Evaluation of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) programme in London

Final report

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Greater London Authority

City Hall

Kamal Chunchie Way

London E16 1ZE

Contents

Executive summary

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) in London provided £144m from 2022-25 to support local areas under three thematic pillars:

- **Supporting Local Business (SLB):** £62m of support for SMEs and start-ups delivered via the boroughs alongside competitively tendered cross-borough projects on themes such as innovation, support for diverse founders and growing the social economy, as well as investment in London's *'single front door for business'*[1].

- **Communities & Place (C&P):** £40m of capital and revenue funding for boroughs providing *'improvements to high streets and public green spaces',* improved accessibility, improved commercial spaces, as well as support to communities on the cost of living, tackling fuel poverty and energy efficiency for households.

- **People & Skills (P&S):** £38m for *'intensive and holistic employment support'* delivered by the boroughs via the four sub-regional partnerships[2] (SRPs), as well as various projects under the Mayor's Support for Young Londoners programme, including support for young people Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET) and work experience placements for at-risk students.

Programme design and development

The London UKSPF programme was co-designed by the Greater London Authority (GLA) and London Councils. Over half of the funds (£78m) were provided directly to boroughs in the form of grants. The programme comprised 381 different projects and sub-projects by some readings. It is best understood as 96 programme interventions formed of: 33 borough-level programmes supporting local communities, places and businesses; 31 cross-borough projects to support businesses (including three large projects directly awarded to London & Partners); four sub-regional programmes providing employment and skills support to disadvantaged groups; and 28 projects providing cross-borough support to young people.

The overall programme was complex but coherent. Its richness was ultimately its strength. The planning process was collaborative and pragmatic. It embodied a new way of working between the GLA and the boroughs. The mature, partnership approach underpinned many positive aspects of programme delivery (flexibility, responsiveness) and created efficiencies. The scope of the programme was sufficiently broad to be able to accommodate a wide range of activities within the defined output/outcome framework. Delays in the launch timetable at national government level created challenges for boroughs and projects. This squeezed the delivery window for some and made mobilisation more difficult. This was magnified in the context of the P&S programme, which, unlike the rest of the UKSPF, was mandated nationally to be only one year in duration (2024-25).

Programme implementation

Unsurprisingly, there were issues in terms of boroughs' ability to deliver capital spending under the C&P priority. These were largely side-stepped at source by using the funding for projects that were already underway. There were also challenges mobilising new work experience provision under the P&S pillar. These were not possible to completely solve given the clash between the academic calendar and the UKSPF calendar. Apart from this, delivery

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[1] UKSPF in London: second annual delivery report for 2023-24, GLA

[2] Central London Forward; Local London; South London Partnership; West London Alliance

was rather effective at aggregate level. Compared to SLB and P&S projects, where delivery partners were generally working with a smaller number of lead contacts, borough leads were often required to collate information from multiple different teams and sub-projects. Some local authorities found that internal systems were not as robust as they needed to be to manage this process. However, the UKSPF also strengthened connections within some boroughs.

There were challenges in some areas relating to overlapping provision and potential duplication, although sometimes more as a hypothetical risk. Where borough and cross-borough activities intersected, they appeared to generally course correct through engagement, although there was undoubtedly some competition for beneficiaries in parts of the UKSPF programme.

The overall programme management approach was received positively across delivery organisations under all UKSPF pillars. The aim of empowering delivery partners worked well. The opportunities for cross-borough learning at the start (stimulated by the GLA and the sub-regional partnerships) was positive because different boroughs were facing the same challenges in terms of how to both interpret and manage the process. Common monitoring and reporting issues related to the complexity of templates, initial uncertainty (especially regarding output/outcome measurement) and the perceived impracticality of the evidential 'ask' in some areas. This tended to relate to a small number of outputs and outcomes that were difficult to measure, but it had an outsized impact on how delivery organisations experienced the programme.

Programme performance and outcomes

The UKSPF programme in London achieved nearly all intended outputs and outcomes across all three investment priorities. Differences between anticipated and actual spend did not alter the overall scope/shape of the programme. Over 12,000 SMEs were supported as a result of the SLB investment priority. Against planned outputs, the largest over-performance was in terms of the number of enterprises receiving grants. The most significant over-achievement of outcomes was observed in the creation of new enterprises.

C&P projects also met all intended outcomes and outputs at aggregate level. In terms of outputs, the most significant achievement against plan was the amount of public realm created or improved. Success was partly dependent on the internal organisational capacity and capabilities of each respective borough. They also took different levels of risk.

The P&S investment priority also achieved most of its intended targets (except for the provision of work experience places):

■ The investment priority significantly overachieved against its target of supporting Londoners into education, employment and training, reaching 5,272 individuals against an initial target of 1,996 individuals in the investment plan.

■ It also achieved significant success regarding the number of economically inactive and unemployed Londoners supported (9,983 individuals against an initial target of 6,988 individuals in the investment plan).

The programme was not just 'more of the same' in terms of delivering outcomes, even though some resources were used to maintain or top-up existing provision and activities. In this sense, programme added value is uneven, but it is clearly visible in terms of:

■ Programme reach to individuals who would not otherwise have received support (or would not have received support that was targeted and tailored in the same way).

- Benefits that emerged from the combined focus on communities and local action that are hard to measure but wide in nature, including local perceptions, and rooted in how the UKSPF plugged gaps (temporarily at least) in investment.
- New and improved support capacity within London with a stronger inclusion focus.

Key lessons and conclusions

The UKSPF experience shows that there is no need to reinvent the wheel in terms of programme design and delivery, even though there is scope to innovate. There was, though, an explicit aim to improve, simplify and add flexibility to previous programmes and to localise decision-making. While there is clearly a balance to be struck here, the general lesson is that this approach pays dividends, even if it cedes control and reduces scope for detailed audit. There are trade-offs in any approach and stakeholders have different perspectives on this, partly because they have different priorities. The commissioning model worked and perceived upfront risks from direct awards of funding to the boroughs were not generally realised.

More could be done to encourage new delivery partners alongside the existing experienced delivery organisations. The UKSPF experience also highlights the value of exploring ways to extend the length of the starting ramp to enable proper set-up and mobilisation. While the overall programme management approach worked, there are still further areas in which simplification is possible. Knowledgeable programme managers smooth the process, and the retention of internal expertise is an important success factor from a programme management perspective.

The programme governance and oversight worked well. The outputs and outcomes framework, while vast, provided an over-arching programme coherence by organising a wide range of programme activities into a coherent structure. The programme design and processes certainly enabled providers to better respond to beneficiary needs in many ways. This is arguably where the programme overall performed most strongly in terms of how UKSPF activities sat alongside or dovetailed with more mainstream provision. Delivery organisations were given scope to determine and interpret targets within an over-arching framework. EDI was embedded as a central consideration throughout the programme. It was a defining feature of design and delivery in a way that went well beyond lip service.

In terms of future programme design, a key lesson from the UKSPF is that the approach of empowering local decision makers creates a richer, more efficient and more responsive programme – but shows that there is a clear case for having a London programme framework. Given a free hand, it is likely that local decisions makers (including boroughs) would use a lot (or a lot more) of the resource to top up existing activities. The largest impacts of the programme have arguably been in areas of 'market failure', including 'discretionary' local authority spending in high impact areas, as well as personalised and responsive support outside of core employment/skills provision. Furthermore, having structures for collaboration, exchange and learning are under-rated aspects of the programme design that deliver benefits at relatively low cost.

1   Introduction

This is the final report for the evaluation of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) programme in London undertaken by ICF on behalf of the Greater London Authority (GLA). The evaluation took place from December 2024 to May 2025 and covered the programme period from launch in April 2022 to March 2025.

1.1   Introduction to the UKSPF programme

1.1.1   The programme context

The UKSPF is a national programme that provided £2.6 billion of funding to local areas over a three-year period with a *'primary purpose'* to *'build pride in place and increase life chances across the UK'*[3]. The initial programme prospectus described how the UKSPF nationally was designed to achieve key levelling up objectives of the government at the time, including:

■ Increasing productivity, pay and living standards through the provision of private sector support

■ Improving public sector service provision

■ Helping to restore and increase community and local pride

■ Giving local leaders and communities the power to make changes within their communities.

The programme was partly introduced to replace the earlier **European Structural and Investment Fund Programme** (ESIF) in a post-Brexit context. The European Social Fund (ESF) and European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) had supported the development of local places and people over many years. The overall funding level of the UKSPF was smaller, but the new programme was intended to be more flexible, removing the previous requirement under the European programmes for competitive tendering and match funding, for example.

The UKSPF was designed and overseen at national level by the **Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG)**[4] but managed locally by *'lead local authorities'*. They had scope to organise the funding in a way that fitted local needs. The programme in England operated, where possible, at the level of *'strategic geographies'*, such as Mayoral Combined Authorities.

In the London context, the **GLA acted as lead local authority**. The London programme was larger than other UKSPF programme areas in England, encompassing 32 boroughs and the City of London Corporation. This created additional complexities from an organising perspective but also the potential for economies of scale.

1.1.2   Structure and approach to UKSPF in London

The **UKSPF investment plan for London was co-designed by the GLA and London Councils**. The plan was submitted to UK government in July 2022 and

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[3] UK Shared Prosperity Fund: Prospectus, Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities / Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, 2022

[4] The Department of Levelling Up, Communities and Housing (DLUHC) as was.

approved in December 2022[5]. Preceding submission was a three-month engagement process between the GLA, London Councils and other stakeholders[6].

The **co-design model** had previously been used to develop the London Recovery Programme[7], which '*focus(ed) on London's longer-term recovery from COVID-19*' and which itself reflected a new form of collaboration between stakeholders in London partly forged out of the need for rapid and responsive collaboration during the pandemic. The UKSPF in London was therefore designed and delivered against the backdrop of an **evolving and maturing partnership approach**, especially between the boroughs and the GLA, although the programme extended to a much broader mix of delivery organisations.

The overall value of the London UKSPF programme was £144,444,970. In line with the national programme, it was structured into three pillars of activity:

■ **Supporting Local Business (SLB):** £62m of support for SMEs and start-ups delivered via the boroughs alongside competitively tendered cross-borough projects on themes such as innovation, support for diverse founders and growing the social economy, as well as investment in London's '*single front door for business*'[8].

■ **Communities & Place (C&P):** £40m of capital and revenue funding for boroughs providing '*improvements to high streets and public green spaces*', improved accessibility, improved commercial spaces, as well as support to communities on the cost of living, tackling fuel poverty and energy efficiency for households.

■ **People & Skills (P&S):** £38m for '*intensive and holistic employment support*' delivered by the boroughs via the four sub-regional partnerships[9] (SRPs), as well as various projects under the Mayor's Support for Young Londoners programme, including support for young people Not in Education, Employment and Training (NEET) and work experience for at-risk students.

The three pillars translated into a programme with a broad scope. There was a strong crosscutting focus on **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)**, including through programme design and targets. While building on the previous European programmes and able to deploy some tools and approaches from those schemes, the UKSPF in practice was also characterised by a need for **rapid mobilisation** among lots of different actors in the system.

The C&P and SLB programmes were three-year programmes from 2022 to 2025, while the UK Government determined that the P&S programme should be one-year in duration (2024-25). This created materially different delivery conditions for that strand of UKSPF activities. Note that the programme has been extended by 12 months from the 1st of April 2025 to March 2026. The extension period is not in scope of this evaluation. However, planning and preparation for the extension were at the forefront of many interviewees' minds at the time of research.

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[5] UK Investment Plan for London (Full Version), UK government template, December 2022

[6] UKSPF Programme Management in London: Comparison Research, GLA, September 2024

[7] London Recovery Programme Overview Paper, GLA, October 2020

[8] UKSPF in London: second annual delivery report for 2023-24, GLA

[9] Central London Forward; Local London; South London Partnership; West London Alliance

1.2   Evaluation overview

The evaluation was framed as a **rapid, lessons learned exercise**. It was undertaken in four phases from December 2024 to May 2025, and used mixed methods to capture a cross-section of experience and perspectives. It incorporated **desk-based review** of the wide array of available programme data and MI, alongside a **qualitative primary research** phase based around semi-structured depth interviews, partly delivered using a case study approach.

1.2.1   Research questions

The evaluation research questions are presented in the box below. They were incorporated into the research methods and tools and are directly revisited at the end of this report in the Chapter 6 conclusions.

The evaluation tackled the following research questions[10]:

■   What worked more or less well regarding the structure and delivery of the programme, and why? What other options were considered and why were these ruled out?

■   How did the governance and oversight of the programme work for setting strategic objectives and supporting decision-making?

■   What were the challenges, facilitators and barriers to implementing and delivering the UKSPF, if any?

■   What were the benefits and disadvantages to the direct funding via London boroughs?

■   What has been the experience of project providers in delivering UKSPF-funded projects? What was their experience of the GLA's management of the programme and its reporting requirements?

■   Has the programme's design/processes enabled providers to better respond to the beneficiaries needs?

■   Are the projects working as intended? Are targets for inputs and outputs being met?

■   Are the projects reaching beneficiaries who otherwise would not have received similar support/provision elsewhere?

■   How has equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) been embedded in the programme, and how has it performed? How could the GLA improve on this in the future?

■   What potential lessons are there for delivering future similar funding programmes?

1.2.2   Evaluation phases

The four evaluation phases were as follows:

■   Phase 1 Scoping and initial learning (December 2024-January 2025)

■   Phase 2 Desk research (December 2024-January 2025)

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[10] Specification for the Evaluation of the London UKSPF Programme, GLA, September 2024

- Phase 3 Primary research and deep dive case studies (January-April 25)
- Phase 4 Reporting and dissemination (Alongside monthly progress meetings, an interim report was produced in February 2025 to share emerging themes before production of this report in June 2025).

