



Ministry
of Justice

The Next Generation of Accredited Offending Behaviour Programmes: Building Choices

Process Evaluation of the Design Test

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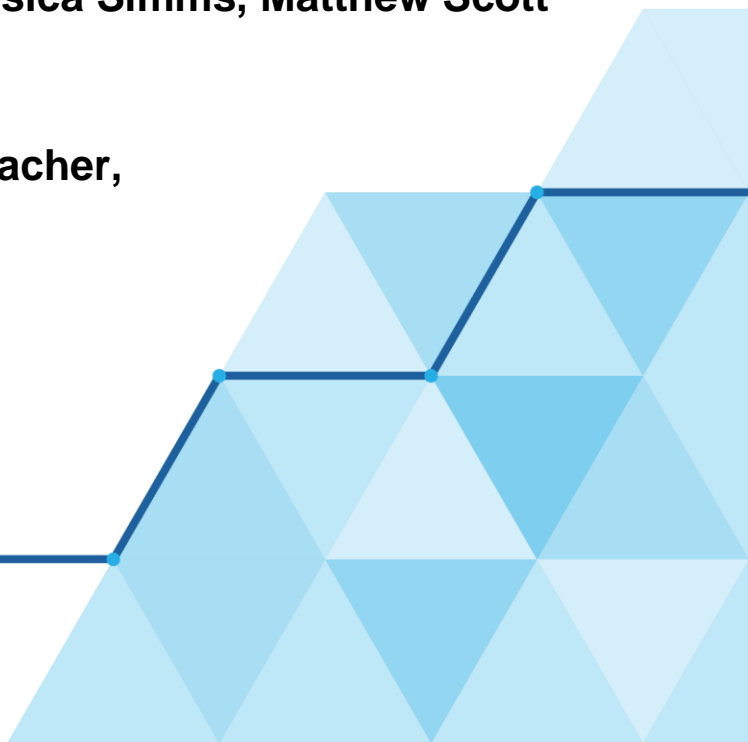
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Ministry of Justice Analytical Series

2025



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First published 2025



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This publication is available for download at <http://www.justice.gov.uk/publications/research-and-analysis/moj>

ISBN 978 1 911691 73 0

Acknowledgements

The authors thank the research participants for providing their feedback without which this evaluation would not be possible. We would also like to thank HMPPS operational staff and Interventions Services for their dedication, enthusiasm and support for implementing the Design Test of Building Choices and supporting the evaluation process. From the Ministry of Justice, we would also like to thank the following colleagues Eleftherios Nomikos, Aiden Mews, Rebecca Hubble, Jakob Kiessling and finally Alana Diamond for oversight. We are also grateful to members of the CSAAP (Correctional Services Accreditation and Advice Panel) who provided advice for this evaluation.

Contents

List of tables

List of figures

Glossary

1. Executive summary	1
1.1 Introduction and aims	1
1.2 Methodology	2
1.3 Limitations and interpretation of findings	3
1.4 Key findings	4
1.5 Conclusion	7
2. Introduction	8
2.1 Background	8
2.2 Building Choices programme design and theory: Overview	10
2.3 Theory of Change	14
3. Evaluation methodology and aims	18
3.1 Overarching methodological approach – theory based evaluation	18
3.2 Qualitative data methodology	19
3.3 Quantitative data methodology	19
3.4 Triangulation of data to understand whether Building Choices showed promise	20
3.5 Ethics	21
3.6 Limitations and interpretation of findings	21
4. Findings	23
4.1 Overall findings – triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data	23
4.2 Assessment and What Works for Me	27
4.3 Training and Delivery Guides	35
4.4 Implementation	37
4.5 Design and Content	44
4.6 Programme outcomes	55
4.7 Changes in Participants	62
5. Conclusion	67
5.1 Key Findings	67
5.2 Lessons learned	69

References	72
Appendix A	76
Responding to the outcomes of the Building Choices Process Study	76
Appendix B	81
Building Choices Theory of Change	81
Appendix C	95
Design Test Sites and Participants	95
Appendix D	98
Methodology	98
Qualitative data methodology	98
Quantitative data methodology	99
Qualitative Interview Sample Sizes	101
Appendix E	102
Participant Risk and Need Assessment Scores	102
Appendix F	103
WAI-SR and Working Alliance	103
Appendix G	105
Success Wheel Measure Quantitative Outputs	105
Appendix H	109
Quality Assurance Data	109
Appendix I	110
Data Triangulation Ratings	110

List of tables

Table 1: Building Choices Theory of Change Programme: Design and Delivery Assumptions	16
Table 2: Building Choices' short term outcomes: data triangulation	24
Table 3: Building Choices mechanisms of change: data triangulation	24
Table 4: Building Choices Theory of Change programme design and delivery assumptions: data triangulation	24
Table 5: Count of risk levels at assessment of programme starters by pathway	28
Table 6: Count of Need levels assessed through the PNI at assessment stage of programme starters by intensity pathway	29
Table 7: Summary of number of Design Test completions and attrition rates	55
Table 8: Change in SWM facilitator scores pre to post programme (distance travelled)	57
Table 9: Mean total HMS scores at each timepoint by cohort and setting	61
Table B1: Building Choices: Key components of Getting Ready	83
Table B2: Building Choices: Key components of 'Getting Started'	84
Table B3: Building Choices: Key components of 'Managing Myself'	85
Table B4: Building Choices: Key components of 'Managing Life's Problems'	85
Table B5: Building Choices: Key components of 'People Around Me'	86
Table B6: Building Choices: Key components of 'Bringing It All Together'	86
Table B7: Approaches and processes expected to support change in programme participants	88
Table C1: Design Test delivery sites and programme participant cohorts	95
Table C2: Demographics of Design Test starters by setting	95
Table C3: Demographics of Design Test completers by setting	96
Table C4: Demographics of Design Test non-completers by setting	96
Table C5: Comparison of Design Test Attrition Rates to sites' 2023/24 National Attrition Rates	97
Table C6: Count of reason for non-completion by Design Test cohort	97
Table D1: Sample sizes (numbers) across sites and cohorts for qualitative interviews (S = staff; PP = programme participants)	101
Table D2: Number of Participant Interviews by Cohort	101

Table F1: Average total programme participant WAI-SR scores	103
Table F2: Average total facilitator WAI-SRT scores	104
Table G1: Equivalent change in 4 domains SWM score from pre to post programme	105
Table G2: Equivalent change in 5 domains SWM score from pre to post programme	105
Table G3: Average programme participant SWM scores by domain	106
Table G4: Average facilitator SWM scores by domain	106
Table G5: Average joint SWM scores by domain	107
Table G6: Average change in participant SWM scores pre to post by domain	107
Table G7: Average change in facilitator SWM scores pre to post by domain	107
Table G8: Average change in joint SWM scores pre to post by domain	108
Table I1 Short term outcomes data triangulation	111
Table I2: Mechanisms of change data triangulation	112
Table I3: Theory of Change assumptions data triangulation	116

List of figures

Figure 1: Pathways for Building Choices	11
Figure 2: Building Choices Theory of Change model (P = pre-programme module in programme activities)	15
Figure 3: Facilitator scores pre and post programme by SWM domain	59
Figure 4: Average HMS score at each data collection timepoint by domain	62
Figure E1: Average PNI domain scores by setting	102

Glossary

AcP – Accredited Programme

DA – Domestic Abuse

E/SARA – E/SARA is the Electronic/Spousal Assault Risk Assessment, a Structured Professional Judgement used as part of the risk of reoffending assessment for Building Choices

EPF – Effective Practice Framework

HMPPS – His Majesty's Prison and Probation Service

HMS – Horizon Motivation Scale

IPV – Intimate Partner Violence

LDC – Learning Disability and Challenges

MoJ – Ministry of Justice

nDelius – National Delius, the management information system using by probation.

Next-Gen AcP – Next Generation of Accredited Programmes

OASys – Offender Assessment System used by HMPPS to measure risks and needs of offenders under supervision

OM – Offender Manager

OMU – Offender Management Unit

PCOSO – people convicted of a sexual offence

PDU – Probation Delivery Unit

PNI – Programme Needs Identifier

PNA – Programme Needs Assessment

POM – Prison Offender Manager

PSR – Pre-Sentence Report

QA – Quality Assurance data (HMPPS)

RNR – Risk-Need-Responsivity

SWM – Success Wheel Measure

WWFM – What Works for Me Meeting

1. Executive summary

1.1 Introduction and aims

This report presents findings from the process evaluation of Building Choices, part of the His Majesty's Prison and Probation Services (HMPPS) Next Generation of Accredited Programmes (Next-Gen AcP). The Next-Gen AcP seeks to reform the current suite of Accredited Offending Behaviour Programmes (AcPs) to deliver a more streamlined and coherent service, supporting front line delivery and realising important benefits across the criminal justice system.

AcPs are cognitive-behavioural interventions designed to target those factors that evidence has demonstrated are associated with offending behaviour. They aim to support people to develop skills that they can apply to manage these factors and lead an offence-free life. They are delivered across prisons and community and are a key part of the rehabilitation offer in HMPPS. The new programme, Building Choices, is designed to address a broad range of common criminogenic needs associated with reoffending and, in keeping with contemporary programme design principles, adopts a strengths-based, person centred, skill focused approach, that enables targeted personalised support to address complex offending histories.

Building Choices consists of group and one-to-one sessions. There is a Moderate Intensity offer which involves 21 group, and five one-to-one sessions. There is also a High Intensity offer, which comprises 46 group sessions plus six one-to-one sessions. The programme is also available for those with Learning Disability and Challenges (LDC).

Building Choices was recommended for accreditation within an initial Design Test phase during 2023 by the Correctional Services Advice and Accreditation Panel (CSAAP, an independent group of experts who provide accreditation recommendations on programmes to HMPPS). This Design Test was intended as a small-scale proof-of-concept of the programme design.

The process evaluation presented in this report is part of a wider multi-phased, multi-method evaluation strategy. The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) commissioned an external independent consortium (TONIC & IPSOS) to conduct the qualitative research and contribute towards the triangulation of data as part of the process evaluation. Findings were presented to HMPPS colleagues in an agile manner during the evaluation to allow design refinements to be made in a timely manner for the next phase of national roll out. See Appendix A for more details on refinements HMPPS have made in response to the findings of the process evaluation.

The overarching aims of the Building Choices Design Test process evaluation were to address the following questions:

1. Is the programme being implemented and delivered as planned/intended?
2. Is the programme reaching the intended target group?
3. Is the programme producing the desired outcomes (based on perceptions)?
4. Does the programme show indicative promise on first order programme outcomes (e.g. distance travelled on the Success Wheel¹)?

1.2 Methodology

The process evaluation sought to understand and evaluate how the Building Choices programme had been implemented and delivered in the context of the initial Design Test phase. Design Test sites included three prison sites and two probation regions in England which offered a range of groups diversified by offence cohort (sexual, violent, intimate partner violence / domestic abuse and other), age (adult and young adults: 18–25), learning ability (including those with recorded LDC) and gender.

The evaluation used a Theory-Based Evaluation approach, which involved mixed methods. This specifically focused on exploring the mechanisms of change (i.e., the factors considered to produce desired outcomes) within the contexts (e.g. prison or probation) of the intervention being delivered. These mechanisms were mapped against the programmes' Theory of Change (ToC; a tool to describe how and why the programme

¹ The Success Wheel is a HMPPS measure designed to assess programme participant progress against the four criminogenic need domains targeted by Building Choices as opportunities for learning skills to lead a constructive, crime-free life. See Appendix B for more information on the Success Wheel.

is expected to bring about the desired change). Qualitative and quantitative data sources were triangulated² and findings were mapped against the Building Choices ToC to assess whether the programme had been implemented as designed. A scoring system was used to determine the strength of evidence, for, mixed or against the programme assumptions, mechanisms of change, and outcomes.

A total of 176 qualitative interviews were conducted with staff (46) and programme participants (64) (some of whom were interviewed more than once) to capture experiences of Building Choices. These interviews were conducted across Building Choices and 'Moving Forward' (defined as post programme support during the Design Test). A test of the new programme assessment process, called the Programme Needs Identifier (PNI), was also conducted in a court in a North Probation Region. Therefore, in addition, 19 probation staff based in courts (court assessors) and court staff were interviewed about their experiences of writing pre-sentence reports for men and women eligible for Building Choices.

1.3 Limitations and interpretation of findings

Process evaluations do not try to establish cause and effect, but instead seek to understand how interventions work in practice, what could be improved and why this might be the case.

The overall number of interviews conducted was sizeable. However, the findings are context-specific and were developed in a unique Design Test environment that was intended to gather initial information and lay the groundwork for responsive learning and adjustments to the programme. Furthermore, the Design Test took place in a small number of delivery sites, and involved self-selecting samples, qualitative methods and a before-after programme participation (uncontrolled) analysis. Therefore, findings cannot be generalised to all Design Test participants, practitioners or wider criminal justice populations (e.g. participants or staff) or sites (prison and community). This is especially the case for women given the small numbers participating in the Design Test and the

² A research strategy which involves the use of multiple data sources to increase the validity and credibility of research findings.

evaluation which meant the programme could not be fully assessed for this group. Given these methodological limitations a degree of caution should be applied when interpreting findings.

1.4 Key findings

Programme participation details are set out below.

- During the Design Test, 78 people started Building Choices. The average (mean) age of these participants was 33 (range 19–71 years of age). The majority were White (77%), with smaller numbers of Black (9%), Asian (8%) and Mixed Race (6%) ethnic groups. Men (96%) made up most of the participants and women (4%) made up the remainder.
- Of the 78 people who started Building Choices across both prison and probation, 53 participants (68%) completed the programme. Levels of non-completion were higher in the community than in prison. The level of attrition across both delivery settings is broadly in line with those recorded for existing AcPs. In general, levels of attrition tend to be naturally higher in community settings due to an increase in challenges, barriers and responsibilities for those outside of a prison setting.

Overall findings are set out below.

- Data suggest that the programme shows promise overall. Multiple sources of data were brought together and scored using a Red/ Amber/ Green (RAG) rating system to assess the strength and weight of evidence against each component of the programme ToC (design and delivery assumptions, mechanisms of change, and outcomes). Most RAG ratings were green or green-amber and there were no red ratings, indicating the programme had performed well.
- There was evidence that the programme was achieving the key short-term outcomes specified in the ToC, as captured through the Success Wheel Measure (SWM). The SWM, which is embedded within the programme to measure participant progress, covers a wide range of behaviours such as being better able to manage thinking, having better insight into emotions and greater openness to learning new skills. This was supported across both qualitative data on

perceptions from staff and participants, and quantitative pre and post programme participation data collected.

There were several programme components that worked well, and these are detailed below.

- The new PNI programme assessment process was reported to be quicker than the 'PNA' (Programme Needs Assessment) used to assess suitability for some of the existing AcPs. The PNI correctly screened who was eligible for the programme in line with the Risk Need and Responsivity (RNR) principles.³
- The 'What Works for Me' (WWFM) meeting is a part of the programme assessment process which focuses on exploring and supporting specific responsivity. This was found to embed responsivity into the programme from the outset and throughout. It also offered an opportunity for programme facilitators to build rapport with programme participants before the programme started.
- The preparatory module of the High Intensity pathway (called 'Getting Ready') was reported to adequately prepare, motivate and engage participants for Building Choices. 'Getting Ready' landed especially well with people with LDC.
- A quantitative measure of motivation to engage with the programme (called the Horizon Motivation Scale: HMS) indicated positive changes in participants' motivation across the programme duration.
- The programme's group size and frequency of sessions was reported to be appropriate in both community and prison settings. The group size allowed for a positive group dynamic to be built, and programme participants described that they felt safe and supported by facilitators.
- Key elements of the programme such as the Success Wheel, the Great Eight⁴ and the focus on skills logs and practices were seen by those interviewed to support the achievement of programme outcomes.

³ RNR is an evidence-based framework for offending behaviour interventions, see Section 2.2 for more detail.

⁴ The Great Eight are a 'toolbox' of tactics that support skills such as problem solving, seeking support and future goals. Collectively, these skills can enhance executive functioning.

- Programme participants reflected that the programme focused on them as individuals and their future, rather than their offence. This was said to support engagement in the programme.
- 'Moving Forward' (defined as post programme support during the Design Test) offered a chance for participants to build relationships with Probation Practitioners and consolidate learning beyond the programme.

There were several areas identified where improvements could be considered for the next phase of delivery. Appendix A outlines the responses to these findings by HMPPS. The key areas for possible improvement are set out below.

- The main Building Choices Delivery Guide was reported, by staff, to be too lengthy to engage with fully. There were also calls for a standalone guide (rather than a companion guide) for delivering the programme to participants with LDC.
- Staff suggested more time was needed to assess participants in the programme selection process (perhaps meeting them more than once); especially to screen people for LDC.
- Staff found the Design Test itself challenging in terms of learning a new programme, delivering it at pace, offering catch up sessions between thrice weekly groups (in the prison setting) and adhering to the Delivery Guide (for quality assurance and integrity purposes).
- Despite being seen as valuable, the preparatory programme module ('Getting Ready') was said to be too lengthy. Staff and programme participants felt its objectives could be achieved in fewer sessions.
- Some programme participants felt that the programme was too future orientated and had lost important concepts such as 'Old Me'.⁵ Relatedly, some facilitators expressed concern over the perceived lack of 'offence specific' work within the programme (namely for people convicted of intimate partner violence or sexual offences). The extent to which such work is truly 'missing' from the programme, as opposed to facilitators 'missing' opportunities to personalise material and tailor learning through offence-specific conversations, is unclear.

⁵ Reflects the thinking, feeling and behaving around or during offending or problematic times.

- Probation Practitioners' understanding of, and capacity to deliver 'Moving Forward' to people attending Building Choices was varied. This could be due to variation in their caseload and capacity to deliver this content.

1.5 Conclusion

Overall, research findings suggest that Building Choices showed promise and was found to be appropriate for those considered suitable for the programme. Findings need to be considered in light of the methodological limitations of the evaluation of this small-scale Design Test.

Building Choices was implemented mostly as intended, targeted at the correct people, and there was promising evidence that it produced the desired changes in programme participants, who were overall found to be motivated and engaged. Working alliance between programme facilitators and programme participants was also reported as being good.

There were some reported areas for possible improvement, for example, around the length of the programme Delivery Guide, training, programme selection, the 'Getting Ready' module and the perceived lack of 'offence-specific' work. Findings were considered by HMPPS in a dynamic way and were used to inform the next phase of programme refinement and implementation (see Appendix A). In general, the findings from this small-scale Design Test of Building Choices are promising.

2. Introduction

2.1 Background

This report presents findings from the process evaluation of the first implementation phase of Building Choices, part of the offer from His Majesty's Prison and Probation Services (HMPPS) Next Generation of Accredited Programmes (Next-Gen AcP).⁶ The Next-Gen AcP seeks to reform HMPPS's current suite of Accredited Offending Behaviour Programmes (AcPs) to deliver a more streamlined and coherent service, supporting front line delivery and realising important benefits across the criminal justice system.

AcPs aim to change the thinking, attitudes and behaviours which may lead people to reoffend. They are informed by international evidence, national evaluation findings along with engagement with front line practitioners, people with lived experience, and senior leaders across the Department. This ensures AcPs are optimally responsive to participants and to the environment within which they are implemented. The Correctional Services Accreditation and Advice Panel (CSAAP)⁷ are an international panel of experts who can attest to the alignment of programmes with the latest international evidence about what works to reduce reoffending. CSAAP provide programme accreditation recommendations to HMPPS.

Next-Gen AcP builds upon the existing HMPPS AcPs offer to deliver the new Building Choices programme. Importantly, Building Choices continues the move towards an individual needs led approach, rather than designing programmes to address specific offence types. This aims to support people to apply their learning more broadly.

In 2023, the CSAAP recommended Building Choices for accreditation to HMPPS for an initial Design Test with the aim of testing the programme design. The roll out of Building Choices has, therefore, been staggered into two phases: 1. the Design Test which was an

⁶ Healthy Sex Programme (HSP) and Healthy Identity Intervention (HII), which are existing accredited programmes, along with Building Choices comprise the Next-Gen AcP.

⁷ For further information on CSAAP see: [Offending behaviour programmes and interventions - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/offending-behaviour-programmes-and-interventions)

initial small-scale ‘proof of concept’ for the programme, and 2. the Early Adopter / national programme delivery phase which will involve staggered roll out across prison and community regions.

This process evaluation report focuses on the first implementation phase, the Design Test. During this phase, Building Choices was delivered in three prison sites and two probation regions in England. The five sites ensured a range of participant groups diversified by offence cohort (sexual, violent, intimate partner violence/ domestic abuse and other), age (adult and young adults: 18–25), learning ability (including those with Learning Disability and Challenges [LDC]) and gender. (See Appendix C, Table C1: Design Test sites and programme participant cohorts).

The process evaluation of Building Choices is part of a wider multi-phased, multi-method evaluation strategy that aims to build evidence on the implementation, delivery and impact of Building Choices as it progresses through its implementation cycle (from Design Test to Early Adopter/national roll out and beyond). These evaluations will help to further develop and iterate the programme design and delivery as it rolls out. They will also provide evidence on the impact of Building Choices and will populate the wider rehabilitation evidence base.

This process evaluation of Building Choices sought to understand how the programme had been implemented (what worked well, what could be improved) and what might influence outcomes within the Design Test phase. The overarching aims of this process evaluation were to address the questions set out below:

1. Is the programme being implemented and delivered as planned/intended?
2. Is the programme reaching the intended target group?
3. Is the programme producing the desired outcomes (based on perceptions)?
4. Does the programme show indicative promise on first order programme outcomes (e.g. distance travelled on the Success Wheel⁸)?

⁸ The Success Wheel is a HMPPS measure designed to assess programme participant progress against key treatment targets.

The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) conducted the evaluation of the Design Test phase of Building Choices on behalf of HMPPS. The also contracted an external independent consortium, TONIC & IPSOS, to conduct the qualitative research and contribute to this report.⁹

Findings were presented to HMPPS colleagues in an agile manner during the process evaluation to enable design refinements for the next phase of roll out. Feedback from other teams within HMPPS also contributed towards making improvements to the programme. See Appendix A for more information on the changes made by HMPPS in response to these evaluation findings.

