays and enhance transparency, a streamlined application system with a tracking interface for relocation requests could be implemented. These measures would alleviate stress and foster a sense of support throughout the relocation process across departments.

Supporting SCS workforce talent development and mobility.

Interviews suggest that a strategic and unified approach to SCS talent development in the regions is important for enhancing PfG outcomes and increasing the pace of SCS representation. Increasing the promotion of case studies for new SCS roles out of London, and utilising communication channels (e.g., regular PfG-focused forums and workshops) to break some of the myths and perceptions around an SCS career outside of London is crucial for enhancing SCS mobility. A strategic approach will also evaluate how a G6/7 pipeline can be designed in locations, with mobility between departments and utilising locality limited recruitment. Additionally, increasing the frequency of SCS and Ministerial presence in PfG locations, will continue to strengthen the case for prospective relocations. Finally, a stricter technique to remove London as a possible location to hire into may be necessary to ensure departments get on track to achieve their SCS targets and overcome the preference of continued hiring into London.

Promote standardised methodology for accurate reporting of roles relocated.

While the PfG programme maintains its own definition of 'relocation', its decision to accommodate a wide range of interpretations of 'relocation' from a small number of departments has resulted in inconsistent reporting. Although this only accounts for a small proportion of roles relocated a standardised methodology is essential for accurate reporting and trust. Central coordination and monitoring from Cabinet Office, deploying this method consistently with Departments is critical. Further, the creation and mandating the use by Departments of a centralised database or dashboard could enhance the Cabinet Office's current QRT reporting system.

Enhancing culture and placemaking through helping civil servants integrate into local offices and communities.

In addition to continued focus on PfG core quantitative targets, greater emphasis should be placed on culture and placemaking, since a key objective of PfG is to foster thriving, cohesive communities and support regional development. This holistic approach not only considers the physical relocation of roles but also acknowledges the importance of embedding civil servants into the local fabric, encouraging meaningful engagement with local communities, and cultivating a sense of belonging in new locations. Interventions such as dedicated mentorship and community partnership championship (including support for local suppliers) could be established to prevent feelings of isolation and guide new arrivals in navigating local dynamics and forging community engagement with local businesses, education, and civic groups.

Future evaluation and research: multi-year evaluation plan and new research topics

The Places for Growth Programme does not currently have a multi-year evaluation plan, that allows for comprehensive conclusions to be compounded across a series of interim and final assessments. A longer evaluation plan, covering the 2024 to

2027 period for example. would provide confidence that longitudinal impacts that would emerge over longer periods will be fully captured. Additionally, this would allow the impact of the changing policy landscape, such as the 60% directive, to be incorporated and fully evaluated.

Emerging from this evaluation a number of specific topics warrant further research to allow assessment and interventions on PfG policy to be developed. Examples include a review of the thematic campus agenda and its challenges and successes, research to further understand and intervene on SCS reticence to relocate at the pace of other grades, and finally exploring in more granular detail how policymaking can be more reflective of the local communities the PfG.

Systematic data and insight

Several areas of this evaluation suffered from moderate and weak evidence availability, and this was particularly acute for carbon emissions and some of the broader evaluation impacts such as better policy making closer to the community it serves. PfG should ensure it has clear monitoring frameworks for benefits and evaluates and closes data gaps emerging from this report to ensure future research can incorporate and test these insights.

Further refining the ToC

Through this formative evaluation, insights were gathered to develop a holistic view of the PfG programme. The evaluation has identified areas within the ToC that require further precision, such as the desired impact for a modern, geographically diverse, and representative Civil Services, or cleaner and green Civil Service, alongside further quantified targets. This need for further precision underscores the importance of refining and specifying these aspects for a more effective program implementation. This exercise would also provide an opportunity to review the desired quantitative impacts of the programme to conclude whether the programme requires further acceleration of targets, and how it can further intervene on a London workforce that has grown over the course of the programme.

Trade-offs should be considered when deciding whether roles relocated should be in towns or cities

The decision on whether to relocate roles to cities or towns within the PfG programme involves balancing various trade-offs. While cities offer scale, diverse talent pools, and potential for large economic impact, towns provide opportunities for community-focused initiatives, local entrepreneurship, and stronger community bonds. By strategically leveraging the strengths of both urban and rural areas, the programme can achieve balanced regional development and maximise its impact on economic growth and prosperity. When determining whether roles relocated should be in cities or town the PfG programme should consider the following:

