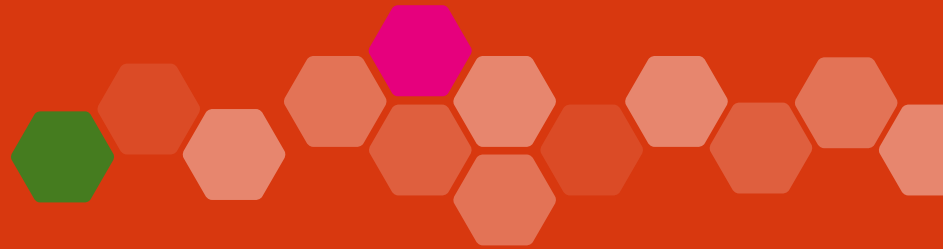


Child Poverty Pathfinders: Evaluability Assessment



People, Communities and Places

Scottish Government

Child Poverty Pathfinders

Evaluability Assessment Report

Phase 1 Research

Cherri Blissett (Rocket Science)
Alasdair Crookes (Rocket Science)
Julia Allard (Rocket Science)

Bouchra Atkinson (Matter of Focus)
Sarah Morton (Matter of Focus)

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Executive Summary

The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act of 2017 set new legal targets for child poverty in Scotland, including for less than 18% of children to be living in relative poverty by 2023/24 and for less than 10% to be living in relative poverty by 2030.¹ To deliver against these targets, the Scottish Government has made a commitment to support the work of Local Pathfinders.² Two Pathfinders are currently being implemented in Dundee and Glasgow. As these represent a new approach at this scale in Scotland, the Scottish Government intends to commission an evaluation in 2023 to understand whether the initiatives are contributing to reductions in child poverty. This evaluability assessment will support the framing and planning of the evaluation.

The Pathfinders are seeking to effect change in complex child poverty systems. This has implications for evaluation, and requires a complexity-informed approach, which places emphasis on understanding *how* change happens. This evaluability assessment aims to understand and make recommendations around whether an evaluation of the Pathfinders could or should be conducted, and, if so, what the best approach to this would be.

Before an evaluation can be conducted, we have identified some key factors that need to be considered and addressed:

- Agreement needs to be reached on a single definition of what is meant by “a Pathfinder”. We have provided a suggestion as part of this evaluability assessment.
- At this stage, we consider that each individual Pathfinder model is a separate subject of the evaluation, however at some point the programme as a whole could be evaluated.
- Scottish Government’s role in the Pathfinders needs to be more clearly established to ensure that all processes, data sources and causal linkages are comprehensively covered in the evaluation.
- Other similar programmes happening at the same time might have spill-over into Pathfinder and evaluative activities, which creates additional challenges for isolating and attributing the impact of the Pathfinders.
- There is a pre-existing local Pathfinder evaluation underway in Glasgow which must be taken into account so as to avoid unnecessary duplication and capitalise on those findings.

¹ [Scottish Government Poverty and Social Justice](#)

² [Best Start, Bright Futures - Scottish Government Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan, 2022 - 2026](#)

- An understanding of existing evidence on the approaches taken by the Pathfinder models is essential.

We propose there are four broad aims of the evaluation, namely, to understand: the impact of the Pathfinders on families, child poverty, and the systems that support them; the value for money of the Pathfinders; how effectively the processes of the Pathfinders are working; and how learning can be captured from the Pathfinders and applied.

To evaluate the impacts on child poverty, families and systems, a key method of interest is a quasi-experimental study. Due to the complexities around child poverty, systems change, and the wider context in which the Pathfinders are operating, it is not clear that a quasi-experimental approach to the evaluation would be feasible. Therefore, should this approach be adopted, we recommend that a quasi-experimental feasibility study is first conducted to confirm the parameters and practicalities of this. In addition, a quasi-experimental study should also be supplemented with either a mixed-methods impact assessment using contribution analysis, or with qualitative-based case studies. A learning partner could be procured as a way of embedding continual monitoring and learning into the Pathfinders. Child poverty is a multi-faceted topic; due to this complexity, and based on previous examples of research and evaluation in this area, the impact evaluation should not rely solely on measuring changes in absolute or relative poverty, but include other key indicators which contribute to poverty.

In relation to evaluating value for money, we recommend a social cost benefit analysis as the best approach to doing this. Our evaluability assessment has identified a range of costs and benefits to capture in this – but implementing this in a robust way will depend on the data that is available to measure these. Gathering this data – where not already collected – should form part of the impact evaluation. Learning is a key aim of the evaluation and is an integral part of the programme Theory of Change. Learning must be captured from the Pathfinders to ensure wider impacts on child poverty are achieved and to support further national efforts to reduce child poverty at scale. Part of this commission has involved setting up Theories of Change and monitoring and evaluation frameworks for the Pathfinders which will provide a strong foundation for learning to be embedded in delivery. Additionally, any investment in developing robust monitoring and evaluation processes by the Pathfinders in the implementation phase will not only support a future evaluation, but also the ability of the Pathfinders to adapt and improve.

This evaluability assessment represents part of Phase 1 of the Pathfinders' evaluation. Phase 2 will involve conducting the evaluation, building on the recommendations here. Currently, Phase 2 is due for completion by March 2025. Based on our assessment, it is unlikely that an evaluation would be completed within this time if a quasi-experimental approach is adopted. Therefore, if this approach is taken, an extension of the evaluation timelines may be necessary. If any of the proposed alternatives to quasi-experimental approaches is implemented, these may also require a minor extension.