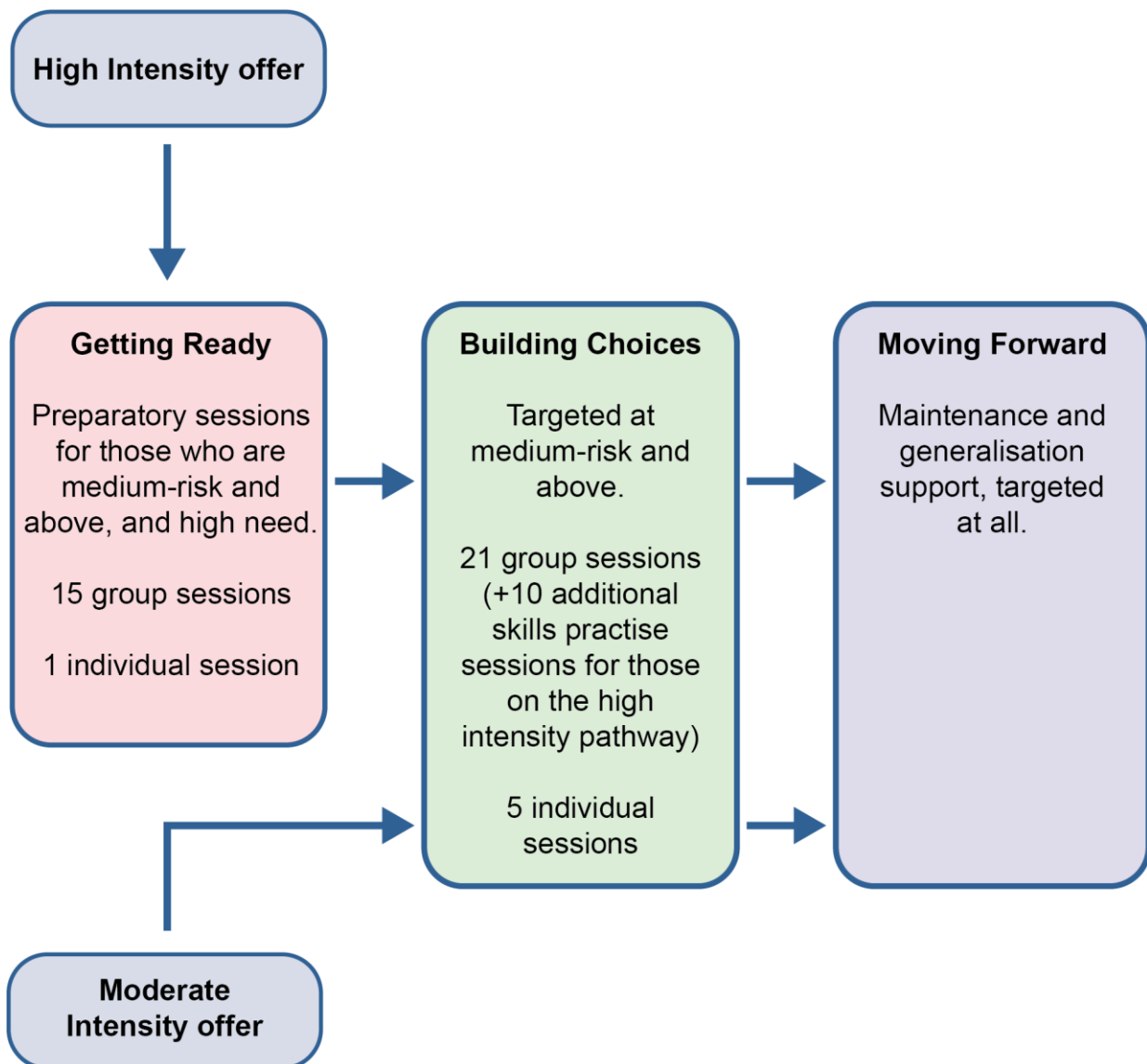
2.2 Building Choices programme design and theory: Overview

Building Choices is a cognitive-behavioural offending behaviour programme, consisting of group and one-to-one sessions. There is a Moderate and High Intensity offer, and the programme is also available for those with LDC. The programme supports skill development in areas of emotion management, healthy thinking, healthy relationships, sense of purpose, and healthy sex where relevant. Building Choices enables participants to develop skills for change and future focused goals that may support them in building a crime-free life.

The Building Choices participant pathways and programme elements as featured in the initial Design Test are set out in Figure 1. Eligibility for the programme is assessed against specific offence-related risk and need criteria (see Appendix B for more information on assessment), followed by a 'What Works for Me' (WWFM) pre-programme meeting in which an individual's responsivity considerations are explored. The final element, called 'Moving Forward', (defined as post programme support during the Design Test) aims to provide support to help consolidate learning.

⁹ The process evaluation was commissioned externally via a full competitive tender process through the Research and Insights Dynamic Purchasing System. For further information see: [Research & Insights - CCS](#)

Figure 1: Pathways for Building Choices



Building Choices – biopsychosocial model

Sitting behind the development of Building Choices is a substantial body of international and domestic evidence (which has also informed the design of previous HMPPS AcPs), along with a comprehensive schedule of consultation and coproduction. Collectively this has contributed to the theoretical underpinnings of Building Choices and provided a foundation for programme design.

Building Choices adopts a biopsychosocial (BPS) model of change (Carter & Mann, 2016; Walton et al., 2017) which builds on the evidence-based Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) framework (Bonta & Andrews, 2017) by integrating theory and learning from strengths

based approaches, desistance research and gender responsivity (Maruna, 2001; Ward, 2002; Bloom et al., 2002, 2005; Covington & Bloom, 2007; Rapp et al., 2006; Hubbard & Matthews, 2017; Maruna & Mann, 2019).

The BPS model comprises two parts. The first focuses on understanding human behaviour including harmful tendencies. The BPS model explains how human behaviour is shaped by biological factors, learning processes and social and cultural contexts. For some people these influences lead to the development of behaviours or strategies which can be considered as criminogenic (i.e., associated with offending) and other harmful behaviour.

The second part of the BPS model outlines six organising principles for programme design that support people towards change, and these are set out below.

The **first principle is the Risk Principle**. This principle concerns who to target based on an individual's likelihood of reoffending. Risk should be matched to the 'intensity' of services. The most intensive services should be reserved for those of highest risk (Wormith & Zidenberg, 2018). This is operationalised in Building Choices via the Moderate Intensity and High Intensity offers (see Figure 1).

Principle Two reflects the responsivity principle of RNR, building an understanding of specific responsivity by describing how a person's biopsychosocial circumstances influence their ability to engage and learn. With that in mind Principle Two includes methods that are accessible and sensitive to specific responsivity needs including cognitive abilities, adversity and trauma experience, neurodiversity and personal circumstances. As such, Building Choices integrates a range of methods to respond to specific needs, help stimulate curiosity in change, respond to the impacts of trauma by adopting a trauma informed approach, appealing to different learning styles and different brains and person-centred plans for supporting participants through their programme journey (WWFM).

Principle Three-Five unpack the **Need principle** of RNR into three parts, which sets out how Building Choices addresses criminogenic needs and describes how a range of cognitive-behavioural processes support change.

- The first part of the model – the biopsychosocial explanation of criminogenic need – gives the basis for focusing on strengthening a participant’s biological, psychological and social resources for change by understanding and targeting why needs manifest in the first place (namely through people’s unique biopsychosocial circumstances). Building Choices uses a range of evidence-based cognitive behavioural methods that aim to target change processes at biological, psychological and social levels.
- Building Choices targets the criminogenic needs associated with reoffending via modules which target self-management, problem solving and relationships. Attitudes are addressed throughout via increased insight, reframing thoughts or relationships with thinking and behaviour options.

The **sixth principle** focuses on strengthening participants’ intention to move away from offending by incorporating strengths based, desistance informed approaches (Maruna, 2001; Ward, 2002; Rapp et al., 2006) and supporting maintenance and generalisation opportunities (‘Moving Forward’).

Using this BPS model, Building Choices aims to enhance a participant’s capacity to desist through a future orientated, strengths based, trauma informed, skills focused approach. Building Choices provides a structured opportunity to learn, strengthen and practice skills and behaviours, targeting areas of common criminogenic need without defining or limiting what participants can address by focusing on offence labels. This does not equate to a one size fits all approach. Instead, a needs-led approach enables participants to personalise according to criminogenic needs by considering how areas apply specifically to themselves and what skills will personally be important for them to develop. Supporting people to strengthen skills aims to provide choice and an ability to lead a non-offending life consistent with what is important to them.

2.3 Theory of Change

A Theory of Change (ToC) is an evaluation tool that captures the theory of how an intervention is expected to work, setting out the steps involved in achieving the intended outcomes. It consolidates a shared vision for the intervention and provides a framework for evaluation.

The Building Choices ToC (Figure 2) describes: the activities planned to take place as part of programme delivery and implementation; the mechanisms of change for participants and how these are intended to translate into outcomes and impacts. The programme's design and delivery assumptions include statements about how the programme should operate under ideal circumstances (see Table 1).

The ToC includes the Success Wheel Measure (SWM) and the Horizon Motivation Scale (HMS) tools, which are embedded within the programme to enable the monitoring of participants' progress through Building Choices. Additional information on the Building Choices ToC can be found in Appendix B. This includes descriptions of the programme assessment, each programme module and the cognitive-behavioural methods used.

Figure 2: Building Choices Theory of Change model (P = pre-programme module in programme activities)

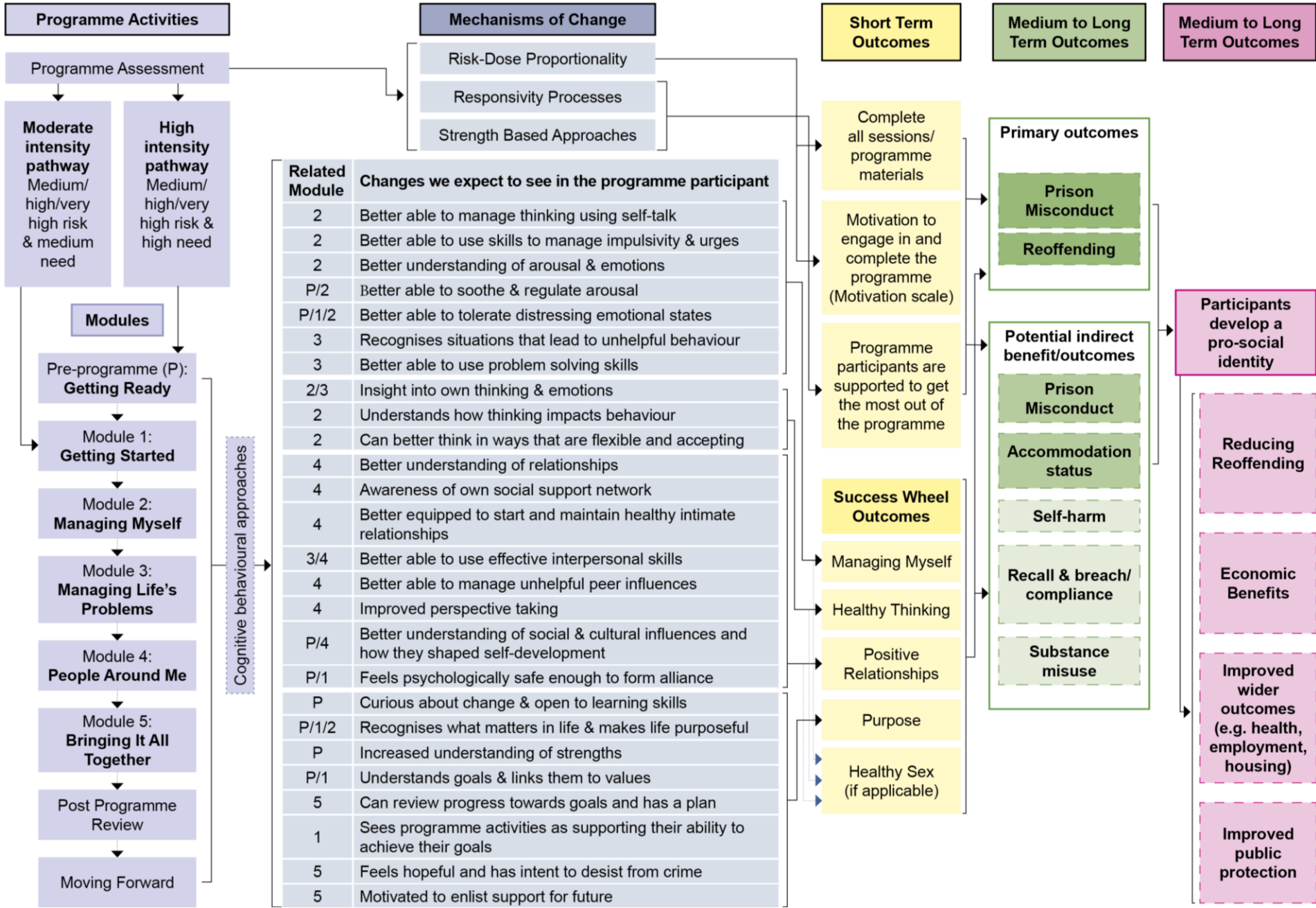


Table 1: Building Choices Theory of Change Programme: Design and Delivery Assumptions

Category	Assumptions
Design	Building Choices is designed to be inclusive of all protected characteristics of programme participants (intersectionality).
	Building Choices will be appropriate for all offence types (criminogenic needs associated with the offence types and tailored conversations).
	Building Choices will be appropriate for programme participants in custody or community settings.
	Building Choices programme design is underpinned by well evidenced theories and principles of effective rehabilitation (e.g. risk need responsivity, biopsychosocial model, desistance theory) which assume programme participants can change and desistance from crime is possible.
Training	Facilitators will be appropriately trained in how to deliver Building Choices as intended.
Assessment	All programme participants will be appropriately selected in line with the eligibility criteria for their pathway.
	Staff in custody and community understand the assessment criteria and use the actuarial risk tools appropriately.
Implementation	Programme participants receive the correct number of sessions in the correct sequence for their pathway.
	Staff will understand individual's identified strengths, needs and areas for support to effectively deliver Building Choices in a tailored/individualised manner for programme participants.
	Facilitators will deliver the programme as intended, after they have been trained to do so.
	Facilitators will develop good working alliance with programme participants.
	Supervision will be of a high standard, in line with training and guidance in the management manuals.
	Session monitoring will be of a high standard, in line with training and guidance in the management manuals.
	All programme participants sign the conditions of success (see Appendix B). Continuing commitment to and achievement of these is monitored throughout the programme, with use of Supportive Authority to explore any specific breaches.

Category	Assumptions
Wider Organisation	Facilitators will have enough time to plan and prep for delivery of each session and module and debrief each session.
	Facilitators are offered appropriate support and development, comprising of the recommended rates of group and individual supervision, session monitoring feedback and counselling where appropriate.
	The wider organisations (prison or probation) will take ownership and accountability and provide the support (resources, staffing, finances, infrastructure, post programme) required to deliver Building Choices as intended.
	The prison rehabilitation culture is conducive in supporting programme participants to apply the skills in the environmental delivery context.

3. Evaluation methodology and aims

3.1 Overarching methodological approach – theory based evaluation

A process evaluation seeks to understand what worked well, what could be improved, and what might influence the outcomes of an intervention. For this evaluation a Theory-Based process evaluation methodology was used, which combined a ToC and drew on some of the concepts from Pawson and Tilley's (1997) Realist Evaluation approach. A mixed-methods, multi-site case study design (Yin, 2003, Weston et al., 2022) was used in combination with this approach.

The Theory-Based approach specifically focused on exploring mechanisms of change (i.e., what is considered to bring about changes to produce desired outcomes) within the contexts (e.g. prison or probation) of the intervention being delivered and different cohorts of interest. See Table C1, Appendix C for a full list of cohorts and Design Test sites.

The multi-site case study approach involved bringing together semi-structured qualitative interviews, and quantitative data from the Working Alliance Inventory (WAI-SR; Tatman & Love, 2010¹⁰; Munder et al., 2010), SWM, HMS, Management Information (MI; such as programme data on completions, assessment etc) and HMPPS Quality Assurance (QA) data. The entirety of this data was then triangulated using a bespoke scoring system to determine the strength and weight of the findings across the Building Choices ToC (see Section 3.4 Triangulation of data). For quantitative data, where sample sizes were sufficient, analysis and findings were provided for the different settings (prison and community), as well as across each of the five Design Test sites. For the qualitative components of the evaluation, due to small sample sizes, findings are aggregated across sites to provide extra anonymity to staff (i.e. quotes only indicate setting: community or prison). Findings which highlight something of note about a specific cohort or setting are

¹⁰ The WAI-SR (Working Alliance Inventory – Short Revised) is a self-completion questionnaire, used to measure the level of therapeutic alliance between programme participants and facilitators. The WAI-SR (T) is the version that facilitators complete on each programme participant.

included, but the small sample size limits how far conclusions may be drawn for specific cohorts (for example, see Appendix I, tables I1–I3, columns ‘reason for RAG rating’). Full details of the methodology can be found in Appendix D.

3.2 Qualitative data methodology

Research staff from TONIC and IPSOS conducted semi-structured interviews with programme participants, programme facilitators, Treatment Managers, and Programme Managers¹¹ across all five Design Test sites.

The main Design Test evaluation involved 176 interviews with 87 staff and 89 programme participants. This related to 46 staff members and 64 programme participants (which included 2 women) as many were interviewed more than once across key time points (after WWFM, ‘Getting Ready’ and after the end of Building Choices).

A test of the new Programme Needs Identifier (PNI), an assessment process used to allocate people to Building Choices, was conducted in a court in the North Probation Region. Therefore, an additional 19 probation staff based in courts (court assessors) and court staff were interviewed about their experiences of writing pre-sentence reports for men and women eligible for Building Choices.

Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was applied to the qualitative data in line with Template Analysis (King, 2004). Full details of the methodology can be found in Appendix D.

3.3 Quantitative data methodology

Building Choices Treatment Returns, containing programme assessment scores and programme outcomes, were completed by programme facilitators and submitted monthly to the MoJ. MI data was collated throughout the Design Test from prison and community administrative databases, including OASys, NDelius, and the Effective Proposal Framework (EPF) tool. Data extracts from these systems were reported in the Design Test

¹¹ Programme Managers and Treatment Managers are responsible for a range of tasks that enable the operational delivery and integrity of AcPs in line with HMPPS’ Intervention Service’s guidance in each site or region. Facilitators are responsible for delivering AcPs in line with the core competency framework and programme delivery guides

Evaluation Dashboard, which was used internally to monitor delivery and provide continuous feedback.

MI data was analysed using descriptive statistics. Analysis of the SWM and HMS data involved using inferential statistics to assess whether any changes were not due to chance (i.e. statistically significant). See Appendix D for further details.

3.4 Triangulation of data to understand whether Building Choices showed promise

A range of quantitative and qualitative data sources were brought together (triangulated) across the ToC to help understand what worked well and what might not have worked so well in the intervention (Building Choices) involving different contexts (custody and community). This was to address the overarching aim of this phase of evaluation, specifically: “Does the programme show promise?”

Several workshops were held with researchers from TONIC/IPSOS, the MoJ Building Choices Evaluation Team and the HMPPS AcP Quality Assurance (QA) team, to evaluate the data. A consolidated ToC spreadsheet was developed, and each aspect of the ToC was considered in light of supporting evidence from a range of data sources (i.e. qualitative interviews, SWM, HMS, WAI-SR & T, MI data and QA data). For further information about HMPPS’ AcP QA data see Appendix H.

A RAG rating system (Campbell et al., 2020) was used to rate the strength of evidence for each data source across the outcomes, mechanisms of change, design and delivery assumptions in the ToC; **Red:** evidence against, **Amber:** mixed evidence, **Green:** evidence for, **None:** insufficient evidence, **N/A:** data source not relevant. In addition, a scale from 1–5 was used, affording consideration to the **strength** of this evidence or confidence in the evidence, for example, the volume of data in the interviews (e.g. quotes). A score of ‘Green’ ‘5’ for an outcome would therefore indicate a large volume of supporting evidence which raters were confident in. An overall RAG rating system with more detail was then devised to look across all the different data sources and determine an overall score for each short-term outcome, mechanism of change and assumption in the ToC

(Campbell et al., 2020). See Section 4.1 and Appendix I for further information on data triangulation.

3.5 Ethics

The research followed ethical research guidelines (Government Social Research, 2021; Oates et al., 2021). The MoJ Government Social Research Ethics Advisory Group provided guidance on the research ethics and the CSAAP scrutinised the research proposal. A risk of harm (safeguarding) register to escalate any issues that might arise during the research was put in place. Researchers were trained and experienced and had the necessary security vetting required for working with those in prison and on probation (including those in high secure prisons) who can present with complex issues such as mental health, LDC and substance misuse.

3.6 Limitations and interpretation of findings

The qualitative research interviews provide a range of experiences, from a self-selecting sample and, as such, findings are not considered generalisable to wider populations (i.e. to other cohorts or sites) and may not be representative of all views. Results may be affected by those who agreed to engage, the experience levels of the facilitators and the specific sites involved in the Design Test.

Some of the findings may also have arisen as a unique consequence of the Design Test itself rather than as issues that will affect the programme in a 'business as usual' context. Where relevant, this is indicated.

There were specific challenges in recruiting participants in the community which aligns with general engagement and attrition for people accessing programmes in that setting. This was particularly the case for the female cohort where the first group did not continue after the WWFM and a second group was subsequently set up. Only two interviews were therefore conducted with women.

In terms of the quantitative data, it should be noted that the Design Test involved only a small number of individuals (out of the entire prison or community population), limiting the conclusions that can be drawn from the analysis. As such, these findings may not be

representative of the wider population of people suitable for referral to Building Choices or those on current AcPs referral and allocation lists.

It is also important to note that the SWM and HMS analysis is an uncontrolled before-after study using pre-and-post programme measurements for individuals. Any change in scores could be due to factors other than Building Choices and, therefore, cannot be attributed directly to the programme. In addition, whilst the SWM has been validated as measuring clinical change in line with a well-established scale for the people convicted of sexual offences (PCOSO) (Elliott & Hambly, 2023), it should be noted that it has not been validated for those with other types of proven offences.

4. Findings

This section includes findings from qualitative interviews with staff and programme participants within the Design Test sites. It also sets out quantitative results from analysis of programme participant characteristics, completion and progress against treatment targets.

The findings are reported in accordance with the programme structure and journey of the participant (rather than thematically). The section starts with the overall findings drawn from triangulating the data across all the qualitative and quantitative data sources available. It then goes on to include sections on assessment; training and Delivery Guides; implementation; design and content; programme outcomes (programme completion, SWM, HMS) and qualitative findings on changes in participants. See Appendix A for information on the changes made by HMPPS in response to these evaluation findings.

4.1 Overall findings – triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data

Summary: Overall, triangulating data across a range of qualitative and quantitative sources, the evidence suggests that Building Choices is a promising offending behaviour programme.

The majority of RAG ratings were Green or Green-Amber across the programme design and delivery assumptions, mechanisms and outcomes, indicating that Building Choices in the Design Test sites was performing well.

There was general consistency in the overall RAG ratings of the strength of evidence across the different data sources for programme design and delivery assumptions, mechanisms and outcomes within the ToC. Out of 27 sub-categories, 16 were rated Green or Green/Amber and 10 rated Amber. There were no Red ratings.¹² In conclusion, this

¹² One was not possible to score (see Table 4)

indicates that Building Choices shows promise in all areas tested and supports the overarching assumption the programme is broadly suitable for people based in prison and community. Below are summarised tables with the RAG ratings included. See Tables I1–I3 in Appendix I for full details of each element and the rationale for each rating.

