

Fairer Futures Partnerships Evaluation Strategy



EQUALITY AND WELFARE

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Introduction

The Fairer Futures Partnerships (FFP) programme aims to bring local and national partners together, to build more integrated, responsive services at a local level that can better support families in or at risk of poverty to maximise their incomes and move into sustained employment or education. The programme is a key element in the national mission to eradicate child poverty.

This strategy sets out the approach to evaluating the programme so that we can build a better understanding of how to effect the transformational change needed to build services that work for people and support them to move out of poverty sustainably.

Background

As part of its mission to eradicate child poverty, the Scottish Government has set out a commitment to ensuring that children and families can access the services they need when and where they need them, through the provision of whole family support¹. This means the ability of services at a local level to ‘wrap themselves around’ and support families in or at risk of poverty according to their needs, building integrated, responsive services focused on improving lives. The Fairer Futures Partnerships (FFPs) are a key mechanism for delivering this commitment to whole family support. They involve national and local government and partners working together, supported by targeted change funding, to take forward locally-driven, place-based tests of change to tackle child poverty, with a view to scaling and spreading successful approaches across Scotland.

This commitment responds to evidence² showing that the landscape of services supporting families at risk of poverty is complex and can be difficult to navigate, and that better integration across services, including housing, education, employability and health, is needed to support families to move out of poverty. The Scottish Government’s 2nd Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan, 2022-26, *Best Start, Bright Futures*³, recognised this challenge. It committed to ensuring that support systems work for the people who need them most, by bringing together partners in ‘pathfinder areas’ to refine, test, adapt and scale different approaches to providing person-centred support; and by working with local authorities to help create the conditions for a transition to more enabling models of support.

Building on the learning from the first phase of this work - the Social Innovation Partnership (SIP)⁴, two child poverty pathfinders in Dundee and Glasgow, and the Family Wellbeing Partnership in Clackmannanshire - the 2024-5 Programme for

¹ [Programme for Government 2024-25: Serving Scotland - gov.scot](#)

² [Tackling child poverty delivery plan 2022-2026 - annex 6: what works - evidence review - gov.scot](#)

³ [Best Start, Bright Futures: tackling child poverty delivery plan 2022 to 2026 - gov.scot](#)

⁴ [Social Innovation Partnership learning programme: final report – I-SPHERE](#)

Government⁵, announced the expansion of the approach - now called Fairer Futures Partnerships - into five new areas (North Ayrshire, East Ayrshire, Perth and Kinross, Inverclyde and Aberdeen City). Subsequently, in May 2025, the Scottish Government committed to expanding the partnerships further, to Shetland, North Lanarkshire and Fife, alongside work to identify further adopters over the coming year⁶.

Key aspects of the FFP approach include:

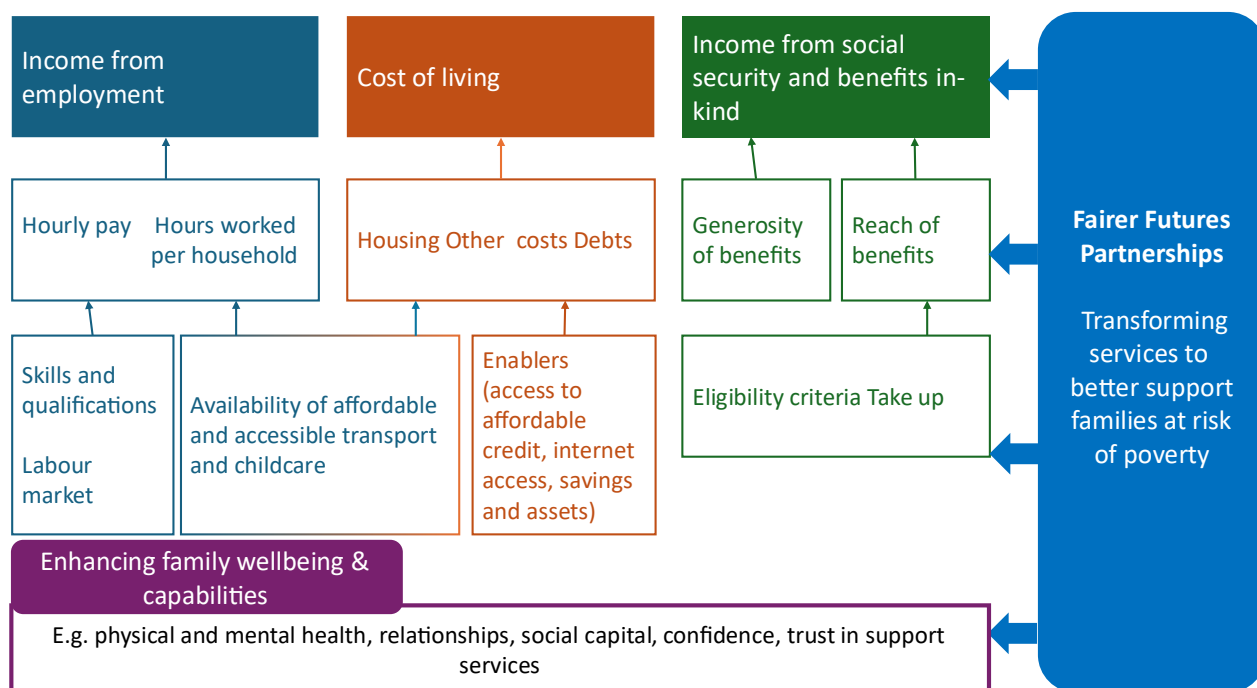
- introducing person-centred, relational, holistic services based around ‘no wrong door’ principles;
- a shift to a social contract with communities that builds local capability and wellbeing;
- shifting the focus away from crisis intervention towards a more preventative approach by default.