Key Recommendations

- 1.** The evaluation strategy and approach should be guided by the core aim of gathering learning from the Pathfinders.
- 2.** The evaluation questions should focus on the 'difference' the Pathfinders have made in terms of impact, as well as on the processes of change. For this, the Theories of Change of the Pathfinders are of central importance in this evaluation.
- 3.** The Pathfinders should primarily be evaluated using a mixed-methods approach, building on the Theories of Change and evidencing these with theory-based, quantitative and qualitative approaches.
- 4.** If implemented, a quasi-experimental approach should be combined with a theory-based evaluation using contribution analysis or qualitative case studies, and should be preceded by a feasibility study.
- 5.** The Pathfinders should be sufficiently supported and resourced to maintain robust monitoring evaluation and learning processes, to ensure learning is effectively captured to improve delivery and to inform Scottish Government decision-making processes.

Introduction and context

Overview

The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act of 2017 set new legal targets for child poverty in Scotland, including for less than 18% of children to be living in relative poverty by 2023/24 and for less than 10% to be living in relative poverty by 2030.³ As part of this overarching target, the Scottish Government created the 2018-2022 Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan, and in March 2022 released the second stage of the delivery plan for 2022-2026.⁴ This second delivery plan includes a commitment to support the work of two Local Pathfinders – one operating in Glasgow and one in Dundee.⁵

These Pathfinders, designed and implemented at a local level, aim to provide person-centred support to families most at risk of poverty. Critically, they also bring together all the support services that vulnerable families require into one place, in a proactive attempt to improve the system as a whole and move away from a disaggregated service provision. As such, they aim to tackle child poverty both by directly supporting families at risk, and also by driving systemic change around the way in which families are supported.

As the Pathfinders represent a relatively new approach for tackling child poverty in Scotland, it will be important to conduct a thorough evaluation in order to assess their impact and extract learnings for future expansion or adaptation. This evaluation will take place in two phases. Phase 1 is making use of the early stages of the Pathfinders to develop understanding around how the Pathfinders operate, what their aims are, and how their impact can be evidenced. This in turn will be used to scope the methodology and lay the foundations for conducting the evaluation in Phase 2 as set out below.

³ [Scottish Government Poverty and Social Justice](#)

⁴ [Scottish Government Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan, 2022-26](#)

⁵ [Scottish Government, Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan, 2022-26](#)

Evaluation overview

Phase 1: Sept 2022 – March 2023

Development of a clear theory of change for the Pathfinders

Development of a monitoring framework clearly setting out what data will need to be collected for each of the Pathfinders to support effective evaluation

Production of an evaluability assessment for the longer-term process, impact and economic evaluation

Gathering of process study information on the early implementation and delivery of the Pathfinder interventions

Phase 2: 2023 – 2025

An impact evaluation to assess the impact of Pathfinders on poverty rates, child poverty drivers and on any other relevant outcomes, ideally using quasi-experimental methods to robustly assess causal evidence of impact

An economic evaluation using social cost benefit analysis to measure the relative value for money of the Pathfinders

A process evaluation to explore perceptions of how Pathfinders are being implemented and experienced – including join up and alignment across ‘the system’, looking at what has worked well and for whom, what could be improved and what barriers and enablers exist

The Scottish Government has commissioned **Rocket Science** and **Matter of Focus** to carry out **Phase 1** of the evaluation. This report sets out the recommendations in relation to the **evaluability assessment** and is accompanied, and informed, by two separate reports covering the Theory of Change (ToC) and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework.

The fourth element of Phase 1 – an early implementation process study – is ongoing and will be completed in March 2023. Outputs from the process study will also provide useful context and data for the impact evaluation. However, the focus of this process study is the *early implementation phase* of the pathfinders to inform the delivery of the existing Pathfinders and the development of future Pathfinders, the focus is not on assessing the impact of the Pathfinders. **This report therefore specifically outlines our findings with respect to the evaluability assessment for the impact and economic evaluation** and is informed by the work undertaken with the Pathfinders to develop ToCs and M&E frameworks (see Child Poverty Pathfinder ToC and MEL report).

The Child Poverty strategic and policy context

As set out above, Scottish Government has enacted an ambitious child poverty delivery plan, and current projections anticipate that the interim target of 18% of children living in relative poverty by 2023-2024 will be met.

In 2022, the Scottish Government published its second [Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan](#) (TCPDP), *Best Start, Bright Futures* (2022-2026), recognising the need to work differently and focus on outcomes to achieve the transformational change needed to meet the 2030 targets for child poverty reduction.

The plan acknowledges feedback from families that more needs to be done to support parents and families to understand and navigate the often complex and fragmented child poverty support system and to access the services and support they need to thrive. Specifically, the plan recognises the need to provide integrated and holistic support to parents to drive forward a reduction in child poverty. The plan focuses on three elements intended to directly impact on the drivers of poverty reduction (income from employment, costs of living, income from social security and benefits in kind):

- **Providing the opportunities and integrated support parents need to enter, sustain and progress in work** by increasing investment in employability support and focusing on key enablers and infrastructure (for example childcare and transport).
- **Maximising the support available for families to live dignified lives and meet their basic needs** by delivering public services in a holistic way and supporting parents and families to maximise their income and get access to the benefits, support and services they need.
- **Supporting the next generation to thrive**, focusing on supporting children and young people to get the best start in life, to learn and grow, and progress from school.

To achieve these goals, the plan recognises that transformational change and new ways of working are needed. A key way forward has been to set up Local Pathfinders to deliver “a new phased approach to whole system, person-centred support,”⁶ aimed at meeting the specific needs of families in need and most at risk of poverty. These priority family groups include: lone parents; ethnic minority families; families with a disabled adult or child; families with a young mother (under 25); families with a child under 1; larger families (3+ children).

