

Headline findings from the Towns Fund process evaluation

The emerging process findings are based on evidence from seven case studies, covering a mix of projects and geographies. All findings should be considered preliminary and subject to change as more evidence becomes available.

Aspects that worked well

Aspects that worked less well

*Local authorities reported that the **structure of the fund** for Town Deals and the Future High Streets Fund enabled them to meet council objectives*

- **allocation-based funding approaches** were effective for targeting areas with the greatest need
- **Town Deal Boards are felt to enhance inclusivity** in local decision-making

- **Towns Fund revenue allocation was perceived as insufficient** to cover project management and service delivery costs

Design and planning worked well for aligning with the needs and priorities of local areas

- **collaboration on design processes** ensured projects were aligned with local needs and priorities
- **Town Fund capacity funding was crucial** for bridging expertise and resourcing gaps within local authorities

- **limited resources within local authorities** for drafting investment plans/Expressions of Interest, project plans and business cases
- **lack of expertise within local authorities** to develop business cases and project plans made appointing consultants a necessity
- **limited availability of delivery partners** highlighted the need for alternative procurement approaches

Delivery went smoothly overall, although contextual factors and a lack of funding for future project operation posed challenges

- **strong local authority and delivery partner relationships** were key to successful project delivery
- **beneficiary engagement targets were exceeded**, with positive feedback on project delivery and services
- **project facilities were deemed fit for purpose** when delivery partners involved in design

- **rising inflation and trade disruptions** negatively affected project delivery
- **construction disruptions** frustrated the public and businesses
- **Project Adjustment Requests** were seen as overly technical
- local authorities **lacked plans to sustain Town Deal projects** beyond the Towns Fund funding period

*Local authorities had mixed views on the proportionality and value of **monitoring requirements***

- **Town Deal Boards actively monitored project delivery** to keep projects on track
- **monitoring reporting frequency was considered appropriate** to avoid repetition
- **cascading approach to completing monitoring returns** ensured accurate and timely data

- **MHCLG monitoring returns seen as too lengthy** and not user-friendly
- **local authorities had mixed views on the usefulness** that they derived from MHCLG monitoring returns
- **lack of understanding about the value of monitoring returns** post project completion

Headline findings from the Towns Fund intervention-level impact evaluation

The emerging impact findings are based on evidence from seven case studies, covering a mix of projects and geographies.

These findings focus on short-term outcomes due to the recent completion dates of the projects. All findings should be considered preliminary and subject to change as more evidence becomes available.

Key sources of evidence

- **project and third-party data**
- **interviews with over 50 stakeholders**, including local authorities, project delivery teams, local residents, and community groups
- **resident surveys in five case study areas**, with an average of 310 responses per survey



Key messages

Pride in place and wellbeing

- the projects have produced facilities and amenities which are **well used and well received** by the local communities
- there is a **quantitative correlation between increased usage of project facilities and higher pride in place and personal wellbeing**
- however, **wider effects on pride in place and wellbeing are inconclusive at present**, largely due to a lack of baseline data

Economic growth

- evidence of **changes in high street footfall is limited at present**
- **qualitative input suggests that the projects have helped to improve business confidence and investment**, by signalling government confidence and investment in the towns

Employment

- a **large and growing number of students have been educated** through the new facilities
- more time is needed to observe wider employment effects

Physical connectivity

- there is **some evidence of increased public transportation usage**, for the one case study expected to affect this outcome

Key enabling mechanisms

Outcomes have been enabled by:

- **community consultation**
- the overall **quality of facilities**
- the **accessibility and flexibility** of the facilities
- **colocation** of multiple services in one space
- **business consultation**, in particular for employment effects

Key barriers

Where outcomes have been limited, this appears to have been affected by **perceptions of limited consultation and disruption from wider regeneration works**.