Phase 1 Scoping and initial learning

Phase 1 included the project inception meeting, programme information gathering and initial stakeholder interviews with five GLA officers who had responsibility specific aspects of the UKSPF programme. Rapid review of programme information was undertaken to support evaluation design, including development of an **analytical framework, case study sample** and **interview topic guide**.

In developing the analytical framework, and given the evaluation focus on process and learning, there was no necessity to re-imagine the existing evaluation theory-base for UKSPF that had been developed to underpin the national UKSPF evaluations commissioned by the MHCLG. Elements of the national framework were used selectively to frame the UKSPF London evaluation.

The overall UKSPF logic model and the case study research questions (see Annex 1) provided a framing structure for the London evaluation research tools. The impact areas in the high-level logic model also provided a structure for exploring areas of programme added value. The headline planning/design and implementation questions from the national case study research were incorporated within the 18 interview core topic areas for the London interviews/cases studies. The topic guide is included in Annex 2 to this report.

Phase 2 Desk research

Phase 2 provided a more detailed review of programme documentation and MI, the scoping of relevant secondary data sources and desk-based research to map and analyse programme outputs and outcomes. Key to the analysis here were a series of programme dashboards maintained by the GLA that brought together various data and MI on UKSPF project progress and reporting.

Phase 3 Primary research / deep dives

The overall aim of the primary research phase was to be as systematic as possible while not attempting a truly representative sample/coverage. This translated into a case study approach sampled to capture a reasonable cross-section of programme activity in order that the majority of key learning points could be identified. The case studies looked at the UKSPF from different angles, including the borough view, a sample of the SLB projects, the SRPs delivering the P&S programme across London's sub-regions, and the specific Support for Young Londoners P&S projects on NEET young people and work experience.

Each case study focused on 3-4 interviews with a mix of project/borough leads, local/sector stakeholders and beneficiaries. The **14 case studies collectively comprised 53 interviews against a target of 48 interviews**. The case study sample and interplay with the UKSPF pillars was as follows:

- Borough-level case studies (*five case studies*): Focusing on local authority level delivery of, in particular, the C&P priority and the direct to borough element of SLB priority.
- Sub-region-level case studies (*two case studies*): Focusing on the P&S priority funding for economically inactive/unemployed local people.

■ Intervention/project case studies (*seven case studies*): Focusing on SLB and P&S project-type delivery.

The **case study sample** by type is shown in Table 1.1 below. The case studies were bookended with two rounds of interviews to capture the programme-wide perspective and to validate the case study learning.

■ Programme-wide and sub-regional stakeholder interviews (12 interviews against a target of 12) with the GLA, London Councils and members of the UKSPF Local Partnership sub-group.

■ Validation interviews (16 interviews against a target of 12) to provide additional depth in certain programme areas.

Across the various research tasks interviews were undertaken with a mix of local authority staff (operational and policy), voluntary and community organisations, training providers, employer and business support organisations, representative bodies, national government and GLA staff, as listed in Annex 3.

Table 1.1   List of case studies

Type	Case study
Intervention/project case study	
1 SLB Innovation	SHIFT: Future Industries Demonstrator (London Legacy Development Corporation), £1.47m
2 SLB Growing the social economy	Power Up London (Big Issue Invest), £989k
3 SLB Low carbon	Circular Fashion (British Fashion Council), £1,221m
4 SLB Diverse founders	Ascend Investment Readiness Programme (Foundervine CIC), £748k
5 SLB London & Partners	Grow London Local (London & Partners Limited), £7m
6 P&S Support for Young Londoners NEET	UNEET-ST (Shaw Trust Limited), £1.437m
7 P&S Support for Young Londoners Work Experience	WEX-EDT South & East (Education Development Trust), £1.074m
Sub-regional case study	
8 P&S Sub-region case study #1	West London Alliance
9 P&S Sub-region case study #2	Central London Forward
Borough case study	
10 Central	Southwark
11 North and East	Newham
12 South	Sutton
13 West	Hillingdon
14 No sub-regional case study	Barnet

2   UKSPF design and development

This chapter provides an overview of the key elements of the UKSPF programme in London as an entry point to understanding the diverse range of activities undertaken. It then looks at the planning, design and set-up process both overall and in terms of each of the three programme pillars.

2.1   Overview of the London programme

2.1.1   The programme investment pillars and commissioning models

The programme composition is complex and can be viewed in a number of different ways:

■ There is a **thematic view** that capture key aspects of the programme architecture (the three pillars) and best shows what the UKSPF was attempting to achieve.

■ There is a **commissioning model** view that approximates loosely to the pillars but provides the best of understanding UKSPF development and implementation because it sees the programme as a 'process'.

■ There is a **project-programme view** which is important for seeing UKSPF as distinctive, analysable 'units', which is excellent for measuring programme performance, but which is a somewhat subjective and artificial view.

2.1.2   The thematic view of the UKSPF in London

The UKSPF programme in London can be understood in terms of the three pillars: *Supporting Local Business (SLB); Community and Place (C&P); and People and Skills (P&S).* The three pillars were organised into a series of intervention themes that served to define the purpose of the programme in London, highlighting, in effect, what the programme was trying to do. The intervention themes mapped onto 21 outputs and 27 outcomes, mostly on a one-to-one basis. The exceptions were:

■ The number of supported volunteering opportunities output mapped to both the P&S and C&P investment priorities.

■ The number of jobs created as a result of UKSPF programme support outcome and the number of jobs safeguarded outcome mapped to both the SLB and C&P investment priorities.

The link between programme activities and associated outputs/outcomes was logical, notwithstanding some areas in which the link was reductive according to stakeholders. This was more about the programme outcomes not capturing the full view of impact rather than them being invalid measures. As such, the over-arching **programme design was coherent**.

The **SLB pillar** mapped to five themes:

■ Investment in local level research and development **(E19)**

■ Strengthening local entrepreneurial ecosystems **(E23)**

■ Generating training hubs, business support offers, business incubator and acceleration initiatives **(E24)**

- Supporting decarbonisation initiatives and improving the natural environment **(E29)**

- Providing business support measures to drive employment growth **(E30)**

The outputs/outcomes within the SLB investment priority were focused on encouraging new business generation along with increasing job creation as a result. Compared to the other two investment priorities, the number of outputs was extremely focused with only four key metrics identified, generally relating to the number of businesses supported (*Number of enterprises receiving grants; Number of potential entrepreneurs assisted to be enterprise ready; Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support; Number of decarbonisation plans developed as a result of support*).

Within the **C&P investment priority,** boroughs were allocated funding across six themes:

- Generating improvements to town centres and high streets **(E1)**

- Creation of and improvements to local green spaces **(E3)**

- Enhancing existing cultural, historic and heritage institutions **(E4)**

- Generating local arts, cultural and heritage activities **(E6)**

- Impactful volunteering and social action projects **(E9)**

- Community measures designed to reduce the cost of living **(E13)**

The key outputs/outcomes in the C&P investment priority had a blended focus on encouraging community regeneration projects as well as providing organisations with support to foster job creation and wider community pride.

The **P&S pillar** had three themes, which mapped directly to the different programme areas (the SRP programme and the Support for Young Londoners projects respectively):

- Employment support for economically inactive people **(E33)**

- Course provision to help support and develop basic skills in areas such as digital, English and Maths **(E34)**

- Support for Young Londoners **(B11)**

The outputs/outcomes under the P&S strand were focused on individual progression into education/training and employment. There was also an explicit focus on providing support to vulnerable individuals who were deemed to be more at risk of becoming long-term unemployed.

As noted above, there were inevitably areas where delivery organisations could identify some **disconnect between the UKSPF output and outcomes framework and what the projects were doing**. This largely reflects that any measurement framework will have limitations. For example:

- The outcomes framework was limited in terms of capturing innovation as mechanism for change/inclusion for some SLB projects.

- The targeted NEET programme included projects focused on young people with considerable support needs. There was scope within the programme framework to capture soft outcomes/distance travelled, but not necessarily what some delivery organisations felt to be critical early-stage perception/mindset shifts among young people as a consequence of participation.

2.1.3 The commissioning model view

The UKSPF can also be understood in terms of the different commissioning models that cut across the three pillars. These provided for distinctive set-up and delivery experiences:

■ As the programme annual report notes, over half of all UKSPF funding (£78m out of £144m) was provided to boroughs on a **grant funded basis**, either directly or indirectly. This cut across all three pillars. The borough programmes totalled £40m for C&P and £13m for SLB. Under the P&S pillar, a further £25m was provided via the four sub-regional partnerships (SRPs) for targeted employment and skills support. The defining characteristic of all of these borough strands is that the funding was allocated based on an agreed formula. The approach reasonably meant that the GLA and London Councils delivered on the ambition to get considerable resources out to local authorities while also retaining scope to commission other organisations using other mechanisms.

■ Both the SLB and P&S programme included **competitively tendered** project-based elements. The projects that received funding within the SLB investment priority underwent a competitive tendering process. Similarly, across the universal NEET, targeted NEET and work experience programmes under the P&S strand, delivery partners were required to submit applications that were assessed by the GLA. To add further complexity, three SLB projects (totalling £19m) were commissioned on a direct award basis from London & Partners (a considerable portion of the £49m non-borough SLB funding).

2.1.4 The project and programme view

The UKSPF annual report distinguishes **381 projects and sub-projects** across the three pillars. While this complexity was noted by stakeholders, the sentiment was more towards seeing it as programme richness rather than, as one interviewee put, describing the programme as a *'hotchpotch'*.

Ultimately, though, that detailed view is too disaggregated to be meaningful. The UKSPF is arguably best understood at slightly more aggregated level as **96 programme interventions** aligned to thematic pillar and geography. This is a slightly artificial encapsulation of the programme, but a meaningful one for analytic purposes. It roughly reflects the level at which the programme was organised and managed.

By this reading, the UKSPF can be segmented as follows:

■ **33 borough programmes** were commissioned and delivered as borough-level packages across the C&P (178 sub-projects) and SLB (111 sub-projects) pillars. The borough programme is the one area that mixes activities under different thematic pillars, risking some potential overlap in relation to support for local businesses as discussed in Chapter 3 – *£53m in total.*

■ **31 SLB projects** were delivered over a consistent timeline and within common themes, comprised of the open competition projects (28 projects) and the London & Partners direct awards (3 projects). The view here is slightly unbalanced in that the London & Partners projects represent 10% of the project total but more than a third of the investment in SLB projects - *£49m in total.*

■ **32 P&S programmes/projects** shared a distinctive timeline and separate GLA management from the other UKSPF strands. It comprised the four SRP direct awards programmes and 28 Skills for Young Londoners projects (Universal

NEET, Targeted NEET, Work experience)[11]. The SRP programmes can be argued as four sub-regional programmes or, as presented in the second annual delivery report, as 37 projects within this; reflecting, in effect, another borough level programme, although that does not fully capture how the programme worked - *£38m in total.*

2.2 The London-wide planning and design process

2.2.1 The co-design model

The UKSPF London Investment Plan was co-designed by the GLA and London Councils. There was also a national programme requirement to set up structures for wider consultation beyond this, composed of the London Partnership Board UKSPF Local Partnership sub-group[12] (for the SLB and C&P programmes) and the Skills for Londoners Board (for the P&S programme).

London Councils was involved in determining how the national funding methodology for the programme should be applied to London. Key to the upfront discussions was ensuring that some resources flowed directly to boroughs to support the principle of local agency over decision-making. The C&P programme was felt to be the most sensible area for this. The borough programme centred on this and local SLB activities. The process involved negotiation, compromise and was delivered within a constrained time period. Contextual challenges included the process running into the local election period when council leaders were otherwise engaged (as one stakeholder put it, *'it was like building the plane while flying'*).

The strong message from interviews was that the planning process was **collaborative and pragmatic**. For those involved in the pan-London process, there was a clear sense of it embodying a new way of working between the GLA and councils. The fact that more than half of the UKSPF funds went to the boroughs was generally seen by interviewees as a meaningful deal, even though some interviewees were keen to note that, at a borough level, the UKSPF was a small resource in the context of the local authority budget. Nevertheless, the collaborative approach set the tone and probably unlocked a series of benefits down the line.

That collaborative approach percolated through different programme levels. It is apparent in numerous boroughs, especially in terms the cross-team engagement needed to generate ideas for the C&P programme. It infused the SRP approach to P&S planning with the boroughs. It was perhaps more challenging in the context of SLB project consortia because project roles were more tightly defined – but this was a slightly different context anyway, given that the projects themselves were often collaborations between different types of organisation.

While the overall perspective was positive, there were many different views and perspectives voiced during the interviews. In terms of planning, design – and indeed programme management – it was generally the case that **policy and strategy interviewees within the boroughs were more sceptical or critical about the process than those more directly or operationally involved in the process**.

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[11] UK Shared Prosperity Fund Overall Review Monitoring Dashboard, GLA, 2025

[12] UKSPF Local Partnership Sub-Group Draft Terms of Reference

> **Lessons from the upfront programme negotiation process with boroughs**
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> The interviews suggested several lessons from those involved in the process of agreeing the overarching resource split for the UKSPF programme in London:
>
> ■ The importance of involving people from the start.
>
> ■ Building into the process an acknowledgement that it takes time for key stakeholders to get their head around the programme and the funding allocation method.
>
> ■ For local leaders, it was helpful to focus on agreeing principles to underpin the approach rather than anything more mechanical.
>
> ■ Regularly bringing local authorities together to present a plan and proposed outputs that could then be 'tweaked' to engender the right level of ownership.