The aims of the Pathfinder approach aligns with the Scottish Government’s overarching Covid Recovery Strategy which focuses on addressing the systemic inequalities heightened by Covid-19, making progress towards becoming a wellbeing economy, and accelerating inclusive person-centered public services. In addition, the Pathfinders are taking place alongside other interventions aimed at

⁶ [Best Start Bright Futures Delivery Plan](#)

catalysing system-wide and local changes including the No One Left Behind approach and the implementation of the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund.

In this wider child poverty reduction policy context, the Local Pathfinders are specifically aimed at contributing to “a new phased approach to whole system change”⁷ focusing on innovation and testing, refining, adapting, and implementing new approaches to delivering person-centred solutions that may be scaled, or replicated in different localities. Critically important then, is the need to gather evidence and learning from the Pathfinders on understanding whether and how they are effective in achieving system change and delivering holistic support which meets the specific needs of people locally to inform national policy and approaches for transforming the wider child poverty system.

Considering this wider context, there are a number of implications to take into account when evaluating Child Poverty Pathfinders. First, the Pathfinders programme is being delivered at a time of high costs of living and economic uncertainty, while still emerging from the pandemic. The economic situation may mean employment is harder to come by and, combined with the cost of living crisis, this likely means that more families are facing the threat of poverty, while those already in poverty are experiencing this more severely. While the Pathfinders are therefore being rolled out at an appropriate time, their impact may relate more to preventing or slowing additional poverty, rather than alleviating existing poverty.

Second, there are other interventions which are taking place at the same time which overlap the Pathfinders in terms of their aims and strategies. Like the Pathfinders, the No One Left Behind initiative and Whole Family Wellbeing Fund aim to create a more holistic support system for vulnerable families and improve employment opportunities for those who struggle the most. These have different aims than the Pathfinder programme – the No One Left Behind initiative is a high-level policy which drives change in the structure of employment services in Scotland, while the Whole Family Wellbeing Fund is a large (£500m) investment in health and social care with the specific purpose of reducing crisis intervention and shifting towards early intervention and prevention. However, there will be inevitable overlap between what they and the Pathfinders do, particularly as the Pathfinders provide tailored support which may include employment or health and social care. On one hand, this can provide a better platform for the Pathfinders to achieve their aims, but at the same time it may introduce more challenges for understanding the specific impact of the Pathfinders alone.

Third, articulating whether, in the long run, the Pathfinders lead to savings for public budgets will need to be read in the context of ongoing budget constraints, under-investment in services, and the presence of formal and informal waiting lists for many supports and services that are available. Improved outcomes for families by reducing child poverty are likely, in the short term, to lead to more families being

⁷ [Best Start Bright Futures Delivery Plan](#)

able to receive higher quality and more intensive support, and then in the longer term are more likely to see these outcomes flow through into possible tangible public sector savings.

Aims of the Evaluability Assessment

Evaluability assessments can occur at various points in the programme implementation cycle. This evaluability assessment takes place relatively early on in the implementation phase of the Child Poverty Pathfinders which commenced activities in the first quarter of 2022. The overarching aim is to provide a plan for conducting a full evaluation of the Child Poverty Pathfinders programme and recommend the best approach for this evaluation. The output from this assessment will be a proposed evaluation plan, including key parameters such as methods used, timescales, and budgetary considerations. This will involve:

- Making explicit the assumptions and the ToCs underpinning the Pathfinders to support a future evaluation
- Assessing whether and how the Child Poverty Pathfinders can be evaluated in a reliable and credible way
- Identifying data gaps and informing the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning systems of the Child Poverty Pathfinders to support any evaluation going forward.

In order to achieve this, our evaluability assessment considers high-level questions:

- What are the factors to consider prior to implementing an evaluation of the two Pathfinders?
- To what extent it is possible to evaluate the Glasgow and Dundee Pathfinders?
- What aims and research questions should the evaluation focus on?

It also aims to identify the most suitable methodology for the evaluation:

- Which evaluation techniques and methodologies are desirable and possible
- How the impact of the programme could be evaluated, including impact on families, child poverty, systems change and economic and fiscal impact
- How a process evaluation can capture the successes and areas for improvement in the Pathfinders' implementation
- How existing data and evidence will be used
- What the main limitations are of the recommended approaches.

Lastly, the assessment considers practical points relating to the implementation and procurement of any evaluation including phasing, cost and procurement. Answers to these questions have been developed through a mixed approach of combining: a series of evaluability workshops; one-to-one discussions with relevant staff and stakeholders; a literature review of the policy area and evaluation best practice; and building on the outputs from the Theories of Change and monitoring and evaluation framework.

Structure of the report

This report is structured as follows:

Section 2 outlines the approach and methodology adopted to undertake the evaluability assessment, including the questions that the evaluability assessment aims to address

Section 3 examines the overall findings of the evaluability assessment structured against the questions identified in section 2

Section 4 provides an overall evaluation plan with key recommendations for the Scottish Government to consider when commissioning the evaluation of the Child Poverty Pathfinders

The appendices set out the additional detail underpinning the above sections, including: the ToCs; our best practice literature review; an evaluation ethical framework; a longlist of evaluation research questions; a discussion of how theory-based evaluation methods can be applied to Child Poverty Pathfinders; suggested costs and benefits to include in an economic evaluation; and an initial bank of financial proxies for an economic evaluation.