Table 8.1: Trade-offs between relocating roles in cities versus towns

Cities	Towns	Insight
Labour Pipeline		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cities tend to have a broader and more secure labour pipeline, offering a diverse talent pool essential for sustained growth of the Civil Service. • Leeds, Manchester, Cardiff, and Bristol have portion of the population holding NVQ level 4 and above qualifications above national averages. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Towns may have a narrower labour pipeline, potentially facing challenges in attracting and retaining skilled workers. • Darlington and Warrington – the towns in the sampled PfG locations - have portion of the population holding NVQ level 4 and above qualifications below national averages. 	<p>Trade-off: Cities offer a broader and more secure labour pipeline, with a diverse talent pool essential for sustained growth. Conversely, towns may face challenges in attracting and retaining skilled workers due to their narrower labour pipelines.</p> <p>Implication: To optimise the PfG programme's impact, targeted strategies are needed to attract and retain skilled professionals in towns, while also leveraging the diverse talent pool in cities to facilitate specialisation and scale for Civil Service growth.</p>
Size		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cities typically boast larger populations and economies, providing scale conducive to large economic impact and growth opportunities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Towns, being smaller, can showcase the effects of initiatives more prominently, such as increased outreach and job creation relative to total employment. • Roles relocated in Darlington account for 1.17% of total employment – highest of sampled PfG locations. 	<p>Trade-off: Cities typically have larger populations and economies, providing scale favourable to large economic impact and growth opportunities. On the other hand, towns, being smaller, can showcase the effects of initiatives more prominently, contributing to vibrant local economies and stronger community bonds.</p> <p>Implication: The programme should consider the trade-off between the scale of impact in cities and the community-focused outcomes in towns when</p>

Cities	Towns	Insight
		determining role relocation destinations.
Levelling Up Impact		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cities, with their larger populations and economies, have the potential to drive levelling up impacts, contributing to regional development and prosperity. • Cities have larger type 1 employment multipliers than towns in sampled PfG locations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Towns, although smaller in scale, can still contribute to levelling up efforts by enabling local growth and addressing specific community needs albeit with smaller employment multipliers. • Darlington and Warrington have lowest employment multiplier among sampled PfG locations. 	<p>Trade-off: While cities have the potential to drive levelling up impacts due to their larger populations and economies, towns can still contribute by enabling local growth and addressing specific community needs.</p> <p>Implication: Leveraging the complementary strengths of both urban and rural areas is important for balanced regional development. By improving the performance of cities, the programme can benefit surrounding towns, enabling mutual growth and prosperity.</p>
Resource Intensity		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cities may already have the resources to enable the recruitment and support of relocated roles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efforts to recruit in smaller local markets, like towns, require higher resource investment 	<p>Trade-off: Facilitating role relocations in cities may be less resource-intensive due to their existing resources for recruitment and support. In contrast, recruiting in smaller local markets like towns requires higher resource investment.</p> <p>Implication: To optimise resource allocation within the programme, careful consideration should be given to the resource intensity of relocating roles to cities versus towns, ensuring efficient use of resources while maximizing impact.</p>

Going forwards the PfG programme should consider the following when determining where roles should be relocated to:

- **Cities are a focal point to drive scale, growth, and expansion of the Civil Service** - The PfG programme should place emphasis on the relocation of roles to cities such as Leeds, Manchester, Cardiff, and Bristol, which exhibit robust labour pipelines and diverse skill sets. These cities offer ample opportunities for the Civil Service to leverage their above-average populations and growing economies for large growth.
- **Cities can ‘pull up’ the performance of towns around them** – The programme should implement regional development initiatives that create collaboration between cities and surrounding towns. The sharing of resources and expertise should be encouraged to uplift the performance of both urban and rural areas, thereby promoting balanced growth across regions. By promoting synergies between cities and towns, the programme can maximise its impact on regional development.
- **Towns can also create meaningful impact** - Recognising the scale and economic impact of cities, resources should be strategically allocated to towns within the PfG programme. Identifying towns with untapped potential and investing in initiatives aimed at addressing their challenges in attracting and retaining skilled workers is important. Through the promotion of local entrepreneurship and community cohesion, towns can contribute meaningfully to the programme's objectives.
- **Long-term sustainability should be considered** - Relocation decisions within the PfG programme should prioritise long-term sustainability considerations. These should include factors such as infrastructure development, environmental impact, and community integration when determining the suitability of relocation destinations. Creating economic growth while safeguarding the well-being and resilience of communities, the programme can achieve sustainable outcomes over time.