The GLA interfaced with the MHCLG as national programme owner. The Memorandum of Understanding between the GLA and the Secretary of State set out the terms of the high-level funding commitment and noted *that 'as part of the delegated delivery model, the Lead Local Authority [GLA] will provide 'light touch' reporting'[13].*

The **scope of the programme was sufficiently broad** to be able to accommodate a wide range of activities within the defined output/outcome framework. Even if imperfect, it probably avoided considerable effort to 'reinvent' the national framework for London. It also underpinned a lot of the flexibility in delivery. Even where the expected outputs and outcomes were set for projects in advance (e.g. the NEET programme, the SLB projects), there was scope to adjust. There were no explicit benchmarks set by government in terms of targets. The GLA looked at past programmes to get a sense of what reasonable outputs and outcomes could be.

While the overall resource envelope for UKSPF was smaller than the preceding EU programmes, there was an opportunity to design a more flexible programme without the heavy audit requirements previously used and which no stakeholders thought were proportionate. From a GLA perspective, there was a sense that this approach *'freed us up'* to be able to play a more facilitative rather than a policing role.

2.2.2 The launch timetable

The GLA was not in control of the overall timetable at the beginning. The GLA and London Councils worked rapidly over summer 2022 to put the plan in place, but it was only signed off by MHCLG at the end of the year. This meant that the programme was late getting started and a substantial portion of year one (April 2022 to March 2023) passed before the programme could really begin.

The expenditure profile in the investment plan anticipated this somewhat. The year one grant allocation from MHCLG to the GLA for the programme was only a little over 10% of the overall budget (£17.5m). However, there were knock-on effects for delivery organisations. As the annual delivery report noted, *'in reality, by the time the first UKSPF contract payments were made, about eighteen months' delivery remained'[14].*

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[13] Memorandum of Understanding between The Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Greater London Authority, December 2022

[14] UKSPF in London: second annual delivery report for 2023-24, GLA

These were programme-wide rather than London-specific issues, but it percolated through to **perceptions of delays on the ground**. It was not always clear to stakeholders whether it was the borough, the SRP, the GLA, or national government that was the source of particular delays. The GLA was inevitably identified as responsible by a lot of stakeholders in London because of its lead role. Part of the perception challenge here was that the UKSPF had been so widely and heavily trailed nationally ('*we were waiting for the UKSPF for ages*' – borough policy lead) as being an important plank of future funding that local stakeholders were on alert.

2.3   Design and set-up of the programme pillars

2.3.1   SLB project design and set up

The SLB project programme combined a set of competitively tendered projects and projects awarded directly to London & Partners. Roughly £30m of UKSPF funding was allocated to the open pool. The GLA received 99 applications for the eventual 28 projects[15]. All bids were appraised by the GLA in consultation with the UKSPF Local Partnership sub-group based on a scoring matrix.

Projects were selected to achieve key themes such as giving support to local entrepreneurs and boosting innovation. These themes were then further subcategorised by sub-themes that applicants were able to apply against. Table 2.1 summarises the SLB sub-themes, the number of projects commissioned and the share of overall resources. This highlights the major focus on low carbon, innovation and supplier readiness.

Table 2.1   SLB Programme Summary

SLB Programme Area	% of overall SLB Funding (and number of projects)
London & Partners	39% (3)
Low Carbon	14% (5)
Innovation	12% (6)
Supplier Readiness	8% (5)
Growing the Social economy	7% (3)
Support fast-growing diverse founders	7% (3)
Investment readiness support for diverse founders	6% (4)
Bridging the Digital Divide	6% (1)
Property Advice Service	2% (1)

Source: GLA Monitoring Information

London & Partners was selected to deliver three projects providing support to help businesses achieve growth and expansion across domestic and global markets, as well as helping to expand London's international reputation. The direct award to London & Partners was noted by some interviewees unprompted, especially at borough level. There were questions about the **transparency of this decision**, which is understandable, although the rationale for the approach is sound. The earlier review of how business support is managed in London concluded that there were too many providers, and that London & Partners should play a lead role. The

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[15] Originally 29 projects but one project dropped out during the contracting stage

approach was stated in the UKSPF Investment Strategy and in line with the varied commissioning approach across the UKSPF programme as a whole.

Beyond this, an open approach was taken. No preference was given to any particular sectors. Organisations were able to put together a consortium to prepare a bid which was then competitively assessed against other applicants. They were able to submit separate applications for multiple projects. Applicants were also able to submit a multi-year application covering multiple themes. Support was provided during the bid process in the form of webinars, Q&A, roundtables and one-to-one question responses to help applicants with the process.

In general, SLB delivery partners reported that **the design and setup of the investment priority were effective**. Delivery partners were granted the autonomy to develop programmes specifically designed to achieve their targeted outputs and outcomes. Additionally, the GLA entrusted them with the discretion to leverage their subject knowledge and expertise in determining the most effective methods for implementation. The competitive tender process meant that delivery partners were held accountable against key target metrics without feeling as though these targets were unachievable.

Table 2.2 lists the projects in order of size. Most projects received from £0.5-£1.5m so were of a considerable scale. Five projects received £2m+, including the three London & Partners projects, which represented nearly 40% of the total investment. Most organisations had been recipients of some form of GLA funding before or had interacted with the ERDF. New organisations commissioned to undertake SLB projects were a minority but able to hit the ground running with support.

Having the option to **develop projects on a cross-borough or London-wide basis was felt to be a real positive** – especially in the context of the inclusion mission of the SLB pillar. One organisation that was also leading UKSPF-funded social enterprise support in another region of England specifically noted that those other projects were smaller scale. The investment priority did not limit delivery partners to focus on a limited number of output and outcome metrics. Funding recipients were able to select the metrics at the application stage that they believed their projects would be able to achieve.

Table 2.2 Summary of SLB projects

Project Name	Funding	Lead SLB Theme
Grow London Global	£9,529,727	London & Partners
Grow London Local	£7,000,000	London & Partners
London E-Business Support Programme	£2,858,421	Bridging the Digital Divide
Grow London Early Stage	£2,470,273	London & Partners
Better Futures	£2,258,796	Low Carbon
Big Innovation Support Programme	£1,506,682	Innovation
SHIFT: Future Industries Demonstrator	£1,471,272	Innovation
Boosting Life Sciences Social Economy	£1,465,708	Growing the social economy
ReLondon's circular economy business transformation programme	£1,446,420	Low Carbon
Amplify Venture	£1,435,248	Support fast-growing diverse founders
DigitalHealth.London Business Support for London	£1,379,257	Support fast-growing diverse founders
Just transition programme	£1,246,356	Low Carbon
Circular Fashion	£1,221,038	Low Carbon

Investment Ready Programme for Diverse Founders	£1,065,964	Investment readiness for diverse founders
Minority Business Matters	£1,018,857	Supplier Readiness
Power Up London	£988,994	Growing the social economy
Shifting London	£950,083	Growing the social economy
Open London	£947,582	Innovation
Central Research Laboratory	£903,234	Innovation
Inclusive Supply Chains	£893,516	Supplier Readiness
Property Advice for SMEs	£750,000	Property Advice Service
Ascend Investment Readiness Programme	£748,074	Investment readiness for diverse founders
Westminster Supplier Readiness	£683,211	Supplier Readiness
Southwark Climate Collective	£653,775	Investment readiness for diverse founders
Camden & Brent Business Climate Challenge	£640,789	Low Carbon
Game Changer	£638,928	Investment readiness for diverse founders
Selby Community Enterprise Centre	£631,110	Supplier Readiness
Barts Life Sciences Innovation	£600,000	Innovation
Social Tech Accelerator	£590,540	Innovation
Empower 100	£558,179	Support fast-growing diverse founders
Supply Ready (West London)	£500,870	Supplier Readiness

Source: Full list of SLB funded projects – GLA Monitoring Information

2.3.2 The borough programme design and set up

The borough programme comprised further SLB-related interventions as well as the entirety of the C&P programme. The C&P investment priority allocated funding to all London boroughs to carry out regeneration activities through capital spend and revenue projects. This funding was allocated across six intervention themes as shown in Table 2.3. The overarching focus was on generating an increased sense of community and pride.

Table 2.3 Communities & Place Spending Overview

C&P Intervention Theme	Funding (% of overall funding)
E1: Improvements to town centres & high streets	£12,000,000 (30%)
E3: Creation of and improvements to local green spaces	£8,000,000 (20%)
E4: Enhancing existing cultural, historic & heritage institutions offer	£6,000,000 (20%)
E6: Local arts, cultural, heritage & creative activities	£5,000,000 (12%)
E9: Impactful volunteering and/or social action projects	£3,000,000 (7%)
E13: Community measures to reduce the cost of living	£6,126,812 (15%)

Source: Summary of C&P spend

UKSPF funding for the C&P strand was directly allocated to boroughs. The outputs and outcomes were determined by the GLA and then boroughs selected which elements they were going to deliver against. While some boroughs used the funding to 'top-up' existing projects, others used it to carry out new activities. In total there were 178 sub-projects within the C&P investment priority that received UKSPF funding.

The approach to selecting projects for the borough programme varied. This largely reflected local structures and ways of doing business. Some boroughs took a more centralised approach to design and management, while others followed a more distributed model. There were many different routes to success. A consistent theme, however, was the boroughs deploying a **high level of pragmatism** in making their plans:

■ One borough described using the UKSPF prospectus to develop project ideas, which were then mapped to the council's current strategy. A central team then reached out to various services within the local authority to identify potential projects. A longlist was brainstormed and then prioritised by the central team through a process of refinement. They found a high degree of alignment between the scope of the programme and local priorities, but *'it was all very new'* and the borough was **cautious** about what types of spending the programme would allow. This was a common theme for numerous boroughs.

■ Another borough immediately prioritised an existing flagship programme and used business support resources to uplift that service considerably. Some existing local authority resources were then moved to a new green programme as a consequence that they were not confident would be delivered within the three-year UKSPF time horizon, even though it was purportedly in line with UKSPF programme ambitions.

One borough interviewee noted that it would have been ideal for UKSPF funding to cover an entire project. However, this was often impractical because there was no suitably sized project available when the funding was released. This meant that identifying the specific contribution of UKSPF funding was harder to identify for some C&P projects than it was for self-contained projects across the other two investment priorities.

As a process, there was a sense in some boroughs that the programme planning process stimulated cross-team links, especially in terms of the C&P projects. It was easy for most local authorities to identify projects that would add value, and the approach of **using the resource in a bottom-up way to meet very local and visible needs has been a very positive element of the programme**, both anecdotally and in terms of evidence being gathered from the public/local communities on an ad hoc basis.

Boroughs had to submit information detailing which key outputs and outcomes they were intending to achieve. At this point, the evidence requirements for outputs and outcomes had not been developed, so boroughs did not know initially what information they needed to provide. This required adjustment in the early delivery phase, including change requests to match actual delivery.

The need to make early adjustments caused frustration but the actual change process was positively received. One interviewee described having a lot of freedom around the targets, which was refreshing: *'The assumption was that we had an evidence base rather than us having to demonstrate need'*. Another interviewee described feeling that there was *'arbitrary pushback'* from the GLA on the proposed volume of one outcome, which was seen as being part of attempts to align the council's plan with the London-wide plan (*'it was interesting to see the negotiation before our eyes'*).

2.3.3   P&S design and set-up

The P&S programme was undertaken during 2024-25. In terms of programme design, given the lower funding level compared to the preceding ESF programme, the GLA undertook a gap analysis to see where the largest shortfall was likely to be. Consultation on the design of the Support for Young Londoners programme was undertaken with 300+ representatives from boroughs, business, the employment support and careers sectors, as well as with young people via surveys and workshops[16]. When the investment strategy was determined, the DWP and MHCLG gave guidance to ensure that the UKSPF did not compete with national objectives or duplicate existing efforts from the other departments. However, changing personnel in government and other departments meant that when the investment plan was submitted it had to be adapted.

The resulting programme included a mix of funding allocated indirectly to boroughs and competitively commissioned projects:

■ **Sub-regional Partnerships (SRPs) programme (four programmes, 67% of total P&S spend):** A budget of £25m was provided via the sub regional partnerships (SRPs) to the boroughs to help address employability challenges across London. Emphasis was placed on providing support to individuals from underrepresented groups and those with specific needs.

■ **The Universal NEET (UNEET) programme (six projects, 15% of P&S spend):** Funding for projects at sub-regional level to support young people who are not in education or employment.

■ **The Targeted NEET (TNEET) programme (16 projects, 14% of P&S spend):** Similar to the above but aimed at specific groups of young people who have complex needs or face multiple forms of disadvantage '*including care leavers, young people who are homeless, involved in substance misuse and/or criminal activity, young carers, and those with special educational needs and disabilities*'[17]. The projects were typically smaller than the universal NEET projects, enabling delivery by a more diverse specialist supplier base.

■ **Work Experience programme (six projects, 4% of P&S spend):** This strand was designed to provide 16–18-year-olds with work experience opportunities to gain familiarity with the working environment, developing skills and cultivating relationships to boost employability prospects.

Note that there was additional funding under the P&S pillar to the Career Hubs for staffing, which does not easily fit into a project/programme view.

A key innovation in the bid process was the set up a **youth panel** to support bid decision making for the NEET programme. This required considerable effort but was felt to be highly impactful. Youth panel members received training and scored a bid question on engagement. Bidders had to score at least three out of five on this question to be considered. The process gave the GLA a higher level of confidence that what bidders were proposing was likely to work in terms of engaging young people. There was some moderation to the overall scores for the targeted NEET projects to ensure that the range of projects fitted to need, so that they were not all aimed at the same target group.