Our Approach and Methodology

Overview of our Approach

We have adopted an analytical and participatory approach to the evaluability assessment, involving gathering stakeholders together to co-produce key components, including the Theories of Change and monitoring and evaluation frameworks, and to discuss and debate possible evaluation methodologies and options as part of the evaluability assessment. Key data and outputs gathered from these participatory workshops have been examined and analysed to support the findings in this report. This process involved the following stages.

Phase 1: Inception and scoping. We held several inception meetings with the Scottish Government. This was an opportunity for Scottish Government to orient the team, discuss the context of the commission, objectives as well as issues and concerns. We also had separate inception meetings with the Glasgow and Dundee Pathfinders. During the inception phase, the team reviewed the shared programme and Pathfinder documentation, identified key stakeholder groups for each element of the work, designed the research tools, and agreed key deadlines, outputs, and deliverables.

Phase 2: Theory of Change (ToC) development. To get a better understanding of the Pathfinders, and the subject of evaluation (the evaluand), we held three ToC workshops, for the Glasgow and Dundee Pathfinders (see Child poverty ToC and MEL report for further information) and for programme staff at the Scottish Government. At each of the Pathfinder workshops we invited relevant staff from the Pathfinders, key stakeholders, and Scottish Government staff (for a full list see ToC and MEL report). Staff from several divisions from the Scottish Government attended the programme level workshop. There was also some representation from the Dundee Pathfinder.⁸ These workshops allowed for collaborative creation of ToCs for each of these aspects of the work, which have been refined and developed to inform the M&E frameworks, and to inform this evaluability assessment.

Phase three: Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework development. To develop the M&E frameworks we undertook a 'data audit' exercise with each of the Pathfinders to identify and understand the data already collected and held that might be useful for ongoing monitoring or evaluation. A separate data workshop was held with Scottish Government programme staff to get a better understanding of data held at the national and local level that could support impact evaluation. The

⁸ Individuals from the Glasgow Pathfinder were unable to attend due to illness. For a full list of participants at the Programme Level workshop see Child Poverty ToC and MEL report.

Pathfinder M&E frameworks have been developed in a separate document and have been critical in supporting this evaluability assessment report.

Phase four: Evaluability assessment. The process for the evaluability assessment – the subject of this report – involved interviews with senior Scottish Government staff, two in-person workshops and an online workshop with Scottish Government programme and Pathfinder staff. The interviews centred around high-level questions relating to the overarching aims of the Pathfinder programme and consequently what is most important to get out of an evaluation. This then led into the first in-person workshop, which provided an opportunity to reflect on the aims of the proposed impact and economic evaluation, highlight potential ethical issues, and discuss the challenges and practical considerations associated with a variety of methods to evaluating impact. The second workshop built on this by focussing specifically on economic evaluation methods and how these could be applied in a Pathfinder context. A draft evaluation plan was then developed, and in an online workshop this was refined and mapped against the key data sources identified from our data audit workshops. The discussion involved getting a better understanding of potential data held at the national and local level that could support an impact evaluation, and specifically a quasi-experimental approach.

Phase five: Analysis and reporting writing. The team analysed the data and outputs from the ToC, MEL and evaluability workshops and undertook a literature review to address the evaluability questions below.

As noted previously, in addition to these five stages we are also undertaking an **early implementation process study**. This largely sits separately from the ToC, M&E framework and evaluability assessment, but will build on the findings where possible. It aims to identify early learning on implementation to inform future delivery of the existing Pathfinders and the development of additional Pathfinders. To conduct this evaluation, we are currently undertaking field research with partners, stakeholders and families, with the report being finalised in March 2023.

Evaluability Assessment Questions

The evaluability assessment will address the following questions:

1. What is a Child Poverty Pathfinder?
2. What factors need to be considered before evaluating the Pathfinders?
3. What ethical framework should guide an evaluation?
4. What key aims should an evaluation focus on?
5. What are the methodological options for evaluating the Pathfinders?
6. How can learning be assessed and integrated?

7. What is the best way of procuring the evaluation?

In the following chapter we set out the findings from the assessment, taking each of these questions in turn. The findings in relation to each of these points are then drawn together to provide recommendations and an evaluation plan at the end of this report.

Evaluability Assessment findings

What is a Child Poverty Pathfinder?

An important part of the Phase 1 evaluation is to detail exactly what the Pathfinders are and what they set out to achieve. In this section, we provide a summary explanation of the overall Pathfinder programme, and then the Glasgow and Dundee Pathfinder models.

In our programme-level ToC workshop and interviews with Scottish Government staff, **no single concise definition of a Pathfinder emerged**. However, there was agreement that the Pathfinders are child poverty interventions and approaches which can take on a variety of different forms, but which have several key features which tie them together. These include:

- A Pathfinder is a **developmental process** of testing and exploring approaches and of continual improvement. It is keeping true to a set of principles or high-level objectives without pre-defining the solutions, or the end goal.
- There is **flexibility in the implementation** of a Pathfinder, such that it has scope to adapt and respond to emergent outcomes and opportunities and to the varied contexts in which it is delivered.
- Each Pathfinder model should be **based on the place in which it operates**, ensuring that the right form of support is provided in different areas.
- The Pathfinder is **delivered in partnership** with those who have local knowledge, and not implemented top-down by the Scottish Government.
- The Pathfinders are set up to deliver a more **person-centred approach**, focussing on each person's and family's needs and being adaptable to address these.
- Pathfinders aim to address the issue that the current support system for families with multiple needs is disjointed and difficult to navigate by **providing holistic support** in one place.
- They aim not only to reduce child poverty, but also to **create systems change** in the way that this is achieved.
- A key aspect of the Pathfinder is to **draw out learning to inform other work**, or Pathfinders, or national policy.
- The possibility of 'failure' is recognised.