Table 2: Building Choices’ short term outcomes: data triangulation

Short term outcomes	RAG (Strength of evidence)
Participants complete all sessions/programme materials	Green/Amber (Moderate)
Participants have motivation to engage in and complete the programme	Green/Amber (Moderate)
Programme participants are supported to get the most out of the programme	Amber (Moderate)

Table 3: Building Choices mechanisms of change: data triangulation

Mechanism of change element	RAG
Managing Myself	Green/Amber (Moderate)
Healthy Thinking	Green/Amber (Moderate)
Positive Relationships	Amber (Moderate)
Sense of Purpose	Green/Amber (Moderate)
Healthy Sex	Green (Low)
Overall Success Wheel	Green/Amber (*Moderate)

Table 4: Building Choices Theory of Change programme design and delivery assumptions: data triangulation

Theory of Change assumption		RAG
Design	Inclusive of all protected characteristics.	Green/Amber (Moderate)
	Appropriate for all offence types	Amber (Moderate)
	Appropriate for prison or community settings.	Green/Amber (Moderate)
	Underpinned by well evidenced theories and principles of effective rehabilitation.	Methodology not specifically designed to test individual theories
Training	Facilitators will be appropriately trained.	Green/Amber (High)

Theory of Change assumption		RAG
Assessment	Programme participants appropriately selected in line with the eligibility criteria.	Amber (Moderate)
	Staff understand the assessment criteria and apply appropriately	Green (Moderate)
Implementation	Programme participants receive the correct sessions/ correct order	Green/Amber (Moderate)
	Responsivity Processes & Strength Based Approaches	Green/Amber (Moderate)
	Facilitators will deliver the programme as intended.	Amber (Moderate)
	Good Working Alliance between facilitators and participants	Green/Amber (Moderate)
	High standard of staff supervision	Amber (Moderate)
	High standard of session monitoring	Amber (Moderate)
	All programme participants sign the conditions of success.	Green/Amber (Moderate)
Wider Organisation	Facilitators will have enough time to plan and prep for delivery of each session and module and debrief each session.	Amber (Moderate)
	Facilitators are offered appropriate support and development.	Amber (Moderate)
	The wider organisations will take ownership and accountability and provide the support required.	Green/Amber (Low)
	Rehabilitation culture supports programme participants apply the skills learned.	Amber (Low)

The short term outcomes, mechanisms of change, design and training were mostly green – green/amber ratings. As evident in Tables 2–4, amber ratings were concentrated in the wider organisation and implementation sections.

Further development and iteration based on findings presented in this report, including those related to IPV, domestic abuse (DA), PCOSO, young male adults and people with LDC, would improve the relevance and suitability of Building Choices for these cohorts.

However, more research would need to be conducted to understand the impact of any iterations or developments to the programme. Only partial data on a women's community-based cohort was included as the first women's group was cancelled due to attrition and just two participants participated in the research when it was reinstated. Further research is therefore required on a women's community and prison-based cohort.

i. Programme participant demographics

A total of 78 people started Building Choices during the Design Test. The demographic characteristics of this group are set out below. See Appendix C for further detail.

- The average (mean) age of all participants was 33 (range 19–71) and varied across Design Test sites. Participants at Site Three (prison, Young Offender Institution) had the youngest average age of 21, compared to Site One (prison) with the oldest average age at 52. See Figure C1 for additional information on sites.
- Violence against the person was the most prevalent primary offence category and Sexual Offences the second most prevalent.
- The majority of participants were White (77%) whilst 23% were from ethnic minority backgrounds (see Tables C2, C3 and C4).
- Men (96%) made up most of the programme starters and women (4%) made up the remainder.¹³

¹³ A further two women started Building Choices after the Design Test and were subsequently interviewed. As this took place outside of the Design Test, they have not been included in the programme participant demographics or outcome measures.

4.2 Assessment and What Works for Me

Summary: The new PNI (Programme Needs Identifier) forms the core part of the eligibility assessment process for Building Choices, drawing on existing OASys data to assess the offending-related risks and needs of participants.¹⁴ The PNI was reported by staff to be more efficient than a previous assessment, the Programme Needs Assessment (PNA). However, facilitators remarked on the potential for the PNI to miss important information about programme participants if their OASys assessment was out of date.

A new process, called the 'What Works for Me' meeting, focused on exploring and supporting specific responsivity. It was viewed as a valuable approach in identifying responsivity needs and building rapport between participants and staff ahead of the programme. There was some suggestion that participants should be met more than once before the programme to effectively detect learning needs (akin to the previous clinical interview process). For an overview of the assessment process, see Appendix B.

i. Risk scores

Actuarial risk assessment instruments are used to estimate the risk of reoffending upon release from prison or non-custodial sentence. They form part of the risk assessment in the referral process for Building Choices and are part of the eligibility criteria for the existing suite of AcPs. An individual can meet the Medium Risk of reoffending requirement for Building Choices by reaching the risk threshold on any one of such instruments¹⁵ and need to be assessed as Medium Risk or higher of reoffending to be eligible for a programme.

The risk criteria were applied correctly to the risk scores at referral. Table 5 shows the risk levels of all those who started on Moderate Intensity and High Intensity groups of Building Choices. All but one programme starter met the risk requirements. This outlier

¹⁴ Offender Assessment System (OASys) is used routinely to assess offending-related risks and needs for those in prison and on probation.

¹⁵ Any of the following are needed to meet the Medium Risk threshold: OGRS: 50+, OSP/C: Medium or Above, OSP/I: High, OVP: Medium or Above, SNSV: 1%+, ESARA/SARA: Medium or Above.

was categorised as Low Risk and therefore did not meet the minimum risk level requirement needed to be eligible. This was due to the individual having their risk scores downgraded between referral and starting the programme, from Medium to Low.

Table 5: Count of risk levels at assessment of programme starters by pathway

Participant Risk Level	Started a Moderate Intensity Group		Started a High Intensity Group	
	Prison	Community	Prison	Community
High Risk	2	24	15	N/A
Medium Risk	14	17	5	0
Low Risk	0	1	0	0
Not Applicable	0	0	0	0

Source: Treatment Returns (n=78)

ii. PNI Assessment

A central part of the eligibility criteria for Building Choices was the newly developed PNI (Programme Needs Identifier) which informs programme eligibility and allocation decisions. The PNI assesses level of criminogenic need using existing OASys offending-related risk and needs data.

All participants, who started the programme, met the Building Choices eligibility need thresholds as assessed by the PNI. Table 6 outlines the criminogenic need levels of Building Choices participants as assessed through the PNI (Figure E1 in Appendix E provides more information on PNI scores by setting). Participants were required to be assessed as Medium Need or higher to be eligible for a Moderate Intensity group and at least High Need for a High Intensity group on the PNI.

Every participant on a High Intensity group met the High Need criteria. Of the 58 allocated to a Moderate Intensity group, 50 (86%) were assessed as Medium Need. The remaining eight were at community sites. Five of them were assessed as High Need,¹⁶ while a further three were assessed as Low Need. These three had a Medium or higher ESARA/SARA¹⁷

¹⁶ No High Intensity groups were run in the community.

¹⁷ The E/SARA is the Electronic/Spousal Assault Risk Assessment, a Structured Professional Judgement which uses static and dynamic risk factors for assessing and managing domestic abuse and stalking offenders. It is used as part of the risk of reoffending assessment for Building Choices.

rating, which made them eligible to receive Building Choices.¹⁸ Therefore, the assessment criteria were applied correctly and were used effectively to direct participants to the correct intensity pathway or identify them as non-suitable for the programme.

Table 6: Count of Need levels assessed through the PNI at assessment stage of programme starters by intensity pathway

Participant Need Level	Started a Moderate Intensity Group	Started a High Intensity Group
High Need	5	20
Medium Need	50	0
Low Need	3	0
Not Applicable	0	0

Source: Treatment Returns (n=78)

iii. Referral and assessment process

Building Choices starts were defined as progression past the WWFM pre-programme meeting to the first session of the programme. Staff at the Design Test sites mostly turned to their waitlists for existing programmes to recruit participants. Of the 78 that started, 11 participants (14%) were not listed as having been on a waitlist for a current AcP. There was no recorded change in dose or intensity pathway across programmes (i.e., no one on a High Intensity AcP waitlist participated in the Moderate Intensity Building Choices pathway or vice-versa).

The Building Choices referral process (from PNI onwards) was found to move at a quicker pace in the community sites than the prison sites included in the Design Test

iv. Views on the PNI (Programme Needs Identifier)

The PNI was viewed positively by all staff who participated in the process evaluation, across all Design Test sites. Many staff reported it was quicker to use than the former PNA,¹⁹ which was welcome in the context of their current workloads.

¹⁸ The ESARA indicates a breadth of criminogenic need related to Intimate Partner Violence and Domestic Abuse even where the PNI score is lower.

¹⁹The PNI replaces the PNA which was a structured assessment process used in a select number of existing AcPs to assess actuarial risk, criminogenic needs, pro-social skills and strengths in these areas, as well as personal responsivity circumstances.

“The fact we’ve got a much more streamlined process for the PNI is a lot better and it’s very quick to complete.” **[Staff, prison]**

However, the effectiveness and suitability of the PNI recommendation was reliant on the quality of the OASys data contributing to it. Across both community and prison sites, several staff and programme participants reflected that there were instances when the required updates to OASys were exceeding the recommended time frames²⁰ and therefore were said to potentially impact the reliability and accuracy of the PNI.

For cases that met the criteria, staff indicated a desire to host a multidisciplinary conversation or meeting once the PNI was completed. This would facilitate a discussion for professionals who knew the programme participant (such as prison officers, Probation Practitioners, psychology teams or healthcare), to consider how the individual could best be supported through an AcP.

In the community, staff interviewed reported that some individuals were screened as suitable for a High Intensity group. As the High Intensity pathway is only offered in prison, these participants progressed to the Moderate Intensity pathway. This commissioning of programmes (i.e. only Moderate Intensity) in community regions is consistent with the previous position of HMPPS, therefore representing a ‘like-for-like’ approach. The High Intensity group of Building Choices is lengthier (with an additional 25 group sessions) and some people on probation may not have enough time on their order to complete it.

Finally, some staff across prison and community felt that the PNI risk and need thresholds for Building Choices were higher than for some of the current suite of programmes (for example Kaizen, which targets general, domestically and sexually violent individuals who are at high risk of reoffending).

Court assessment pilot

Court probation staff conducting assessments for Building Choices (Court assessors) felt that the assessment process was efficiently identifying the right

²⁰ The OASys completion responsibilities include the following for appropriately timed updates: **Determinate sentence with over 2 years to serve:** Prison Offender Manager (POM) to update OASys every 2 years and/or prior to handover to COM. **Indeterminate sentence:** POM to update every 3 years and/or prior to handover to COM.

people for the programme. A pilot was conducted to evaluate the new assessment for Building Choices in court. This involved the use of the PNI in court at one probation region using the EPF data system.

Qualitative interviews with Probation Practitioners and Probation Support Officers conducting court programme eligibility assessments indicated that there was broad support for the introduction of Building Choices. They welcomed the introduction of a programme that focused on criminogenic needs that could be tailored to an individual's context. This was said to particularly be the case for women where there was a previously perceived gap in programmes designed for women. They also welcomed the programme's focus on the future and building skills.

“What's good about Building Choices is, it's specific and targeted – so you know that the work is going to be done in a set way, and there's structure to it. I think the danger before, is that for a lot of female offenders because they'd often get the supervision or the RAR sessions,²¹ and they go to the women's centre, it's not maybe as focused on their criminogenic needs as what it could have been or addressing these thinking skills. And I think it does do it.” **[Court assessor]**

Court Assessors reported that the PNI did not take additional time to complete and was somewhat more streamlined than existing processes as they were now only assessing suitability for one programme

“I think it's a lot more straightforward because we don't have to think about the different programmes. When you've got somebody who has, a lot of domestic abuse and then commits a random different offence, but really you want to address the domestic abuse. So now we've just got the one programme. I just think it's much more straightforward really for us to propose programmes now.” **[Court assessor]**

²¹ Rehabilitation Activity Requirement (known as 'RAR') is one of the requirements that can be included within a community order or suspended sentence order. The main purpose is for rehabilitation and to encourage a purposeful life in which they do not reoffend. For further information, see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-rehabilitation-activity-requirement-in-probation>

Assessors reported that they had experienced several challenges as part of the Design Test. While much of the communication on determining eligibility and recommending Building Choices was reported to be helpful, communication about the programme itself was said to be confusing and lacking, particularly in the initial introduction. Further, some assessors referenced feeling like they did not fully know the programme they were recommending. Some felt they would be unable to explain to the judiciary or the person being assessed how a single programme was suitable for people convicted of different offences with different criminogenic needs when they would have previously been directed to dedicated programs. This ultimately impacted their confidence in recommending Building Choices to decision-makers. Court assessors felt they needed more information on the implementation of the programme in practice, particularly for people with varied offending histories, as this had not been communicated effectively.

The assessment process itself was described by some as feeling like a 'tick box' exercise. As a result, some assessors felt that their ability to apply their professional judgement and expertise had been limited. Some, however, felt the structure was an advantage particularly for less experienced assessors.

A final key challenge raised by assessors at the start of the Design Test was the broader lack of awareness of the programme, particularly within the judiciary in the pilot area. This was highlighted as a concern since assessors are less likely to be in court to discuss the merits of the programme when magistrates determine an individual's sentence. This issue is particularly pronounced when court assessors work remotely. As a result, assessors felt that the judiciary were less likely to consider their recommendation during sentencing.

v. 'What Works for Me' Pre-Programme Meeting

Person centred, collaborative and supportive. Across community and prison Design Test sites, the WWFM meeting was seen by participants and staff as a helpful pre-programme conversation. It supported them to get to know one another better, ahead of the programme starting.

"It's far more personalised than anything we've done before. It really does meet the individuals' own needs." **[Staff, prison]**

For programme participants, the WWFM meeting was said to reduce anxiety ahead of the group-work commencing, as they could discuss their concerns in advance, and ask any questions.

“I’m more comfortable with it... every time I go for anything like this, I feel like my dyslexia is going get in the way and cause problems. That made me feel a lot more at ease.” **[Programme participant, community]**

Programme participants stated that they felt the conversation was about their needs, preferred ways of learning and working, and ‘them as a person’, rather than their risk or offence. Compared to their previous experiences in the criminal justice system, this was important to them and became a golden thread throughout the programme.

Staff thought the WWFM meeting offered a collaborative and supportive space to invite conversation rather than an ‘assessment’, helping to build rapport between facilitators and programme participants. Staff and programme participants reflected that the meetings enabled a good mixture of being strengths-focused and identifying areas for support.

The ‘What Works for Me’ meeting could be adapted to be more effective. Both staff and programme participants identified how the WWFM meeting allowed measures to be implemented ahead of the programme’s start to accommodate participants’ learning styles and preferences.

Those who were identified as having specific learning or personal needs were perceived to have benefitted most. For participants who did not feel they needed much in terms of responsivity adjustments, the meetings were reported by staff and participants as being less useful. The amount of needs a programme participant had also affected the length of time the WWFM meeting took. This ranged from an hour to four hours. Despite guidance on the sequencing of programme and research consent, the Design Test staff tended to collect consent alongside the WWFM meeting, adding to the meeting length.

Some staff felt the WWFM meeting provided limited time to get to know the participant before deciding which programme pathway to place them on, especially compared to the PNA or clinical interview process that existed previously. It was also suggested that having

two staff members in the WWFM meeting could be beneficial, making it more interactive and supporting decision-making when planning for participants' learning strengths and needs. In addition, it was proposed that other professionals could be involved in the WWFM meeting to triangulate information.

A small number of staff suggested that the WWFM meeting should incorporate exercises to help staff better understand participants' abilities and learning styles rather than relying on self-report.

'What Works for Me' Template; comprehensive but some sections require

clarification. A section called 'What's Going on for Me Now' was frequently reviewed as the most valuable section on the WWFM template because it focused on current issues and was clear to deliver. It also enabled facilitators to start getting to know participants in their current context. See Appendix B for further information on programme assessment. There were, however, suggestions about parts of the WWFM template that could be adapted to improve its utility, as set out below.

- Some programme participants reportedly struggled with the part that addressed culture and sexual orientation. They found it hard to understand how this related to the programme.
- For male participants, the current wording of 'pregnancy and maternity' was contested, and staff suggested changing it to 'parenting' to be more inclusive. This section highlighted the need for facilitators to have some awareness and understanding in advance of particularly sensitive areas, for example, where participants had children removed from their care. It was noted that this section was the most likely to cause distress, especially for female participants.
- The 'My Learning' section received mixed reviews and was said to be repetitive, especially where concepts such as 'my senses' were introduced. Staff reported that the training on how to apply this section was unclear and that the template lacked prompts to steer the conversation.

See Appendix A for detail on refinements made in relation to the Assessment and WWFM process in response to process evaluation findings.

4.3 Training and Delivery Guides

Summary: Training was reported to be comprehensive. That said, facilitators preferred the components that were delivered in-person and would have preferred to practice the entirety of the 'What Works for Me' meeting before delivery. Building Choices Delivery Guides were reported to be dense and therefore challenging to assimilate with ease. Facilitators also felt there should be parity between the guide for Building Choices Plus (for people with LDC) and the equivalent guide for those without, rather than a companion guide specifically for working with people with LDC.

By way of context setting, it is important to note that the facilitators that took part in the evaluation of the Design Test had experience of delivering the current suite of AcPs; some had almost 20 years of service in HMPPS. However, this also meant their previous experience of AcPs (most designed for people with specific offence types) was underpinned by different theories of change, content and delivery guide structures. In future roll out, there will be more newly trained facilitators who do not have such extensive prior experience with delivering programmes.

Preference for in-person training especially as there was a lot of programme content to assimilate. Staff from prison and community sites preferred in-person training to online training. They reported challenges in the training because they did not have advanced oversight of the Delivery Guides, or a copy to take away as they were stored at sites. There was an appetite to prepare for the training in advance, by reading through the Guides. Further, having Delivery Guides to take home after training days would have helped to consolidate learning.

Most facilitators valued the opportunity to go 'back to basics' and return to the theoretical underpinnings of AcPs. However, the theory module was considered quite 'dense' and staff thought it may be harder for less experienced facilitators to assimilate in terms of the volume of material. There was a recommendation to streamline this part of the training.

"The theory was a lot to take in. We had a leaflet and some information prior to that, but it was very confusing. The pace of it was really fast. It left a lot of our

group very confused. It didn't flow. The content, it was very complicated... If it was a less experienced facilitator going into that, they'd have just got lost."

[Staff, prison]

A feature of the Design Test was that training and delivery occurred quite close together and staff felt there was a large volume of information to process in a short space of time. Staff described that they would have valued more time to practice the delivery of the entire WWFM process in training, rather than just individual sections of it. This is particularly relevant considering the feedback about the WWFM template and it being unclear how to deliver specific sections.

Desire to practice delivery more in training. Facilitators were very experienced and familiar with some of the key programme concepts; however, they were less clear on how to deliver or apply Building Choices content in practice or the aims of some of the exercises. The emphasis on assessment, learning new content and delivering at pace was found to be stressful during the training.

Staff recognised that for those participants not undertaking the LDC pathway, there would still be a range of neurodiversity and learning styles. For this reason, there were calls for this to be more explicitly attended to in the training so that staff felt more confident when delivering Building Choices.

Delivery Guides were thorough but 'dense'. In their current format, the Delivery Guides for Building Choices, including the 'Needs and Suitability' manual, were said to be comprehensive but lengthy. Whilst the amount of information was similar to existing programmes, the volume and the density of the guides was raised by almost every member of staff as a particular challenge. This was reported to make it difficult to find relevant information and there were requests for 'quick reference' points or summary sections. Although staff acknowledged that they would become more familiar with the content over time, there was a view that guides could be more 'user friendly'.

The need for specific LDC adjustments. Staff reflected on the need for the Delivery Guides to be more accessible and responsive to different levels of staff experience and capabilities, including those with neurodivergences.

“I think that as much as we are gearing up for our participants to have neurodiversity, our staff pool has a lot of neurodiversity and they have been really overwhelmed with the guides and the manuals... they’re struggling to get their heads around it.” **[Staff, community]**

Furthermore, staff advocated for more support in delivering the What Works for Me meeting and the wider Building Choices programme for participants with LDC. The LDC companion guide used during the Design Test²² was said to be useful but not comprehensive enough, and there were calls for a standalone ‘Building Choices Plus’ Delivery Guide for participants with LDC. This would need to include handouts adapted for participants with LDC, as some facilitators had opted to create these themselves, which added to the workload.

See Appendix A for detail on development and streamlining of the training and Delivery Guides in response to these process evaluation findings.

4.4 Implementation

Summary: The size and frequency of the Building Choices groups was reviewed favourably overall. The format of these groups permitted a working alliance and level of rapport to be built amongst group participants and facilitators. It also supported the ability to maintain momentum, motivation, and engagement whilst practicing skills in between sessions. Facilitators noted they would have liked some discretion and flexibility regarding session length and the ability to move content around dependent on the group needs. The need to maintain programme integrity was therefore said to impact participant responsivity. However, the combination of one-to-one sessions alongside group-work enabled individual needs to be explored. This was said, by staff, to somewhat overcome concerns over the manualised nature of the programme.

²² The LDC companion guide directly supports the delivery of Building Choices Plus for LDC participants during Design Test.

i. Group size

Group size fostered positive group dynamics. Overall programme participants and staff felt that the group size was appropriate and enabled a good group dynamic to be fostered – adhering to the ‘conditions of success’ (i.e. a set of conditions, which outline group expectations for successful engagement and a safe learning environment). Group numbers between six and eight (as opposed to the usual group sizes of 10 or 12 for the current suite of moderate intensity programmes) were said to work well to allow people to practice and share their skills.

“Having a smaller group worked really well. I felt I knew my participants inside and out. I had the time to know them. We were able to really think about how we could personalise this session for them when we were doing planning because we didn’t have loads of participants to discuss, it was easier... I think that really just helped with engagement, with the learning that they would have taken away. So, yes, I really liked the group sizes.” **[Staff, community]**

However, smaller group sizes could become concerning when participant attrition was high. For example, a group decreased from six to four participants, and staff reported that any further reduction in group size would have negatively impacted group dynamics.

Facilitators on the women’s group expressed concern that they would struggle to cover programme content with a full group of eight participants. This was because a group with only two women was still taking the full two and a half hours per session and, especially where women had high levels of trauma, facilitators felt there was scope to pace the sessions slower.

“There’s not enough listening time in Building Choices... We’re only working with two women at the moment, and those sessions overrun. Imagine if we had one with eight.” **[Staff, women’s cohort, community]**

As there was no women’s group running with eight participants during the Design Test, there is insufficient evidence to fully assess group size for this cohort yet.

ii. Working Alliance

Safe and supportive working alliance between participants and facilitators. The group dynamic was said to be a safe and supportive space in part because of the skills of the facilitators. All facilitators across each site in the Design Test received positive feedback from programme participants in the way they attended to everyone's needs within the group and built a robust working alliance. Participants described the group as a space where people felt able to share their experiences. This was an important theme across the whole evaluation and was prevalent from the very first WWFM meetings until completion of the programme.

“Honestly, I feel like it's all memorable because of who delivered it. I feel like because they are themselves when they're delivering it... not coming across as teacher-ish... I feel like it's because of them that I benefited so much from the programme.” **[Programme participant, prison]**

There was evidence of this providing a transferrable skill outside of the programme, where participants felt better able to connect with other professionals. This was echoed in the quantitative analysis, which aims to understand the extent of working alliance between practitioner and participant.

Overall, analysis for this process evaluation indicated that good levels of working alliance were present for all cohorts at the start of the programme and upon completion.

WAI-SR quantitative data was analysed to assess whether there were sustained levels of high working alliance throughout programme delivery as this is expected to be conducive to better treatment outcomes.

Increases in reported WAI-SR scores among participants were observed across all settings and cohorts pre to post Building Choices. The average (mean) score was 49.8 at the start and 54.2 at the end (out of a maximum of 60). However, a large variation in scores was observed.²³ Mean scores were lower at the start of the programme for those

²³ (SD at start = 9.2, SD at end = 7.5).

on the High Intensity pathway, but a larger increase was seen across the programme for this group compared to those on the Moderate Intensity pathway (15% increase for High Intensity and 8% increase for Moderate Intensity).