While each partnership differs in its specific activities and tests of change, collectively the partnerships include activities that target each of the three key drivers of child poverty directly (increasing income from employment, increasing income from benefits, and reducing the costs of living), as well as focusing on enhancing wellbeing and capabilities and tackling wider barriers that may prevent people from taking steps to improve their incomes (for example, improving confidence, health and wellbeing, and engagement with and trust in support). This is shown in Figure 1, below. The FFPs’ focus on transforming support systems so that they more effectively meet the needs of families at risk of poverty also aims to ensure that changes are sustainable and that poverty is reduced over the longer-term.

⁵ [Programme for Government 2024-25: Serving Scotland - gov.scot](#)

⁶ [Programme for Government 2025 to 2026 - gov.scot](#)

Figure 1: Contribution of Fairer Futures Partnerships to action on child poverty drivers



Scope of the evaluation strategy

This evaluation strategy is focused on the role of Scottish Government in evaluating the Fairer Futures Partnerships as a national programme of activity. However, it will also be underpinned and informed by a wide range of evaluation and learning work taking place both across Scottish Government and externally, including at a local level. Gaining a better understanding of how to effectively transform family support for people in poverty and what has been achieved is a shared endeavour across different levels of government and third and private sector partners.

In addition to local level evaluation activity, relevant Scottish Government evaluations include those relating to: the [Whole Family Wellbeing Fund](#), the [Child Poverty Practice Accelerator Fund](#), [School-Age Childcare Early Adopter Communities](#), the [Cash-First programme](#) and the [No One Left Behind](#) employability approach. Some of these initiatives operate in the same areas as the FFPs and we will seek to co-ordinate and consolidate evaluation activity, avoiding duplication wherever possible.

The purpose of the national evaluation of the FFP programme is to better understand:

- How to achieve transformational and sustainable change in the delivery of family support;
- What approaches are effective and sustainable in different local contexts; and
- What are the impacts of the approaches being taken for families, communities, public services staff and wider support systems.

Findings from the evaluation will be used to inform future policy and investment decisions and to support existing and future partnerships to learn and adapt their approaches.

Alongside the national evaluation there will also be wider evaluative, learning and improvement work conducted by local partners, and by external academic, research and practitioner organisations that we will wish to draw on to inform the national evaluation. One key element of this will be a programme of learning and engagement co-ordinated by Scottish Government in collaboration with the Improvement Service, which aims to create a platform for sharing best practice and creating momentum around taking forward the learning from the FFPs. The programme includes targeted support for partners on service design, goal orientation, project structuring, and monitoring and evaluation. The learning programme will complement and add value to the national evaluation and enable lessons learnt to feed back into local partnerships and to Scottish Government more quickly to improve policy design and delivery.

Vision and aims

The Scottish Government's vision for the Fairer Futures Partnerships is to work closely and collaboratively with local authorities to help eradicate child poverty by forging trusting partnerships; inspiring and supporting new ways of working; and creating a learning culture where partners can test and share new models of family-centred provision.