Implicit in the concept of a Pathfinder is the idea that an exploratory, adaptive, and developmental approach is needed when working in complex settings, where seeking to effect change means engaging with the system of service providers, and where change often does not occur in predictable and linear ways. The latest TCPDP, Best Start, Bright Futures describes the newly set up Pathfinders in terms

of a “*new phased approach to whole system change.*”⁹ The focus is on the Pathfinders trialling different innovative approaches to support changes in the child poverty system, and testing, refining and adapting these approaches in order to learn how best to deliver holistic and person-centred support that meets the specific needs of families.

In the following subsections, we describe what the above means in practice for how the overall Pathfinders programme is set up, and the models applied in Dundee and Glasgow.

Overall Child Poverty Pathfinder programme

The Scottish Government aims to contribute to a reduction in child poverty through the Child Poverty Pathfinder Programme by supporting the design, set-up, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of Local Child Poverty Pathfinders. The Scottish Government is working with people and families in need or at greatest risk of poverty, local Pathfinder teams and their partner organisations to set up, deliver, monitor, evaluate, and adapt the programme and to apply learning from it to national policy and change processes.

Consultation with people and families at risk of poverty takes place throughout the delivery of the programme. Actions identified in the Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan (2022-2026) are informed by consultation with people and families with lived experience. Consultation with these groups continues through the Pathfinders and learning from the programme feeds back into the development of future TCDPs. The composition of local Pathfinder teams varies according to locality and Pathfinder approaches but generally comprises the Scottish Government, the Local Authority, the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP), other agencies and partnerships that interact with children and families, and third sector organisations. The Pathfinders develop and grow their partnerships with relevant organisations in the localities as an understanding of their activities emerges and as they seek to implement broader shifts towards more holistic, joined-up and efficient ways of working in the child poverty system.

Glasgow Pathfinder

The basis of the Glasgow Pathfinder is to deliver a No Wrong Door model for tackling child poverty – meaning that regardless of where, how, and why a person or family engages in the system, that interaction then becomes the gateway to receiving holistic, consistent, and comprehensive support. The role of the Pathfinder itself is then to explore how best a No Wrong Door model can be achieved by gathering learning from interventions that are in place which operate under the No Wrong Door approach. At present, the primary intervention through which the Pathfinder is doing this is ‘Glasgow Helps’. Glasgow Helps is a

⁹ [Best Start Bright Futures, Scottish Government Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan](#)

collaboration between Glasgow City Council, Scottish Government, Convention of Scottish Local Authorities, and the Improvement Service. The delivery model for this intervention takes the form of a telephone helpline which parents are referred to from sources such as key workers, educational staff or health professionals. After an initial call with the Pathfinder, families will have basic information recorded and, if necessary, may receive an immediate intervention, such as a food parcel. This is followed-up with a more detailed holistic needs assessment call, with a trained support officer, who assesses the intensity and frequency of support required depending on their needs and sets up conversations for further referrals. Subsequently, parents will have follow-up touch points through regular phone calls to monitor the situation and reassess their needs.

In order to access this service, all that is required is a Glasgow postcode. As such, this model is able to assist a large number of people across the city, for an array of support needs. For instance, between 9th May 2022 and 1st August 2022, a total of 5,564 contacts were made, and to December 2022, 713 citizens were supported through ongoing case management support. This open approach can facilitate analysis of the types of needs that are most frequently occurring, and geographical variations in the form and intensity of support required.

Dundee Pathfinder

The Dundee model was developed through a collaborative initiative between DWP, Dundee City Council, Scottish Government and other partners such as the Chamber of Commerce, Discovery Works, businesses in Dundee, the Brooksbank Centre, and other third sector and grassroots organisations. A key feature of this Pathfinder is to connect with other services and organisations in Dundee – including local employers – to improve linkages, allowing them to work in a more connected, streamlined and efficient way to provide solutions to families. The Dundee Pathfinder adopts a key worker model in the Linlathen area of the city and aims to address child poverty through improving families' employment opportunities. Early work indicates that the target families face barriers beyond just employment, such as childcare, transport, and a lack of understanding of available support services and benefits. As such, the Pathfinder has adapted to support people and families in all areas of need to bring them closer not only to employment but to all services and benefits that enhance their wellbeing and maximise their incomes.

In the current phase, key workers have sought to engage families in Linlathen who might benefit from further support as part of the pathfinder approach. Linlathen has been targeted based on a high level of deprivation identified in previous work. Individuals were initially identified as eligible, using council held data, if they were parents who qualified for Housing Benefit and council tax reduction and claimed no income from employment. Because many of these people encounter multiple barriers, they often have not previously accessed any services, or even know they exist, meaning it often requires multiple visits and contacts to encourage people to

join the Pathfinder. Once signed up, individuals can visit the Brooksbank community centre which serves as an integrated services drop-in hub. Here, there are representatives from various organisations and support services who can provide bespoke support and advice to people who attend. The key workers will then carry out regular follow-up touch points after the initial visit to monitor and if necessary reassess support needs. In 24 weeks, 217 people have accessed this service.

Although the Dundee Pathfinder originally targeted at the Linlathen area, it has been found that as word spread, people from other parts of the city were attending the drop-in centre. This has led to increased numbers of people arriving and seeking help. While staff do not turn people away, they are aware that the service is being used by those from outside the area. The demand for the one-stop shop model demonstrates the popularity with families of being able to access help for many different areas of their lives in one place.