Facilitator scores were generally high at all timepoints analysed, and overall scores stayed at a similar level from the start to the end of Building Choices.²⁴ This was similar in both prison and community settings. However, there were very small reductions in scores from pre to post Building Choices for the LDC, general violence and general offending cohorts (5%, 4% and 0.3% reduction in scores respectively). See Appendix F for more detail on the analytical results on working alliance.

iii. Responsivity

The ‘What Works for Me’ Meeting supported responsivity, but facilitators felt limited in other ways. The meeting enabled facilitators to adjust their delivery for programme participants to help them engage in the programme content.

“...they took my thoughts and feelings into consideration. So, it’s definitely helpful and they put things in place for myself and obviously for other members. It just made me be able to work better.” **[Programme participant, prison]**

However, some facilitators described a sense of frustration around their ability to be responsive in terms of programme and session content.

“If we want to just use the Delivery Guide verbatim, as they are written down for every single prisoner, it feels like we’re pushing everybody through the same machine... it’s robotic...in the other programmes, we definitely had loads more scope to be creative.” **[Staff, prison, referring to people with LDC]**

Specific concerns were raised over being able to address the needs of people with LDC. Facilitators remarked on the variability within the groups; especially in the cohort of people with LDC, where cognitive ability ranged considerably. Facilitators reiterated throughout the evaluation that they needed a separate Delivery Guide and training package for Building Choices Plus; similar to the current suite of AcPs for people with LDC

²⁴ (pre mean = 36.3, post mean = 36.7, out of a maximum of 45)

(see Appendix A for subsequent development of such a guide). Although there was a companion guide for LDC, the programme material remained the same and it was felt there was little flexibility to respond to the range and diversity of needs within each group, including the ability to move session content into the following session if required. A dedicated delivery guide for the LDC pathway (Building Choices plus) was subsequently developed (see Appendix A).

“There’s a reason in the past LDC programmes were separate... we had a whole separate manual, and a whole separate training package, and a whole separate support network for those guys and for that programme and that really worked, I had a lot of success...the guys did really well. Within that manual, that flexibility was really built in... We’ve gone a step backwards now, reabsorbing and LDC goes back into a cookie cutter standard normal programme. I don’t think it works.”

[Staff, prison]

Some facilitators reflected on the fact that Building Choices was a new programme which took time to familiarise and prepare for, which impacted their ability to reflect on responsivity needs, especially whilst delivering three sessions per week.²⁵

iv. Session length and frequency

Some sessions could be condensed. Overall, staff and programme participants described the frequency and length of sessions of Building Choices as appropriate. However, staff delivering ‘Getting Ready’ said the content felt limited for 15 sessions (i.e., it could be covered in less time). Facilitators delivering Building Choices to people with LDC described how they would like greater flexibility in terms of the end date of the programme, which would allow them to be more responsive to group needs (because they would be able to shift content across sessions accordingly).

“With BNM [Previous Accredited Programme], you could try an icebreaker, if that didn’t work, we called it there and we might have had half an hour of content still to cover, we’d put that in the next session...whereas in this one, every session is its

²⁵ The Management Manual suggests two sessions per week as optimal but three times a week was used due to the time constraints of Design Test.

own separate entity, every session is timed, which just doesn't work when you're trying to manage the flow of focus and attention..." **[Staff, prison]**

Two to three times a week felt appropriate for delivery. Due to the time scales in the Design Test, prison sites delivered Building Choices three times a week and community sites delivered it twice a week. In prison, staff said it was difficult to offer catch-up sessions (for those who missed group sessions) whilst maintaining consistent delivery and thrice weekly sessions. However, participants across prisons felt three sessions a week was appropriate. Facilitators in the community felt that twice a week was sufficient so as not to disrupt participants lives too much. This enabled momentum to be maintained whilst allowing for between session work to be completed. This was especially important for skills logs (self-monitoring logs supporting ongoing repetition and application of skills to real-time, real-life situations) and practice. Amongst some participants however, there was some resistance to 'homework' between sessions.

v. One-to-One sessions

An important space to build trust and rapport and work on individual issues. One-to-one sessions were said to be positioned appropriately around each module. They were unanimously described, by programme participants and facilitators, as being highly valuable and complimentary to the group work. They were an opportunity to be responsive and go into more depth around an individual's specific needs to support learning and understanding amongst participants.

"I thoroughly enjoyed my one-to-ones with my facilitator, and I think I've got more out of the programme by asking more questions in my one-to-ones that I perhaps wouldn't be comfortable with in a group because I don't want to discuss my background with the group." **[Programme participant, prison]**

They were also an opportunity for facilitators to foster self-reflection, providing participants with a safe space outside of the group to encourage self-development.

"I just wanted to say thank you after our one-to-one, you truly made me question myself and my actions... I can and will promise to give my all to the project. Less aggression and speak with less aggressive language. It's really tough to see our

own faults, but I'm now a man of my word. I want people to respect me not hate me." **[Programme participant, prison]**

Additional one-to-one sessions were welcomed and there was a need for better communication about post programme support. Some participants stated they would have liked additional one-to-one sessions and a post-programme one-to-one. This was considered particularly important because there was about a week between the final one-to-one and the last session. Facilitators also stated they would have liked the opportunity to offer additional one-to one sessions for those who needed them.

Despite 'Moving Forward' being implemented, facilitators stated they would be happy to continue working one-to-one with programme participants to consolidate their learning, acknowledging that staff in Offender Management Units (OMUs) had high caseloads to undertake this work.

Participants in one prison site recommended having a community group for those post release to check in on progress. Nevertheless, the overarching sentiment was that after the programme ended, participants across sites reported somewhat of a 'cliff edge' and were left wanting a consolidation session. At the time of Building Choices ending, 'Moving Forward' was not well understood by participants in its ability to provide this.

"It would be something I'd like to chase up on the out as well, so maybe a community meeting or something. People who have done Building Choices in prison, a little gathering, see how they did, see how they are doing. I think that would be a good idea as well..." **[Programme participant, prison]**

See Appendix A for detail on the HMPPS response to findings around implementation.

4.5 Design and Content

Summary: generally, participants liked that Building Choices was about them as an individual rather than their offence. ‘Getting Ready’ was reported by facilitators as ‘clunky’ relative to Building Choices yet it achieved its objective of preparing and motivating programme participants for the rest of the programme. Programme participants and facilitators praised the content of Building Choices for being strengths focused and future orientated. Key concepts such as the Success Wheel (an accessible way for tracking participant progress in managing criminogenic needs) and the Great Eight skills²⁶ landed well with participants and they were able to centre changes in their behaviour around these. However, facilitators felt there were missed opportunities to explore offence specific behaviour, and a perceived focus on behaviours rather than cognition and beliefs or values. This was raised most frequently in relation to people with convictions for IPV or sexual offences.

i. Overall review of programme content

Key concepts of the programme were well received but some components from previous programmes were felt to be missing. Staff were apprehensive of the change to a new programme, and many experienced facilitators seemed passionate about previous programmes they had delivered. Despite this, both facilitators and programme participants saw value in Building Choices and a number of participants were able to articulate the impact they felt the programme had on their current and future behaviour.

“With a few tweaks, it’s fantastic. For Medium Intensity men, fantastic. The guys have got a lot from it. They’ve really enjoyed it. One of the men yesterday in the final session called it life changing. That is pretty high praise.” **[Staff, prison]**

Those who had previous experience of delivering programmes agreed that important and valuable concepts such as skills practice, and the Success Wheel were helpfully weaved

²⁶ The Great Eight are a ‘toolbox’ of tactics, the content of which support a range of skills including problem solving, seeking support and future goals, but as a collective can support executive functioning and the development of neural pathways.

throughout Building Choices and could see how it was the ‘greatest hits’ of previous programmes. The Theory Guide was helpful in outlining the underpinnings of the content.

Facilitators voiced, however, that there were some key concepts from previous programmes that were felt to be missing. Some examples included ‘personal rules’, ‘Old Me’,²⁷ and the ‘tug of war’ between ‘Old Me’ and ‘New Me.’²⁸

“I do think that the ‘old me’ bit not being there can be tricky because we’re just looking at the future. We’re not supposed to talk about the ‘old me’. I think there’s definitely a place for that because it shows the progression. It was quite hard dealing with skills practically, without having old me present.” **[Staff, prison]**

Building Choices is designed to focus on addressing offending risk through targeting the criminogenic needs associated with reoffending. This is in line with the evidence base as described in Section 2.2. The programme therefore has a strong focus on ‘Future Me’, the thinking, skills, strengths and behaviour that are present when a person is trying to lead a non-offending life consistent with what matters to them.

Building Choices enabled programme participants to consider different areas of their lives through the success wheel. However, the focus on ‘Future Me’ received mixed reviews. Whilst facilitators said they valued the strengths-based approach, they would have liked more flexibility to explore past offending in more depth, in exercises such as the ‘My Story Life Map’.²⁹ Amongst some staff **and** programme participants there was a view that compared to previous programmes, there were fewer opportunities to discuss offending behaviour and triggers in Building Choices. However, it was unclear whether this was due to their expectation that offence-focused content should have featured more centrally (perhaps because of their experiences with previous AcPs and a resulting dissonance when it didn’t) rather than there being an evidence-based ‘need’ for it in programme design.

²⁷ Reflects the thinking, feeling and behaving around or during offending or problematic times.

²⁸ Reflects the thinking and behaving present when a person is leading or trying to lead a non-offending life.

²⁹ A tool for participants to get to know themselves, what has happened in their lives, what is important to them, patterns in their thinking, feeling, and behaviour, and areas to strengthen to bring balance to their Success Wheel.

“It’s gone so far into future focused positivity, you lose some of the credibility when it comes to looking at some of that past...We’ve moved further and further away from being able to drill down into what those real risk areas are and what those triggers are.” **[Staff, prison]**

However, some facilitators described their perception that whilst previous programmes were more offence focused, participants could still discuss past experience where required.

Programme participants felt the programme was about them as an individual and their strengths rather than their behaviour. Some participants described the programme as non-judgemental and they were able to relinquish historic feelings of shame. Overall, this was felt to support engagement on the programme.

“I liked the fact it seemed very future based, as opposed to going back. We did look at the past, but that wasn’t the main thing... I feel a whole weight’s been lifted off my shoulders due to the programme, and in the future looking forward.”

[Programme participant, prison]

Some of these findings could reflect a need for clearer guidance and training around the evidence behind the programme design. Whilst Building Choices has a strong skills-focused, strengths-based and future-orientated design, this does not negate a focus on, or discussion about, offence-related behaviour where relevant. See Appendix A for information on how HMPPS have developed the training and materials in response to this.

ii. ‘Getting Ready’

Two prisons in the Design Test phase delivered ‘Getting Ready’ which constitutes part of the High Intensity pathway of Building Choices. This was for three groups: two High Intensity groups for people with LDC (Building Choices Plus) and one Building Choices High Intensity group.

‘Getting Ready’ fostered engagement. ‘Getting Ready’ was said to be useful in preparing participants for the rest of Building Choices, particularly those who have historically had difficulty engaging. Therefore, the right people were perceived to have

been on the High Intensity pathway. Programme participants across both sites were motivated to continue with Building Choices and described how they had got to know themselves better. Further 'Getting Ready' enabled the group to build rapport and trust amongst themselves and the facilitators, and introduce programme tools such as the Success Wheel, Great Eight and Skills Logs.

'Getting Ready' lacked flow in places and there was a desire for clearer aims over fewer sessions. Facilitators reported that 'Getting Ready' felt somewhat 'bolted on', rather than seamlessly flowing into Building Choices, and the transition from 'Getting Ready' to 'Getting Started' was not optimised for those on the High Intensity pathway (see Figure 1 for Building Choices pathways). Relative to the rest of Building Choices, 'Getting Ready' was described as feeling 'clunky'. Facilitators reported that it lacked flow, was repetitive in places and suggested that there could be clearer aims and objectives at the start of each exercise to help orientate to the purpose.

At times this was said to affect engagement and motivation of programme participants. Staff therefore suggested the number of sessions could be reduced as well as revisiting the timing of certain exercises. For participants the repetition was considered by some to be 'patronising' or 'childish', although for those with LDC it supported their learning style.

"Some of us in the group, we struggle to remember things. So, if you keep going over it, they'll mention one thing, and it just... floods back." **[Programme participant, prison]**

iii. Criminogenic needs and tailored conversations

There was a perceived lack of relationship content for specific offences. There were concerns about a perceived lack of offence-specific work in Building Choices, amongst participants (on the PCOSO strand) and facilitators across strands. This was particularly pronounced given that Building Choices has been designed to be delivered to those with a range of criminogenic needs rather than for a specific offence cohort as was the case in the previous suite of AcPs.

“I think it is probably too generic. There are not enough one-to-ones. Some of these guys are quite complex, particularly when you look at the ones convicted of sexual offences. ...none of this is going to get looked at...” **[Staff, prison]**

PCOSO Cohort. For people on the PCOSO cohort, there was said to be a lack of content on ‘healthy, consensual sex’ within the group. This could in fact be picked up in one-to-one sessions, but facilitators and programme participants said, relative to previous programmes, this felt like a missing component. The addition of the Healthy Sex segment on the Success Wheel (which includes skills to manage criminogenic needs associated with sexual reoffending, such as managing unhealthy sexual arousal) was not felt to adequately cover this. There was reference to attempts, amongst facilitators, to bring in content from Horizon to enrich this, although this was not in the Building Choices Delivery Guide.

“I thought we would’ve covered a bit relating to sexual offences because the Success Wheel talked about healthy sex but there was no specific section.”

[Programme participant, prison]

“We really want to take it to places that it doesn’t go. We don’t talk about sex, and we’re working with a sex group... looking at specifically, how do you manage your sexual thoughts and thinking not just emotions, generally, but unhelpful thoughts about children or violence? We haven’t touched on any of that.” **[Staff, prison]**

Facilitators and participants of the PCOSO cohort, in community and prison, also reflected on the perceived value in discussing healthy sex in a group setting (which was said to be lacking).

IPV Cohort. For the IPV cohort, facilitators were positive that the programme was holistic and strengths based but also described they would like to go into more depth on the relationship module, specifically attachment styles.

“As much as I’ve tried to put BBR to bed and detach it, you recognise that there’s certain sessions that really can be quite impactful, attachment is one of those, it’s

feeling a bit brushed over... doesn't give them the opportunity to have those 'aha' moments." **[Staff, community]**

A perceived lack of work on attitudes and beliefs, underpinning offending was raised by facilitators working with those with IPV convictions in both community settings.

"For other programmes that we've done...we'll look at people's belief systems that are underpinning their behaviour... we don't actually cover that topic in Building Choices and that's been a common theme that facilitators have raised... I think some feedback from the participants was that the relationships module on Building Choices they wish was longer. I think facilitators felt the same as well."

[Staff, community]

However, relative to participants with convictions for sexual offending, those on the IPV cohort described a sense of relief that the content was not solely focused on their relationships.

"As soon as they say that it's not all aimed at what you've done and why you're here, about you and your partner, it's about other stuff... As soon as she said that, my mood lightened on it. When they said BBR, I thought it's going to be all about me and my partner and all this. I wasn't looking forward to doing it, to be honest."

[Programme participant, community]

A lack of 'offence specific' content was also raised by facilitators on the women's cohort. This did not pertain to a certain type of offence, but rather, a perceived lack of opportunities to consider index offending.

"There is no offence focused work whatsoever and I think we need to have more accountability built in within the programme for what they're there for." **[Staff, women's cohort, community]**

One-to-One sessions were an opportunity to explore offence specific content but were reported to lack structure. One-to-one sessions were said to be an opportunity to address criminogenic needs directly, but facilitators found the tailored conversations (additional conversations which take place during the individual sessions to support

personalisation of nuanced criminogenic need) to be 'lacking'. They described wanting more structure and guidance for these sessions, like "Individual-Packs"³⁰ (I-Packs) from current programmes, such as BNM+ and Kaizen. Whilst such structured material was acknowledged by facilitators to be a 'comfort blanket', they thought it provided participants with something they could share with other staff.

"You're having this tailored conversation...where am I going with this? Whereas from the BNM, and Kaizen, that structure of the I-Packs was something that could be plucked out, like a book on a shelf, so maybe having something a bit more rigid, rather than a conversation." **[Staff, prison]**

Despite this feedback from facilitators, programme participants (except for those on the PCOSO strand) reviewed tailored conversations more positively. This may have been as they had no previous experience with I-Packs.

"I like the tailored conversations in the one-to-ones, so I had two. I had one about carrying a weapon. The other one was about being a Dad... I liked both of them."
[Programme participant, prison]

The Design Test team considered these concerns as they arose, and in response provided direct support to facilitators to help them use and apply their learning in tailored conversations with participants. This went some way to ameliorating the initial difficulties discussed.

iv. Specific programme components

Below is a summary of findings of some of the specific programme components:

- **The My Story Life Map³¹ was valuable but may have been best delivered individually.** It was said to be an important tool for participants to recognise behavioural patterns in their life. However, both staff and programme participants highlighted the importance of sensitive delivery of this part of the programme in

³⁰ A series of short exercises complementing core curriculum in Kaizen and BMN+ to support individualisation.

³¹ My Story Life Map is a tool for participants to get to know themselves (what has happened in their lives, what is important to them, patterns in their thinking, feeling, and behaviour, their strengths and areas to strengthen to bring balance to their Success Wheel) and that helps build rapport and personalise learning.

accordance with the Delivery Guide. Some participants described how difficult it was to complete Life Maps when they had spent most of their life in prison or had experienced adversity.

- **The My Story Portfolio³² was said to be a helpful tool to consolidate learning.** Participants found the My Story Portfolio very useful, especially as a way of reflecting back over their work throughout the programme.
- **The Success Wheel as a concept was well understood by programme participants and helpfully weaved throughout the programme.** Sites had the Success Wheel displayed throughout the delivery of the programme which also supported learning.
- **Great Eight skills were well grasped and formed an important thread throughout Building Choices.** Participants were often able to name all eight skills and their visual nature was said to act as a useful aide memoire. The Great Eight often formed the basis of, or featured in, specific exercises such as 'Here and Now' and 'Surf the Urge'.
- **The breathing exercises³³ and 'Here and Now'³⁴ received mixed reviews and were tricky to apply in justice settings.** Some participants found these skills useful and had used them outside of the programme. Others reported finding it difficult to engage with them in any context. Some of the resistance encountered was due to personal preference, whilst others articulated it to be impacted by the setting (e.g. prison or group).
- **There was an opportunity to learn new skills, practice and consolidate them across a variety of exercises.³⁵** Throughout the programme the skills logs and skills practices were reviewed favourably by programme participants and facilitators. They allowed opportunities for praise and constructive feedback.

³² My Story Portfolio – from the start of the programme, this acts as a home for different materials and handouts, pulling together participants' reflections and learning with endorsement from facilitators.

³³ These are included throughout the programme to support participants to regulate their levels of arousal.

³⁴ Mindfulness based exercises

³⁵ Skills coaching is the initial introduction of skills to participants. The process enables them to develop familiarity with the skill and consider it benefits and relevance for them. Skills logs provide ongoing chance for participants to self-monitor when they have used skills in real-life outside of sessions and whether the skills are personally credible and helpful for them increasing likelihood of ongoing use. 'Future Me' Skills Practices involve consolidation and formal application of a combination of skills to manage personally relevant current or future situations.

Some programme participants reported handling conflict better, thinking through consequences and changing their behaviour.

- **Facilitators suggested tweaks to improve skills practices³⁶ even further.**

Acknowledging the challenges that programme participants might face, facilitators felt skills practices could be made more 'realistic' by allowing a greater degree of challenge. There was some constructive feedback from staff that there was not always time to give every participant a chance to feedback on their skills log.

Community facilitators expressed if the group was at full capacity (eight people) this would have been even more challenging.

See Appendix A for details of how HMPPS have developed the design of the programme in response to these findings.

v. Consolidation

For this part of the evaluation, 11 programme participants and 13 members of staff were interviewed about their experiences of taking part in the Post Programme Review and at least one subsequent 'Moving Forward' conversation.

Overall, 'Moving Forward' was said to be a valuable consolidation approach and an opportunity to build relationships between programme participants and their Offender Managers (OM). Staff suggested improvements could be made by increasing joint working between facilitators and OM's and producing a post programme report to capture progress.

Offender Managers had a varied understanding of 'Moving Forward' and the Building Choices programme. It was clear that OM's were initially confused about 'Moving Forward' and what was expected of them. The evaluation team received several emails from OM's which referenced their workload as a challenge when engaging in 'Moving Forward' conversations. However, during the evaluation there were training sessions for OM's to help answer concerns and questions about Building Choices more generally as well as 'Moving Forward'. Initial indications suggested this was satisfactory and highlighted the importance of early communication to OM's. Facilitators of Building

³⁶ This was used by facilitators as an umbrella term to encompass feedback on skills coaching, logs and practices.

Choices, who were handing over to OMs, noted that the extent to which 'Moving Forward' would be successful depended on the level of support and availability of the probation team. They noted a high level of variability in this.

"One of them, he's got a really good case manager, and when we did the three-way, it was evident that the case manager was going to carry on doing the work with him which was good. Whereas, the other case manager was quite dismissive." **[Staff, community]**

Post Programme Review could be chaired by facilitators. OMs in custody expressed a preference that facilitators should chair the post programme review as they had spent the last few months getting to know the participant. Similarly, OMs said they would value a post programme report (which they said they used to get for other programmes). The post programme review, and associated minutes, were reported as helpful but a report was said to be of more value when it came to parole board meetings especially if these were some years away.

"There is a vast amount of knowledge that disappears because it's all in the facilitators which is a worry when I am in front of parole." **[Staff, prison]**

'Moving Forward' supported relationship building and working alliance. 'Moving Forward' was reported by participants and OMs as a relationship building opportunity. It was said by OMs to help them get to know their cases by going through the individual's My Story Portfolio. The My Story Life Map in particular was said to be a useful exercise, from which OMs learnt new things that they could incorporate into sentence and risk management plans. There was one example given where the level of childhood trauma outlined in the Life Map meant the relevant OMs was exploring an onward referral for support for the prisoner.

"I know a lot more about him, what shaped the person he is now. We do hear a lot about a lot of people and their backgrounds, but I think he's quite exceptional in terms of the amount of trauma he's had to endure. It's incredibly helpful for me to understand him as a person." **[Staff, prison]**

‘Moving Forward’ consolidated learning but the offer and expectation should be made clear from the outset to programme participants. Interviews with programme participants were positive and they reiterated that this part of the process consolidated their learning. One participant explained he was able to show his OM why he felt he had continued to previously reoffend through his My Story Life Map. Similarly, OMs reflected on the merit in this in recognising people’s progress.

“He brings his whole pack [My Story Portfolio] and we go through it and he can reflect back and tell me when he’s used those skills... He’s recognizing that he feels he’s moving forward, and he feels he’s got a lot more controls on his life, embedding those skills he’s learning... I can see where he’s progressing and what he’s doing and how he’s feeling.” **[Staff, community]**

However, participants stated they would have liked to have known more about ‘Moving Forward’ at the start of the programme. Some felt it had not been explained to them that there was an expectation they would have to continue with skills logs beyond the end of the programme.

Whilst they could see value in this, they felt unprepared and had assumed their ‘work’ had been completed at the end of the programme.