The aims are for Scottish Government to:

- Forge trusting partnerships with local authorities and their wider partners in order to support and catalyse new ways of working that better meet the needs of families at risk of poverty;
- Create a learning culture where partners can test and share new models of family-centred, joined up service provision;
- Embrace opportunities for cross-Scottish Government learning and join up of approaches; and
- Take a leading role in unblocking barriers to change that require national level action.

and for local partnerships to:

- Develop, refine, adapt and test different approaches to providing more effective, person-centred support for families at risk of poverty;
- Collectively build an evidence base and share learning that can inspire action in other parts of Scotland; and
- Scale and sustain successful new models of service design and delivery, potentially leading to longer term savings in public expenditure.

The Fairer Futures Partnerships are operating in a complex policy environment, closely linked with other key policy agendas and initiatives, such as early learning

and childcare, employability, Whole Family Wellbeing⁷ and the Promise⁸. As part of its commitment to whole family support, Scottish Government is also seeking to break down some of the barriers to this at the local level through consideration of increasing funding flexibility, to better enable partners to deliver integrated support, initially for a core group of local authorities with the intention of extending this to other areas thereafter. Along with improved data sharing and collective leadership, this has been identified as a key strategic enabler of more effective whole family support. Collectively these policies are central to the public service reform vision of more preventative, integrated and efficient services, first set out by the Christie Commission in 2011⁹.

Theory of Change for the Fairer Futures Partnerships

A Theory of Change (ToC) explains what a policy or intervention is intended to achieve and how it will contribute to outcomes in the short and longer-term. The FFP Theory of Change identifies inputs, activities and short, medium and long-term desired outcomes from the FFP programme, divided into outcomes for families and outcomes for policy and practice (recognising that these are interconnected), as set out below in the logic model below (Figure 2).

The key long-term outcomes in the Theory of Change for families include:

- Higher family incomes and reduced child poverty
- Sustained improvements in health and wellbeing
- Fewer families needing crisis interventions
- Families empowered & equipped to independently seek practical, informational, social, and financial assistance to improve their circumstances

The long-term outcomes for policy and practice include:

- Place-based partnership working (across Scottish Government, local government and the third sector) is embedded
- Person-centred, joined up support services are the norm
- We see a shift from crisis to preventative spend
- New local approaches are self-sustaining via savings in the system

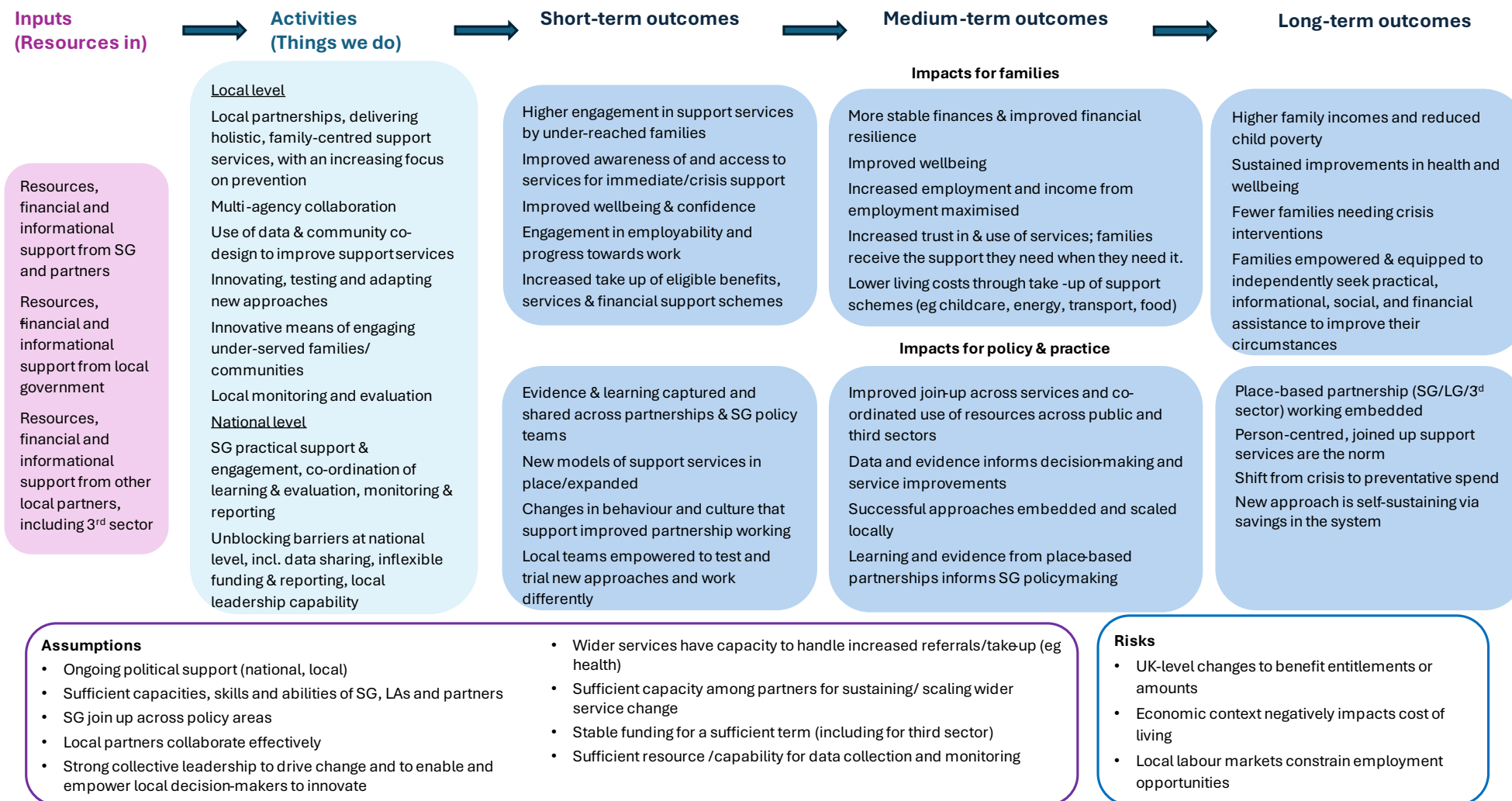
⁷ [Whole Family Wellbeing Funding - Getting it right for every child \(GIRFEC\) - gov.scot](#)