9 References

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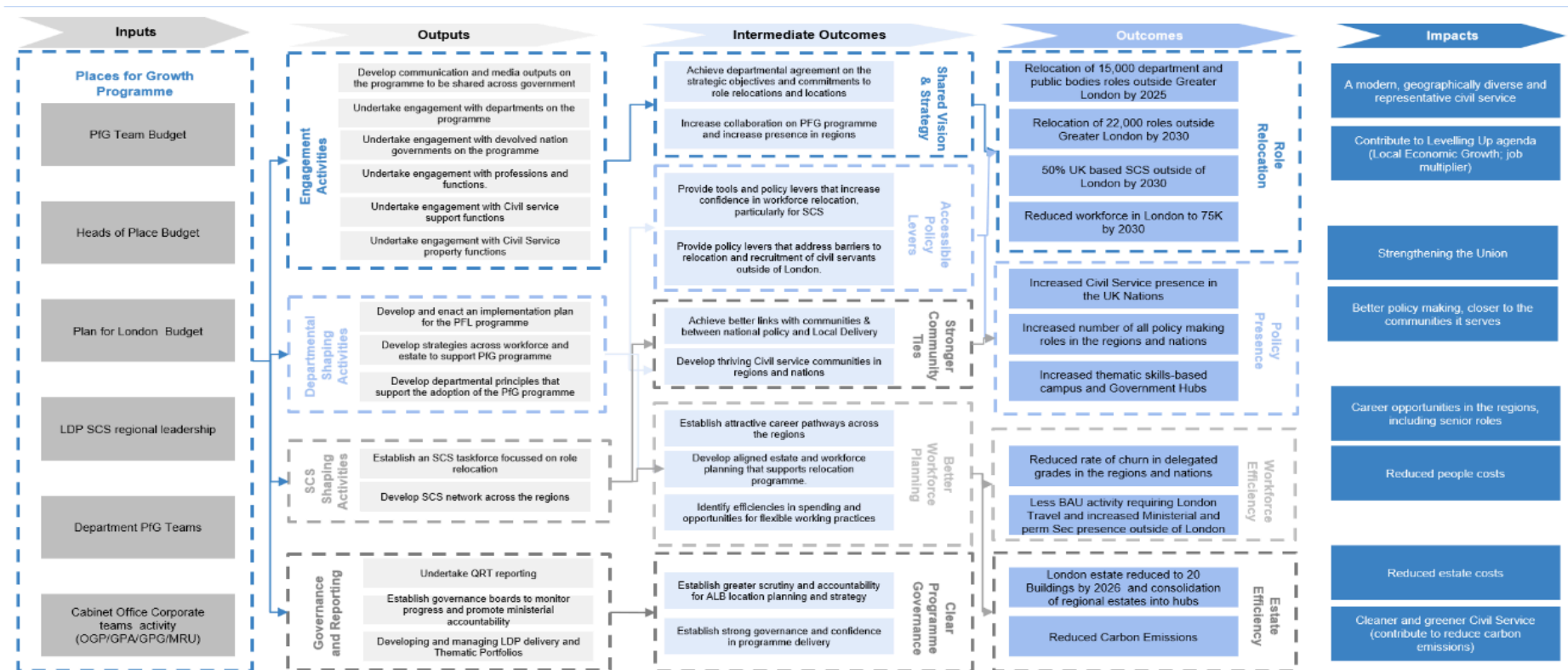
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Appendix A

The initial theory of change was updated by changing the language providing logical groupings across the ToC that help summarise the logic flow of the programme and to illustrate clearer linkages.

Figure A. 1: Theory of change



(Description of Figure A.1) The Theory of Change for the PFG programme, from inputs through outputs, intermediate outcomes, outcomes and impacts. The buckets and specific parts have been referenced throughout this report.

Appendix B

The evaluation questions set out by Cabinet Office were mapped to the theory of change, ensuring outputs, intermediate outcomes, outcomes, and impacts would all be assessed.

Table B. 1: Process evaluation questions mapped to the theory of change

Evaluation Question	ToC Stage	ToC Mapping
During the initial years of PfG delivery, what worked well and for whom (peoples and places)? Why?	Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance and reporting • Engagement activities
	Intermediate Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared vision & strategy • Better workforce planning
During the initial years of PfG delivery, what did not work or work less well than expected? Why?	Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement activities • Departmental shaping activities
	Intermediate Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCS shaping activities • Governance and reporting • Better workforce planning
How did Covid-19 and post-pandemic work arrangements impact London and PfG locations?	Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Departmental shaping activities
Were there any unexpected or unintended issues in the delivery of the intervention?	Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance and reporting • Departmental shaping activities
What lessons can be learned and applied to improve future PfG delivery? What can be improved?	Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SCS shaping activities

	Intermediate Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance and reporting • Shared vision & strategy
How can departments be further supported to develop and deliver their relocation/placemaking programmes?	Intermediate Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared vision & strategy • Better workforce planning

Table B. 2: Impact evaluation questions mapped to the theory of change

Evaluation Question	ToC Stage	ToC Mapping
Did PfG achieve the expected outcomes and to what extent?	Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Role relocation ● Policy presence ● Workforce efficiency ● Estate efficiency
Did PfG achieve the expected impacts and to what extent?	Impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A modern, geographically diverse, and representative Civil Service ● Contributing to Levelling up agenda (local economic growth, job multiplier) ● Strengthening the union ● Better policy making, closer to the community it serves ● Career opportunities in the region, including senior roles ● Reduced people costs ● Reduced estate costs ● Cleaner and green Civil Service (contribute to reduce carbon emissions)
How have the current PfG locations benefited from relocations so far?	Impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Contributing to Levelling up agenda (local economic growth, job multiplier)