“You told me it was a 6-month course, then I’ve got to do this afterwards... if your OMU or anyone in power tells you they want you to do something, I’ll do it. I’ll do anything to get out, but I don’t like to be lied to.” **[Programme participant, prison]**

A small number of participants stated they would value a group check-in session between the post programme review and ‘Moving Forward’ conversations to see how everyone had been getting on since the programme ended.

4.6 Programme outcomes

Summary: Completion rates for Building Choices largely aligned with attrition rates seen at sites for existing AcPs. The most common reasons for non-completion were recorded in the 'Other' sub-category, indicating lack of engagement was not a significant factor for participants dropping out. There were good indications of reported participant change against key programme targets. Levels of recorded motivation did vary across cohorts at the start of delivery, and it was consistently high at the end of the programme.

i. Programme completion

Of the 78 participants that started Building Choices on the Design Test, 68% (53) completed the programme, and the overall attrition rate was 32% (see Table 7). Participant attrition was higher in community sites (43%) than in prison (19%). One community region had an attrition rate of 56%. These figures align with those for the delivery of existing AcPs, where attrition in community is a persistent issue. However, the relatively small Design Test sample size limits the extent to which these findings can be generalised. Further information can be found in Table C5, Appendix C, which compares the attrition rates found on the Design Test against sites' 2023/24 AcP delivery.

Table 7: Summary of number of Design Test completions and attrition rates

By cohort	Number of starters	Number of completers	Attrition Rate
General Violence	8	7	13%
PCOSO	16	14	13%
General Offending (inc. Women)	15	8	47%
DA/IPV	23	13	43%
LDC	16	11	31%
By Setting			
Prison	36	29	19%
Community	42	24	43%
Total	78	53	32%

Source: Treatment Returns (n=78)

The most common reason for not completing the programme was 'Other – not covered by any other reason', accounting for 12 of 25 (48%) non-completers (see Table C6 in Appendix C). This was the most frequent reason given for participants from the DA and IVP cohorts, which also had the largest number of non-completers of each cohort.

Of the 25 non-completers, 18 (72%) had reasons in the 'Other' sub-category. 'Other' reasons included personal problems such as health or bereavement. This indicates that lack of engagement which would be covered by 'self-deselection', was not a significant factor for participants dropping out.

Eight individuals were assessed for Building Choices and did not progress to start a programme. Seven of these were assessed in community sites. The WWFM meeting was the most common point at which those considered for Building Choices were found not ready to engage, contributing to three out of eight reasons for not starting.

ii. Success Wheel Measure

The SWM and the HMS were embedded within the programme to provide information about participant distance travelled' (i.e., reported change) against key programme aims and levels of motivation. See Appendix B for a description of the Success Wheel domains.³⁷

Overall SWM scores

Analysis of the SWM shows that participant scores tended to increase from pre to post programme. The overall change in total SWM score from pre-to-post programme was found to be statistically significant (i.e. not due to chance),³⁸ providing indicative³⁹ evidence of participant progress against the ToC.⁴⁰ A large effect size in favour in the

³⁷ For those on the Moderate Intensity pathway, pre programme scores refer to the SWM scores at the start of Building Choices. For the High Intensity pathway, pre programme scores refer to the SWM scores at the start of 'Getting Ready'. For both pathways, post programme scores refer to the SWM scores at the end of Building Choices.

³⁸ Using a paired t-test

³⁹ Reflecting the fact these measures were provided for Building Choices participants only. They were not administered to a comparison group and thus causal inference cannot be drawn. Findings must therefore be considered 'indicative', rather than confirmatory or causal.

⁴⁰ It used complete cases, excluding those who dropped out or had data missing as the paired t-tests required data at both timepoints to compare (n = 48).

programme was found, with large increases in scores pre to post programme ($t = 9.67$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.35$).⁴¹

Table 8 shows the changes in facilitator reported participant pre to post programme scores by cohort and setting. Out of the cohorts, the largest distance travelled on average was seen for participants in the general offending cohort, which started with some of the lowest average scores for each domain. Comparatively, some of the smallest pre- to -post SWM changes were observed in the PCOSO cohort, which had some of the higher pre programme scores for each domain out of the cohorts. Prison sites saw greater change in SWM scores than sites in the community. (See Tables G1 and G2 in Appendix G for further detail).

Table 8: Change in SWM facilitator scores pre to post programme (distance travelled)

	Managing Myself	Healthy Thinking	Positive Relationships	Purpose	Healthy Sex
By cohort: General offending	1.53	1.25	1.15	1.20	N/A
By cohort: General violence	1.14	0.67	0.38	0.90	N/A
By cohort: DA/IPV	0.81	0.85	0.43	0.86	N/A
By cohort: LDC	0.88	0.86	0.45	0.55	N/A
By cohort: PCOSO	0.50	0.43	0.57	0.50	0.50
By setting: Community	0.69	0.61	0.26	0.48	0.50
By setting: Prison	1.11	0.99	0.89	1.01	0.50
Overall	0.92	0.81	0.60	0.77	0.50

Source: Treatment Returns. Pre programme: $n = 63$ (except 'Healthy Sex', $n = 14$). Post programme: $n = 52$ (except 'Healthy Sex', $n = 14$).

⁴¹ Cohen's d statistic is typically categorised as a small effect when 0.2–0.49, a medium effect when 0.5–0.79, and a large effect when 0.8 or greater.

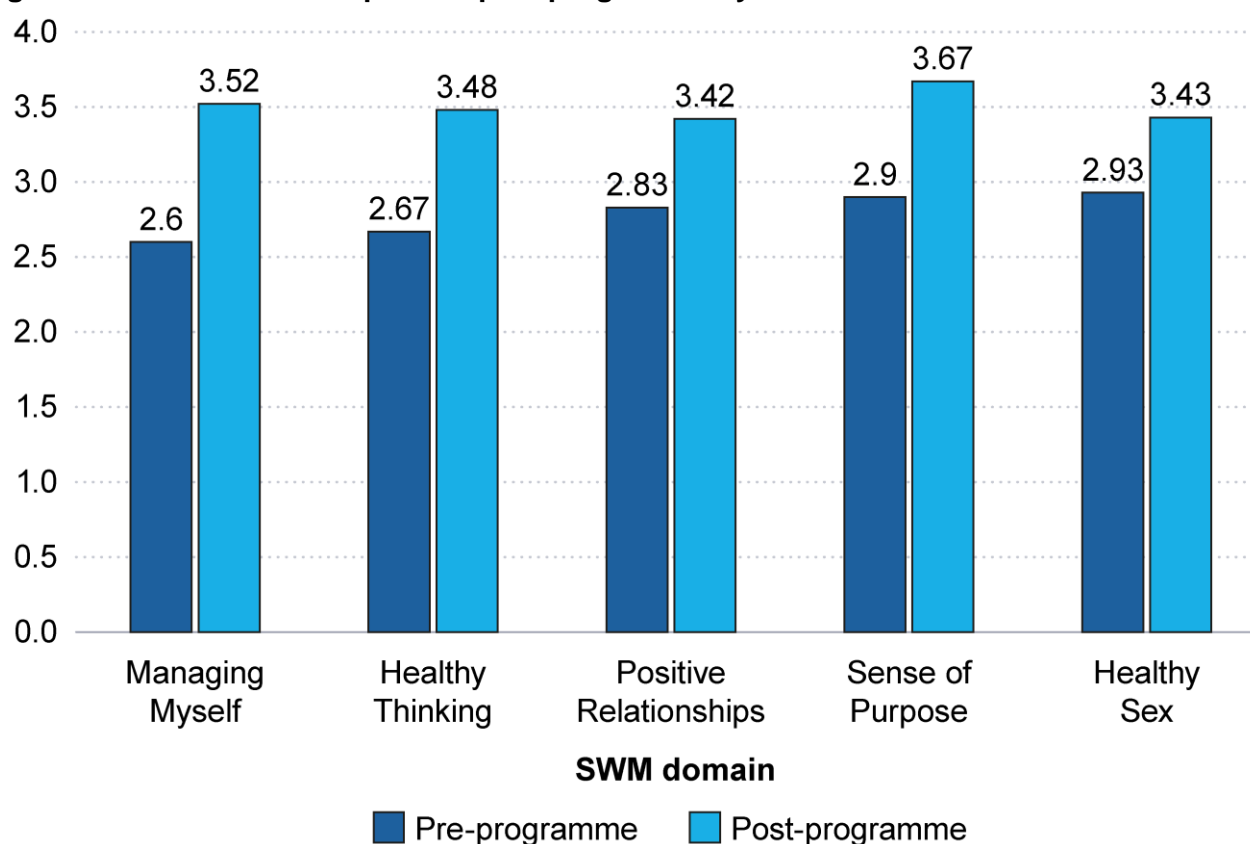
It should be noted that only a small number of participants had scores for the 'Healthy Sex' domain ($n = 14$) compared to the other four domains, as it is only applicable to participants with sexual offences. This small sample size limits the analysis and conclusions that can be drawn for this domain.

Comparison of SWM domains, participant and facilitator scores, and custody versus community settings

Change in facilitator reported participant pre to post programme scores were found to increase for all domains (see Figure 3). The 'Managing Myself' domain, which had the lowest average initial score, saw the largest increases by setting and across each cohort except DA/IPV. The smallest changes were seen in the 'Healthy Sex' and 'Positive Relationships' domains.

Although all programme participants domain scores started off higher, similar patterns of change were observed. However, lower levels of change were observed in participant scores for the 'Positive Relationships' and 'Healthy Thinking' domains compared to the facilitator scores. See tables G3–G5, Appendix G, for further detail.

Figure 3: Facilitator scores pre and post programme by SWM domain



Source: Treatment Returns. Pre programme: n = 63 (except 'Healthy Sex', n = 14). Post programme: n = 52 (except 'Healthy Sex', n = 14).

The change in SWM domain scores from pre to post programme (distance travelled) are broken down by cohort, site and setting, as shown in Tables G6–G8 in Appendix G. For the facilitator, participant and joint scores, a larger distance travelled was seen in prison compared to community across the domains (except the facilitator 'Healthy Sex' domain scores which were the same for both settings). This is the case despite all SWM domain pre programme scores starting off higher in prison compared to community.

There was an increase in all participant SWM domain scores pre to post programme, except for 'Positive Relationships' for the cohort of people with LDC, which saw a small decrease. All cohorts, sites and settings experienced increases in scores for each domain of Facilitator and Joint scores, with the largest distance travelled observed in the general offending cohort. See Tables G6–G8 in Appendix G for further details.

iii. **Horizon Motivation Scale**

Overall HMS scores

Analysis of the HMS tested for participant's sustained levels of high motivation throughout programme delivery, which is associated with lower rates of general recidivism (e.g., Hanson & Bussiere, 1998).

The total HMS scores (out of a maximum score of eight) are reported at each time point in Table 9. This includes all participants with HMS score data at each timepoint, including non-completers. Motivation levels were found to be greater in prison than in community at all timepoints. However, there was a greater increase in scores from the start to the end of the programme for those in community compared to prison.

The levels of motivation varied between cohorts at the 1st timepoint, with average HMS scores ranging from 2.88 for the IPV cohort to 6.64 in the PCOSO cohort. While the IPV cohort still had the lowest scores at the 4th timepoint, this cohort experienced the greatest increase in average score (3.1-point change). A fall in total HMS scores was observed for the General Violence cohort between the 2nd and 3rd timepoints, however this cohort went on to see the largest increase of scores between the 3rd and 4th timepoint out of all the cohorts.

The overall average score was 6.94 out of 8 at the 4th timepoint, suggesting high levels of motivation at the end of the programme. It should be noted that the increase in scores across the programme may have been affected by individuals who dropped out of the programme not being included in later timepoints. These individuals may have had lower motivation scores prior to dropping out, but further analysis would be required to assess this.

Table 9: Mean total HMS scores at each timepoint by cohort and setting

	1st timepoint	2nd timepoint	3rd timepoint	4th timepoint
By cohort: General Offending	5.83	6.09	6.30	7.13
By cohort: General Violence	5.43	5.86	5.71	7.50
By cohort: DA/IPV	2.88	3.06	4.79	6.00
By cohort: LDC	5.38	5.43	6.55	7.09
By cohort: PCOSO	6.64	6.64	7.14	7.36
By setting: Community	3.77	3.90	5.31	6.17
By setting: Prison	6.26	6.42	6.80	7.61
Overall	5.09	5.22	6.11	6.94

Source: Treatment Returns (1st timepoint: n = 66. 2nd timepoint: n = 63. 3rd timepoint: n = 56. 4th timepoint: n = 52).

Programme participant motivation levels were compared pre and post programme (i.e. the 1st and 4th data collection points at the pre-group 1:1 and ‘Bringing it Together’ respectively).⁴² There was a statistically significant difference in the HMS scores pre and post programme.⁴³ This represents a large effect size in favour of the programme and suggests average motivation levels increased through delivery.

Comparison of domains

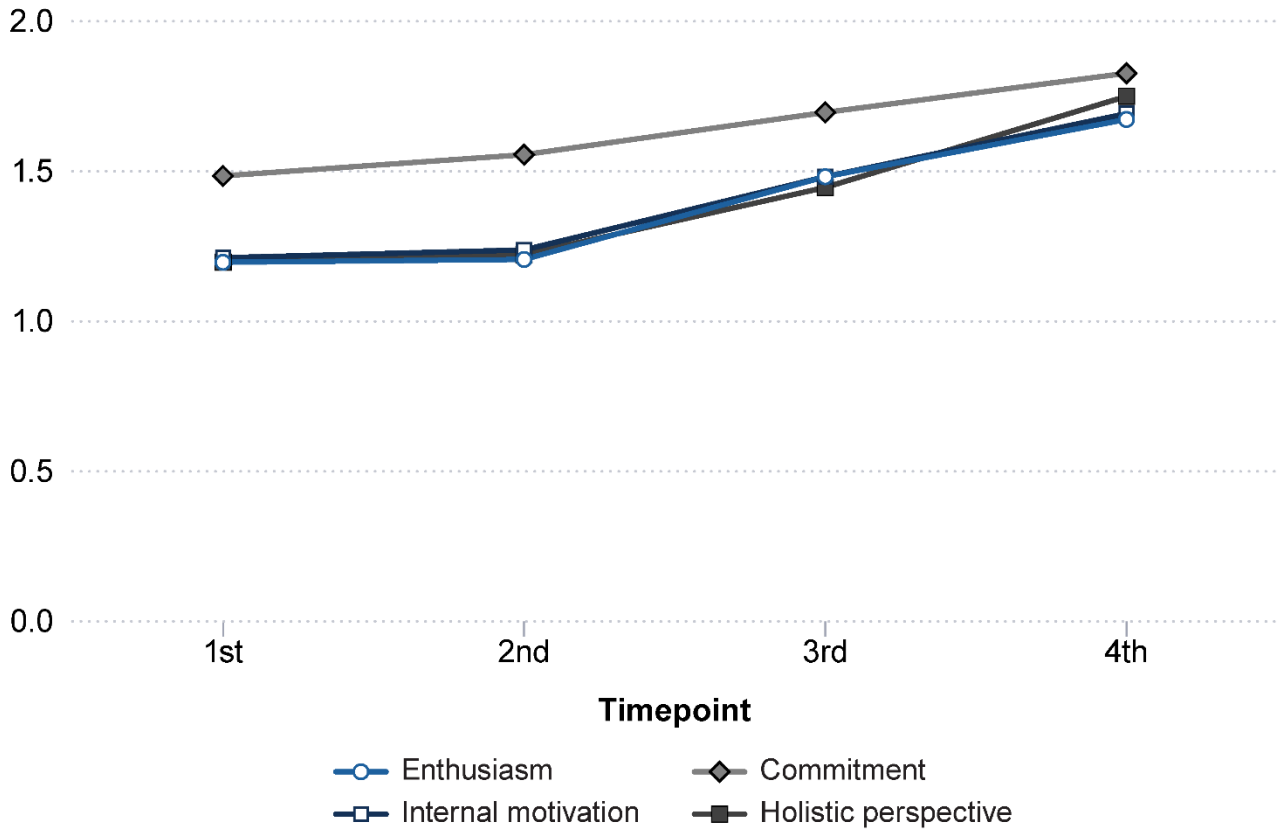
Figure 4 shows the HMS domain scores at each data collection timepoint. An increase in score was observed between each timepoint, suggesting the facilitators believed there to be an increase in evidence of participant motivation as the programme progressed. While small changes in score were seen across the domains between the 1st and 2nd data

⁴² using a paired samples Wilcoxon test. As the test required data for each individual at both timepoints, only those with complete cases were included (n = 52).

⁴³ V = 649.5, p < .001, r = 0.661

collection points, all domains were found to increase by greater magnitudes between the 2nd and 3rd timepoints and between the 3rd and 4th timepoints.

Figure 4: Average HMS score at each data collection timepoint by domain



The highest average change in score pre to post was observed in the holistic perspective domain, while the smallest change pre to post was observed in the commitment domain. However, the commitment domain had a higher starting level compared to the other domains.

4.7 Changes in Participants

There was evidence of participants making progress towards the desired changes the programme aimed to achieve. Programme participants gave examples of perceived changes in themselves throughout the programme. Staff supported this observation. Several participants, across both men and women's cohorts, demonstrated change in their ability to engage in the programme, where previously they had dropped out of other activities or disengaged from other programmes.

“I would say at this point in their lives it’s been life changing. I’m not saying long-term they’re going to maintain changes or whatever else, but the things that they’re coming back and reporting to us are a real surprise.” **[Staff, community]**

Contrary to some comments from facilitators noted in section 4.5.3 about the (lack of) focus on risks and triggers, programme participants said that they had got to know themselves better through the programme, identifying triggers, and patterns in behaviours.

“...prior to coming into prison and my offending, I was living on my own, I was very isolated. So, I’ve learnt that’s one of my risks that I need to manage... that’s one of the biggest things I took away from the programme.” **[Programme participant, prison]**

Programme participants also gave examples where other people had noted changes in them (such as friends, family or colleagues).

“One of the girls at work said, ‘I can tell you’ve done your programme, because you’ve changed. You’re a lot brighter and you’re a lot more confident.’ I’ve learned to manage my problems a lot better. So, before, I used to let stuff build up, whereas now I’m not going to worry about that at the moment, because that’s not a problem, and a lot more about managing my anxiety.” **[Programme participant, prison]**

Several participants, across prison and community, indicated they used the programme content and associated skills ‘on a daily basis’. Often this was in line with the short-term outcomes described in the ToC, such as a better understanding of arousal and emotions, and domains of the Success Wheel. The following section outlines the changes described by participants and staff as they relate to the Success Wheel domains.

‘Managing Myself’: had a high volume of supporting quotes and evidence from both staff and participant interviews. This included short term outcomes such as ‘better able to manage thinking and use self-talk’, and ‘recognises situations that lead to unhelpful behaviour’.

“I’m dealing with-, basically when someone gets a bit nasty or a bit out of order with me, I don’t get violent anymore. I don’t get as much angry. I just say, ‘I don’t want to talk about this. See you later.’ That’s what I say. But basically, I don’t say, ‘Oh, right, you want a fight?’ Do you know what I mean. So, yes, I’ve basically seen that really, the difference in me, and I can deal with certain situations now, certain problems, in a better perspective than I used to.” **[Programme participant, community]**

‘Better able to use problem solving skills’ was commonly cited by programme participants alongside using ‘I language’ and assertive communication styles rather than aggression.

“We’ve had two lads the last couple of weeks, looking at old me behaviour. Something happens and they would have responded with violence to save face... There’s two different situations, two different prisoners, and both of them have used Stop and Think... there’s been a change in behaviour.” [Staff, prison]

However, within this segment, ‘better able to manage impulsivity’ had mixed evidence as staff described scenarios in prison sites where some participants had still engaged in antisocial behaviour on the wings (despite some improvements and reductions in the frequency of this occurring). This was particularly pertinent for those in the young adult prison. Programme participants acknowledged some challenges in practising certain skills in the prison environment.

‘Healthy Thinking’: There was evidence across staff and programme participant interviews relating to improvements in this domain. This included mechanisms such as ‘increased perspective taking’. There was evidence to support this in the context of understanding the views and positions of family, friends and victims amongst programme participants.

‘Positive Relationships’: The extent people discussed changes in their ‘Positive Relationships’ was mixed. With regards to the outcome ‘better equipped to start and maintain healthy intimate relationships’; programme participants felt they had not had the opportunity to enact this given their current set-up (in prison, for example). However, some

programme participants in community reflected there had been improvements in their existing relationships.

“...being in a toxic relationship, and what isn’t a healthy relationship, i.e. arguing all the time, drinking all the time, violence, that sort of thing is obviously what’s not acceptable. Also, having the ability to, if you have issues in a relationship, being able to talk it out without losing your temper.” **[Programme participant, community]**

There was insufficient evidence from qualitative interviews to support the outcome ‘better understanding of social and cultural influences and how they shaped self-development’. Although the biopsychosocial model was mentioned by some interviewees, this was very infrequent. Similarly, ‘better able to manage unhelpful peer influences’ had mixed feedback because the confines of the justice setting meant that people could not fully disassociate from negative peers or, alternatively, had been forced to separate from peers by their orders or sentences. The support spider⁴⁴ exercise and specific exercises on Building Choices were said to support participants’ understanding of their relationships (not only intimate relationships), and who was in their support network. Participants often added professionals, such as the Jobcentre or OMU, to their support network as a result of the programme, realising they could draw on external support options outside of immediate friends and family.

“...the Support Spider, there were friends and family, and there were more professional-based figures as well, such as probation, Offender Management Unit worker as well. Again, I think it’s just a newfound appreciation, just the further adaption of being able to appreciate them.” **[Programme participant, prison]**

‘Purpose’: There was also evidence to support changes in accordance with the final segment on the Success Wheel, ‘Purpose’. Outcomes such as ‘increased understanding of strengths’ were evidenced throughout participant and staff interviews and were facilitated by skills practice where there was praise for people’s strengths and progress.

⁴⁴ The support spider captures the support and important relationships needed to assist participants whilst on the programme and beyond.

The short-term outcome ‘understanding goals and links them to values’ received mixed feedback. While participants articulated their goals and ambitions after the programme, they were not explicitly able to link these to their personal values. programme participants rarely described a change to their purpose or plans, but they reflected on how the programme had helped them feel confident about the goals they had.

5. Conclusion

The process evaluation sought to explore how Building Choices was being delivered and implemented across Design Test sites and draw out learning for the next phase of programme implementation. A Theory-Based Evaluation was used, with a mixed-methods approach (using both qualitative and quantitative methods), including an assessment of self- and staff reported changes across short term programme outcomes.

This was a focussed Design Test of Building Choices with a small number of participants. Assessment of outcomes data used a before and after programme participation analysis approach and therefore can only be regarded as indicative evidence. However, within these methodological constraints, the findings indicate that Building Choices shows promise and was mostly implemented and delivered as intended.

5.1 Key Findings

i. **Is the programme being implemented and delivered as planned/intended?**

Generally, the programme was implemented and delivered as intended, adhering to the Delivery Guide. This was evident in the triangulation of qualitative, quantitative and QA data. The programme was reported to be engaging and there was good working alliance across settings and cohorts. There were some challenges delivering to young adult males with LDC (who were prison based) which is reflective of wider programme delivery concerns for this group. Treatment managers and facilitators reported thorough training in preparation for implementation and delivery. The WWFM meetings allowed participants and facilitators to meet each other ahead of the programme. This supported implementation and delivery.