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[16] UKSPF Consultation on support for young Londoners intervention: Summary of responses March-May 2023, GLA

[17] UKSPF in London: second annual delivery report for 2023-24, GLA

The one-year P&S programme delivery timetable shaped much of the project planning. It was the most significant design and delivery constraint mentioned by almost all stakeholders. It caused challenges for those setting up NEET and work experience projects, especially under the payment by results model. One organisation leading a work experience project described being exposed to costs without any drawdown until delivery started. Delays in receiving provider guidance further complicated financial planning. In this case, contracts were not signed by the go-live date and the organisation had to make risk-based decisions to start recruiting staff without signed contracts.

The **SRPs** took varied approaches in terms of where they focused resources (see Table 2.4). Local London was entirely focused on support for disadvantaged groups. Central London Forward placed most of its focus on skills support for unemployed people. The other two SRPs balanced targets and resources across both outcome areas. Two of the four sub-regions invested in additional capacity for the No Wrong Door integration hubs set up to support a more integrated approach to employment and skills. The differences did not translate into obviously different activities at borough level and, as with the borough programme, the distribution to boroughs was largely determined by a formula.

There were, however, some good examples of collaboration – including sub-regions making targeted collective investments. For example, one SRP agreed a sub-regional project to set up Individual Placement and Support (IPS) in adult social care. This provision made sense on a cross-borough basis because of different integrated care board geographies and the specialist nature of support that is difficult to resource locally. Boroughs were willing to collaborate in these areas when it was also clear that it would not duplicate existing provision and create competition for referrals.

Table 2.4   Distribution of SRP funding by outcome and programme

	CLF	LL	SLP	WLA
E33 Support for disadvantaged groups	28.8%	96.0%	47.0%	44.5%
E33 No Wrong Door	0.0%	0.0%	2.0%	6.0%
E34 Basic/life/career skills for unemployed people	67.2%	0.0%	47.0%	45.5%
Management and administration	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%	4.0%

Source: SRP UKSPF Grant Funding Agreements Annex A

3   UKSPF implementation

This chapter explores implementation of the UKSPF programme. It looks at the overall effectiveness of delivery and some of the key operational challenges faced by stakeholders. It examines the programme management approach, monitoring and reporting, as well as support provided to delivery organisations.

3.1   Delivery against plan

3.1.1   Overall effectiveness of delivery against plan

Given the complexity of the overall UKSPF programme and its multitude of delivery settings, programme implementation was relatively successful. There were unsurprising **issues in terms of boroughs' ability to deliver capital spending under the C&P priority**. These were largely side-stepped at source by using the funding for projects that were already underway. There were also challenges mobilising new work experience provision under the P&S pillar, which were not possible to completely solve given the clash between the academic calendar and the UKSPF calendar. Apart from this, delivery was rather effective at aggregate level.

Ensuring that the funding could be disbursed, often in challenging delivery conditions, was **the driving characteristic of UKSPF programme management in practice**. At different levels, the UKSPF was managed to ensure that the funding could be spend on time. This was a shared interest among the GLA, the SRPs, the boroughs and other project leads. It informed decisions about both:

- What to fund at project level and how to define success (i.e. **pragmatism**). This is shown in terms of local authorities selecting *'shovel ready'* capital projects within the C&P strand, for example, and upfront exchanges in all pillars to ensure that targets were achievable. There were positive outcomes from the pragmatic approach. The parameters of the programme steered boroughs towards bottom up, local, high-impact interventions because of the need to move quickly and focus on improvements that could be quickly delivered.

- How to deploy flexibilities during the implementation phase (e.g. change requests) to **flex delivery** where barriers were faced, both within projects in dialogue with the GLA/SRP and at programme level in terms shifting resources between projects.

3.1.2   The timetable, mobilisation and pace of delivery

The main implementation challenges faced across the board related to timing/planning and **squeezed delivery timescales**. This was partly exacerbated by internal systems and mobilisation challenges for delivery organisations. None of these challenges were new or unique to the UKSPF, other than it having a shorter delivery window than the ESF/ERDF programmes:

'There were lots of problems with ESF in terms of the audit regime but at least it was a seven-year programme, you could plan it strategically.' (GLA interviewee)

Nevertheless, there was considerable scope in practice to rollover SLB/C&P resources between financial years. The short-term funding in the P&S priority area led to numerous interviewees describing a **stop-start approach to delivery**. One of the NEET projects described needing to quickly recruit and train around 15 staff

members but only being able to offer fixed-term contracts of less than one year made it difficult to attract and retain staff, leading to high turnover. Others faced similar challenges:

'To mobilise, get a staff team on board, train that team and then get stuck into delivery, there's not a lot of time before you're suddenly winding down' (Employment support provider)

"The timing of things is sometimes problematic for delivery. So, if, I don't know, 50% of our workforce leave and then we get an extension, suddenly we've got to go through the process of recruiting staff again, training staff etc." (Employment support provider)

While the condensed timetable worked against those not already delivering and, as a consequence, limited the diversity of delivery base, it ultimately translated into less efficient delivery rather than failure to deliver in most cases.

There is, however, an **apparent tension between having a programme that was keenly focused on capability to deliver (to maximise the use of resources) while at the same time trying to develop the capacity to provide more bespoke or specialised support**. This was the richness of the programme, but it created issues in terms of mobilisation to deliver beyond 'business-as-usual' – which is arguably where most of the programme added value lay. The London & Partners project probably represents the clearest attempt within the UKSPF to develop new, sustained capacity for support (see below), but others were, in effect, trying to do this in the context of much smaller projects.

> **Grow London building new capacity:** Rapid growth presented a challenge as London & Partners expanded from 100 to 300 staff over the course of the project. The platform used underwent a significant procurement process (more than £1m). Staff were recruited to help with delivery and numerous companies were supported within the boroughs. This translated into support given to over 16,000 businesses and reaching a large number of London's SMEs in a year.

Interviewees reported several factors underpinning successful mobilisation for the NEET programme. Pre-established partnerships with sub-contractors and referral networks were crucial to hitting the ground running. Strategic partnerships, including with the SRP, helped to build networks and promote the project ('*I think strategic partnerships are quite a key in building those networks.'* – project lead). Having a strong social media presence helped promote the project and reach a wider audience, but the team also put up posters and distributed flyers in community hubs, libraries and other key locations.

The timing challenges faced by the work experience programme limited potential impact. Mobilisation was difficult due to the timing of the contract, which coincided with exam periods and summer holidays. This made it challenging to engage schools and colleges, as they were focused on other priorities. It is not clear that anything realistically could be done to tally the programme financial year and the school academic year. Some strategies helped, such as shifting the focus towards colleges or, in one case, collaborating with the Army to offer three-day work experience placements; but the programme was on the backfoot for reasons largely outside of its own control. This fed into delivery organisation challenges. For example, one of the anticipated contracts could not be awarded and so another provider had to take on extra provision.

3.1.3 Information and partnership management

There was a need for SLB consortia and for local authorities generally to have **good processes for gathering and managing information** on a quarterly basis. Two specific pain points related to:

■ having to go back to partners to ask them to change the information they collected on beneficiaries because the requirements were not known early enough; and

■ individual users being unable to effectively use or understand what was perceived to be a complex and overengineered monitoring spreadsheet.

Each of the councils had grant agreements in place with the GLA, but they had their own governance processes to follow to determine how to spend their allocation. One local authority described having various internal processes to follow, including getting local authority officers to make key decisions. There was a difference between having committed the spend to then defraying money from the bank account. This led to delays and some significant capital underspend even as they approached March 2025.

Compared to the SLB and P&S projects where delivery partners were engaging with a smaller number of lead contacts, **borough leads were required to collate information from multiple different teams and sub-projects**. The SRP programme faced similar challenges but the SRPs had a more explicit mission to generate consistent data and processes across the boroughs, whereas borough programme leads might be managing information flows for UKSPF reporting in addition to other responsibilities.

GLA programme managers provided scope for the boroughs to put in place internal delivery processes that they judged worked most effectively for them, but this heightened the demands on borough leads. While this was effective for some boroughs, others struggled due to specific capacity and capability challenges within their teams.

Some local authorities found that **internal systems** were not as robust as they needed to be to manage the UKSPF programme, especially in terms of contract management. Issues included lack of clarity on outputs required of commissioned organisations, lack of flexibility to extend contracts, lack of cross-departmental oversight over budget monitoring. Boroughs without established information management processes found that, if there was staff turnover, or sub-project scope adjustments, there was much less visibility internally and ability to keep on top of these changes. It reflects the varying capacity of different local authorities.

However, there were some benefits in this context. The **UKSPF strengthened some connections within some boroughs**:

■ It generated a new process for some local authorities to collaborate between departments to identify project opportunities under the C&P pillar.

■ It showed where there is 'hidden' evidence being collected by certain borough teams on a day-to-day basis that had a wider resonance for other teams in terms understanding local community behaviours and preferences.

3.1.4 Overlapping provision

There were challenges is some areas relating to **overlapping provision and potential duplication**. The hybrid programme design meant that different elements

of UKSPF provision intersected at various points. Most resources were allocated through the vertical structure of the local authorities and largely therefore delivered within local geographic boundaries. There was, though, clear added value in commissioning provision on a cross-borough basis. This created a **risk of competition** (which may or may not be a bad thing) and duplication. This was mentioned by some interviewees, although more as hypothetical rather than real world challenge.

Where borough and cross-borough activities intersected, they appeared to generally course correct through engagement. For example, one of the NEET projects being delivered at sub-regional level found that one borough already had a project providing similar support to young people, but in another borough the Jobcentre Plus 18-24 team was overstretched. The UKSPF project could pivot to providing additional support where there was a lack of capacity for mentoring and coaching etc.

Having different UKSPF delivery organisations competing to support the same beneficiaries is a function of each project having its own targets and payments linked to activities undertaken. The model arguably worked well in terms of achieving (often high quality) results. However, it is reasonable to suggest that more could have been done on alignment. As one borough policy interviewee put it in the context of the SLB interventions: '*There should have been time to join all of this up.'*

In the context of the NEET programme, having the distinction between a targeted and universal programme delivered some benefits, such as broadening the base of delivery organisations in the context of the smaller, specialist projects. It created challenges as well. Some of the targeted project providers (which were specialist organisations) found that they were receiving referrals from people who had wider or general needs. The model then depended on them referring to other providers, but this did not necessarily happen. The inverse may also have been true with general NEET providers potentially not referring some people to specialist NEET support that they may have benefited from in order to be able to claim for that participant. Some interviewees suggested that the payment by results model acted as a barrier to signposting in that way.

3.2   Programme management

3.2.1   Programme management approach and support

The overall programme management approach was received positively across delivery organisations under all UKSPF pillars. The aim of empowering delivery partners worked well. Interviewees described a generally light-touch engagement with the GLA that was '*refreshing'* and '*nothing too onerous'*. Typical words to describe the GLA contract managers – and equivalents within the SRPs – were '*good', 'skilled'' 'flexible'* and '*responsive'.* If there was a new recipient under the SLB projects programme, the GLA made sure to put an experienced grant manager in charge of managing the relationship.

As one GLA interviewee noted, '*there has been a culture shift for us'* from focusing on checking payments to overseeing something where the delivery organisations have more freedom. Paying the boroughs in advance was a key mechanism for the different approach, creating a keener focus on quality of delivery.

SLB projects and NEET/work experience projects generally required more support than the boroughs in terms of requests for information/clarification. Some SLB

projects found the intervals between quarterly progress updates too long at certain junctures. A suggestion made to address this was to introduce an 'office hours' style slot each month, as an informal way for project members to ask questions outside of the more formal progress meetings. This was something deployed by some SRPs under the P&S pillar.

Throughout the programme, there were opportunities for **collaborative support.** Having space for cross-borough learning at the start (stimulated by the GLA and the SRPs) was a big win because different boroughs were facing the same challenges in terms of how to both interpret and manage the process. One SRP described its role as providing minimum service standards and a management framework to ensure that the employment support is being delivered on a consistent basis across the sub-region. The SLB projects had quarterly project network meetings where different projects could come together and ask questions and learn from each other. Under the P&S pillar, bringing providers together under the Support for Young Londoners programme on a quarterly basis helped them to exchange learning.

3.2.2 Programme monitoring and reporting

The programme was managed via a quarterly reporting cycle. This mirrored the timetable for reporting from the GLA to central government, although that extended over time to become six-monthly updates. The dashboards used by the GLA to manage the programme (the borough/SLB programmes on one side and the P&S programme separately) took time to develop partly because it was not initially clear what information would be needed by MHCLG. This led to the GLA tracking information that was not ultimately required, such as detailed EDI performance and sector employment.

The programme had a reliable 'live' picture of progress and performance via the **dashboards**. It was possible to aggregate and make sense of the diverse landscape of provision. Progress was communicated outwards through annual reports that provided a good summary at programme level.

Common monitoring and reporting issues related to the **complexity of templates**, initial uncertainty (especially regarding output/outcome measurement) and the perceived impracticality of the evidential 'ask' in some areas. Some boroughs with elongated processes for gathering internal data found the turnaround time for quarterly reporting too short.

Delivery partners working with multiple local authorities under the UKSPF noted that **different local authorities interpreted the rules differently**. Making assumptions about the reporting requirements based on undertaking a UKSPF project in one borough was problematic, as a second project might be much more onerous in terms of reporting.