Evaluation Question	ToC Stage	ToC Mapping
To what extent have different approaches to relocation impacted in different ways on PfG locations?	Intermediate Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Accessible policy levers
	Impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Contributing to Levelling up agenda (local economic growth, job multiplier) ● Better policy making, closer to the community it serves
Has the intervention resulted in any unintended outcomes?	Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● n/a
<p>What generalisable lessons have we learned about impact?</p> <p>What generalisable lessons have we learned about impact?</p>	Impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A modern, geographically diverse, and representative Civil Service ● Contributing to Levelling up agenda (local economic growth, job multiplier) ● Strengthening the union ● Better policy making, closer to the community it serves ● Career opportunities in the region, including senior roles ● Reduced people costs ● Reduced estate costs ● Cleaner and green Civil Service (contribute to reduce carbon emissions)

Appendix C

For each of the evaluation questions an assessment has been provided along with a rating indicating the strength of the evidence supporting that assessment. These are defined below:

- **Evaluation Question(s)** – outlines the specific question being addressed as part of the formative evaluation.
- **Assessment (Process)** – Based on the evidence, expert judgement used to determine whether the technique involved in PfG delivery worked well, as set out in the theory of change:
 - Worked Well – The technique was effective in PfG implementation and helped to progress towards outcomes and impacts
 - Generally Worked Well – The technique mostly had success in delivering the PfG programme, but encountered some limitation or there is the opportunity for more to be done to fulfil its success.
 - Generally Did Not Work Well – The technique showed some success but largely encountered difficulties and has a notable opportunity to be improved in the future.
 - Did Not Work Well – The technique had serious limitations in supporting PfG implementation and adaptation is required to ensure the technique can become a success.
 - Inconclusive - The available evidence or data does not provide a clear basis for making a definitive assessment.
- **Assessment (Impact)** – Based on the evidence, expert judgement used to determine whether the PfG programme has achieved its objective set out from the theory of change:
 - Achieved – The PfG programme has successfully met the specified objective or outcome.
 - Partially Achieved/On Track – The PfG programme has made some progress towards the objective or outcome, but full achievement has not been realised.
 - Not Achieved/At Risk – The PfG programme has not met the expected objectives or outcomes.
 - Inconclusive – The available evidence or data does not provide a clear basis for making a definitive assessment.
- **Strength of Evidence** – The robustness of the data supporting the assessment was assessed using expert judgement:
 - Strong – The supporting evidence is robust, derived from rigorous research methods, reliable data sources, and/or a substantial sample size.
 - Moderate – The evidence is reasonably reliable, but there may be some limitations in terms of sample size, research methods, or data quality.

- Weak – The evidence is less convincing, possibly due to small sample sizes, methodological issues, or reliance on less reliable data sources.

Appendix D

Evaluation Questions

Evaluation questions developed by Cabinet Office have been reviewed and consideration has been given to the level of difficulty in sourcing evidence or data and complexity to analyse, as summarised below:

- Low Difficulty – Data and evidence already exists or is easily drawn from primary research methods, and analysis viewed straightforward to perform.
- Medium Difficulty – Data and evidence needs to be sourced or newly created; analysis required is viewed as straightforward to perform.
- High Difficulty – Data and evidence needs to be sourced or newly created; analysis required viewed as having high complexity.

Table D. 1: Assessment of evaluation question difficulty

Evaluation Questions Assessment		
	Process	Impact
Low Difficulty	4	4
Medium Difficulty	2	2
High Difficulty	0	1
Total	6	7

When evidence emerged or complexities arose in addressing an Evaluation Question, this was proactively flagged with the Cabinet Office to agree on alternative data points, remedial actions, or whether a specific evaluation question should be moved to a subsequent evaluation phase.

Appendix E

Sampling and representation

The non-random selection of samples in this evaluation may introduce biases, such as the overrepresentation or underrepresentation of certain groups or regions, limiting the generalisability of findings to the entire Civil Service population.

This section shows that the purposively selected sample of 10 PfG locations had a higher concentration of relocated roles than out-of-scope locations while having small overall deviations in grade and departmental proportions when compared to the wider Civil Service.

Analysis of the survey sample, on the other hand, showed a lack of representativeness in grade proportions when compared with the wider Civil Service, while geographic and departmental distribution revealed relatively small deviations.

To mitigate disparities in representation and enhance the credibility of findings, the evaluation triangulated survey data with other qualitative and quantitative data sources, including interviews, focus groups, and administrative data.

General informant profiles from the survey are outlined in Figure E. 1 below:

Figure E. 1: Informant profiles of survey respondents



(Description of Figure E.1) Pie chart of survey respondent informant profiles showing 7% as London, 57% pre-existing non-London, 21% don't know whether their role is relocated, 8% physically relocated, 5% internal churn role, 2% new joiner churn role. Total of 825 respondents.