However, staff outlined some areas of concern which could contribute to improved implementation and delivery in the future. Facilitators delivering to LDC cohorts for the first time had to make several adaptations to materials and handouts and felt a standalone LDC Delivery Guide would be useful. Programme facilitators across Building Choices reported they would have liked more discretion for excluding some programme content

(particular exercises), based on group need, which they and some programme participants found repetitive. Even though AcPs, such as the Thinking Skills Programme, have been available for men and women with diverse offence histories for several decades (and were successfully trialled for people with LDC, Oakes et al. 2016), there was still a concern from facilitators that some 'offence specific' content or components were missing. There was a related desire for more structure and direction over 'tailored conversations' to enable criminogenic needs to be covered in one-to-one sessions.

ii. Is the programme reaching the intended target groups?

Overall, the programme was reaching the intended target groups. The PNI was viewed positively and the WWFM meeting was useful for exploring readiness to engage and specific responsivity considerations. There was a higher rate of attrition in community settings than prison, although this is in line with existing programmes. Qualitative findings suggested that attrition in prison was more likely to be due to issues outside of the suitability of the programme and pertained to the individual (e.g. mental health concerns or being in segregation). Across prison sites, feedback suggested a small number of participants might have been better placed on Building Choices Plus (for those with LDC).

iii. Is the programme producing the desired outcomes (based on perceptions)?

The qualitative interview data provides an indication that the desired outcomes of the programme were being produced. Quantitative analysis of SWM domains also suggest improvements for programme participants in managing emotions, problem solving, communication skills and healthy relationships with others (including professionals). Without a comparison group however, it is not possible to attribute these changes to the programme. In addition, facilitators and programme participants were able to give examples of progress they, and others, had noticed since engaging in the programme.

iv. Does the programme show promise on short term programme outcomes (e.g. distance travelled on the Success Wheel Measure)?

Improvements were made across key programme targets. Analysis of the SWM showed overall increases in scores pre to post programme, and in the individual domains for both prison and community. This provides indicative (i.e., not causal) evidence that Building Choices is meeting its intervention aims, in line with the ToC. Programme motivation levels (analysis of HMS scores) varied between cohorts; however, overall reported levels of

motivation were reasonably high, and improvements were seen from pre to post programme for all cohorts, sites and settings.

5.2 Lessons learned

i. What worked well?

- The PNI was reported by practitioners to be quicker than the PNA and correctly screened who was eligible for the programme in line with RNR principles.
- The WWFM Meeting embeds responsivity into Building Choices throughout. It also offered an opportunity to build rapport between the practitioner and participant before the programme started.
- There were reported positive changes in motivation to engage with Building Choices across its duration (as measured by the HMS). This was despite community cohorts having a much lower reported level of motivation at the start, relative to prison cohorts.
- There was evidence, across a range of data sources, that Building Choices achieved several short-term outcomes from the ToC. This was across settings and cohorts.
- The size and frequency of the group was said to be appropriate in both community and prison settings. The group size allowed for a positive group dynamic to be established, and participants described they felt safe and supported by facilitators.
- Relatedly, a range of data sources indicated good working alliance between programme practitioners and participants across settings and cohorts.
- Key elements of the programme such as the Success Wheel, the Great Eight and the focus on skills logs and practices were seen to support the achievement of these outcomes.
- Programme participants reflected that the programme focused on them as individuals and their future, rather than their offence. This was said to support engagement in the programme and working alliance between facilitators and programme participants.

- For those who engaged in 'Getting Ready' the module was reported to adequately prepare, motivate and engage participants for Building Choices. 'Getting Ready' landed especially well for people with LDC.

ii. **Considerations for programme improvement**

- The Delivery Guide was unanimously reported by staff to be too lengthy to engage with fully and there were calls for a standalone LDC guide (rather than simply a companion guide).
- There were examples where people's learning needs had been missed despite the PNI and WWFM meeting. Staff suggested more time to assess participants in the selection process (perhaps meeting them more than once); especially to screen for LDC. Staff suggested undertaking the WWFM, and staff then coming back together as a programmes team to discuss which pathway was most appropriate before taking consent to engage on the programme.
- Staff found the Design Test challenging in terms of learning a new programme, delivering it at pace, offering catch up sessions between thrice weekly groups (prison setting) and adhering to the Delivery Guides (for QA and integrity purposes). They also felt this limited their ability to modify the programme and exercises based on the group needs and dynamic on any given day.
- 'Getting Ready' was said to be too lengthy and staff and programme participants felt its objectives could be achieved in fewer than 15 sessions.
- The amount of repetition in Building Choices was said to be problematic, especially when group members found exercises challenging or did not engage.
- There were some suggestions for amendments to be made for participants with LDC or young adults who found it harder to engage with certain exercises.
- There was some feedback about the programme being too future orientated and losing important previous concepts such as 'old me'.
- Some facilitators expressed concern over the perceived lack of 'offence specific' work within the group (namely for PCOSOs or individuals with IPV/DA offence histories). The extent to which such work is truly 'missing' from the programme, as opposed to facilitators 'missing' opportunities to personalise material and tailor learning through offence-specific conversations, is unclear. In addition, the extent

to which facilitator's concerns were influenced by implementation issues specific to the Design Test needs to be considered, and further evaluation of Building Choices should enable exploration of this issue.

- Tailored conversations were an opportunity to target individual needs, but these were said to lack structure relative to previous I-Packs. Additional support provided to facilitators by the Design Test team to help with tailored conversations went some way in ameliorating the initial difficulties discussed.
- It may also be useful to consider how the changes in the programme (relative to BBR for example) could be proactively addressed in communication packages ahead of future Building Choices programmes being delivered.
- There was variation in OM's understanding and capacity to support 'Moving Forward' conversations.

These findings were considered by HMPPS in a dynamic way and were used to inform the next phase of programme refinement and implementation (see Appendix A). In general, the findings from this small-scale Design Test of Building Choices are promising.

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Appendix A

Responding to the outcomes of the Building Choices Process Study

The Design Test of Building Choices was a small-scale test of whether evidence informed design could be ‘brought to life’ within both custody and community and with groups of interest as follows:

- People convicted of sexual offending,
- People convicted of intimate partner violence and domestic abuse,
- People convicted of general violence,
- People with learning disability and challenges,
- Younger adult males
- Women

It forms part of a longer-term implementation strategy designed to deliver a fully embedded, quality service that translates into promising outcomes. As a Design Test the process study results are derived from a unique test and learning scenario with the intention of iterative design refinement.

The process study was one part of multiple loops of feedback built into the Design Test. These feedback loops included quality assurance, engagement from the HMPPS Lived Experience Panel and Design Test site engagement. All feedback was considered on balance and collectively supported refinement informed by a programme of co-production inclusive of delivery teams involved in the Design Test. In response, Building Choices has undergone extensive updates to enhance its accessibility, responsiveness, and support for facilitators and participants alike. These updates are summarised below.

Design of the programme

To improve the accessibility of the programme materials, the Delivery Guide was streamlined with an emphasis on visual enhancements and improved formatting to be more user-friendly, especially for facilitators with neurodivergent needs. Additionally, the My Story Portfolio was redesigned with a more visually appealing layout to help

participants engage more effectively. This included breaking down the content into smaller, manageable portions to avoid overwhelming participants. The Portfolio also now features session summaries and reminders of each skill benefits to improve retention and maximise learning outcomes.

Furthermore, strengthened guidance on delivering Skills Logs, Skills Coaching, and Future Me Skills Practices was introduced to build facilitator confidence and support participant development.

The High Intensity Pathway's Getting Ready Module was co-designed to refine its flow and eliminate repetitive content. A smoother transition into the Getting Started module was created, replacing redundant My Story Life Map exercises with alternative self-reflection activities, aimed at helping participants develop insights into their behaviour patterns as preparation for creating a life map in later sessions. Similar refinements were applied to other modules within the Building Choices programme, such as Managing Life's Problems and People Around Me, with attention to inclusive language and terminology across the pathways.

To address offence-focused conversations, particularly around issues like sexual thoughts and jealousy, new guidance was developed. Tips for targeting specific types of conversations relevant to participants with certain convictions were strengthened, including Tailored Conversations utilising tools such as the Success Wheel, My Story Life Map, and Future Me Plan to meet unique cohort needs across different modules.

A dedicated guide for the Learning Disabilities and Challenges (LDC) pathway was developed to reduce cognitive load on facilitators by providing tailored instructions for delivering each session to this group. This guide aligns with core design principles to better meet the responsivity needs of participants with LDC.

To support trauma informed delivery, guidance in relevant sessions was strengthened especially in relation to facilitation of the My Story Life Map exercises. This guidance is reinforced on training when learners are introduced to the My Story Life Map and consider effective ways to deliver it with participants that are trauma sensitive.

Finally, Moving Forward as a package of support for sentence management colleagues has been expanded beyond the focus on post programme contacts. The support provided now seeks to enable confident wrap around sentence management support from programme referrals, motivation to engage in the programme through to completion, as well as post programme support.

Assessment

Refinements were made to the assessment approach and guide to improve accuracy and clarity in evaluating participants' needs, particularly when obtaining informed consent before beginning the programme. Guidance was also bolstered to engage sentence management teams in ensuring timely and high-quality OASys (Offender Assessment System) assessments, which are critical for accurate Programmes Need Identifier (PNI) results. Further engagement with broader system improvement projects was initiated to ensure that Building Choices is effectively integrated into wider assessment systems. Data collection commenced to facilitate future adjustments to risk thresholds within Building Choices, enabling evidence-based recalibration as needed.

An updated What Works for Me Meeting (WWFM) was introduced, with reduced complexity and an added focus on cultural factors. Additionally, greater emphasis on recognising and understanding the prevalence of "masking" behaviours among individuals with LDC was added, allowing facilitators to identify characteristics that may indicate the need for an LDC-specific pathway. New resources after the Design Test, included a recorded demonstration of the WWFM and a Treatment Manager Resource Pack to support local coaching practices.

The Needs and Suitability guide was also revised to make it more concise, with a summary page and clearer guidance to aid clinical decision-making processes.

Training

The training pathway for facilitators was refined, with online learning modules reserved primarily for theoretical content to maximise the value of face-to-face sessions for skill-building.

In relation to skills practice in action training, guidance on the processes were simplified in the Delivery Guide which was also carried through into training to provide consistency in messaging. A series of recorded demonstrations of these in-action processes for facilitators to access at any time was also made available to support understanding and effective delivery.

All staff have access to up-to-date Delivery Guides and supporting documents before training, enabling them to better prepare. The Preparation Meeting was also redesigned to clarify the role of assessments and allows space for collaboratively setting goals for a safe, supportive learning environment. Additionally, the Theory Module was streamlined and paired with a comprehensive workbook to support understanding and practical application of programme theories.

Finally, an additional three-day skills practice event was introduced to the training pathway, dedicated to equipping facilitators with the skills needed to deliver Building Choices plus.

Facilitators now also engage in exercises focused on planning and delivering content for various participant cohorts, considering guidance for addressing diverse needs across offending and responsivity groups. This comprehensive approach aims to improve facilitators' confidence and adaptability, ensuring the Building Choices programme can meet a wide range of participant needs effectively.

Delivery Standards in the Management Manual

Further guidance was included within the Management Manual about how to operationalise the planning and supervision requirements. The group size within the community was trialled at an increased size of ten to support completion rates and challenges with attrition. The process of 'Bus stopping' was introduced, as a mechanism that enables participants to re-join a different group at a similar point to where they have come off the programme (within a set time) to further support completion rates. The recommendation of delivering two sessions a week as the ideal was retained to support delivery, and the resourcing of catch-up sessions.

Implementation lessons learnt from the Design Test were translated into a refined engagement and implementation support package for Court Staff who refer to the programme using the Pre-Sentence Report, and the judiciary in their understanding of the programme.

The support includes a comprehensive 'court implementation pack' developed for delivery teams and court leads to share with the judiciary and their pre-sentence report writers. The pack outlines programme content and the rationale along with 'presentation notes' to enable it to be delivered effectively by staff new to the change. Increased programme information was also made available in the pack including 'cohort briefings' which outline how the design of Building Choices builds on existing AcPs to still meet the needs of all specific offence types and a range of responsivity factors.

Court staff also have access to a walk-through of the assessment process to prepare them for implementation. Access to fortnightly implementation meetings over the rollout period was also provided to promoting local understanding and embedding of processes.

Alongside this work specific to court staff and the judiciary, work to engage sentence management colleagues in Moving Forward took place to improve clarity around what it is and how it helps.

Appendix B

Building Choices Theory of Change

The Theory of Change (ToC) was based on the evidence-based theories in the Building Choices Theory and Design Guide developed by HMPPS. To develop and refine the ToC, key stakeholders were consulted over several months, through three workshops and email correspondences. These stakeholders worked in prison and community settings and included members of the Building Choices Design Team, Implementation Team, Quality Assurance Team, Assessment Team, Training Team, and colleagues from HMPPS Psychology Services Group.

The ToC will be iterated based on findings from ongoing process, impact, and economic evaluations. Descriptions of the programme may change during the refinement process informed by evaluation and feedback from Design Test sites.

Training Process for Staff and Facilitators

Staff received both in-person and online training, which was assessed.

The Design Test involved two iterations of the facilitator training pathway:

- **New Facilitator Pathway:** This included a preparation meeting (half a day online); foundations training (three days online); skills training (five days in-person); and programme training (five days in-person). This is the longer of the two pathways, allocating more time to the basic skills of facilitation and allowing learners more time to practice new skills. This pathway was delivered to initial Design Test facilitators in late 2023.
- **Existing Facilitator Pathway:** Created based on feedback from the New Facilitator Pathway. This included a preparation meeting (half a day online) and Evolution training (five days in person). If the facilitator had not previously completed training core concepts and theories of existing programmes, they would also complete the Foundations training (three days online).

Both pathways contained the same level of theory input and programme content. Both were assessed against a core competency framework.⁴⁵ At the end of each pathway, learners were given a result of 'ready' or 'not yet ready' to proceed to supported delivery of the programme. Design Test training during early 2024 consisted of both Existing Facilitator and New Facilitator pathways to ensure that all versions were tested fully prior to further rollout.

Programme Activities

On the ToC model (see Figure 2), the programme activities illustrate what inputs are part of the programme delivery. Each of the programme activities involves utilising resources and one or more cognitive-behavioural methods (e.g., mindfulness, problem-solving training). Additional information about the specific programme activities is detailed below.

Programme Assessment

The assessment determines whether individuals are eligible for Building Choices and, if so, which programme pathway (e.g., LDC, Moderate Intensity, High Intensity) is best suited to them. The assessment involves:

- Actuarial risk assessment instruments and a Structured Professional Judgement tool (used to assess risk of proven reoffending).
- The Programme Needs Identifier (PNI) is used to understand person-centred criminogenic need across four domains (Sexual Interests, Cognitive, Relationships, and Self-Management).
- The WWFM meeting explores and supports specific responsivity. This includes recognising signs of LDC, or other responsivity considerations, and putting in place adaptations to help participants with engagement. The WWFM template used in the meeting has four sections: 'What is going on for me now?', 'What makes me who I am?', 'What works for my learning', and a 'What Works for Me plan'.

⁴⁵ The core competency framework is a set of behaviours which describe effective facilitation, covering how the guide is used, a motivational style, skills for maintaining engagement, effective preparation and reflective practice.

For the Design Test, individuals assessed to have medium or above risk of reoffending and medium or above levels of criminogenic need were placed on the Moderate intensity pathway, consisting of the core Building Choices modules (21 group sessions and 5 one-to-one sessions; approx. 58 hours of dose). Those assessed as medium and above risk with high levels of need were placed on the High Intensity pathway⁴⁶ which involves a pre-programme module called ‘Getting Ready’, followed by the core Building Choices modules, and additional skills practice sessions (46 group sessions and 6 one-to-one sessions in total; approx. 121 hours of dose).

Pre-programme – ‘Getting Ready’ The first module in the High Intensity pathway, Getting Ready, allows extended opportunity for participants and facilitators to get to know each other. Good relationships help people feel connected and safe, creating a climate for engagement and change.

Getting Ready consists of 15 group sessions and one one-to-one session. It adds approximately 31 hours of dose to the High Intensity pathway. Cognitive behavioural methods in Getting Ready include emotional regulation and arousal reduction procedures (e.g., mindfulness ‘Here and Now’, self-talk, deep breathing / soothing), psychoeducation, enhancing motivation, and values clarification. The key components are illustrated in Table B1.

Table B1: Building Choices: Key components of Getting Ready

Module component	Skills/behaviours
Build constructive working relationships and establish a sense of safety	Goals, Support Spider, peer support, group environment including working to the conditions for success and working alliance
Strengthen self-regulation skills and skills to participate	Calming Breathing, Dropping Anchor, Notice 5 Things, Being Kind to Ourselves & Others, Taking Care of Ourselves, Time Out, Relaxation, Calming Self-Talk, Safe-Space Visualisation, Defusion and Acceptance mindfulness

⁴⁶ This guidance has since been updated and individuals assessed as high/very high risk and presenting with high need are now in scope to access the High Intensity Pathway. Individuals who are assessed as medium/high/very high risk but present with medium need will now progress to the Moderate Intensity Pathway.

Module component	Skills/behaviours
Provide greater time to get to know themselves	Understanding Myself (My Story Life Map), What I'm Good At, What Gets in the Way including My Strong Thoughts, Values Clarification, Skills Logs
Stimulate curiosity in change	Sticking at it, Commitment to Change, Great 8

Module 1 – ‘Getting Started’ offers preparatory sessions to support engagement and to stimulate curiosity for change. For those on the High Intensity pathway who completed ‘Getting Ready’, this module provides opportunity for repetition and consolidation of their earlier learning.

Made up of two group sessions and one individual session. Cognitive behavioural methods include enhancing motivation, and values clarification. The key components of the module are illustrated in Table B2.

Table B2: Building Choices: Key components of ‘Getting Started’

Module component	Skills/behaviours
Engagement/building alliance	Success Wheel, expectations of self & others, working together (revisit conditions of success), building rapport, Great 8, Self-Monitoring, My Story & Future Me Life Plan, Support Spider
Psychoeducation (biopsychosocial)	Who Am I, My Story Life Map, values and goals

Module 2 – ‘Managing Myself’ focuses on strengthening participants’ abilities to understand and regulate feelings, thoughts and behaviours in a flexible way.

Made up of six group sessions (nine for the High Intensity pathway) and one individual session. Cognitive behavioural methods include mindfulness ‘Here and Now’, emotional regulation, arousal reduction, cognitive reappraisal, self-management, and enhancing motivation. The key components of the module are illustrated in Table B3.

Table B3: Building Choices: Key components of ‘Managing Myself’

Module component	Skills/behaviours
Psychoeducation	Recognising emotions (helpful and unhelpful influences), arousal recognition/defining emotions, arousal curve (including fight/flight/freeze), patterns in thinking and behaviour, Antecedent-Behaviour-Consequence (ABC), difficult emotions/thinking, impact of thinking on behaviour.
Skills practice/coaching (based on need)	Self-regulation skills (belly breathing, PMR, Time Out, Dropping Anchor, Notice 5 Things, Surf the Urge), skills for managing thinking (defusion and acceptance mindfulness, cognitive reappraisal self-talk)

Module 3 – ‘Managing Life’s Problems’ is about being able to manage personally relevant problems in helpful ways by thinking through decisions.

Made up of four group sessions (Seven for the High Intensity pathway) and one individual session. Cognitive behavioural methods include problem solving training, interpersonal skills practice, and enhancing motivation. The key components of the module are illustrated in Table B4.

Table B4: Building Choices: Key components of ‘Managing Life’s Problems’

Module component	Skills/behaviours
Psychoeducation and skills practice/coaching	Approaching problems (passive/aggressive/assertive)
Skills practice/coaching – problem solving	Problem solving strategy, I-Language, having a go at problem solving
Skills practice/coaching – interpersonal skills for problem solving	Assertiveness I-Language

Module 4 – ‘People Around Me’ AcP on the importance of quality relationships, the influence of those around us, and managing some of the difficulties in establishing and maintaining relationships through strengthening interpersonal skills.

Made up of six group sessions (nine for the High Intensity pathway) and 1 individual session. Cognitive behavioural methods include interpersonal skills practice, arousal

reduction and emotional regulation, and enhancing motivation. The key components of the module are illustrated in Table B5.

Table B5: Building Choices: Key components of ‘People Around Me’

Module component	Skills/behaviours
Psychoeducation (biopsychosocial)	Sources of influence (who/what are they and how they have shaped me)
Skills practice/coaching – interpersonal skills practice	Managing influence (skills to build resilience to influences)
Psychoeducation (relationships)	Relationships, intimacy & attachment, healthy/unhealthy relationships, different types of relationships, roles/responsibilities in relationships, parenting, healthy sex including consent
Skills practice/coaching – interpersonal/intimacy skills practice	Conflict resolution, negotiation, coping with rejection, coping with relationships ending, understanding and accepting criticism, responding to persuasion, perspective taking, responding to the feelings of others, giving praise / instructions, making requests, showing anger or affection, apologising

Module 5 – ‘Bringing It All Together’ consolidates learning from the previous modules, allowing participants to practise handling a personally relevant situation that could test Future Me or lead them towards a harmful life.

Made up of three group sessions (four for the High Intensity pathway). Cognitive behavioural methods include enhancing motivation and values clarification. The key component of the module is illustrated in Table B6.

Table B6: Building Choices: Key components of ‘Bringing It All Together’

Module component	Skills/behaviours
Skills practice – Future Me Plan (enables participants to consolidate their values and goals, their existing and newly acquired skills that help achieve these goals, barriers that might get in the way, and sources of support).	Bringing together all the combined skills from previous modules into a situation from participants’ Future Me Plan (combining self-regulation/arousal management, flexible thinking, problem solving and relationship skills)

Post Programme Review

One meeting between the participant, Prison Offender Manager (POM) or Probation Practitioners (excepting those affected by probation reset⁴⁷), facilitator and other relevant attendees (e.g. a keyworker, a supportive member of staff, a family member). The aim of this is to celebrate, consolidate and bring together the learning from the programme and set goals for the future.

‘Moving Forward’

One to five discussions following on from the post programme review with Probation Practitioners or POM (depending on whether the programme graduate is in community or prison and who the responsible officer is). These continued discussions aim to enable programme graduates to maintain and generalise their learning, supporting desistance.⁴⁸

Mechanisms of Change

The mechanisms examine how programme participants are expected to experience and act upon the intervention processes and resources which intend to effect change. This includes skills development, alongside expectations about how they will feel, insights they will develop, and their level of engagement.

The mechanisms of change are informed by the six key principles discussed in the Building Choices Theory and Design Guide:

- ‘Cognitive behavioural therapy approaches’, which sits between activities and mechanisms, aligns with Principles 3–5 (strengthening biological, psychological, and social resources). These CBT methods, along with how they are expected to support change, are described in Table B7.
- ‘Risk-Dose Proportionality’ aligns with Principle 1 (proportionality to risk)
- ‘Responsivity Processes’ maps onto Principle 2 (responsivity to biological, psychological and social circumstances).

⁴⁷ Probation reset (policy changes) put in place in April 2024 meant that Moving Forward was not provided for some participants. Participants in the final third of their sentence do not access Moving Forward unless they are exempt from the Probation reset. For example, Very High risk of serious harm, those managed by the National Security Division, all cases with current active child protection in place and all MAPPA cases (levels 1–3 and categories 1–4).

⁴⁸ Reinforcement of programme learnings over time is well evidenced.