Some local authorities themselves experienced different regimes of reporting and evidential requirements within different arms of the UKSPF. Boroughs in some sub-regions reported that the SRP imposed additional conditions under the P&S sub-regional programme to what the GLA was requiring for the borough programme. The challenge with the SRP programme in some sub-regions was that the distribution of risk was felt to be different, with the collective of boroughs in the sub-region responsible for delivery of each borough.

Issues measuring some outputs/outcomes had an outsized impact on how delivery organisations experienced the programme. There was a general challenge in how to measure the number of jobs safeguarded through an

intervention. The issue of outcomes that appear beyond the programme time window was also noted, especially some of the entrepreneurial outcomes under the SLB programme, such as improved productivity or new products and services. Beyond this, the challenges faced can be categorised in terms of:

■ **Disproportionality:** Outcomes related to building energy improvements under C&P were intended to be measured by residents obtaining new EPC certificates. This was costly and out of kilter with the scale of intervention.

■ **Inappropriateness:** There were issues in both the P&S and SLB pillars relating to asking vulnerable or disadvantaged individuals for what was perceived to be sensitive or intrusive information (e.g. tax information) or requiring intermediaries to collect data such as signatures from beneficiaries who were reluctant to sign documents. One work experience project described how it was envisaged that participating young people would get employers to sign a declaration to evidence an outcome. One of the boroughs found that its work with volunteers and local community organisations ran into barriers in terms of the level of personal information they, as volunteers, were expected to provide. Similarly, where small community organisations were delivering local activities, they sometimes lacked the capacity to act as intermediaries to collect a lot of data.

■ **Narrowly defined outputs/outcomes:** Some interviewees found that narrow measurements did not capture full impact or constrained the programme in a way that conflicted with its objectives. In the SLB programme, restrictions on providing multisite environmental support for one organisation within the borough felt counterproductive. In the context of the NEET programme, the 'good jobs' target required young people to be employed at the London living wage and working 16 hours minimum. This was sometimes difficult to achieve. Projects argued that it was not necessarily a failure for beneficiaries facing labour market barriers to have an employment outcome that did not immediately meet these terms. They did not necessarily understand that this was a sub-measure of a wider job outcome measure and that all positive outcomes in this regard were counted; or, they nevertheless found the good jobs outcome disconnected from project activities (i.e. it is a question of interpretation by the projects and the perceived emphasis of programme commissioners).

Given the volume of outputs and outcomes in the UKSPF programme, those that caused issues were the exception rather than the rule. Importantly, in most cases requirements were flexed in discussion with the GLA without considerable effort being needed. Yet, it was still a disproportionate bugbear for projects.

There was also a wide variety of other data being collected through delivery. SLB project delivery organisations felt that most of what was required was in line with (or less than) the data and follow up they would undertake with SMEs/founders as a matter of course. For P&S NEET projects, participant distance travelled was incorporated in the UKSPF outcomes framework. Some specialist NEET providers had tools for capturing soft outcomes in a fairly detailed way beyond what the programme required (see below). Additional data collected by boroughs was more ad hoc but rich in quality.

> **Additional tools to measure progress:** Shaw Trust used the Resilience Compass tool to assess and measure young people's progress, aligning with the GLA's soft outcomes and providing a comprehensive view of their development. The Resilience Compass assesses holistically the barriers and needs of a young person to build a plan, and the distance travelled from the start of the project until completion.

The **exit survey for businesses** supported via the SLB programme was difficult to deliver successfully. London & Partners similarly struggled to get a good response to its survey of 1,200 companies that aimed to capture qualitative feedback. Exit surveys were intended to be issued to all projects across the SLB investment priority. The survey had 19 questions covering a range of topics including:

■ Whether the UKSPF had helped the enterprise gain access to new capital

■ Exploring if the enterprise had hired additional staff

■ Asking whether the enterprise had introduced new products and services

■ Looking to see whether new relationships had been developed or existing relationships had been strengthened

■ Examining whether business had become more environmentally and financially stable and if this was likely to be sustained.

Exit surveys were collected for 17 out of the 31 SLB projects. The response rates varied significantly. Whilst some were able to collate responses from over 100 beneficiaries, many others were only able to gather responses from a handful of participants. Delivery partners and beneficiaries observed that the surveys could have been better promoted from the start. For projects delivering using a cohort approach, this made it more difficult to gather responses from beneficiaries.

4 Programme performance and outcomes

This chapter explores UKSPF programme performance in terms of achieving planned outputs and outcomes. It then looks at the nature of programme impact, added value and, in particular, the EDI reach of the programme.

4.1 Achieving outputs and outcomes

The UKSPF programme in London **achieved nearly all intended outputs and outcomes across all three investment priorities**. The SLB and C&P pillars met all of their goals, while the P&S investment priority achieved most of its targets.

The £144m budget in the investment plan was fully dispersed once management costs and accruals were accounted for. Fundamentally, therefore, the **collective effort from the GLA, the boroughs and other delivery organisations to effectively deliver the programme has been a success**. There was an underspend in the work experience programme for reasons discussed in Chapter 3.

Importantly, the programme was delivered in a way that was substantially in line with the investment plan, even accounting for the need to move resources around in practice to overcome specific delivery issues. Differences between anticipated and actual spend did not alter the overall scope/shape of the programme and, instead, can be viewed as examples of **smart responsiveness**, including local authorities flexing how C&P capital spend was used in order to ensure that resources could be used within the timescale.

4.1.1 Support for local businesses outputs and outcomes

Over **12,000 SMEs were supported** as a result of the SLB investment priority. Against planned outputs, the largest over-performance was the **number of enterprises receiving grants** with 726 recorded against the investment plan target of 321 enterprises. Success was also seen with the number of potential entrepreneurs assisted to become enterprise ready, with 7,506 enterprises supported against a target of 3,716 enterprises.

Across the SLB programme, the most significant over-achievement of outcomes was observed in the **creation of new enterprises**, with 828 established compared to an investment plan target of 280 enterprises. Significant achievement was also seen in relation to the **number of enterprises engaged in new markets**, with 1,432 recorded compared to an investment plan target of 524 enterprises.

4.1.2 Communities and place outputs and outcomes

C&P projects also met all intended outcomes and outputs at aggregate level. In terms of outputs, the most significant achievement against plan was **the amount of public realm created or improved as a result of the UKSPF**, nearly 164,000m^2 against a target of just under 69,000m^2. Significant overachievement was also seen with regards to the **number of trees planted** (6,202 vs an investment plan target of 3,054) and the **number of households who received support** (13,256 against an investment plan target of 8,626).

In terms of outcomes, there was substantial over-achievement of targets to improve accessibility for individuals (9,773 individuals were assisted against an investment target of 1,286). Significant success was achieved with **enhanced engagement**

metrics, positively impacting 79,728 individuals compared to the initial investment plan target of 18,848.

Success was partly dependent on the internal organisational capacity and capabilities of each respective borough. They also took different levels of risk. As boroughs determined which projects UKSPF funding would contribute towards, there was a wide range of different activities supported. This involved making modest contributions to significant capital infrastructure projects that were already in progress, as well as UKSPF funding that completely covered community regeneration projects.

4.1.3 People and skills outputs and outcomes

The P&S investment priority also achieved most of its intended targets:

■ The investment priority significantly overachieved against its target of **supporting Londoners into education, employment and training**, reaching 5,272 individuals against an initial target of 1,996 individuals in the investment plan.

■ The investment priority also achieved significant success regarding the **number of economically inactive and unemployed Londoners supported** as a result of the UKSPF (9,983 individuals against an initial target of 6,988 individuals in the investment plan).

The programme supported 9,343 young people aged 16-24 against a target of 6,500 young Londoners in the investment plan. It therefore exceeded the initial target even though, as noted above, there was under-performance against targets for the work experience programme specifically (1,182 placements against a target of 4,000 placements in the investment plan).

4.2 Programme impact and added value

Despite the successes experienced, delivery partners across all programme areas felt that **capturing the full impact of the programme was challenging**. While organisations used qualitative tools to add evidence of impact, such as beneficiary case studies, exit surveys, or internal evaluations, these were not carried out universally and tended to focus on individual success stories rather than being able encapsulate programme added value. That limitation is amplified because of **the heterogeneity of the UKSPF in London** – it was a programme doing lots of different things in lots of different ways.

Stepping back, though, it is possible to bring the evaluation evidence together to look at how the UKSPF, at programme level, added value over-and-above the mainstream delivery and investment that was already taking place. Through this lens it is possible to see the ways in which the programme was not just 'more of the same' in terms of outcomes, even though **some resources *were* used to maintain or top-up existing provision and activities**.

In this sense, **programme added value is uneven, but it is clearly visible** in terms of the following:

■ **Programme reach** to individuals who would not otherwise have received support (or would not have received support that was targeted and tailored in the same way).

■ Benefits that emerge from the **combined focus on communities and local action** that are hard to measure but wide in nature, including local perceptions, and rooted in how the UKSPF plugged gaps (temporarily at least) in investment.

■ New and improved support **capacity** within London with a stronger inclusion focus.

4.2.1 Reaching additional beneficiaries

There is strong qualitative evidence that the **programme has reached beneficiaries who would not have received similar support elsewhere**. This is partly a function of the scale of the investment. More significantly, the delivery mechanism meant the investment reached communities that may not otherwise have been supported. It was characteristic of the highly localised 'bottom up' project design within the C&P revenue projects. It was embedded in the explicit EDI focus of a lot of the SLB projects. It was also visible in the highly targeted approach to support for young people in the P&S programme.

Delivery partners, programme managers, and beneficiaries unanimously agreed that the majority of the benefits observed would not have been realised without funding. One local authority interviewee was fairly typical in describing *'75-80% of the projects [C&P; SLB] would not have happened without the programme'*. Furthermore, those activities that would otherwise have happened would generally have taken place over a considerably longer time period or to a lower quality.

A key portion of UKSPF delivery was in domains where there is **no clear alternative funding**. It is not statutory provision for local authorities or is more targeted/personalised than existing provision allows. Delivery partners indicated that, in the absence of funding for NEET support, a significant number of vulnerable individuals would remain unsupported. Ultimately, the P&S strand alone has led to a highly targeted and personalised support to 25,000+ Londoners:

"The programme has been great. And we've certainly, reached loads of people who are just not getting any support at all who would really just kind of fall through the cracks of a lot of those services." (P&S delivery partner)

"We know that a lot of local authorities financially are struggling. I think interventions for young people are slightly different to interventions for adults, and I think UK Shared Prosperity funding enables providers, … not just ourselves, lots of organisations to create bespoke solutions for young people…just look at the numbers, you know, there'd be 900 plus young people in our area that wouldn't have received the service necessarily…I think it's massive." (Employment Support Provider)

Within the SLB investment priority, beneficiaries and delivery partners identified that while numerous accelerator and incubation programmes are available, very few, if any, concentrate on offering tailored support to founders from diverse backgrounds. As entrepreneurship is a competitive space, much is dependent on existing relationships. The business growth achieved, networks established, and sense of empowerment gained are all linked to the specific design of the SLB project programme.

4.2.2 Spillovers and soft outcomes

It was also evident that the UKSPF had generated significant spillovers for local communities across all three investment priorities. The benefits came in many forms including:

■ Increased local pride as a result of capital spend through the C&P investment priority.

■ Job creation for local residents across all three priorities.

■ Reduced anti-social behaviour and reduced family pressure due to progression into education and employment opportunities through the P&S investment priority.

Delivery partners additionally noted qualitative outcomes that the Support for Young Londoners programme had accomplished in addition to the quantitative outputs. They remarked that the programme had significantly enhanced many **beneficiaries' self-confidence and sense of purpose**. This was crucial in helping to change their outlook regarding their future prospects and, combined with increased knowledge about workplace behaviours and expectations, was a key benefit of the programme.

One delivery partner captured how this increased positive outlook contributes to an increased sense of belonging. The tailored support not only helps the beneficiaries themselves but also leads to wider positive spillover impacts for wider society through increased societal participation and lower probability of anti-social behaviour.

4.2.3 Building and maintaining capacity

SLB projects led to participating organisations being able to source new investment partners, raise capital, develop new relationships, hire new staff, and increase knowledge and skills development. Successes included founders being connected with prospective investment partners and raising new capital directly because of the programme. Several founders successfully raised hundreds of thousands of pounds in capital or expedited their products' routes to market. They expressed unequivocally that these accomplishments were directly attributable to their participation in the UKSPF. Even founders who had not secured additional capital through the programme noted an increased awareness of the current state of their businesses and, importantly, the necessary steps required for further progression:

"Without the funding, we wouldn't have been able to do any of this. … UKSPF was our first major project and that's been a massive benefit to us…I think we have learned a huge amount and it's probably more because we've been able to deliver, because we've succeeded, it's given us a platform." (SLB delivery organisation).

Exit survey responses suggest that the programme helped participants to improve internal processes, increase knowledge of local markets and create new partnerships. Results also indicated that the programme reached enterprises led by people from under-represented groups, a core goal of the overall UKSPF.

Where the UKSPF funding was a 'top-up' or contribution towards existing services or projects, identifying the specific UKSPF impact was difficult. Some of the C&P projects receiving UKSPF funding were long term in nature and, as such, pinpointing the programme contribution was challenging. Borough delivery partners nevertheless remarked that UKSPF funding helped to **plug certain gaps and alleviate cashflow challenges with other funding sources**.