In both models, there are not fixed lengths of time for which families are enrolled in the Pathfinder, and in general there are not standard criteria to determine when a case has reached closure. This is in part due to the variety of support needs that the Pathfinders are intended to meet, meaning the duration and end point will vary between people. In some cases where there is a clear practical intervention – such as a clothing grant – this can be more easily identified in terms of duration and end point; but this is not possible in all instances. Instead, most people enrolled in either Pathfinder will follow a unique journey, with the duration and closure point being a reflection of their poverty cycle.

A key contrast between the two existing Pathfinder models is that one takes the approach of a lower intensity of intervention but for a large number of people (Glasgow), whereas the other provides more intensive support for a smaller group (Dundee). This difference may be valuable to help learn what works well in Pathfinder models to achieve the shared aims, and to what extent this can be scaled up or applied elsewhere.

Full details of the Glasgow and Dundee Pathfinder ToCs, risks and assumptions, and the monitoring and evaluation frameworks can be found in the accompanying Child Poverty Pathfinder ToC and MEL report. The Glasgow ToC identifies two pathways for reducing child poverty. The first relates to the Glasgow Helps support system providing **person-centred case management support to parents**, focussing on what matters to them. And the second through building support and partnerships in the Pathfinder across local and national organisations and creating the conditions for **systems change**. The Dundee ToC includes the same second pathway, while the first pathway relates to the reduction of child poverty through tailored packages of holistic, person-centred support for families at greatest risk of poverty using a **key worker model**. It also includes a third pathway, relating to the work done with local employers to **improve employment opportunities for parents**.

For reference, the ToCs are also provided in [Appendix 1](#) of this document.

What factors need to be considered before evaluating the Pathfinders?

Before assessing how best to approach an evaluation of the Child Poverty Pathfinders in Glasgow and Dundee, we need to consider whether there is value in investing in any evaluation at all. There are a number of factors that need to be considered by Scottish Government prior to deciding to progress with an evaluation of the two Pathfinders. Without further clarity on the issues outlined below, any evaluation is likely to:

- Spend valuable evaluation resource attempting to answer these questions before the evaluation can draw firm conclusions.
- Limit the usefulness of the insights and evidence gained through the evaluation to inform future Pathfinder activity.

Defining Child Poverty Pathfinders

As explained above, there is no consensus on how to define the Pathfinders and their scope. Further clarity on this would help ensure that the evaluation is targeted and useful in helping inform future decisions on the use of Pathfinders in Scotland. Currently, Child Poverty Pathfinders appear to be understood by various stakeholders as meeting a range of key criteria:

Target those in poverty with children, rather than support at a population level – e.g. by supporting those who are unemployed

Using a joined-up service model that brings together services and organisations to provide holistic support to families

Using a place-based approach to target families in need.

Dundee's Pathfinder approach matches with all three criteria. Glasgow's approach looks to provide a single entry point to the collection of support that is relevant for those calling. It doesn't limit eligibility to families, those experiencing poverty, or particular locations, other than a Glasgow postcode. In addition, beyond the overarching aim of addressing child poverty by working closely with families in need, there is little in common between the two existing Pathfinder models. As a result, it is likely that an evaluation of Glasgow and Dundee Pathfinders would yield insights into the approaches used by the two cities, but it will be difficult to translate evaluation findings into informing the development of the Pathfinder programme **unless there is a clearer sense of what is meant by "a Pathfinder"**. A suggested definition, based on the information set out above, is as follows:

*"A Child Poverty Pathfinder is a service which aims to **reduce child poverty** by providing **holistic support** which directly addresses **individual-level needs** for each person or family in a way that was*

*not previously offered. It is **co-designed** and delivered in partnership with those with lived experience, meaning the design of each Pathfinder is **based on the place in which it operates**. Ongoing delivery of the service is enhanced through **learning and flexibility**, making the Pathfinder a **developmental process** which evolves and **continually improves**.”*

Establishing what is used as the evaluand

Closely related to the above, understanding and being clear about the evaluand – that is, the subject of the evaluation – is critical for framing this evaluability assessment. There are two main possibilities for the evaluand of Child Poverty Pathfinders: the two local Pathfinder models, or the overall programme as a whole. The terms of reference for this research specify that the evaluand(s) will be **the individual Child Poverty Pathfinders** (as opposed to the programme as a whole) in order to gather learning and evidence of how and whether effective systems change is occurring and whether the Pathfinders are delivering holistic support that meets the needs of families.

However, as seen in the programme-level ToC, learning from the Pathfinders is critical to informing national policy, influencing national systems change and enabling the Scottish Government to support the Pathfinders in resolving barriers, and to provide evidence for scaling up or replicating successful approaches. Placing the local Pathfinders in the context of the wider programme-level ToC, allows us to consider scale. The Pathfinders are operating at a local level and commenced activities only in the first quarter of 2022. Given the intended aim of the Pathfinder is to explore and trial new approaches, they are as yet relatively small in scale. To deliver child poverty reductions nationally, at scale, is dependent on the implementation of the Child Poverty Pathfinder *programme*, as a whole, which may usefully be the focus of a future evaluation. The lack of cohesion on understanding and defining what a Pathfinder is – as explained above – means that at present it may not be feasible to evaluate through a programme-level lens. Therefore, **for the purposes of this evaluability assessment, the two Local Child Poverty Pathfinders are the evaluand** and a key aim of evaluating the Pathfinders is to gather *learning* and *evidence* of what is working to support further national efforts to reduce child poverty at scale.