- ‘Strengths Based Approaches’ supports Principle 6 (strengthening the intention to desist).

These mechanisms and principles feed into the ‘Changes we expect to see in the programme participant’. For each of these, the modules that are especially relevant to inducing that change are marked in orange on the left-hand side of each box (labelled ‘Related Module’) in the ToC (Figure 2).

Table B7: Approaches and processes expected to support change in programme participants

Approach/CBT Method	Description of how this will support the change process (including technical/evidential mediators of change)
Principle 2: Multimodal & brain friendly	To support learning and appeal to neurodiversity supporting engagement and the presentation of material in a variety of ways that are accessible and sensitive to neurodivergences and a range of cognitive abilities
Principle 2: Trauma informed	To engage participants and optimise their learning by creating an environment that is psychologically safe enough to build trust, alliance, self-regulation and therefore learning capacity. This environment is established by recognising and building on strengths and embedding into design the principles of safety, trust, choice, collaboration, and empowerment, including cultural considerations.
Principle 2: Working alliance	Establishing a collaborative, trusting working relationship between staff and participants to help people feel connected and safe enough enabling a context for engagement and change.
Principle 2: Supportive authority	Operationalising a working alliance and safe environment, that emphasises existing skills and provides opportunity to try out change by learning skills. This is achieved by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone signing-up to the terms of effective engagement (Conditions of Success) • Promoting choice and autonomy for everyone, • Positive coaching from staff
Principle 2: Maximising engagement	Providing all participants with space to connect to values, stimulating curiosity in change and how engagement might help align values and behaviour. For medium-high risk / high need participants additional support to establish safety in the working relationship, strengthen skills for engagement, orient to the programme process and explore the potential of change.

Approach/CBT Method	Description of how this will support the change process (including technical/evidential mediators of change)
Principle 2: Attention to specific responsivity factors	Adapting to the characteristics of the individual including their strengths, learning ability, culture, gender, age, mental and physical health and other factors as a foundation for personalising the programme and enhancing opportunity for people to fully participate.
Principle 2: Gender responsive programming for women	To inform and support working with women, drawing on a broad set of guiding principles referred to as gender responsive principles.
Principle 3: Neuroplasticity	The capacity of the brain to reorganise the connections between cells in response to new learning and enable changes in neural networks as a basis for adaptation.
Principle 3: Problem solving	Able to use problem-solving skills (i.e., define a problem, generate options, weigh up costs and benefits, plan and implement). Improved executive functions.
Principle 3: Executive functioning & the Great 8 Tactics	Able to employ short cuts to memory supporting development of neural pathways and overall executive functioning.
Principle 3: Monitoring & Repetition	Strengthened neural connections which underpin new skills through ongoing rehearsal and repetition.
Principle 3: Mindfulness	Improved attention to thoughts, feelings, urges, sensations, and the environment. Supports self-regulation.
Principle 3: Regulating arousal	Better use of body-based techniques and breathing to soothe and regulate arousal moderated in part by changes in parasympathetic arousal.
Principle 3: Diet, sleep, exercise, medication	Better able to engage and learn through improved physical and mental health.
Principle 4: Decentring/Defusion	Better insight into own thinking improving cognitive flexibility. Decentring or metacognition – being aware of own thinking; taking a step back and adopting a perspective where thoughts and feelings are taken less literally.
Principle 4: Acceptance	Better insight into own thinking improving cognitive flexibility. Psychological acceptance and a willingness to open up to our experiences, including thoughts and feelings and changing the relationship with them.

Approach/CBT Method	Description of how this will support the change process (including technical/evidential mediators of change)
Principle 4: Values clarification	Better understanding of what is important in life (i.e., family, love, friendship, honesty, caring, connection, security, respect, peace) increasing personal investment in change.
Principle 4: Self-management/ learning processes	Better awareness and understanding of the link between situations, behaviour (including thoughts, feelings) and consequences, supporting development and retention of new behaviours through behaviour learning processes (i.e. reinforcement).
Principle 4: Cognitive reappraisal	Increased awareness of thoughts, and able to demonstrate improved flexible thinking by identifying and re-appraising certain thoughts or through improved metacognition (aware of own thinking and its effects)
Principle 4: Modifying beliefs	Identification of thinking and use of cognitive appraisal techniques and mindfulness exercises to support cognitive flexibility through reframing thinking/beliefs. New beliefs are validated through ongoing skills practice, application, and self-monitoring, providing opportunity to experience new thinking in real situations.
Principle 4: Emotion awareness & management	Better understanding of arousal and skills for emotional management.
Principle 5: Interpersonal skills	Improved ability to connect, manage and maintain relationships.
Principle 5: Group environment (facilitators and peers) /Working alliance	Opportunity to experience healthy pro-social relationships and live opportunity for listening, interacting using interpersonal skills, connecting with others & co-operation and practising skills with others.
Principle 5: Support Networks	Able to establish new supportive relationships and/or develop existing pro-social relationships and support networks including professional support.
Principle 6: Strengths based	An approach underpinned by belief in human potential and the capacity for people to develop, grow and change by drawing on their own strengths, and building upon these through opportunities to learn.
Principle 6: Motivational Interviewing	Increased engagement, reduced ambivalence and curiosity about the possibility of change. This links skills for change to what is important to people, building on values clarification (principle 4).
Principle 6: Desistance informed approaches	Development of a prosocial identity characterized with hope, purpose, goals and agency.

Approach/CBT Method	Description of how this will support the change process (including technical/evidential mediators of change)
Principle 6: Moving Forward	Recognises the benefits of ongoing maintenance and generalization to support the intent to desist.

Short Term Outcomes

A range of short-term programme outcomes were assessed as part of the process evaluation. A combination of administrative data and pre and post intervention measures were used to monitor participants' progress through Building Choices and related outcomes. The short-term outcome measures are the Success Wheel Measure (SWM) and the Horizon Motivation Scale (HMS) (which are embedded within the programme design), as well as the Working Alliance Inventory-Short Revised (WAI-SR).

Success Wheel Measure

The SWM is a structured clinical judgement of whether a participant derives benefit from the programme. It was developed by HMPPS and MoJ Data and Analysis Directorate and was inspired by Marques et al. (2005).

The Success Wheel conceptualises the four criminogenic need domains targeted by the programme (three risk related, and one focused on desistance factors) as opportunities for learning skills to lead a constructive, crime-free life. A fifth domain (also risk related) called 'Healthy Sex' is relevant only to those with a history of sexual offending. Participants are encouraged to set goals and monitor their own progress on their Success Wheel which in turn captures growth in their personal resources for change. The five Success Wheel domains are:

1. 'Managing Myself' (MM: e.g., managing emotions, and impulsivity and having effective problem-solving).
2. 'Healthy Thinking' (HT: e.g., flexible thinking,).
3. 'Positive Relationships' (PR: e.g., intimacy, perspective-taking, assertiveness, pro-social relationships).
4. 'Healthy Sex' (HS: e.g., managing unhealthy sexual arousal) (only for those with a history of sexual offending).
5. 'Purpose' (P: e.g., developing a prosocial identity, being an active member of society).

Each domain is scored 1–5 on a Likert scale from 1 (no or little evidence of success in this area) through 3 (moderate achievement in this area) to 5 (very good success in this area). This means, for participants where the ‘Healthy Sex’ domain is not applicable, overall SWM scores will range between 4–20, whilst for those where the ‘Healthy Sex’ domain is applicable, overall SWM scores will range between 5–25. The Success Wheel has been designed for adults with LDC by using simplified language and icons to help aid understanding.

The SWM is a pre and post measure scored at two points during Building Choices.⁴⁹ The initial SWM scores were taken at the end of the ‘Getting Started’ 1:1 and the final scores during the ‘Bringing It All Together’ 1:1. The High Intensity pathway includes a third SWM scoring as part of the ‘Getting Ready’ component of the programme that precedes Building Choices. This takes place in the Mid-Group 1:1 after session 7. There are three SWM scoring types at each data point: scores given by the participant, scores given by the facilitator, and a joint score which must be agreed between participant and facilitator.

Horizon Motivation Scale

The HMS is a 4-item scale developed by HMPPS and the Data and Analysis evaluation team in MoJ to measure motivation towards participating in Horizon (sexual offending programme),⁵⁰ and later used to measure motivation in other programmes such as Kaizen (violence programme).⁵¹

The four items in the HMS are:

1. Enthusiasm, a positive attitude, energy, and a drive to direct that energy positively.
2. Internal Motivation, an internal desire and willingness to participate.
3. Commitment, commitment to completing the programme and acceptance that doing so will take resolve and perseverance.

⁴⁹ See Elliott and Hambly (2023) SWM validation study for a sexual offending [Horizon] sample.

⁵⁰ See Elliott and Hambly (2023) HMS validation study for a sexual offending [Horizon] sample.

⁵¹ The Horizon Motivation Scale is informed by self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2008: Ryan & Deci, 2017) which defines motivation as the drive to engage in a course of action and recognises the different orientations of motivation such as intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. This theory states there are four aspects of activation and intention for motivation: energy, direction, persistence and equifinality (early life experiences).

4. Holistic Perspective, recognition that participation will contribute to living an offence-free life.

Facilitators score participants as either 0 (no evidence), 1 (some evidence) or 2 (strong evidence) on each of these items, giving an overall score range of 0–8. The HMS is scored four times throughout the programme for all participants: In the Pre-group 1:1, at the end of the 'Getting Started' 1:1, at the end of the 'Managing Life's Problems' module and after Bringing It All Together.

Working Alliance Inventory-Short Revised

The WAI-SR is a short and revised form of the working alliance inventory. It is used to measure the quality of the therapeutic relationship between a programme practitioner and participant. It is based on Bordin's model (1979) of the therapeutic alliance and includes 12 items that assess three key aspects:

- Agreement on the tasks of therapy: This evaluates how well the therapist and client agree on the activities and processes involved in the therapy.
- Agreement on the goals of therapy: This measures the mutual understanding and agreement on the objectives of the therapy.
- Development of an affective bond: This assesses the emotional connection and trust between the therapist and client.

The WAI-SR uses a 5-point Likert scale, where programme participants rate their experiences from 1 (never) to 5 (always). This tool helps ensure that both parties are aligned in their therapeutic journey, which is important for effective treatment outcomes.

Medium to Long Term Outcomes

The measures under 'primary outcomes' in the ToC (Figure 2) represent outcomes that are feasible to measure. The measures under 'potential indirect benefits/outcomes' represent outcomes which are more likely to sit outside of the scope of the evaluation (the lighter tones of green on the diagram represent greater uncertainty around the specific outcome measure).

Impact

This illustrates the long term overall aims of Building Choices. As a result of the programme, participants are expected to develop a pro-social identity. This is expected to lead to reduced reoffending, economic benefits, improved wider outcomes, and improved public protection.

Assumptions and Risks

Assumptions are the underlying conditions or resources that need to exist for the planned change to occur. These are detailed in Table 2 in the main report. There is a risk of possible disruption to the ToC if each assumption is not held. This can happen when there are process blockages, disruptive external factors, and unintended consequences. Where possible, the assumptions on the visual model will be tested during the evaluations.

Appendix C

Design Test Sites and Participants

Table C1: Design Test delivery sites and programme participant cohorts⁵²

Site	Cohorts being tested
Prison, site 1: Category C male prison	Moderate Intensity, PCOSO (People convicted of sexual offences)
Prison, site 2: Category A (high secure) male prison	High Intensity, General Violence High Intensity (LDC)
Prison, site 3: Category C prison for young male adults (18–25-year-olds)	Moderate Intensity, General Offending (GO) High Intensity (LDC)
Community, site 4: community region in the South of England	Moderate Intensity GO Plus Moderate Intensity (LDC) Moderate Intensity PCOSO Moderate Intensity IPV (Intimate Partner Violence)
Community, site 5: community region in the North of England	Moderate Intensity IPV Moderate Intensity Females (The first female group stopped due to attrition. ⁵³ A second female group was established, although limited data collection was available at the time to include in this report).

Table C2: Demographics of Design Test starters by setting

	Number	Mean Age	Age Standard Deviation	% Male	% Female	% White	% Black	% Asian	% Mixed Race
Starters: Community	42	33.3	8.9	93%	7%	76%	7%	12%	5%
Starters: Prison	36	33.0	13.9	100%	0%	78%	11%	3%	8%

⁵² The LDC group sizes are 6 rather than 8

⁵³ Several explanations were provided for why the first women's group folded these included; the programme was not mandatory at the time, childcare issues, substance use issues and other commitments.

	Number	Mean Age	Age Standard Deviation	% Male	% Female	% White	% Black	% Asian	% Mixed Race
Starters: Overall	78	33.2	11.4	96%	4%	77%	9%	8%	6%

Source: OASys data (n=78)

Table C3: Demographics of Design Test completers by setting

	Number	Mean Age	Age Standard Deviation	% Male	% Female	% White	% Black	% Asian	% Mixed Race
Completers: Community	24	32.0	8.4	100%	0%	65%	4%	22%	9%
Completers: Prison	29	34.0	14.7	100%	0%	72%	14%	3%	10%
Completers: Overall	53	33.1	12.2	100%	0%	69%	10%	12%	10%

Source: OASys data (n=53)

Table C4: Demographics of Design Test non-completers by setting

	Number	Mean Age	Age Standard Deviation	% Male	% Female	% White	% Black	% Asian	% Mixed Race
Non-completers: Community	18	35.0	9.6	83%	17%	89%	11%	0%	0%
Non-completers: Prison	7	28.9	9.8	100%	0%	100%	0%	0%	0%
Non-completers: Overall	25	33.3	9.8	88%	12%	92%	8%	0%	0%

Source: OASys data (n=25)

Tables C5 – C6 show attrition rates and reasons for non-completion of Building Choices. Attrition rates for the existing suite of AcPs were calculated from Management Information data in the HMPPS Performance Hub.

Table C5: Comparison of Design Test Attrition Rates to sites' 2023/24 National Attrition Rates

Site	Design Test Attrition Rate	23/24 BAU AcP Attrition Rate
Site 1 (prison)	0%	8%
Site 2 (prison)	21%	15%
Site 3 (prison)	29%	18%
Site 4 (community)	33%	30%
Site 5 (community)	56%	35%

Source: Treatment Returns/HMPPS Performance Hub

Table C6: Count of reason for non-completion by Design Test cohort

Reason for Non-Completion of Programme	No. of Participants
1c Self-deselection – consistently not getting stuck in (Condition for Success)	3
1d Self-deselection – consistently not meeting more than 1 Condition for Success	3
3b Change of location – outside site control (e.g. court, overcrowding, SED, deportation)	1
4c Other – Personal Problems not relating to the programme (e.g. bereavement)	4
4d Other – Health problems impacting participation	2
4e Other – not covered by any other reason	12
Total	25

Source: Treatment Returns (n=25)

Appendix D

Methodology

Qualitative data methodology

Interview schedules were designed using the ToC and in consultation with senior HMPPS stakeholders and MoJ colleagues. This included those who had written and contributed to Building Choices training, programme content, assessments and guides.

Recruitment and sampling

Interviews with staff took place with their consent over Microsoft Teams or in person at two or three critical time points: after assessment had been completed, after 'Getting Ready' (for prison sites 2 and 3 High Intensity cohorts only), after Building Choices and after 'Moving Forward'. All interviews for staff were intended to be completed within three weeks after these milestones.

For programme participants, research consent was taken by programme facilitators. Programme participants in the community received a £10 voucher for their participation (as agreed by MoJ Data and Analysis Ethics Advisory Group). Semi-structured interviews were conducted in person at the prison sites and over the phone for people on probation. These interviews took place at the same critical time points noted above for staff, but no more than two weeks after each milestone.

Participation was voluntary for both staff and programme participants, resulting in a self-selecting sample. The interviews included participants from each participant cohort and type of staff, including facilitators, Treatment Managers, Programme Managers, Prison and Community Offender Managers (see Table D1 for further details).

Interviews with court assessors were conducted by MoJ analysts as well as TONIC/IPSOS researchers.

Qualitative data analysis

The qualitative analysis was conducted by researchers from TONIC and IPSOS. Validation checking of findings was conducted by MoJ analysts. With participant consent, interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. There was also a small amount of written data provided from staff and one programme participant as he was not able to leave the wing for safety reasons. Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was applied to the qualitative data in line with Template Analysis (King, 2004)². An inductive and deductive analytical approach was used. This allowed for themes to be developed from the data as well as taking into consideration pre-developed themes based on the Building Choices ToC model (Figure 2). Computer assisted qualitative digital analysis software was used to help organise the data and capture the themes.

Quantitative data methodology

Quantitative analysis was used to describe who was selected to go on to Building Choices, the number of starters and completers and the reasons for attrition. All quantitative findings in this report do not include the second female group due to timing (the first female group folded). The small number of sites involved in the Design Test and methodological design limits the generalisability of conclusions derived from the quantitative analysis.

Outcome measure analysis – pre to post programme distance travelled

- **Assessing progress against treatment targets.** Average “distance travelled” (change in mean scores pre to post programme) was used for analysis of facilitator-score data to investigate whether a change in domain scores between data collection points had occurred. Facilitator rated scores were chosen as the primary measure due to the enhanced guidance in scoring given to facilitators and a greater amount of experience in using the SWM compared to participants. A **z-score** standardisation process of total scores was used to enable analysis of all participants, as people convicted of sexual offences (PCOSOs) score an additional fifth domain (the ‘Healthy Sex’ domain) which is not scored by other participants. This standardisation allowed the total scores of participants with four SWM domains to be compared with those with five SWM domains. Inferential

statistical analysis is used to indicate whether a statistically significant change in SWM score had occurred throughout the programme.

- **Assessing participant's levels of motivation to engage with the programme.** Analysis of HMS consisted of descriptive statistics of the average (mean) change in overall and domain scores between each of the four data collection points. Inferential statistics were conducted using a paired samples Wilcoxon test to determine whether there is a statistically significant score change between pre and post programme HMS scores.⁵⁴
- **Assessing the working alliance between facilitators and participants.** WAI-SR descriptive statistical analysis measures the average (mean) facilitator and participant scores at each data collection timepoint and average "distance travelled". While there are no defined levels of working alliance for specific scores, the higher the total score the stronger the working alliance.⁵⁵ Issues with question 2 on the facilitator questionnaire⁵⁶ led to it being removed from the analysis, meaning the facilitator questionnaire (WAI-SRT) analysis comprised of nine questions with a total possible score of 45.

See Appendix B for further details on the SWM, HMS and the Working Alliance Inventory-Short Revised.

Missing Data

In some instances, participants' outcome data was missing from the Treatment Returns, including the SWM and HMS and the WAI-SR. Using imputation of averages to replace any missing scores would have a more pronounced effect upon analytical findings due to the low sample size. Therefore, complete case analysis was used. For the SWM and HMS inferential statistics, this required participants to have data at all timepoints as the

⁵⁴ A Shapiro-Wilk normality test found that the differences between the pairs pre and post programme were not normally distributed ($p = 0.02$). The paired samples Wilcoxon test is a non-parametric alternative to the paired t-test, which can be used when the data is not normally distributed.

⁵⁵ Total participant scores range from 12 to 60. Total facilitator scores would usually range from 10 to 50, however feedback on question 2 on the facilitator questionnaire "I am genuinely concerned for [insert programme participant's name]'s welfare" indicated a misunderstanding of the question. The question was subsequently removed from the analysis, meaning the facilitator questionnaire (WAI-SRT) analysis comprised of 9 questions with a total possible score of 45.

⁵⁶ WAI-SRT question 2: "I am genuinely concerned for ____'s welfare."

statistical tests used paired samples. All other quantitative analysis included participants who did not have data at every timepoint, either due to the participant not completing the programme or data being missing.

The descriptive analysis of the SWM, HMS and WAI-SR includes data from participants in earlier data collection timepoints who did not complete the programme and do not have data at all timepoints. The SWM data used to assess change was collected as part of programme delivery, no SWM data is therefore available for non-completers. The relationship between programme non-completion and the score for these measures has not been explored in this paper.

Qualitative Interview Sample Sizes

Table D1: Sample sizes (numbers) across sites and cohorts for qualitative interviews⁵⁷
(S = staff; PP = programme participants)

	Site 2 (prison)		Site 3 (prison)		Site 1 (prison)		Site 4 (community)		Site 5 (community)		Total
	S	PP	S	PP	S	PP	S	PP	S	PP	
What Works for Me	4	8	8	11	4	4	4	10	5	5	63
Getting Ready	6	9	5	4	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	24
Building Choices	8	8	9	7	4	8	5	4	8	5	66
Moving Forward	3	4	2	0	5	2	0	0	0	0	16
Total	21	29	24	22	13	14	9	14	13	10	169

Table D2: Number of Participant Interviews by Cohort

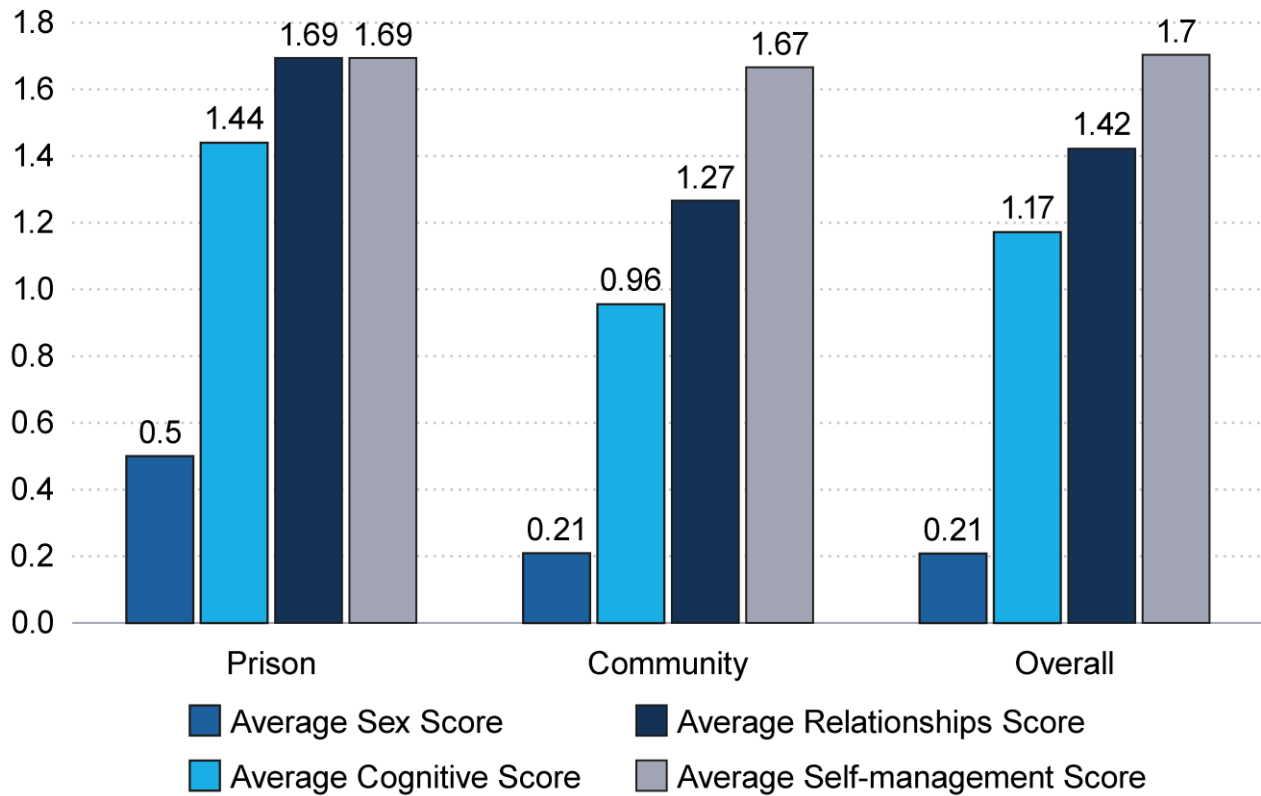
Cohort	GO	GV	IPV	PCOSO	LDC	Women
Number of Interviews	9	7	10	15	12	2

⁵⁷ Excludes Moving Forwards and Court Assessors.