There are inevitably programme areas where additionality is more contested and there could be **substitution of resources**. Funding to part-support C&P capital investments, some borough business support and some of the direct employment support provision under the P&S sub-regional programme may have been replaced by other resources in the absence of the UKSPF. Even here, though, it is important to note that these parts of the programme could add value. There is significant borough variation in the business and employment support offer. Some boroughs used UKSPF funding to, in effect, set up new business support or employment support programmes. In addition, investment has been made to upgrade existing services ranging from digital training provision in libraries to enhanced community spaces for cultural events.

4.2.4   EDI reach and added value

There was an explicit programme focus on ensuring that underrepresented groups were targeted. Targets were put in place to make sure that the funding was directed towards these underserved groups.

Overall, all three priorities achieved the majority of the EDI outcome and output targets. This included within the SLB investment priority ensuring that a certain proportion of the funding was specifically directed towards entrepreneurs from underrepresented groups (see Table 4.1):

'What was really nice is we had diverse businesses across verticals and industries, and I think we were able to help founders across almost every single industry (to) open the door to either an investment mentor or a network contact for them to learn from.' (SLB delivery partner).

Individuals with prior involvement in accelerator and innovation programmes observed a distinct difference between delivery partners who merely discuss EDI initiatives and targeting, and those under the UKSPF which concentrated on effecting positive change.

Within the P&S investment priority, delivery partners noted that the whole design of the projects was geared towards under-represented groups. In some cases, it was challenging for specific projects to meet gender targets where there was a focus on a non-traditional sector, for example. This highlights the risks of a rigid application of EDI targets, something also mentioned in the context of the SRP programme where differences in demographics in neighbouring boroughs were not always acknowledged in sub-regional targets. At aggregate level, though, the EDI reach was strong (see Table 4.2).

The C&P projects appeared to have the most difficulty explicitly identifying impact on under-represented groups, partly because of the nature the investments (see Table 4.3). Nevertheless, delivery partners and GLA programme managers were clear that the funding across this priority generated significant added value for the wider community, including adding light and vibrancy to local areas and an increased sense of community pride.

Table 4.1   SLB EDI Programme Summary

EDI Category	EDI Item	Number of individuals supported (% of total)
Disabled	Disabled – No	14,829 (78%)
	Disabled – Prefer not to say	2,499 (13%)
	Disabled – Yes	1,802 (9%)
Ethnicity	Ethnicity – BAME	9,720 (51%)
	Ethnicity – Prefer not to say	2,040 (11%)
	Ethnicity – White	7,436 (38%)
Gender	Gender – Female	9,526 (50%)
	Gender – Male	7,629 (40%)
	Gender – Other	281 (1%)
	Gender – Prefer not to say	1,704 (9%)

Source: UKSPF Monitoring Information

Table 4.2   P&S EDI Programme Summary

EDI Category	Number of individuals supported (% of total)
Female Participants	7,877 (41%)
Participants from Ethnic Minorities	13,488 (70%)
Participants with a Disability	4,189 (22%)
People aged over 50	2,153 (22%)

Source: UKSPF Monitoring Information

Table 4.3   C&P EDI Programme Summary

EDI Category	EDI Item	Number of individuals supported (% of total)
Disabled	Disabled – No	13,821 (65%)
	Disabled – Prefer not to say	5,335 (25%)
	Disabled – Yes	2,059 (10%)
Ethnicity	Ethnicity – BAME	9,707 (45%)
	Ethnicity – Prefer not to say	5,260 (25%)
	Ethnicity – White	6,479 (30%)
Gender	Gender – Female	11,257 (51%)
	Gender – Male	7,298 (33%)
	Gender – Other	99 (<1%)
	Gender – Prefer not to say	3,407 (15%)

Sourced from UKSPF Monitoring Information

5 Lessons learned

This section summarises key lessons learned from the UKSPF programme. It is worth noting that much of the programme planning at different levels quite explicitly built on previous programmes. The UKSPF was, in this sense, an evolution rather than a revolution. Much of the learning therefore has roots in stakeholders' experience of delivering ESF/ERDF projects over a number of years. Indeed, the importance of retaining tools and processes, as well as expertise and knowledge stands out as general lesson.

The UKSPF experience shows that there is **no need to reinvent the wheel in terms of programme design and delivery even though there is scope to innovate**. There was, though, an explicit aim to improve, simplify and add flexibility to previous programmes and to localise decision-making. While there is clearly a balance to be struck here, the general lesson is that this approach pays dividends, even if it cedes control and reduces scope for detailed audit. There are **trade-offs** in any approach and stakeholders have different perspectives on this partly because they have different priorities.

5.1 Programme design and set up

The commissioning model worked and perceived upfront risks appear to have been managed:

Delivery partners across the competitively funded SLB and P&S investment priorities noted that the commissioning process generally appeared to work effectively. The competitive component helped applicants to clearly understand the scope of their projects and ensured that there was focus and alignment from both delivery partners and the GLA on intended project outcomes. At the same time, allocating money directly to the boroughs was seen as a successful new way of working. It depended on a degree of maturity in the relationship with and between the boroughs to agree the resourcing split (*'We couldn't have done this 5 or 10 years ago'* – borough interviewee).

Delivery organisations remain cautious even when offered more flexibility:

Stakeholders with ESF/ERDF experience highlighted how the delivery experience of the UKSPF was much smoother and with lower administrative burdens. There was some initial adjustment needed to understand the new parameters, including what was permissible and where flexibility was allowed. This injected a degree of caution into the planning process and some over-compensation in terms of the volume of information collected etc. The clearer that requirements can be upfront (difficult at point of launch with the UKSPF being national programme), the less this is likely to happen.

More could be done to encourage new delivery partners alongside the existing experienced organisations:

The importance of having an appropriate balance between new and experienced delivery partners was noted across the investment priorities. While it is difficult to engineer this on a top-down basis, it is more likely to happen when the GLA is actively trying to ensure openness, because new entrants face additional barriers (e.g. they are less able to afford delays, they may not have all staff or reporting systems in place). Stakeholders noted that encouraging new delivery partners helped to ensure that new ideas are promoted within programmes, and it gives new

organisations the chance to learn from those familiar with delivering programmes similar to the UKSPF.

5.2 Programme management

Existing delivery processes could be further simplified:

Delivery partners noted that while the GLA put in place extensive support, more could be done to simplify processes. For example, although the Excel templates required for reporting were simpler than previous programmes, there was general surprise that these transactions – or more of them – were not being managed via an online system.

Knowledgeable programme managers smooth the process:

Delivery partners noted that the GLA programme managers they worked alongside were generally experienced and readily available to assist with outstanding queries over the course of their projects. There were major benefits in having programme managers who were aware of the specific challenges facing each specific investment priority. For example, within the P&S strand, delivery partners working with vulnerable individuals occasionally struggled to meet evidencing requirements. Delivery partners observed that GLA programme managers who understood challenges like this provided more flexibility in how and when to record evidence requirements.

The communications reach of the UKSPF could be broader:

Delivery partners noted that while significant efforts were made to promote the programme, there was potential for the UKSPF to have a wider reach. There were extensive opportunities to share learning within programme strands and this was widely valued. There was, though, an extensive appetite for outward-facing and cross-programme communications and exchanges. Events such as the celebration day were useful in sharing knowledge. Stakeholders noted that they occurred sporadically and generally once projects were nearing completion. It was proposed that these events could occur at regular intervals throughout the programme for even greater cross-pollination of learning.

6 Conclusions and recommendations

6.1 Conclusions

The evaluation conclusions are presented below structured in terms of the research questions introduced in Chapter 1. In terms of headline messages from the wealth of programme evidence, the following is striking:

■ The UKSPF programme has modelled a new way of working for stakeholders in London. This is much more visible from the top down (e.g. the initial programme design and consultation) but it percolates through the overall programme. It is much more dynamic and responsive than a more rigid or narrowly defined programme structure would allow.

■ Similarly, the programme design was driven by pragmatism and compromise in a way that may make it appear messy. For example, the programme pillars are structured with little read across, similar activities are commissioned in quite different ways, the programme sub-divides into lots of small interventions in some areas and is diluted into existing, much larger projects/services in others. However, the lack of prescription has removed many of the barriers to doing what is needed.

What worked more or less well regarding the structure and delivery of the programme, and why?

Overall, delivery organisations and GLA programme managers were clear that the programme model on the whole worked well. Stakeholders noted that the GLA empowered them with the ability to design and implement a delivery model that leveraged their strengths, capabilities and experience within their respective sectors. There was considerable freedom to flex programme elements to allow the programme to undertake a wide range of activities – beyond simple intervention delivery.

Key strengths in terms of programme structure and delivery were:

■ The **mixed commissioning model** including direct award of funding and competitive tendering. This created a richer programme overall. There was efficiency and reduced bureaucracy in the transmission of resources to boroughs, yet the programme also enabled a wide range of other organisations to bid to lead delivery in the SLB and P&S priority areas. The programme therefore combined openness and efficiency in a way that previous programmes have not.

■ Similarly, freedom and flexibility were hard-wired into the borough programme, which both served to meet the ambition of **empowering local decision makers** and which translated into a flexible and responsive programme management approach. This depended on trust, confidence and, according to many stakeholders, the existence of sufficiently mature relationships between the pan London and local levels. This might have been important for creating the partnership environment to agree the upfront borough allocation formula. Beyond this, though, the programme suggested that the benefits of flexibility far outweigh a maximalist approach to financial assurance.

Weaknesses in terms of programme structure and delivery were:

■ **Delays** in programme launch and insufficient time for planning and set up for delivery organisations. The programme almost had an assumption that delivery

organisations were already delivering and could absorb set up costs and risks. This clearly works against having a diversity of providers and, from a risk management perspective, guided against innovation. The counter argument is that the programme did largely deliver as planned even against squeezed timelines and this shows the in-programme change procedure working well. Ultimately, upfront delays while projects recruit staff and the uncertainty that means they lose staff before any continuation funding is confirmed is an area of programme inefficiency. This is not a UKSPF-specific point, but the existence of similar issues regarding the 2025/26 extension for projects indicates that it was not a 'new programme' issue either.

■ The P&S pillar being squeezed into a one-year programme (less in practice) was very sub-optimal in context of its added value ambitions to support young people. It was a success to achieve what was achieved in the context of the NEET and work experience programmes, but there was real misalignment between the delivery plan and programme ambitions.

There were some programme structure areas that were contested in terms of being a strength or a weakness:

■ There were elements of having a separate de facto borough programme within the sub-regional partnership element of the P&S pillar. There were considerable benefits to the model in terms of efficient support, as well as learning and collaboration across boroughs. However, aspects of the role appeared as an additional layer of management to disburse the resources. This is fine unless the SRPs are imposing different evidence and monitoring requirements to the GLA, which some appeared to (just as different boroughs asked delivery organisations for different levels of reporting to undertake similar UKSPF activities). This is partly a function of the diverse commissioning regime (a programme positive), but an issue for delivery organisations that might reasonably anticipate meeting a single set of expectations.

■ In the SLB pillar, there was a risk of duplication between the borough programmes and the tendered projects. There was probably overlap in business support provision in certain places, but it is not clear that this was substantial. There were some local communication issues and a potential for competition that needed managing. Ultimately, though, the variety of provision is a significant value, and it is not clear that each borough is best placed to duplicate the same service. There is an open question about the sustainability of both new business support capacity developed within the boroughs and the targeted projects that suggests fragility or lack of stability in elements of the overall business support capacity. This might be seen to reinforce the earlier decision to fund London-wide business support capacity through London & Partners on a non-competitive basis.

How did the governance and oversight of the programme work for setting strategic objectives and supporting decision-making?

Objectively, the programme governance and oversight worked well. The outputs and outcomes framework – while vast – provided an over-arching programme coherence by organising a wide range of programme activities into a coherent structure. It could not necessarily capture or facilitate more holistic interventions on people, place and businesses, but it did not prevent these from happening. The management dashboards used by the GLA gave a clear and meaningful live view of progress. The programme was well-able to course-correct in flight, shifting resources where necessary between projects and within boroughs.

The partnership board model was perhaps something of a missed opportunity. Its role was somewhat token, although it is not clear that there was an additional function that it could have taken on beyond the high-level advisory role on bids. It did provide a backdrop for good quality annual reporting.

What were the challenges, facilitators and barriers to implementing and delivering the UKSPF, if any?

The main challenge/barrier was timing in the context of delivery organisations having sufficient warning of decisions, decisions being made/confirmed in line with publicised dates and the consequent impact on project set-up. Projects undertaking staff recruitment and sub-contracting during the delivery phase were on the back-foot. Extremely challenging delivery timelines for the work experience and NEET programmes added further problems. The internal systems within boroughs for signing-off plans had a similar squeezing effect. The addition of capital investments (with associated uncertainties and externalities) adds to the squeeze, although here boroughs often pre-empted problems by funding what could be confidently delivered.

Capturing evidence of delivery was a general challenge in relation to specific outputs/outcomes. In the main, this actually boiled down to the output/outcome requirements only being confirmed after the borough programme had started. This had effects that percolated through supply chains. Other issues, such as where the suggested evidence was disproportionate to collect or too difficult to collect were nearly always flexed in discussion with the GLA.

The key facilitator was previous experience of European programmes, although those without this generally still thrived. Success in implementation depended somewhat on organisations having good internal information management. Investing in central collation of quarterly information rather than distributing this to different teams or partner organisations probably saved time overall.

What were the benefits and disadvantages to the direct funding via London boroughs?

A key benefit of the direct funding model is that it underpinned the partnership approach across London with the GLA, making it concrete rather than aspirational. This is something that almost all interviewees describe in positive terms, sometimes profoundly positive terms, and not something that could be seen negatively except in abstract terms. The programme shows the value of the direct funding approach, but that value arguably makes the most sense in the context of it being one component (albeit the major component) of a varied commissioning model.