Note: the survey received a total of 872 responses. However, 47 respondents either rejected the privacy notice or did not respond to a key filter question, and so were excluded from the analysis.

Table E. 1: Office location of survey respondents in comparison with the wider Civil Service

Summary statistics for survey respondents' office location	
Total number of survey respondents	825
Number of locations represented in survey	59
Total number of civil servants in represented survey locations	364,640
Average number of survey respondents per location	14
Average number of civil servants per location	6,180

To evaluate the representativeness of the survey sample in terms of geographical distribution, an analysis was conducted focusing on the comparison between the proportion of survey respondents and the proportion of total civil servants.

The primary metric used in this analysis was the absolute difference in percentage points between the proportion of survey respondents and the proportion of civil servants for each location included in the survey. The average absolute difference was approximately 1.8 percentage points, meaning that the proportion of survey respondents per location did not deviate greatly from the proportion of civil servants. The majority of locations had relatively minor differences between the survey and civil servant proportions.

At the same time, there were variations across certain locations. For example, in areas like Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan and Birmingham, the survey respondents were disproportionately high compared to the wider Civil Service. Such discrepancies highlight areas where the sample may not adequately reflect the Civil Service composition. The variability in representation among different locations indicates a further need for caution in generalising the survey findings.

Table E. 2: Sampled and out-of-scope locations in comparison with the wider Civil Service

	Number of roles relocated	Total number of civil service roles	Percentage of all civil service roles
Sample of 10 selected locations	8,990	98,640	9.1%
Out of Scope locations	6,875	42,125	1.6%

The sampling strategy for the PfG evaluation was developed to ensure efficiency and manageability within short timelines. A selection of 10 PfG locations was made based on their ability to represent the majority of relocated roles across a diverse range of regions, towns, and cities. This selection covered nearly 60% of the total relocations to date as of Q2 2023 and 7 out of the 11 NUTS nations and regions, excluding London.

Table E. 2 above shows that the relocated roles from the sample locations represented 9.1% of all civil service roles in these 10 locations. In contrast, relocated roles from out-of-scope locations accounted for only 1.6% of all civil service roles in those locations. This data indicates a higher concentration of relocated roles in the sampled locations compared to the out-of-scope locations, which affects representativeness of the sample. It is recognised that including the 125 out-of-scope locations, which accounted for the remaining 39.7% of relocations, would have offered additional insights into the PfG programme's effects, particularly in areas with smaller proportions of relocated roles. Future evaluations could, therefore, benefit from a broader analysis that includes these out-of-scope locations.

Table E. 3: Civil Service grades of survey respondents in comparison with the wider Civil Service

Summary statistics for survey respondents' grades	
Total number of survey respondents	825
Number of grades represented in survey	5
Total number of civil servants in represented grades	494,065
Average number of survey respondents per grade	163
Average number of civil servants per grade	98,813

The analysis of the Civil Service grades of survey respondents in comparison with the wider Civil Service reveals certain disparities in representation across different grades.

The survey data, when compared with the overall Civil Service composition, indicates an overrepresentation of SCS, Senior and Higher Executive Officers, and Grades 6 and 7, alongside an underrepresentation of Administrative Officers and Assistants and Executive Officers. For example, Senior and Higher Executive Officers, who constitute 29.9% of the Civil Service, represent a disproportionately high 42.8% of survey respondents. Similarly, individuals in Grades 6 and 7, though only 15.2% of the Civil Service, account for 37.1% of the survey population. The absolute average percentage difference between survey respondent grade proportions and wider Civil Service grade proportions was 19.7 percentage points, indicating a wide deviation and lack of representation.

Table E. 4: Civil Service grades within the sample of 10 selected locations in comparison with the wider Civil Service

Summary statistics for grades represented in sampled locations	
Total number of civil servants in the 10 sampled locations	93,850
Number of grades represented in the 10 sampled locations	4
Total number of civil servants in represented grades	494,065
Average number of civil servants from 10 sampled locations per grade	23,463
Average number of civil servants per grade	123,516

The analysis of Civil Service grades within the evaluation’s sample of 10 selected locations, in comparison with the wider Civil Service, offers insights into the representativeness of this subset relative to the overall civil servant population. The average absolute percentage difference between the proportions of Civil Service grades in the sample and those in the wider Civil Service is approximately 3 percentage points. This metric shows a relatively minor overall deviation of the sample's grade composition from the actual distribution within the wider Civil Service.

Table E. 5: Civil Service departments of survey respondents in comparison with the wider Civil Service

Summary statistics for survey respondents' departments	
Total number of survey respondents	825
Number of departments represented in survey	18
Total number of civil servants in represented departments	455,925
Average number of survey respondents per department	45.8
Average number of civil servants per department	25,329

To assess the departmental representativeness of the survey sample, the analysis compared the departmental distribution of survey respondents with that of the wider Civil Service.