Appendix E

Participant Risk and Need Assessment Scores

Figure E1: Average PNI domain scores by setting



Appendix F

WAI-SR and Working Alliance

Programme participant WAI-SR scores

Table F1 details the average total programme participant WAI-SR scores and standard deviation at each timepoint by cohort, site and setting. Programme participant scores can range between 12 and 60.

Table F1: Average total programme participant WAI-SR scores

	Pre-Getting Ready		Pre-Building Choices		Post Building Choices	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
By cohort: General Offending	N/A	N/A	56.5	3.7	57.0	2.2
By cohort: General Violence	38.7	1.7	44.5	8.8	46.8	2.6
By cohort: IPV	N/A	N/A	49.2	10.8	55.1	8.6
By cohort: LDC	46.0	12.3	45.7	11.9	52.0	10.2
By cohort: PCOSO	N/A	N/A	50.4	8.2	56.2	5.3
By site: Site 1 (prison)	N/A	N/A	52.7	7.9	56.5	5.1
By site: Site 2 (prison)	43.4	9.0	46.7	10.2	50.6	6.5
By site: Site 3 (prison)	43.0	16.1	52.3	9.9	52.6	10.2
By site: Site 4 (community)	N/A	N/A	48.4	7.9	55.2	8.1
By site: Site 5 (community)	N/A	N/A	49.2	10.8	56.0	6.2
By setting: Prison	43.3	11.0	50.3	9.6	53.3	7.7
By setting: Community	N/A	N/A	48.7	8.6	55.5	7.3
Overall	43.3	11.0	49.8	9.2	54.2	7.5

Source: Completed WAI-SR forms (Pre-Getting Ready n=8, Pre-Building Choices n=41, Post Building Choices n=41).

Facilitator WAI-SRT scores

Table F2 breaks down the average total facilitator WAI-SRT scores and standard deviation at each timepoint by cohort, site and setting. Facilitator scores range between 9 and 45.

Table F2: Average total facilitator WAI-SRT scores

	Pre-Getting Ready		Pre-Building Choices		Post Building Choices	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
By cohort: General Offending	N/A	N/A	41.0	2.2	40.9	4.8
By cohort: General Violence	32.2	2.9	33.8	4.8	32.3	4.8
By cohort: IPV	N/A	N/A	36.1	3.4	36.1	4.8
By cohort: LDC	33.4	6.9	36.0	9.2	34.1	5.9
By cohort: PCOSO	N/A	N/A	34.9	5.3	38.7	3.8
By site: Site 1 (prison)	N/A	N/A	35.4	2.5	40.3	3.4
By site: Site 2 (prison)	33.4	7.1	33.3	8.4	33.9	4.6
By site: Site 3 (prison)	32.2	0.4	40.0	3.9	38.0	6.3
By site: Site 4 (community)	N/A	N/A	34.6	6.6	35.8	5.9
By site: Site 5 (community)	N/A	N/A	36.1	3.4	36.9	4.1
By setting: Prison	33.0	5.8	36.8	6.3	37.2	5.5
By setting: Community	N/A	N/A	35.3	5.2	36.1	5.3
Overall	33.0	5.8	36.3	5.9	36.7	5.4

Source: Completed WAI-SR forms (Pre-Getting Ready n=15, Pre-Building Choices n=41, Post Building Choices n=51).

Appendix G

Success Wheel Measure Quantitative Outputs

The z-scores (standardised sum of SWM score) are not reported as the standardisation has made the scores meaningless to interpret in isolation. Therefore, to compare total scores for participants with four SWM domains to those with five SWM domains, all standardised z-scores were converted to scores equivalent total SWM scores.

Table G1 shows the equivalent (standardised) four domain SWM point change (i.e. out of a maximum score of 20) and magnitude of change.

Table G1: Equivalent change in 4 domains SWM score from pre to post programme

	Participant scores	Facilitator scores	Joint scores
By Setting: Community	2.40 (19%)	2.04 (21%)	2.41 (25%)
By Setting: Prison	3.06 (23%)	3.95 (34%)	3.28 (26%)
By cohort: General Offending	3.68 (28%)	5.13 (51%)	3.95 (32%)
By cohort: General Violence	3.07 (23%)	3.10 (25%)	3.07 (23%)
By cohort: IPV/DA	3.03 (25%)	2.94 (32%)	2.94 (32%)
By cohort: LDC	2.39 (18%)	2.75 (23%)	2.42 (20%)
By cohort: PCOSO	2.09 (16%)	2.11 (19%)	2.16 (18%)
Overall	2.76 (21%)	3.07 (29%)	2.85 (25%)

Table G2 shows the equivalent (standardised) five domain SWM point change (i.e. out of a maximum score of 25) and magnitude of change.

Table G2: Equivalent change in 5 domains SWM score from pre to post programme

	Participant score change	Facilitator score change	Joint scores change
By Setting: Community	3.12 (18%)	2.41 (18%)	2.94 (23%)
By Setting: Prison	3.98 (23%)	4.68 (22%)	4.01 (24%)
By cohort: General Offending	4.77 (27%)	6.07 (43%)	4.83 (30%)
By cohort: General Violence	3.99 (23%)	3.67 (22%)	3.75 (21%)
By cohort: IPV/DA	3.94 (25%)	3.48 (27%)	3.59 (29%)

	Participant score change	Facilitator score change	Joint scores change
By cohort: LDC	3.10 (18%)	3.25 (20%)	2.96 (18%)
By cohort: PCOSO	2.71 (16%)	2.50 (16%)	2.64 (17%)
Overall	3.58 (21%)	3.63 (24%)	3.48 (23%)

Table G3 provides the average programme participant SWM scores and standard deviation at each timepoint by domain.

Table G3: Average programme participant SWM scores by domain

	Managing Myself		Healthy Thinking		Positive Relationships		Purpose		Healthy Sex	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Pre	3.02	0.98	3.32	0.91	3.53	0.87	3.30	1.00	3.29	1.07
Mid	3.20	0.77	3.53	0.74	3.60	0.63	3.80	0.77		
Post	3.98	0.71	3.96	0.69	3.94	0.65	4.10	0.67	3.86	1.03

Table G4 provides the average facilitator SWM scores and standard deviation at each timepoint by domain.

Table G4: Average facilitator SWM scores by domain

	Managing Myself		Healthy Thinking		Positive Relationships		Purpose		Healthy Sex	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Pre	2.60	0.77	2.67	0.80	2.83	0.85	2.90	0.80	2.93	0.83
Mid	3.07	0.44	3.00	0.65	3.27	0.59	3.67	0.49		
Post	3.52	0.72	3.48	0.73	3.42	0.70	3.67	0.94	3.43	0.85

Table G5 provides the average joint SWM scores and standard deviation at each timepoint by domain.

Table G5: Average joint SWM scores by domain

	Managing Myself		Healthy Thinking		Positive Relationships		Purpose		Healthy Sex	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Pre	2.73	0.81	2.81	0.83	2.87	0.84	3.16	0.89	2.93	0.92
Mid	3.20	0.56	3.27	0.70	3.40	0.51	3.73	0.46		
Post	3.62	0.77	3.60	0.75	3.48	0.78	3.73	0.97	3.50	0.85

The average change in participant SWM scores can be seen in Table G6, which shows there was an increase in all SWM domain scores pre to post programme, with the exception of 'Positive Relationships' for the LDC cohort, which saw a small decrease.

Table G6: Average change in participant SWM scores pre to post by domain

	Managing Myself	Healthy Thinking	Positive Relationships	Purpose	Healthy Sex
By cohort: General offending	1.03	1.08	0.30	1.28	N/A
By cohort: General Violence	1.02	0.55	0.55	0.95	N/A
By cohort: IPV	0.92	0.63	0.73	0.75	N/A
By cohort: LDC	1.14	0.82	-0.09	0.52	N/A
By cohort: PCOSO	0.71	0.21	0.50	0.71	0.57
By setting: Community	0.73	0.54	0.36	0.77	0.50
By setting: Prison	1.15	0.73	0.45	0.82	0.63
Overall	0.96	0.64	0.41	0.80	0.57

Table G7 details the average change in facilitator SWM domain scores pre to post programme, with all cohorts, sites and settings experienced increases in scores for each domain, with the largest distance travelled observed in the general offending cohort.

Table G7: Average change in facilitator SWM scores pre to post by domain

	Managing Myself	Healthy Thinking	Positive Relationships	Purpose	Healthy Sex
By cohort: General offending	1.53	1.25	1.15	1.20	N/A

	Managing Myself	Healthy Thinking	Positive Relationships	Purpose	Healthy Sex
By cohort: General Violence	1.14	0.67	0.38	0.90	N/A
By cohort: IPV	0.81	0.85	0.43	0.86	N/A
By cohort: LDC	0.88	0.86	0.45	0.55	N/A
By cohort: PCOSO	0.50	0.43	0.57	0.50	0.50
By setting: Community	0.69	0.61	0.26	0.48	0.50
By setting: Prison	1.11	0.99	0.89	1.01	0.50
Overall	0.92	0.81	0.60	0.77	0.50

Table G8 illustrates the average change in joint SWM scores (distance travelled) pre to post programme by domain. All domains saw increases in scores across all cohorts, sites and settings, with the General offending cohort experiencing the largest increase in scores.

Table G8: Average change in joint SWM scores pre to post by domain

	Managing Myself	Healthy Thinking	Positive Relationships	Purpose	Healthy Sex
By cohort: General offending	1.10	1.13	0.78	0.95	N/A
By cohort: General Violence	1.17	0.55	0.69	0.67	N/A
By cohort: IPV	0.81	0.85	0.55	0.74	N/A
By cohort: LDC	0.89	0.73	0.64	0.17	N/A
By cohort: PCOSO	0.64	0.57	0.43	0.43	0.57
By setting: Community	0.71	0.76	0.42	0.51	0.50
By setting: Prison	1.05	0.84	0.78	0.64	0.63
Overall	0.89	0.79	0.61	0.57	0.57

Appendix H

Quality Assurance Data

The Quality Assurance (QA) of the Building Choices Design Test groups was completed through use of the Interventions Integrity Framework (IIF), by the HMPPS Accredited Programme QA team. To assess and review quality of delivery, a minimum of 20% of sessions on each group were reviewed, plus sessions that the Treatment Manager had monitored. Feedback on session delivery was provided at regular intervals throughout the Design Test to the delivery teams. This was either to Treatment Managers who then disseminated feedback to their facilitators (prison), or directly to facilitators and Treatment Managers (community). The difference in process was due to site preference.

Supplementary materials were also reviewed such as: session planning notes, supervision minutes, session plans and debriefs, session monitoring feedback, WWFM notes, post programme review minutes, programme returns, session registers, and defensible decision logs. An IIF report was produced for each of the groups delivered with RAG ratings (Green, Green/Amber, Amber/Red or Red) applied to each of the Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE's) for which delivery teams were responsible. Practice relating to organisational support was not reviewed as part of the IIF on this occasion to minimise potential for any overlap with the evaluation also taking place.

The QA data was used for the triangulation process with qualitative and quantitative data gathered in the process evaluation.

Appendix I

Data Triangulation Ratings

A RAG rating scoring system was used across the different data sources to understand if the Building Choices ToC was translated into practice. The triangulation ratings are divided into the ToC short term outcomes (see Table I1), mechanisms of change (see Table I2), and assumptions (see Table I3).

RAG ratings, meanings: **Red** = evidence against or unsupportive of the short-term outcomes, Mechanisms of Change and Assumptions; **Red/Amber** = more evidence against than supportive; **Amber** = evidence is mixed (against and supportive); **Green/Amber** = more evidence in support but some against; **Green** = evidence in support.

Strength of evidence, meanings: the strength of evidence is focused on the amount of data available on the cohorts of interest (i.e. IPV/DA, LDC, PCOSO, GO, High Intensity pathway, Women), settings (prison or community) and MI data sample sizes in the data sources used for the Design Test evaluation. **Insufficient** = Insufficient data across all relevant data sources for cohorts and settings of interest (prison and community); **Low** = Some data on some of the cohorts or interest and settings of interest; **Moderate** = Evidence across most cohorts of interest and settings but some evidence gaps in the data; **High** = Evidence across all cohorts of interest and settings in the data sources.

N.B. not all data sources were applicable to each of the short-term outcomes, mechanisms of change and assumptions.

Table I1 Short term outcomes data triangulation

Short term outcome	RAG	Main reason for RAG score	Strength of evidence
Participants complete all sessions/programme materials	Green/Amber	Qualitative data is based on a small sample. Management Information data covers all participants and describes a high rate of attrition in community (a finding not unusual for community-based programmes). The Quality Assurance data included those who completed all sessions and not any non-completers.	Moderate
Participants have motivation to engage in and complete the programme	Green/Amber	Evidence is from a small sample of Design Test participants and does not include a women's cohort. Descriptive statistics from the Horizon Motivation Scale lend support to sustained participant motivation.	Moderate
Programme participants are supported to get the most out of the programme	Amber	Evidence suggests there are some challenges when delivering to young adult prison-based participants and those with LDC. This evidence does not include data on the women's cohort.	Moderate

Table I2: Mechanisms of change data triangulation

Mechanism of change element	RAG	Main reason for RAG score	Strength of evidence
<p>Managing Myself: Better able to manage thinking and use self-talk</p> <p>Managing Myself: Better able to use skills to manage impulsivity & urges</p> <p>Managing Myself: Better understanding of arousal & emotions</p> <p>Managing Myself: Better able to soothe & regulate arousal</p> <p>Managing Myself: Better able to tolerate distressing emotional states</p> <p>Managing Myself: Recognises situations that lead to unhelpful behaviour</p> <p>Managing Myself: Better able to use problem solving skills</p>	Green/Amber	Findings from the SWM suggest there were improvements across cohorts and settings for Managing Myself. Qualitative interviews suggest the young adult programme participants (prison-based) had challenges with managing urges, impulses and recognising unhelpful behaviour (a finding not unusual across AcPs).	Moderate

Mechanism of change element	RAG	Main reason for RAG score	Strength of evidence
<p>Healthy Thinking: Insight into own thinking & emotions</p> <p>Healthy Thinking: Understands how thinking impacts behaviour</p> <p>Healthy Thinking: Can better think in ways that are flexible and accepting</p>	Green/Amber	Findings from the SWM suggest there were improvements across cohorts and settings for Healthy Thinking.	Moderate

Mechanism of change element	RAG	Main reason for RAG score	Strength of evidence
<p>Positive Relationships: Better understanding of relationships</p> <p>Positive Relationships: Awareness of own social support network</p> <p>Positive Relationships: Better equipped to start and maintain healthy intimate relationships</p> <p>Positive Relationships: Better able to use effective interpersonal skills</p> <p>Positive Relationships: Better able to manage unhelpful peer influences</p> <p>Positive Relationships: Improved perspective taking</p> <p>Positive Relationships: Better understanding of social & cultural influences and how they shaped self-development</p> <p>Positive Relationships: Feels psychologically safe enough to form alliance</p>	Amber	<p>There was a small reduction in participant SWM scores for the LDC cohort in the positive relationships domain (but increases in facilitator and joint scores). Findings from staff interviews raised the following question for further research to address:</p> <p><i>Is content about relationships specific for IPV/DA & PCOSO offences missing and therefore required or is it missed by staff, who were expecting to see this type of content which is in other programmes?</i></p>	Moderate

Mechanism of change element	RAG	Main reason for RAG score	Strength of evidence
<p>Sense of Purpose: Curious about change & open to learning skills</p> <p>Sense of Purpose: Recognises what matters in life & makes life purposeful</p> <p>Sense of Purpose: Increased understanding of strengths</p> <p>Sense of Purpose: Understands goals & links them to values</p> <p>Sense of Purpose: Can review progress towards goals and has a plan</p> <p>Sense of Purpose: Sees programme activities as supporting their ability to achieve their goals</p> <p>Sense of Purpose: Feels hopeful and has intent to desist from crime</p> <p>Sense of Purpose: Motivated to enlist support for future</p>	Green/Amber	Evidence of programme participants talking about their goals but limited evidence of linking goals to values.	Moderate
Healthy Sex	Green	The Healthy Sex domain on the SWM only relates to PCOSO cohort.	Low

Mechanism of change element	RAG	Main reason for RAG score	Strength of evidence
Overall Success Wheel	Green/Amber	Good progress on Success Wheel overall, however very small increases in scores before/after the Getting Ready element of the programme. Facilitator score change was minimal in the high secure prison and large in the Category C young adult male prison for Getting Ready. There was no data available for the women's cohort.	Moderate

Table I3: Theory of Change assumptions data triangulation

Assumption	RAG	Main reason for RAG score	Strength of evidence
Design: Building Choices is designed to be inclusive of all protected characteristics of programme participants (intersectionality).	Green/Amber	Qualitative findings suggest some challenges with meeting responsivity needs of the LDC cohort. There is no data available for the women's cohort.	Moderate
Design: Building Choices will be appropriate for all offence types (criminogenic needs associated with the offence types and tailored conversations)	Amber	Data sources raise the question: <i>Is content about relationships specific for PCOSO, IPV/DA offences missing and therefore required or is it missed by staff, who were expecting to see this type of content which is in other programmes?</i> (There is no data available for the women's cohort)	Moderate
Design: Building Choices will be appropriate for programme participants in prison or community settings.	Green/Amber	Evidence suggests the programme content was suitable for those in community and prison settings. Higher attrition in community was found, a finding not unusual with programmes in community settings. There is no data available for the women's cohort.	Moderate

Assumption	RAG	Main reason for RAG score	Strength of evidence
Design: Building Choices programme design is underpinned by well evidenced theories and principles of effective rehabilitation (e.g. biopsychosocial model, including RNR, strengths-based approach, and desistance theory) which assume programme participants can change and desistance from crime is possible.	N/A	The methodology was not specifically designed to test the theories.	Insufficient Evidence
Training: Facilitators will be appropriately trained in how to deliver Building Choices as intended.	Green/Amber	All those who delivered the programme had completed and passed training. Some evidence suggested some improvements could be made to training.	High
Assessment: All programme participants will be appropriately selected in line with the eligibility criteria for their pathway. [Risk-Dose Proportionality]	Amber	Three participants had low need (DA), however had the Medium SARA score needed to be eligible for the programme. A further person in community had medium risk at the time of sentence but then had a low-risk score at the start of the programme. It was not clear if this was a clerical data inputting error or if the person had a low-risk score.	Moderate

Assumption	RAG	Main reason for RAG score	Strength of evidence
Assessment: Staff in prison and community understand the assessment criteria and use the actuarial risk and relevant structured professional judgement tools appropriately.	Green	Evidence supports that the assessment criteria, tools and process were understood across both settings and all sites.	Moderate
Implementation: Programme participants receive the correct number of sessions in the correct sequence for their pathway. [Risk-Dose Proportionality]	Green/Amber	Sessions were mostly delivered in the right order and catch ups were provided as specified. There were some instances of a catch up and 1:1 session being combined where they should not have been. Some catch up sessions were not completed, and some staff in prisons also reported that delivering catch up sessions was challenging to manage within the weekly delivery rate.	Moderate
Implementation: Staff will understand individual's identified strengths, needs and areas for support to effectively deliver Building Choices in a tailored/individualised manner for programme participants. [Responsivity Processes & Strength Based Approaches]	Green/Amber	WWFM supported the identification of responsivity needs. Some evidence suggests staff struggled across cohorts (especially the young adult LDC prison cohort) to make adaptations due to the need to maintain programme integrity. However, QA data suggests this was because attempts to address responsivity did not link to the programme content or aims. Responsivity overall was strong in the community setting.	Moderate

Assumption	RAG	Main reason for RAG score	Strength of evidence
Implementation: Facilitators will deliver the programme as intended, after they have been trained to do so.	Amber	Programme integrity was mixed. There were examples of good practice where session content was delivered responsively in line with the delivery guide. On some occasions however, programme content changed or missing. For example, Check-in exercises and skills practices were sometimes missed, and other material was occasionally altered which was not in line with the guidelines or programme aims. This was across sites and both settings. This finding might be reflective of Building Choices being a new programme	Moderate
Implementation: Facilitators will develop good working alliance with programme participants.	Green/Amber	Evidence from the WAI-SR & WAI-SRT showed scores started high and remained high, indicating good working alliance across sites, settings and cohorts. This was corroborated with findings from the interviews and QA data. However, the Category C young adult male prison saw a decrease in working alliance for facilitator scores, for the LDC cohort, which aligns with QA findings. Overall programme participants considered there was good working alliance with facilitators.	Moderate
Implementation: Supervision will be of a high standard, in line with training and guidance in the management manuals.	Amber	There was of a good balance of programme planning and supervision across most sites. In some instances, there was more focus on staff well-being than on staff professional development, though this may have reflected the unique characteristics or needs of certain staff or those of the individuals they worked with during the Design Test.	Moderate

Assumption	RAG	Main reason for RAG score	Strength of evidence
Implementation: Session monitoring will be of a high standard, in line with training and guidance in the management manuals.	Amber	Evidence suggested that more session monitoring was required in the community sites, and to a lesser extent in the prison sites.	Moderate
Implementation: All programme participants sign the conditions of success. Continuing commitment to and achievement of these is monitored throughout the programme, with use of Supportive Authority to explore any specific breaches.	Green/Amber	There was evidence that participants had signed up to the conditions of success, although this was inferred from the findings as there was no MI data available at the time which specifically captured this. There were some inconsistencies with the conditions of success and the use of the principles of supportive authority to manage this.	Moderate
Wider Organisation: Facilitators will have enough time to plan and prep for delivery of each session and module and debrief each session.	Amber	Evidence suggests that overall, there was time set aside for planning but that it took longer than anticipated, especially in applying adaptations for those with LDC on Building Choices plus. This observation might have been reflective of staff being new to the programme.	Moderate
Wider Organisation: Facilitators are offered appropriate support and development, comprising of the recommended rates of group and individual supervision, session monitoring feedback and personal support where appropriate.	Amber	Most facilitators felt supported. Some sites completed the required amount of session monitoring and feedback, but some needed to do more. This was the case across both prison and community settings, for both individual and group supervision. Professional reflective support provision for staff was not monitored as part of the Design Test as this would not necessarily be accessed within the timescales of the test itself.	Moderate

Assumption	RAG	Main reason for RAG score	Strength of evidence
Wider Organisation: The wider organisations (prison or probation) will take ownership and accountability and provide the support (resources, staffing, finances, infrastructure, post programme) required to deliver Building Choices as intended.	Green/Amber	There was limited data available. However, staff were made available for the programme delivery, had rooms, materials, and resources to conduct the sessions.	Low
Wider Organisation: The site rehabilitation culture is conducive in supporting programme participants to apply the skills in the environmental delivery context.	Amber	Performance indicator measures, (a set of proxy measures for rehabilitative culture used for this study) showed mixed findings for prison and community (See Appendix N for further details).	Low