⁸ [The Promise](#)

⁹ [Christie Commission on the future delivery of public services - gov.scot](#) [Christie Commission on the future delivery of public services - gov.scot](#)

Figure 2: Fairer Futures Partnerships - Theory of Change Logic Model

Programme logic model for the Theory of Change (i.e. How do we intend change to happen?)



Through linking inputs, activities, intermediate (short and medium-term) outcomes and long-term outcomes, the Theory of Change also identifies pathways by which the long-term outcomes will be achieved. Some illustrative pathways are set out in more detail in Box 1.

Box 1: Example Pathways in the FFP programme Theory of Change

1. Pathway to higher family incomes and reduced child poverty

Through a range of *activities* at the local level, including delivery of holistic, family-centred, preventative support, better multi agency collaboration and use of data to improve targeting, there will be more awareness of support, more engagement in support services and greater trust in the support provided among families at risk of poverty, especially among families who were less well-reached previously (*short-term outcomes*).

This, in turn, should result in improved finances for these families, through additional benefit take-up, take-up of grants and/or cost reductions, as well as improved wellbeing and, for some people, engagement in employability activity or training/education (*medium-term outcomes*).

Over the longer-term, this should result in people who have been supported moving into sustained work, resulting in higher incomes (*long-term outcomes*).

2. Pathway to shift from crisis to preventative spend

Scottish Government support to local partnerships in the form of funding, expertise, facilitation and unblocking national-level barriers (*activities*) enables changes in behaviour and culture locally that support improved partnership working and the development of new models of whole family support (*short-term outcomes*).

Testing and trialling these approaches, and the sharing of learning, enables successful models to be scaled up and embedded across local systems (*medium-term outcomes*).

Scaling up enables more families at risk of poverty to be reached and for families' potential crises to be averted through preventative interventions. This should enable savings in the system from reduced use of crisis support to be evidenced over the longer-term (*long-term outcomes*).

These examples show simple pathways to long-term outcomes, but in practice pathways are more complex than this, with multiple interacting factors that can affect a person's journey towards long-term outcomes, as well as affecting 'the journey' taken by the system towards the desired policy and practice outcomes. The Theory of Change for the FFP programme identifies some of the key contextual conditions (assumptions) that are required for pathways to be successful, as well as some of key risks that can knock people or services/systems off course, as shown in Figure 2, although in reality there will be many more factors than this that will interact to affect outcomes.