The practical benefits are in being able to get resources cleanly and rapidly to the coalface. It is unlike to be possible to devise the C&P pillar on a top-down basis given the highly localised activities that comprised much of the revenue funding. This creates a large number of projects within many boroughs, but that does not correspond to piecemeal activity. Instead, this strand of UKSPF resources appears more closely associated with impactful, highly localised interventions that boroughs are not otherwise able to fund.

The disadvantage is the risk of funding being lost to day-to-day funding needs that are not in line with the UKSPF ambitions or impossible to track. Part-funding ongoing service delivery to the extent that delivery organisations are barely aware of the UKSPF component is an exceptional position, but it exists and was apparent during the interviews. However, the mixed economy commissioning approach serves to minimise these problems pretty well.

What has been the experience of project providers in delivering UKSPF-funded projects? What was their experience of the GLA's management of the programme and its reporting requirements?

Experiences of GLA management were generally positive. Those with operational responsibility were typically more positive than those (especially within boroughs) with a policy or strategy role, reflecting that the routine engagement and support took place in a collaborative and solutions focused way. In some areas where the programme context was particularly complex, such as the targeted NEET support, having highly experienced GLA programme managers made a big difference in having a shared understanding the factors impacting on delivery and providing practical advice.

Project providers with experience of previous European programmes were near universally more positive in terms of the proportionality of UKSPF reporting and, in particular, the flexibility of the programme in terms of what could and could not be funded. Some of the reporting rules needed to be in place earlier in order for the boroughs, in particular, to be able to plan. Crucially, where interviewees reported negative experiences or management issues (e.g. rules, reporting), these were almost always addressed through discussion with GLA programme officers.

Has the programme's design/processes enabled providers to better respond to the beneficiaries needs?

The programme design and processes certainly enabled providers to better respond to beneficiary needs in many ways. This is arguably **the area in which the programme overall performed most strongly** in terms of how UKSPF activities sat alongside or dovetailed with other mainstream provision. While the programme incorporated payment by results in many areas, it did so in a way that was flexible and mindful of the needs of individual groups. The C&P planning model was essentially responsive to local needs. The SLB project programme design was thematically targeted in a way that provided focus on under-represented groups in the context of a broad programme. The design of the work experience programme and especially the NEET programme (with its universal and targeted components) created programme elements that were fundamentally framed in terms of beneficiary need – literally so in the context of the consultation with and involvement of young people in designing the programme.

The borough SLB projects and the sub-regional partnership P&S programme were typically more general in nature but still focused on beneficiary need and, even here, there was scope to use resources specifically to plug gaps locally or within the sub-region (e.g. specialised mental health support projects). There were constraints in the context of UKSPF being short-term or time-bound funding for groups or themes where there is ongoing need. To an extent, the programme brings to the surface gaps in support, does something to help address these in the short-term but cannot necessarily put this on a sustainable footing. Stepping back, in certain areas, the UKSPF model – especially regarding what a targeted but flexible programme looks like – provides a template for new programmes such as Connect to Work.

Are the projects working as intended? Are targets for inputs and outputs being met?

In almost all areas, the projects worked as intended and output targets across the programme as whole were met. Smart, flexible programme design and management facilitated this. Delivery organisations were given scope to determine and interpret targets within an over-arching framework. The output definitions were often helpfully broad, even if the evidence requirements were sometimes challenging – but

flexibility was deployed here also. Change requests across the programme were handled quite efficiently and dealt with collaboratively and using common sense.

Even amongst these changes, and with the multitude of small projects in borough programmes, the overall shape of activity was in line with the programme ambitions. The main area where targets could not be met, the work experience programme, was where UKSPF resource was being used to do something specific, at scale and in an unrealistic timeframe, even though the activity itself was well in line with the programme ambition and complemented other strands.

Are the projects reaching beneficiaries who otherwise would not have received similar support/provision elsewhere?

There is strong evidence that the programme reached beneficiaries who would not have received similar support elsewhere. This is partly a function of the scale of investment. It also delivered in some domains for which there is no clear alternative funding (e.g. public realm improvements). More significantly, it was delivered in a way that generally meant the investment reached communities that may not otherwise have been supported. This was characteristic of the highly localised 'bottom up' project design within the C&P revenue projects. It was embedded in the hard-wired EDI focus in a lot of the SLB projects. And it was visible in the highly targeted approach to support for young people in the P&S programme.

How has equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) been embedded in the programme, and how has it performed? How could the GLA improve on this in the future?

EDI was embedded as a central consideration throughout the programme. It was a defining feature of design and delivery in a way that went well beyond lip service. It was a programme differentiator, but the scale and variety of the overall programme meant that there was space to consider inclusion in fairly holistic terms, considering how to target communities as well as people based on individual characteristics. Issues related to how to manage EDI targets flexibly where the geography and demographics of London vary so much. This was a challenge in the context of sub-regional targets that did not reflect the characteristics of individual boroughs.

What potential lessons are there for delivering future similar funding programmes?

In terms of programme design, a key lesson from the UKSPF is that the approach of empowering local decision makers creates a richer, more efficient and more responsive programme – but shows that there is a clear case for having a London programme framework. Given a free hand, it is likely that local decisions makers (including boroughs) would use a lot (or a lot more) of the resource to top up existing activities. The **largest impacts of the programme have arguably been in areas of 'market failure'**, including 'discretionary' local authority spending in high impact areas, as well as personalised and responsive support outside of core employment/skills provision.

Furthermore, **having structures for collaboration, exchange and learning are under-rated aspects of the programme design that deliver benefits at relatively low cost**. Having more secure or extended multi-year funding would have been beneficial in certain areas, especially under the P&S pillar. There is an overall lesson in terms of the balance of investment: to use resources to continue to invest in good, high value provision that cannot be funded from elsewhere while having space for new organisations and partnerships to enter the mix. The SLB projects and the targeted NEET programme both did this.

In terms of programme management, a clear lesson for future programmes is to **retain the responsive and flexible contract management approach**. No matter how well-designed the programme rules and tools are, having that ability for delivery organisations to come together and ask questions and collectively solve problems at the beginning is an effective approach. Ensuring that monitoring and reporting templates are not over-engineered and are robust for a wide user group is also helpful.

6.2   Recommendations

1. The key gaps that the UKSPF plugged in terms of existing investment and provision related to local/neighbourhood level place improvement and specialist, targeted support for Londoners (young and old) with additional needs. Future programmes should further explore these areas because there is a clear market failure in terms of other funding streams.

2. The UKSPF shows the value in multi-year funding for projects and providers, especially in terms of where it was absent in the P&S pillar. Future programmes should be framed to allow more longer-term provision.

3. Designing programmes that include a mixed menu of funding and commissioning models delivers considerable benefits in terms of the quality/range of provision, the diversity of (complementary) action and a balanced approach. This multi-pronged approach might usefully underpin future programmes.

4. In the context of a mixed commissioning model, the use of payment by results might be refined somewhat. It was an effective mechanism overall but there were lags in some projects being able to record results, and it created some unhelpful data collection imperatives. In line with the mature model of grant funding for local authorities, it is worth the GLA considering whether some projects should be funded on more of an activity rather than a results basis.

5. More could be done to continue encourage new delivery partners, even though the UKSPF showed pockets of success here in the context of the SLB projects and the NEET projects. Having extended funding timetables, the opportunity to directly bid for smaller and more targeted activities as part of larger programmes, and collaborative support from the GLA are key markers to enable this that should inform future programme design.

6. The GLA should explore ways to increase the length of the starting ramp from contract award to delivery. This is partly about providing information in advance and keeping to programme timetables (or setting those timetables to acknowledge the potential for real world delays). It could also be about having a set up or mobilisation phase built into programmes that increases the likelihood of delivery to profile and does not hinder new providers or innovation.

7. There are further refinements that can be made to delivery process and tools, even though these worked well overall. Further simplified reporting templates and online systems can all create further efficiencies and should be explored.

8. Having knowledgeable and experienced programme managers was important to the delivery model because it helped to ensure that flexible adjustments could be agreed where necessary with delivery organisations. It was important also for helping less experienced providers to succeed. It is worth the GLA reflecting on how to maintain and retain this in-house tacit knowledge for future programmes.

ANNEXES

Annex 1   UKSPF national logic model

National UKSPF evaluation: High-level logic model

INPUTS	INTERVENTIONS	OUTPUTS	INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES	IMPACTS	MISSIONS
Central Government Inputs		New (or improvements to existing) community and neighbourhood interventions receive funding	Improved decision-making, and fundraising & delivery capacity in each place	**Pillar 1: Physical Environment** • Satisfied with physical changes in local area	**Levelling Up White Paper Missions**
£2.6 billion of central funding for a package of Communities in Place, Supporting Local Businesses and People and Skills interventions in each place				**Pillar 2: Public services & infrastructure** • Happy with the quality of local services • Satisfied with local amenities • feel safe in public spaces in their local community	**Mission 1:** Employment & Productivity **Mission 2:** R &D investment **Mission 6:** High-quality skills training
Central funding for 'capacity and capability building' in each place to improve decision-making, and fundraising & delivery capacity	Package of 41+ Intervention Types + bespoke interventions	Communities in Place			**Mission 7:** Healthy life expectancy
Central guidance on choosing and delivering package of interventions successfully		Supporting Local Businesses		**Pillar 3: Engagement, participation & connections:** • civic activity • regular volunteering • membership of local community groups • willing to take action to improve local environment • engagement in sporting activities	**Mission 8:** Wellbeing **Mission 9:** Pride in Place **Mission 11:** Neighbourhood crime
Central govt providing requirements for continuous improvement & monitoring					
Inputs for engagement Sessions with local authorities		People and Skills			
OGDs (DFT, DfE, BEIS) input				**Pillar 4: Culture, heritage & sports** • Increase in engagement in regular cultural activities	
Local Place Inputs				**Pillar 5: Opportunities** • Satisfied with job and business opportunities in their area	
Local knowledge of local decision makers in each place					
Other Funding sources					
Local socioeconomic context					

National UKSPF Evaluation: Case study example research questions

Local Context
• What particular economic and social challenges does the place face?
• What other local growth initiatives are currently delivering in the place?
• What is the place's baseline level of pride in place and life chances?

Process Evaluation

Planning and design
• How did places prioritise/select their interventions and projects?
• What stakeholders were consulted when designing interventions?
• Were interventions targeted toward particular groups or micro-geographies?

Implementation/post-implementation
• Are interventions being implemented as intended? If not, why not?
• Have synergistic or antagonistic effects between interventions been observed?
• How well did the local-central government relationship function?
• Were there any common blockers or enablers across different interventions?

Impact Evaluation
• What outcomes and impacts was UKSPF specifically responsible for?
• How do these outcomes compare to previous similar interventions in the place through other funds?
• What place-specific factors affected outcomes (positively or negatively)? How might these affect replicability of interventions elsewhere?
• Did LLAs place-specific theories of change work in practice?

+

Outputs from other key deliverables - intervention and programme-level impact evaluations

Source: MHCLG Guidance: UKSPF: evaluation strategy Updated 16 October 2024

Annex 2   Research tools

Introduction and design approach

An all-purpose topic guide has been developed that can be used selectively with different interviewee groups to reflect that not all discussion areas will be relevant to all interviewees. As such, the topic guide is framed in terms of subjects that are generally applicable to the programme as a whole; and which can be adapted by interviewers to the specific UKSPF context of each interview of case study. Prompts have also been included as relevant to support this.

The following interviewee groups are distinguished:

- Programme management stakeholder
- Programme delivery stakeholder
- Policy stakeholder
- Beneficiary or target organisation

Table A2.1   Interview core topic areas by interview group

Core topic areas	Prog Manag.	Prog Delivery	Policy	Target org.
Planning and design				
1 UKSPF awareness and understanding			X	X
2 Rationale and prioritisation	X	X		X
3 Mobilisation	X	X		X
4 Stakeholder involvement	X	X	X	X
Implementation				
5 Effectiveness of implementation	X	X	X	X
6 Monitoring and reporting	X	X		
7 Collaboration in implementation	X	X		X
Outcomes				
8 Achieving outputs and outcomes		X		X
9 Measuring impact and added value		X		X
10 EDI reach and added value	X	X		X
11 Counterfactual question	X	X	X	X
12 Programme added value	X	X	X	X
13 Sustainability		X	X	X
14 Barriers and challenges	X	X		X
15 Lessons learned and good practice	X	X	X	X
Looking forward				
16 Learning for future commissioning	X	X		X
17 Changing London context	X		X	
18 Other comments	X	X	X	X

Master topic guide

<u>Introduction</u>

Describe the purpose of the interview and the topics you would like to explore. Explain confidentiality: Interviews are being conducted on the basis that nothing will be attributed to individual interviewees when we report the findings.

<u>Planning and design</u>

[Interviewer note: For each interview, note in advance whether the interviewee bid competitively for funding and was allocated resources and adapt the line of enquiry accordingly].

1. As necessary, explore the interviewee's level awareness and understanding of the UKSPF in London

- *Explore:* How they become aware of the programme/funding opportunity; knowledge of any communications activities to raise awareness of the programme and (where relevant) funding opportunity; understanding of the distinctive elements of UKSPF and how it fits alongside other activities and funding; previous experience of similar programmes, such as ERDF/ESF

- *Prompt* in relation to the quality of information provided at the planning stage; any gaps; suggestions for future improvements.

2. How was the proposed focus of the UKSPF bid/programme/project determined? How were priorities set and what was the rationale for choosing specific activities (to bid for or to allocate resources to, as relevant)?