Defining Scottish Government’s role in a Pathfinder

Scottish Government is a key delivery partner within the two Pathfinders. In Glasgow, Scottish Government is currently supporting the development of some of the national level barriers to joint-working – for example data sharing between the various public sector partners. In Dundee the Scottish Government has a staff member who is part of the team that is shaping and designing the service. It isn’t currently clear what Scottish Government’s role within Pathfinders should be now and in the future. Establishing that clarity will help with both the operational

delivery as well as with evaluating the performance of the Pathfinders, for several reasons. First, Scottish Government is partly what ties the two Pathfinders together into a single overall programme. If there was a need for a future evaluation to evaluate the programme as a whole (which we do not currently recommend), then it will be necessary to solidify Scottish Government's role in order to help define 'the programme'. Second, it may be that the input that Scottish Government has in the Pathfinders is a contributing factor to why the Pathfinders do or do not have an impact, and so clarifying exactly what their role is may help to understand more about what does and doesn't work. Third, without clarity on the role of Scottish Government, the evaluation might miss out on key people within government who should be involved in the evaluation, or overlook data held by Scottish Government. We understand that the Pathfinders programme is included as part of the Scottish Government's commitment to addressing child poverty, but that the approach requires action at the local level by local partners. Further consideration is needed by Scottish Government in deciding how they can continue to contribute to Pathfinders in two important areas:

The way it participates as a partner to the development of the approach and direction of the Pathfinder, including the way it provides constructive challenges as an equal partner and contributes insight to help the Pathfinders make evidence-based decisions.

The ways in which it can support the successful implementation of the Pathfinder – which may include working with senior stakeholders to create the buy-in required to see process and cultural change, which in turn facilitates joined-up services across organisations, as well as providing financial and in-kind resources for the Pathfinder.

Addressing the complexity of other Scottish Government funding and activity streams with families

It isn't currently clear how the Child Poverty Pathfinders sits within the broader work being conducted, particularly in Glasgow, around supporting families. The Whole Family Wellbeing Fund (WFWF) is providing funding to Glasgow and Dundee to develop whole family approaches to supporting families. The WFWF is being progressed through different Directorates in the Scottish Government to the Child Poverty Pathfinders. There is a significant cross over in Child Poverty Pathfinders and WFWF including in:

The families they are supporting. The families that the two Child Poverty Pathfinders are supporting often have multiple and complex needs arising from, and contributing to, their level of poverty. The families that are being supported through the WFWF and are known to services, such as children and families social work, are commonly in poverty.

The organisations working together for the Child Poverty Pathfinders and WFWF. Both programmes require the involvement of the Council, HSCP, Scottish Government, other agencies that interact with children and families and third sector organisations that work with children and families.

The objective of creating a joined-up approach that changes the way that families are supported. Both Child Poverty Pathfinders and WFWF are targeting holistic support that requires significant changes to the systems and organisations.

Given the complexities of addressing child poverty and of the existing service landscapes in Scotland, understanding and **attributing the impact** of the Child Poverty Pathfinders is likely to be challenging. There is some obvious cross-over in Scottish Government programmes and efforts that complicate the ability to evaluate the Child Poverty Pathfinder – particularly in Glasgow. We feel that there could be scope to more closely align and coordinate Scottish Government's activity on children and families to help give the evaluation a better chance of being able to draw conclusions as part of an evaluation. Other local activity to take into account and which may increase the difficulty of attributing the impact of the Glasgow Helps element of the Glasgow Pathfinder includes Citizens Advice Bureau and Glasgow's Advice & Information Network (GAIN), which both offer telephone helpline support.

Local evaluation activity already happening

We understand that Glasgow City Council is already working on evaluating Glasgow Helps (a key aspect of their Child Poverty Pathfinder) which includes a cost-benefit analysis of the programme. There is a risk that there will be duplication of evaluation effort. However, if well-coordinated it may offer useful information and evidence for analysis.

The existing evaluation is being led by the University of Glasgow and is designed to monitor and articulate the ongoing progress within the Pathfinder, using proactive critical reflection, data collecting and continuous feedback. It will also provide reflection through workshops and sessions throughout the course of the Pathfinder to support continuous improvement. This will help to identify methodologies to inform the monitoring system that can be used for future projects.

Existing evidence on the approaches taken by the Pathfinders

An evaluation of the Child Poverty Pathfinders would be able to understand the effectiveness of the Pathfinder in Glasgow and the key worker approach taken in Dundee. There is a reasonable body of evidence on the effectiveness of the key features of both approaches which raises a consideration for Scottish Government of the value added by additional insight into these two models to inform decisions on the future of the Pathfinders programme.

The literature supports that several key features of both Pathfinders can help in making them effective in reducing child poverty in a sustainable way. Although the Pathfinders have taken different approaches to recruiting participants and organising service co-ordination, there is evidence to support both service models. In particular, the literature emphasises the importance of offering personalised, holistic, and whole-family support as being crucial for addressing poverty. For example, the Supporting Families framework outlines that strong local partnerships that can identify and support families in need seamlessly across a range of services will be critical for addressing child poverty.¹⁰ Similarly, a review of best practice in this area conducted by the government of Northern Ireland concluded that successful interventions were characterised by: parental engagement, targeted approaches, harnessing existing resources, and holistic services.¹¹ This is discussed in more detail in the literature review at [appendix 2](#).

¹⁰ [Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. \(2021\). Supporting Families 2021-22 and Beyond.](#)

¹¹ [Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister. \(2013\). Best Practice in Addressing Child Poverty.](#)

What ethical framework should guide an evaluation?

Given the sensitivity of the topic area and vulnerability of families in poverty, the ethical considerations around research and evaluation are important drivers for how programmes are evaluated. During one of our evaluability workshops, we jointly developed an ethical framework that can guide decisions on the design and implementation of an evaluation. We then further developed and refined this into a final framework, the key aspects of which are summarised below.