The Theory of Change presented here is a starting point and should be seen as a living document that will be added to and built on as the programme develops and evolves. It is

intended to provide a framework, primarily for the national evaluation of the programme - which will aim to evidence the key steps in the Theory of Change – but should also serve as a useful resource for partners designing local-level monitoring and evaluation work, where similar outcomes will be sought.

Monitoring framework and indicators

A set of indicators will be developed for building evidence against the Theory of Change pathways and outcomes as part of the national evaluation. This will set out how the key outcomes in the Theory of Change can be defined and measured and how causal pathways can be evidenced.

This work will be based on the following principles:

- it will align with work already underway in Scottish Government to define a set of core outcomes and indicators for whole family support, so as not to increase the reporting burden on local partnerships;
- it will be developed collaboratively and be sensitive to differences across local partnerships, aiming to support local flexibility in what is measured and reported, while ensuring national coherence and comparability so that partners have a clearer understanding of their impacts;
- it will aim for an appropriate mix of process and outcome measures, intermediate and longer-term outcomes and individual/family and system-level outcomes to ensure that a range of changes can be captured;
- it will be developed and iterated over time as the programme evolves and as data quality improves.

This work will also identify and set out a range of data sources and methods that could be used for evidencing outcomes, which are likely to include national published datasets, locally- and nationally-held administrative data, and locally collected monitoring and evaluation data, including qualitative data.

Research Questions

We have developed a set of core research questions that will shape the national evaluation of the FFP programme, set out below. Alongside the Theory of Change, these questions may also be useful for other partners to help shape and guide their evaluation activity.

1. What approaches to building more integrated, responsive services are being developed and implemented in local partnerships?
2. To what extent and how is the programme making progress towards the outcomes set out in the Theory of Change – for families and for policy and practice, at both local and Scottish Government levels?
3. To what extent are the approaches being developed and tested sustainable over time and to what extent can they become self-sustaining without additional funding?
4. To what extent can successful approaches be adapted or adopted in other areas?

5. To what extent is the work of the partnerships driving change within Scottish Government?
6. What are the impacts on public services staff and on families in or at risk of poverty?
7. What are the enablers and constraints on making progress?
8. Are there any unintended impacts and consequences on families or on public services and local support?
9. What do new approaches cost to deliver, compared to business as usual, and to what extent do the approaches represent value for money over existing approaches?

We also set out, in Box 2 below, the more specific research questions that we aim to address in the national evaluation of the expansion areas that is currently being commissioned. These are based on the Theory of Change for the programme and identified evidence gaps, and it is envisaged that they will be refined in the early phase of the research. Again, these may be helpful for other partners and could be adapted to support local research and evaluation activity.

Box 2: Research questions for the national evaluation of the FFP expansion areas

Process questions

RQ 1. What approaches are local partnerships taking to transform the support provided to families in poverty and which approaches are most effective?

What are the strengths and weaknesses of different models / approaches for transforming family support services and how are they influenced by diverse local contexts?

How do FFPs engage with and support a diversity of families, such as those with protected characteristics or from under-served groups?

How are common challenges addressed (e.g. collective leadership, embedding cultural change, data sharing) and what is the transferable learning from this?

How effectively are FFPs joining up a range of initiatives and activity at the local level to maximise the impact on child poverty (e.g. initiatives in health, employability, childcare, transport, economic development, etc.)?

How effectively are FFPs joining up and co-ordinating family support across the public and third sectors?

To what extent are third sector partners supporting local FFP implementation and what value does this add?

How can person-centred, holistic and 'no wrong door' approaches to family support be scaled up within and across areas?

How can changes be sustained and embedded over the longer-term? To what extent can they become self-sustaining without additional funding?

How effectively is learning being shared and used across the partnerships and Scottish Government to drive improvements?

What more can Scottish Government do to support success in embedding systems change at a local level?

Impact questions

RQ 2. What contribution is the programme making, both in terms of changes to family support systems and to changes for individual families and people in or at risk of poverty?

To what extent are the FFPs supporting families to improve their material circumstances (and ultimately move out of poverty) over the medium term (6-12 months) and longer term (12 months +), and how are they contributing to that outcome?

How do any impacts differ for different types of families (e.g. priority family groups, people with protected characteristics)?

To what extent and how are the FFPs delivering more person-centred, joined up and effective support to families in or at risk of poverty?