- *Explore:* Alignment/fit between local priorities and the UKSPF outcomes/outputs; the process of prioritisation at different levels (organisation; partnership; borough; sub-region; pan-London)

- *Prompt* as necessary in relation to local considerations or factors relating to specific target groups/organisations as relevant; the strategic rationale behind the way funding was allocated.

3. How effective was the planning and set up process (as relevant, for the project, specific borough activities funded through UKSPF, sub-regional activities funded through UKSPF)? How straightforward was it to move from plan to delivery, and why?

- *Explore* in relation to what worked well and what worked less well; level of support provided; clarity of UKSPF rules and any related flexibilities; business-as-usual type delivery vs more innovative or new activities.

4. Who was involved in preparing to deliver the relevant UKSPF activities? What was the level of stakeholder involvement in the planning/bidding and set up process (including internal and external stakeholders, as relevant)? Which stakeholders/partners were involved and in what capacity?

- *Explore:* Rationale for involving different stakeholders; perceptions of added value or barriers related to stakeholder engagement

- *Prompt (as relevant)* in relation to local authorities, employment support, business support and education/training providers; voluntary and community organisations; employers/business; the GLA/SRP etc; other groups and bodies.

<u>Implementation</u>

5. How effective has delivery of the project/programme of activities (as relevant) been?

- *Explore:* What worked well and what worked less well; key factors supporting effective implementation; external factors that impacted on implementation

6. What evidence and monitoring information were UKSPF recipients required to provide? Was the quantity/type of information appropriately determined?

  – *Explore:* Monitoring frequency and volume; availability of information across the system of delivery, outputs and outcomes; support provided by the GLA; extent to which the output and outcome metrics were appropriate and effectively captured the value of the activity.

7. How were stakeholders involved in delivery/implementation?

  – *Explore* what worked well and what worked less well; lessons for stakeholder engagement; any measures that did or could encourage collaboration; as, relevant, the extent to which the interviewee feels connected to other projects/activities in other areas related to UKSPF

  – *Prompt* as necessary on if/how the programme has stimulated new partnerships/collaboration; whether the plan/project has engaged new organisations and demographics not worked with previously

Outcomes

Throughout this section, encourage interviewees to explain the evidence their responses are based on, provide tangible examples, and quantify outcomes where possible

8. To what extent has the project/programme of activities achieved its expected outputs/outcomes? [Note: Question here relates to the activities in scope of the case study not the overall UKSPF programme]

  – *Explore:* Factors perceived to underpin any deviation from plan; any imbalances in performance within the project/borough/sub-region; signals and measures of progress towards achieving longer-term outputs/outcomes; perceived level of stretch in the targets.

  – Explore, as relevant, any changes to planned output/outcome targets in the context of using the change request process and reflections on that process.

9. How is the impact of the project/programme being measured and captured, both qualitatively (in terms of the UKSPF process) and quantitatively?

  – *Explore:* Recipient understanding of how to measure key impact metrics; support and information help gather good quality information.

10. To what extent was the project/programme set up to engage and impact on Londoners who may face disadvantage? Is there evidence that is has reached groups and individuals who would not otherwise have received support?

  – *Explore:* Outputs and outcomes in relation to EDI ambitions and targets; what worked well and less well in ensuring equality, diversity and inclusion in delivery.

11. What would have happened without the UKSPF funding?

  – *Explore:* Elements or activities that might have happened anyway; activities that might have taken place but in a different way (how?) or over a different timescale; activities that might have delivered by a different organisation/source; activities that could or would not have happened without the UKSPF (why not?)

12. Thinking more broadly, what do you think the added value of the UKSPF has been? What is your sense of the overall impact on communities, places, local business and people (locally or across London)?

- – *Explore* in relation any sense of visible impact or perceptions of new approaches/new ways of working

- – *Prompt* as relevant for evidence in terms of the programme impact pillars: <u>Physical Environment</u> (satisfaction with changes to the local area); <u>Public services & infrastructure</u> (local services; local amenities; quality and safety of public spaces); <u>Engagement, participation & connections</u> (civic activity; volunteering; member of community groups); <u>Culture, heritage & sports</u> (engagement in cultural activities); <u>Opportunities</u> (jobs and business opportunities locally)

13. To what extent has the project/programme led to outcomes that are likely to be sustained beyond the UKSPF programme period?

- – *Prompt* as required in relation to new capacity, provision, networks, tools, organisations or services funded through the programme or as part of the project; innovations; explore potential longer-term impacts in this context

14. What were the key barriers and challenges experienced as part of the UKSPF project/programme and how were these overcome?

- – *Explore:* Challenges similar to other programmes (ESF/ERDF; other GLA programmes) versus those that were specific to the UKSPF design and approach; any major surprises; mitigations and responses to barriers and challenges; any interactions with or support from the GLA received or which would have been useful; what the interviewee would do differently next time

15. What are the key lessons learned from the project/programme? Are there examples of good or effective practice that can be shared? Key success factors?

- – *Explore* in relation to planning, design, implementation, engagement of communities/stakeholders; achieving impact; monitoring and evaluation etc

<u>Looking forward and reflecting on the programme overall</u>

[Interviewer note: In this section, note that additional funding for the 2025/26 may or may not have been confirmed at the time of interview. This may influence interviewee responses. As far as is feasible, attempt to frame the discussion more widely than immediate funding uncertainty].

16. Do you have any reflections or suggestions for the GLA in terms of the funding and commissioning approach(es) used for the UKSPF to inform the design of future programmes?

- – *Explore* in relation to the perceived level of flexibility and freedom offered at different levels; the accessibility of the UKSPF to a wide range of organisations through open calls etc

17. Across the themes of place, community, business and people, are there changing, emerging or evolving needs in a London context that any future programme needs to put additional emphasis on compared to the UKSPF plan/priorities? If so, please explain.

18. Do you have any other comments or points not yet covered? Is there any additional feedback for the GLA about how it can continue to support future similar programmes to achieve positive outcomes?

Thank and close

Annex 3   List of interviewees

Organisation	Role
Agreka Build	Founder
Anciela	Creative Director
Bardo	Founder
Barnet	External Funding & Partnerships Manager – Housing, Economy & Placemaking
Barnet	Head of Placemaking – Housing, Economy & Placemaking, Growth
Barnet	Business Engagement Manager – Economy & Skills
Beneficiary	Project beneficiary
Big Issue Invest	Programme Manager-Power Up
Big Issue Invest	Programme Manager
Big Issue Invest	BII Workshop Facilitator
British Fashion Council	Senior government relations manager Low carbon transition programme project manager Leader of the institute on positive fashion
Camden	Programme Lead
Capital Enterprise	Programme managers at Capital Enterprise
Capital Enterprise	Programme managers at Capital Enterprise
Catch22 Charity Limited	Partner and Delivery Lead
Circle Collective	Director of Operations
City of London	UKSPF contract manager
Diffusion Elite Security	Owner of Organisation
Ealing	Senior programmes manager & UKSPF project manager
Ealing	Programme Leads
Education Development Trust	Contract Manager
Education Development Trust	Head of Careers
Education Development Trust	Compliance Officer
Film London	Founder
Foundervine CIC	Senior Programmes manager at Foundervine
Greater London Authority	Member of regeneration and growth strategies team
Greater London Authority	Assistant Director of Skills & Employment
Greater London Authority	Assistant Director of Economic Development & Programmes
Greater London Authority	C&P Programme Manager
Greater London Authority	C&P Programme Manager
Greater London Authority	Senior Manager UKSPF Head of Programme Delivery (including UKSPF)
Greater London Authority	Principal Project Officer for UKSPF SRP strand
Greater London Authority	Head of Strategy and Relationships, Skills and Employment
Greater London Authority	SLB Programme Manager
Greater London Authority	SLB Programme Manager
Greater London Authority	Principal Project Officer for UKSPF NEET strand

Organisation	Role
Heart of the City	Programme Delivery Lead
Hillingdon Chamber of Commerce	CEO
IDGO	Founder
LA & Chamber of Commerce	Follow up round table
Lewisham	Employment Project Coordinator
London Councils	Strategic Lead: Enterprise, Economy and Skills
London & Partners	Compliance Lead
London & Partners	Case Study Coordinator and head of marketing
London & Partners	Heads of business support service delivery at Grow London local
London & Partners	Head of Operations and strategy for strategy and small business directorate
London Borough of Hillingdon	Project Manager - Corporate Services
London Borough of Hillingdon	SLB project lead
London Borough of Hillingdon	Hayes Lane station
London Borough of Hillingdon	People and skills
London Learning Consortium	Director of Business Development, Head of learner onboarding
London Legacy Development Corporation	Programme Manager
London Legacy Development Corporation	Head of Innovation
Loop	Executive Lead at the Loop, the Circular Economy Hub part of the programme
Newable	Delivery Lead
Newham	Senior Economic Regeneration Officer
Newham	Libraries and Community Assets Manager	Resident Engagement and Participation
Nobody's Child	Sustainability Manager
One Tech	Programme manager at One Tech
Plexal	Delivery Leads
Rinova Ltd	Founder Heads of Programme Delivery
Seedling	Founder
Shaw Trust	Programme Manager, Change Project UKSPF Service Manager
Shaw Trust	Team Leader – Change Project UKSPF
Shaw Trust	Assistant Director Children and Young People's Services
Southwark	Assistant Director of Economy
Southwark	Principal Strategy Officer, Local Economy Team
Sutton	Assistant Director - Strategy
Sutton	Cost of Living and Volunteering project leads
Sutton	PMO Officer
Sutton College	College Principal
Sutton LA	Head of Parks and Open Spaces
The Rebel School	Head of Brand Experience & Logistics

Organisation	Role
Tower Hamlets Workpath	UK Shared Prosperity Fund Programme Manager
UKSPF Local Partnership Sub Group	UKSPF Sub group Chair - CEO of Camden Town Unlimited
UKSPF Local Partnership Sub Group	Head of Strategic Business Development, Exports Directorate, DBT
UKSPF Local Partnership Sub Group	Head of Enterprise and Business Growth covering Richmond and Wandsworth boroughs
Youth Unity	Referral Partner from Youth Unity, Gang Exit and Serious Youth Violence

Annex 4 List of UKSPF Outputs and outcomes

Table A4.1   Community and Place Outputs and Outcomes

	Description
Outputs	
	(OP03) - Amount of public realm created or improved
	(OP05) - Number of trees planted
	(OP09) - Number of households receiving support
	(OP07) - Number of local events or activities supported
	(OP08) - Number of volunteering opportunities supported
	(OP02) - Number of commercial buildings completed or improved
	(OP01) - Amount of commercial space completed or improved
	(OP10) - Number of organisations receiving non-financial support
	(OP04) - Amount of green or blue space created or improved
	(OP06) - Number of Tourism, Culture or Heritage assets created or improved
Outcomes	
	(OC05) - Improved perceived/experienced accessibility
	(OC08) - Improved engagement numbers
	(OC09) - Increased take up of energy efficiency measures
	(OC02) - Jobs safeguarded as a result of support
	(OC03) - Increased visitor numbers
	(OC04) - Increased use of cycleways or foot paths
	(OC01) - Jobs created as a result of support
	(OC06) - Improved perception of facilities/amenities
	(OC07) - Increased footfall

Sourced from output and outcome definition and evidence requirements - Original Gov.UK Source

Table A4.2   Supporting Local Business Outputs and Outcomes

	Description
Outputs	
	(OP12) - Number of enterprises receiving grants
	(OP13) - Number of potential entrepreneurs assisted to be enterprise ready
	(OP11) - Number of enterprises receiving non-financial support
	(OP14) - Number of decarbonisation plans developed as a result of support
Outcomes	
	(OC14) - Estimated Carbon dioxide equivalent reductions as a result of support
	(OC16) - Number of new enterprises created as a result of support
	(OC15) - Number of enterprises engaged in new markets
	(OC11) - Number of new to market products

	Description
	(OC13) - Number of enterprises adopting new or improved products or services
	(OC02) - Jobs safeguarded as a result of support
	(OC10) - Number of organisations engaged in knowledge transfer activity following support
	(OC18) - Increased number of enterprises supported
	(OC01) - Jobs created as a result of support
	(OC12) - Number of enterprises with improved productivity
	(OC62) - Number of early stage enterprises which increase their revenue following support

Sourced from output and outcome definition and evidence requirements - Original Gov.UK Source

Table A4.3   People and Skills Outputs and Outcomes

	Description
Outputs	
	(OP08) - Number of volunteering opportunities supported
	(OP38) - Number of economically inactive people engaging with keyworker support services
	(OP41) - Number of people receiving support to gain employment
	(OP48) - Number of people supported to engage in life skills
	(OP49) - Number of people supported to gain a qualification
	(OP50) - Number of people supported to participate in education
	(OP51) - Number of people taking part in work experience programmes
	(OP52) - Number of socially excluded people accessing support
Outcomes	
	(OC32) - People engaged in life skills support following interventions
	(OC34) - People gaining a qualification or completing a course following support
	(OC38) - Number of people engaged in job-searching following support
	(OC40) - Number of people experiencing reduced structural barriers into employment and into skills provision
	(OC41) - Number of people familiarised with employer expectations, including, standards of behaviour in the workplace
	(OC42) - Number of people in education/training following support
	(OC43) - Number of people in employment, including self-employment, following support
	(OC45) - Number of people reporting increased employability through development of interpersonal skills funded by UKSPF
	(OC48) - Number of people with basic skills following support

Sourced from output and outcome definition and evidence requirements - Original Gov.UK Source