Disparities in representation can be observed in some departments. For instance, the Department of Work & Pensions, which constitutes 19.3% of the Civil Service, is underrepresented in the survey sample with only 1.8% of respondents coming from this department, resulting in an absolute percentage difference of 17.5 percentage points. Similarly, the Home Office, which makes up 9.5% of the Civil Service, has a mere 0.7% representation in the survey, leading to an 8.8 percentage point difference. Despite these disparities, the average absolute percentage difference across all departments was found to be relatively moderate at 4.9 percentage points.

Table E. 6: Civil Service departments in the 10 sampled locations compared to the wider Civil Service

Summary statistics for departments represented in sampled locations	
Total number of civil servants in the 10 sampled locations	87,962
Number of departments represented in the 10 sampled locations	38
Total number of civil servants in represented departments	519,760
Average number of civil servants from the 10 sampled locations per department	2,315
Average number of civil servants per department	13,678

Table E. 6 looks at the departmental representativeness of the sample, comparing the proportion of civil servants in the sample from the 10 selected locations to the total proportion of all civil servants across various departments.

The average percentage difference between the two proportions is 0.67 percentage points, indicating a relatively small overall deviation between the sample and the actual proportions, suggesting that the sample, despite some disparities in representation, does not deviate much on average from the actual distribution of civil servants across departments.

Appendix F

Below are the calculation methodologies used for assessing the monetised benefits and costs of the PfG programme.

i. Monetised Benefits

Financial

Table F. 1: Calculation methodologies for financial monetised benefits

Benefits	Calculation	Key Assumption
People		
Reduction in staffing costs	<p>Staff cost savings have been calculated by comparing the average salary of relocated roles with the average salary for the equivalent level if the role was located in London.</p> <p>The calculation methodology for calculating staff cost savings is summarised below.</p> <p><i>Reduction in staffing costs = Number of roles relocated at PfG salary (FTE) X (Weighted average London salary cost – Weighted average PfG salary cost)</i></p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2-year London weighting held for 20% of roles physically relocated from London. 2. Weighted average salaries are calculated based on the composition of roles by grade in each PfG location.
Estate		
Reduction in running costs Reduction in rental costs	<p>Estate costs savings have been calculated by comparing average costs in terms of rent and running costs per FTE in London and PfG sampled locations.</p> <p>The calculation methodology for calculating estate cost savings is summarised below.</p>	<p><u>Running costs</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Costs based on 2024/25 GPA budget data (assumed year 2024). Costs adjusted for the period 2021 to 2030 using CPI. 2. Weighted average running costs are calculated based on capacity (FTE) of buildings in PfG sampled locations.

Benefits	Calculation	Key Assumption
	<p>Reduction in estate running costs = Number of roles relocated (FTE) X (London estate running costs per FTE – PfG estate running costs per FTE)</p> <p>Reduction in rental costs = Number of roles relocated (FTE) x (London estate rent per FTE – PfG estate rent per FTE)</p>	<p><u>Rental costs</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Costs are based on 2024/25 GPA budget data (assumed year 2024). Costs adjusted for the period 2021 to 2030 using CPI. 2. Weighted average rent costs are calculated based on capacity (FTE) of buildings in PfG sampled locations.

Economic

Table F. 2: Calculation methodologies for economic monetised benefits

Benefits	Calculation	Key Assumption
Employment		
Impact of new jobs:	Local economic benefits have been calculated to capture the economic benefits associated with an uplift of salaries of new PfG staff and staff in the supply chain.	New employment only (80% of roles not physically relocated) into the region.
Direct	The calculation methodology that employed for estimating direct economic impact is summarised below.	<u>Local Displacement</u>
Indirect (multiplier impact)	<p>Direct employment impact (£) = Number of new roles x (PfG salary – average local private sector salary)</p> <p>The indirect employment impacts capture the increase in compensation of employees throughout the supply chain due to higher value jobs being created in PfG locations.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 10% of the roles that are displaced from Private Sector are not filled. <u>London Displacement</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. 20% of roles physically relocated into the region. 3. 10% of roles that are relocated from London are not filled.