To what extent and how has more person-centred, joined up and effective support impacted families' and children's wellbeing outcomes?

To what extent, and how, has there been a shift towards more preventative support for families in/at risk of poverty?

To what extent and how have parents felt more included in decision-making and planning that affects them and their community?

Resource use questions

RQ3. How are resources being used within the programme?

How efficiently and effectively is Scottish Government and local partners' resource being deployed in the programme?

To what extent does the additional funding flexibility and reduced reporting in some FFP areas affect the efficiency and effectiveness of resource use?

The evaluation journey so far

Evaluations have already been undertaken of the first phase of place-based partnerships, including the Social Innovation Partnership¹⁰, the Family Wellbeing Partnership in

¹⁰ [Social Innovation Partnership learning programme: final report – I-SPHERE](#)

Clackmannanshire (FWP), and the Child Poverty Pathfinders in Dundee and Glasgow. The findings from the latter two evaluations are published alongside this strategy.

Social Innovation Partnership (SIP)

The SIP is a unique collaboration between the Scottish Government, the Hunter Foundation, social entrepreneurs and third sector organisations which began in 2016. It brings together and funds 13 SIP partners who work in communities with significant levels of poverty and disadvantage. The programme aims to help families increase their wellbeing and capabilities and in so doing promote social justice and help tackle poverty and inequality.

Family Wellbeing Partnership (FWP)

The FWP is a transformation partnership between Clackmannanshire Council and the Social Innovation Partnership (including Scottish Government and the Hunter Foundation) to test and embed wellbeing-and capability-enhancing approaches to service design and delivery. The integrated, collaborative approach aims to put the voice and agency of Clackmannanshire families and communities at the heart of decision-making, making it easier for people to access the support they need, when they need it.

Dundee Child Poverty Pathfinder

The Dundee pathfinder was established in 2022 as a collaboration between Dundee City Council, DWP, Scottish Government, Social Security Scotland and various local partners. At the heart of its approach is a place-based, relational key worker model, emphasising the tailoring of support to the unique needs of each family. It also includes targeted outreach via door-knocking informed by administrative data, and weekly multi-agency drop-in sessions.

Glasgow Child Poverty Pathfinder

The Glasgow pathfinder began in 2022 and has influencing and embedding 'whole system change' as its main focus. Key features have been the establishment of a multi-agency change team to drive forward system change and embedding a 'no wrong door' model across Glasgow, so that families can access person-centred, relational, holistic case management and support regardless of when, where and how they engage with services.

These evaluations focused on examining how the interventions were working and whether they were leading to any 'systems change'; understanding the short to medium term impacts for families; and distilling learning from the approaches taken to inform the development, further implementation and expansion of these approaches in the current sites as well as in other local authorities.

There were a range of challenges faced in conducting comprehensive and robust impact evaluations of these initiatives. This was due to:

- the evolving nature of the interventions and their intended outcomes;
- the lengthy timeframe anticipated for many of the outcomes;
- the limited availability of local monitoring data; and
- limitations on the capacity of local teams to engage with the evaluations.

These are challenges that will continue to be faced for the evaluation of the FFP programme (and are common to many other ‘complex’ evaluations). We set out in a later section how the national evaluation will seek to address these challenges.

The key takeaway lessons from across these evaluations were:

- **Innovative means of engagement** can be effective in engaging those families previously not reached by support. This included using administrative data to identify those most in need; proactive outreach to people’s homes; use of local trusted venues and assets for delivery of support (e.g. community centres, schools); and engagement of communities in co-designing initiatives to meet their needs.
- Delivery of **holistic support through trusted key workers**, with support tailored to people’s needs and at the duration and pace set by them, is important in tackling immediate needs and setting people onto a pathway towards more sustained improvements in wellbeing and material circumstances.
- **Join-up between different elements of support** was critical to achievement of outcomes for families. In addition to the role of keyworkers, this also included physical co-location of support, such as through multi-agency drop-in centres or one stop shops, as well as funding key co-ordinating posts that facilitated service join up to tackle barriers more holistically (e.g. across childcare, training, wellbeing, employability)
- **Innovative approaches to delivering employability support** that were shown to have success included ‘intermediate labour market’ projects that provide a supported bridge to employment with a work placement, accompanied by additional training or support; and work with public sector employers to offer flexible working arrangements.
- Key **barriers to achieving outcomes** included: gaps in wider support services (particularly for complex health issues); limited job opportunities in local labour markets; and barriers relating to benefit rules (specifically, those on Universal Credit with no work-related requirements feeling unable to participate in employability activities for fear of losing benefits).
- **Achieving change at the system level is complex and should be expected to take time**. Factors that supported wider change across the system included supportive leadership at all levels (facilitated in some cases by ‘values-based leadership’) which gave frontline staff ‘permission’ to act differently; collaborative governance arrangements; specific resource dedicated to change capacity; regular communication across stakeholders to maintain momentum and motivation; flexible funding models; and developing shared accountability frameworks.

Alongside a theory-based impact evaluation, the evaluation of the Child Poverty Pathfinders also included a feasibility assessment for a quasi-experimental (QED) pilot study in Dundee only. This would provide a more robust assessment of medium-term impacts for families on employment and income, by enabling a comparison of outcomes

for pathfinder participants with those for a control group using administrative data. A final decision on whether or not to go ahead with the QED pilot is still pending at the time of writing, and dependent on the outcome of negotiations between the Scottish Government, DWP, HMRC and Social Security Scotland over data access to facilitate this study. If the necessary agreements are reached and data is obtained, the QED pilot study will take place over 2025/26.

Current evaluation priorities

Over the first year of the strategy, the main focus of activity will be an evaluation of the FFP expansion areas, which is currently being commissioned. This will build on the previous evaluation findings, and focus on the effectiveness of the overall programme, including the role of Scottish Government in developing and supporting place-based collaborations. It will enhance our understanding of:

- how local partnerships are effecting systems change;
- what contribution they are making to changes in family support systems and to outcomes for families; and
- how resources are being used within the programme.

It will also pay close attention to outstanding gaps in the evidence and areas where greater understanding would help to inform future delivery and policy, such as the conditions required for scaling up FFP activity, and the longer term outcomes from this approach for families' material circumstances, and for wider systems change in public services.

Alongside the commissioned evaluation, other activity over the coming year will include:

- supporting the development and embedding of a cross-SG outcomes framework for whole family support, to better evidence longer-term outcomes from the FFPs;
- supporting local partners with guidance to improve monitoring data and evidencing outcomes;
- pursuing the QED pilot study (subject to data availability), looking at longer-term employment and income impacts from the Pathfinder in Dundee, and testing the potential for this approach to be used for measuring impacts in other areas;
- developing an approach to better understand the value for money of the FFPs, for example by identifying a range of relevant data sources to measure and value impacts; and
- supporting local partners in understanding the comparative costs and resources that go into new approaches, compared to 'business as usual'.

Further research and evaluation work relating to the FFP programme will subsequently be developed as needs emerge and evolve. This strategy provides a framework for any future work by setting out a Theory of Change for the programme and a set of high level evaluation questions. It is intended to be helpful for a range of partners beyond Scottish Government in guiding research and evaluative work, with the overall intention of helping to foster an evidence-based culture, with monitoring, evaluation and learning built in to place-based partnerships from the start. It is intended that the strategy will be updated in the future as the programme develops and as policy needs change.

Governance

This evaluation strategy will be overseen by a governance group of relevant policy officials chaired by the Deputy Director for Place-Based Social Justice, who will meet quarterly to review progress on evaluation. A Research Advisory Group (RAG), comprising Scottish Government and external policy and analytical stakeholders, will also be convened for individual projects within the strategy, including for the upcoming national evaluation of the expansion areas. The RAG will advise on technical aspects of the evaluation and will report to the governance group.

In addition, the FFP programme provides quarterly update reporting on delivery, data and impact – including data from the evaluation - through the child poverty governance structure. Short updates and longer focused presentations may be provided to the Child Poverty Programme Board, as requested by members.

Challenges and risks

It will inevitably be challenging to deliver a fully comprehensive programme of evaluation for the Fairer Futures Partnerships, given pressure on resources, and a rapidly evolving policy landscape, including further expansion of partnerships across 2025/26, as well as ongoing developments in related policy areas. That is why the next phase of the evaluation will put in place a framework for longer-term monitoring of outcomes that can be applied to new partnerships as the programme expands.

Decisions to undertake any further detailed evaluation work alongside this will be made at the appropriate point, and be based on whether this is realistic, proportionate and adds value to the existing evidence base. As noted, in addition to Scottish Government research, the evaluation approach will also need to draw on a range of other evidence sources, and to this end, over the next year we will support capacity building among partners for improved data collection, analysis and (self-) evaluation in order to better evidence progress towards outcomes.