Benefits	Calculation	Key Assumption
	<p>Indirect employment impact (£) = (Local public sector type I COE multiplier x direct employment impact) - direct economic impact</p> <p>Displacement is considered for the local private sector of which new hires previous positions in the private sector are not filled.</p> <p>Direct employment impact (£) = 10% x number of new roles x ((PfG salary – average local private sector salary)</p> <p>Indirect employment impact (£) = (Local public sector type I COE multiplier x direct employment impact) - direct economic impact</p> <p>Displacement is also considered for the impact on London whereby Civil Service roles that are relocated from London are not replaced within the London economy.</p> <p>Direct employment impact (£) = ((20% x number of new roles) x London salary) x 10%</p> <p>Indirect employment impact (£) = (Local public sector type I COE multiplier x direct employment impact) - direct economic impact</p>	

ii. Monetised Costs

Financial

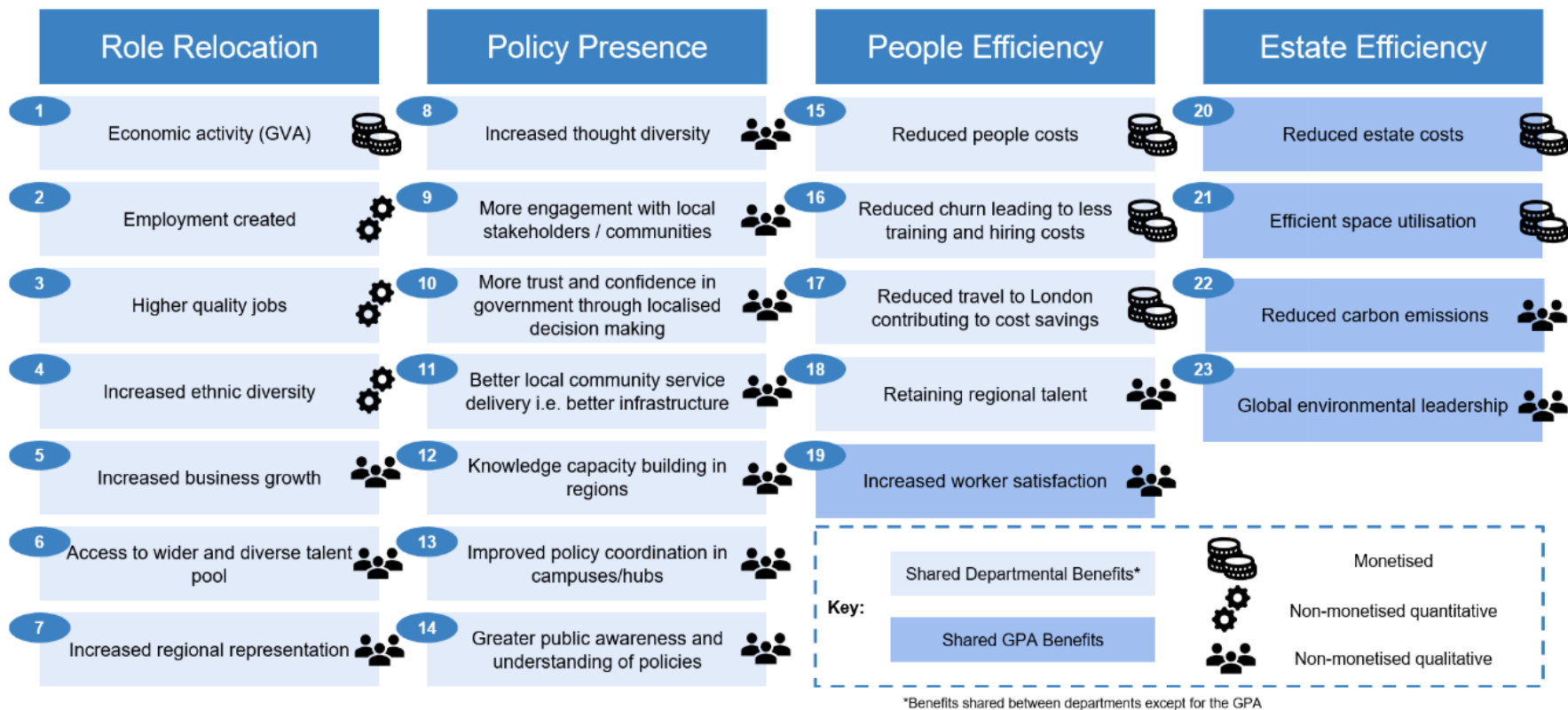
Table F. 3: Calculation methodologies for financial monetised costs

Costs	Calculation	Key Assumption
Programme		
Programme costs	£5.7m budget is evenly split across 2021 to 2023 and therefore from 2023 to 2030	1. Excludes departmental costs for implementation of PfG programme.
People		
Relocation costs Increase in recruitment and training costs	<p><u>Relocation costs:</u></p> <p>Relocation costs have been calculated total expenditure on relocation allowances associated with staff moving from London to PfG locations.</p> <p>Relocation costs (£) = Number of new roles relocated from London x 14,000</p> <p><u>Recruitment and training costs:</u></p> <p>Changes in recruitment and training costs have been calculated to capture an uplift in the cost of recruiting and training new staff hires outside of London relative to in London.</p> <p>Increased recruitment and training costs (£) = Number of roles relocated x % new hires x recruitment and training costs per person x % PfG uplift</p>	<p><u>Relocation costs:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 20% assumption for roles physically relocated from London. All London staff relocating to the regions to receive the maximum £14k relocation expenses allowed for in the relocation policy. <p><u>Recruitment and training costs:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Benchmark for recruitment and training costs based on average figure provided in literature. 10% PfG uplift also applied these costs. <p><u>Costs Excluded</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Refurbishment costs incurred by GPA.