Drawing on learning from the first wave of evaluations, there are also a range of methodological and practical challenges to robust and impactful evaluation of the FFP. First and foremost, the FFP has a number of characteristics that make it a *complex* intervention. These include:

- The FFPs are testing approaches, rather than rolling out a standard delivery model, and so, by design, are changing and evolving over time, in response to ongoing learning and local need.
- They have a wide and evolving range of stakeholders and actors involved.
- They interact with a wide range of related policies and interventions, including other place-based initiatives operating within the same local areas.
- They are embedded within wider systems, such that activities and outcomes will be influenced by a wide range of external factors (including benefit levels and entitlements, labour market constraints, cost of living challenges, local capacity and gaps in wider support services, etc).
- There is variability in activities across the partnerships, with different approaches being tested, and also variability in individual support journeys, which are tailored to individuals' needs in line with person-centred principles.

In combination, these characteristics make evaluation difficult. For example, it is difficult to establish what the boundaries of the FFPs are, what the baseline position is and to attribute any changes seen to the FFPs themselves rather than to other factors. This requires an evaluation approach that is cognisant of complexity¹¹.

Other practical challenges include:

- Many of the outcomes set out in the Theory of Change will only be fully achieved over the longer term – beyond a single evaluation timeframe - in particular, transformational changes to support systems will take time to achieve and embed.
- It will be difficult to identify indicators and data sources for the full range of outcomes in the ToC; for example, it is often more difficult to measure ‘softer’, less tangible outcomes, but which are known to be important in embedding change, for example shifts in public service culture.
- The availability, sufficiency and quality of data available to local partnerships is likely to have limitations, and partner organisations may have limited capacity for making improvements, making establishing impact and assessing value for money very difficult.
- It may be difficult to assess the extent to which local findings and learning are scalable, adaptable to other areas (especially to areas with different demographic characteristics) and sustainable or cost-effective over the longer term.
- Given the rapidly expanding programme, and ongoing policy development, it may be difficult to deliver findings from the evaluation in a timely way to have the maximum impact on policy and practice.
- The ongoing availability of funding for both delivery and evaluation is not guaranteed and is subject to ministerial priorities.

These are common challenges in many government evaluations. Learning from the previous phase of evaluation work, some of the ways we will seek to address these challenges include:

- ✓ Working closely with policy colleagues and partners to ensure that the evaluation approach is attuned to the evolving programme and key policy questions and needs.
- ✓ Building additional time into evaluation timelines for extended scoping work and for reviewing the Theory of Change at multiple points, to account for the evolution of the programme and local initiatives.
- ✓ Communicating expectations around evaluation with partners from the outset and providing additional support, through both the national evaluation and the learning programme, including supporting local partners to be as explicit as possible about their theory of change, their desired outcomes and the likely timeframes for achieving these.
- ✓ Working collaboratively and openly with partners on improving ways of evidencing impacts, including exploring the use of new or innovative data sources, such as administrative data, viewing this as a shared and exploratory journey.

¹¹ [Handling Complexity in Policy Evaluation - Magenta Book 2020 Supplementary Guide - CECAN](#)

- ✓ Taking a methodological approach and considering research questions that are sensitive to the wider 'ecosystem' in which initiatives are embedded and which may impact the extent to which they are able to be embedded and sustained.
- ✓ Collaborating effectively with a wide range of analytical colleagues and experts to ensure that methodological learning from evaluating complex, place-based initiatives is widely shared, discussed and debated.

Next steps and timeline

A national evaluation of the FFP expansion areas is currently being commissioned and is scheduled to begin in July 2025, running through to September 2026. Alongside this we will be progressing work to:

- disseminate the findings and support the use of learning from the first phase of evaluations – both for local partnerships and for Scottish Government policy, including for the next and final Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan under the 2017 Act (for 2026-2031);
- develop and embed a cross-Scottish Government outcomes framework for whole family support that can be used by the FFPs;
- support partners with improvements to monitoring data and evidencing outcomes;
- progress the QED study in Dundee (subject to data availability); and
- develop our approach to how we might better understand the value for money of the FFP programme.

Further research and evaluation work will be developed in the future as policy needs emerge and evolve, and it is intended that the strategy will be updated at appropriate intervals to reflect this.



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