Appendix G

The PfG Theory of Change (ToC) identified 23 individual benefits of which 6 were monetisable, and 16 were non-monetisable benefits. Non-monetised benefits were further distinguished by non-monetised quantitative benefits (numerically measurable but not factored into the benefits-cost ratio calculation) and non-monetised qualitative benefits (purely qualitative in nature and not quantitatively measured).

Figure G. 1: PfG programme benefits



(Description of Figure H.1) PfG programme benefits spanning role relocation, policy presence, people efficiency and estate efficiency.

Benefit Profiles

Benefit Profiles are within the embedded link below:



Reporting frequency

Reporting frequency for these benefits varied depending on their nature and measurability. Monetisable benefits, being quantifiable and financially measurable, were typically reported on an annual basis to track economic and financial performance. On the other hand, non-monetisable benefits, especially qualitative ones, were reported periodically based on qualitative assessments and stakeholder feedback, rather than strict numerical metrics.

This reporting approach ensures a comprehensive understanding of both quantitative and qualitative impacts of the PfG programme over time. Benefits are reported either on a quarterly basis, annual basis, or every three years, depending on the specific nature and measurement requirements of each benefit.

Table G. 1: Benefits to report quarterly

#	Benefit	KPI	Source
2	Employment created	Number of roles relocated	QRT
3	Higher quality jobs	% of G7 and above roles relocated	QRT
7	Increased regional representation	Number of roles relocated by region and nation	QRT
6	Access to wider and diverse talent pool	Number of roles relocated by region and nation	QRT

Table G. 2: Benefits to report annually

#	Benefit	KPI	Source
1	Economic Activity	Local economic benefits (£m)	Benefits methodology
3	Higher quality jobs	Difference in public sector wage compared to private sector wage in PfG locations	Civil Service bulletin data
4	Increased ethnic diversity	% change in share of ethnic diversity in PfG locations compared to civil service average	Civil Service bulletin data
1 2	Knowledge capacity in regions	Churn rate in PfG locations compared to wider civil service churn	Civil Service bulletin data
1 5	Reduced people costs	Annual savings in people costs (£m)	Benefits methodology
1 7	Reduced travel to London contributing to cost savings	Travel expense costs pa	Departments in PfG locations
1 8	Retaining regional talent	Churn rate in PfG locations compared to wider civil service churn	Civil Service bulletin data
2 0	Reduced estate costs	Annual estate savings (£m)	Benefits Methodology
2 1	Efficient space utilisation	FTE per m2 in buildings in PfG locations	GPA / Departments
2 3	Reduced carbon emissions	Annual % change in electricity consumption per FTE in estates	GPA / Departments

#	Benefit	KPI	Source
2 3	Global environmental leadership	Annual % change in electricity consumption per FTE in estates compared to international benchmarks	GPA / Departments

Table G. 3: Benefits to report every evaluation cycle

#	Benefit	KPI	Source
5	Increased business growth	Qualitative local business insights in PfG locations, number of business start-ups	Business survey as per conducted in formative evaluation, ONS data
4	Increased thought diversity	Qualitative insights gathered related to thought diversity	Survey and targeted interviews as conducted in the formative evaluation
9	More engagement with local stakeholders and communities	Qualitative local business insights in PfG locations	Business survey as per conducted in formative evaluation
10	More trust and confidence in government through localised decision making	Qualitative public perception insights	Public perception surveys
11	Better local community service delivery i.e., better infrastructure	Number of local infrastructure development plans and policies implemented	Departments in PfG locations
13	Improved policy coordination in campuses/hubs	Qualitative insights gathered related to policy coordination	Survey and targeted interviews as conducted in the formative evaluation
14	Greater public awareness and understanding of policies	Qualitative insights gathered related to public awareness	Public perception surveys

#	Benefit	KPI	Source
16	Reduced churn leading to less training and hiring costs	Hiring and training costs in PfG regions (<i>to capture as Covid-19 implications subside</i>)	Departments in PfG locations
19	Increased worker satisfaction	Qualitative insights gathered related to worker satisfaction	Survey and targeted interviews as conducted in the formative evaluation

Appendix H

The PfG programme includes design principles used as criteria for selecting locations to relocate civil servants into, and for assisting in delivering the programme locally. The design principles are shown below.

Figure H. 1: Places for Growth design principles

Places for Growth / Beyond Whitehall / Levelling up Design principles



(Description of Figure I.1) PfG design principles, including capabilities, career lifecycle, co-location & clustering, digital, data and technology, transport, workforce, modern workspace, and local engagement