- Managing disclosures made by families during field research
- Minimising harm to research participants
- Managing identification of fraud or illegal activity through field research
- Managing conversations on sensitive issues
- Reducing barriers to participation in field research
- Ensuring research is mutually beneficial for the researcher and participant
- Ensuring informed consent
- Ensuring efficient and justified expenditure on research and evaluation activity
- Protecting the time of research participants
- Ensuring robust and useable evaluation findings
- Managing implicit bias/generalising/stereotyping during research and analysis
- Protecting the wellbeing and time of non-participating research groups (e.g. control groups who aren't receiving Pathfinder support)
- Protection of personal and sensitive data

The full framework, which includes the implications for each consideration, is set out in [appendix 3](#).

What key aims should an evaluation focus on?

In this section, we set out our recommendations for the aims which are used to guide the evaluation. In determining these aims, it has been important to account for the complexity around what the Pathfinders do and try to achieve. While these aims have been designed considering the two existing Pathfinders in Glasgow and Dundee, they also encapsulate the policy context and objectives of the broader Pathfinders programme. Therefore, we feel that they can be used to evaluate the Pathfinders in Glasgow and Dundee, as well as act as a framework for the consideration of future Pathfinders.

We have suggested four aims for the evaluation. These are presented separately, but – as detailed in the remainder of this section – have inherent overlap between them.

1. **Impact evaluation:** To understand the impact Pathfinders have on families, child poverty, and the system that supports them
2. **Value for money evaluation:** To understand the Pathfinders' costs, benefits, and impact on the economy and public expenditure
3. **Process evaluation:** To understand the effectiveness of the way Pathfinders have been implemented
4. **Learning:** To understand how lessons from the Pathfinders can be captured to support scaling up and rolling out elsewhere

These evaluation aims can be used to support conversations around the purpose of the different Pathfinders to help ensure that partners are on the same page about what they are trying to achieve with their Pathfinder related collective action. For example, there are currently conversations in Dundee about the relative importance of the system change aim within what they are trying to achieve – i.e. to what extent are they looking to create change to the way organisations work together as a system. Systems change should therefore be an important aspect of the evaluation, but it is important to understand what it means and where it fits within the evaluation.

Systems change relates to structural and procedural changes to the organisations which support families, which in turn improve the services provided to families. This can refer to (but is not limited to) changes in:

- The types of services available
- The ways in which families are contacted and brought into the system
- The extent to which the right families are reached
- Methods of identifying and targeting families that need support
- The complexity and length of families' journey through the system.

In the design, implementation and evaluation of the Pathfinders, there are two important simultaneous concepts to consider: how the support models help people, as well as how the broader Pathfinder approach drives systems change. For example, the Glasgow model provides support through a helpline and a series of follow-up touch points depending on the person's type and intensity of needs. At the same time, the rationale behind the model drives systems change by shifting away from a support structure of numerous distinct support roles for separate issues, and into a more general support worker role of reaching out to people and arranging help for them in whatever way they need. This changes the attitude around how services are accessed and provided, and leads to a more holistic support system – the latter point being a primary aim of the Pathfinders.

Therefore, the evaluation aims are designed to acknowledge both these elements of the Pathfinder, in order to assess the extent to which both have been achieved. To do this, we suggest that evaluating systems change forms part of the first evaluation aim (the impact evaluation) because, as with assessing the impact on families and child poverty, evaluating systems change is primarily a case of comparing the situation before and after the intervention.

However, evidence to support the impact on systems change is likely to also be accessed through the process evaluation (aim 3). Process evaluations look at the way the service operates, how it is used, and the experiences of delivery staff and families that use it. These are factors which also relate to systems change, and so there will be value in drawing on the process evaluation findings to inform the assessment of whether the Pathfinders have driven systems change.

From our workshops and specific feedback from the Scottish Government policy team, we have identified a set of research questions associated with the above aims. These are provided as a longlist of detailed evaluation questions in the proposed [evaluation aims and methods](#) for evaluators to consider, refine and prioritise in a future evaluation.

We expand on how the evaluation should address each of these aims in the remainder of this section.

What are the methodological options for evaluating the Pathfinders?

Following from the aims above, we now provide recommendations for the best methodologies to address each in turn.

Methods for evaluating the impact of the Pathfinders

Understanding impact evaluation

Howard White (2006) defines impact evaluation as an **assessment of the impact of an intervention** on final welfare outcomes. White notes, however, that impact evaluation has taken on several different meanings over the last decades. Two common understandings of impact evaluation include:

An evaluation which looks at the impact of an intervention on final welfare outcomes, rather than only at project outputs, or a process evaluation which focuses on implementation;

An evaluation concerned with establishing a counterfactual, i.e. the difference the project made (how indicators behaved with the project), compared to how they would have been without it.¹²

These definitions broadly guide the different types of methodologies used to assess impact, which will be discussed below. However, they are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

The following section will discuss the methodologies in more detail. It is worth noting that impact assessment has grown as a field and methodologies have emerged and become more refined over time as debates in the field become more nuanced.

Given the underlying aim of the Pathfinders to reduce child poverty, measuring the impact on families and child poverty is a crucial part of the evaluation. The most obvious way of doing this would be to look directly at child poverty rates in the Pathfinder areas. However, as highlighted in the literature review, there are many complications around both measuring and understanding the **causes of change** in child poverty levels. Therefore, we see there being three options for measuring the impact of the Pathfinders on families and child poverty:

Analyse **population-level child poverty data** (i.e. measures of absolute or relative poverty) and determine whether the Pathfinders have had a positive impact on poverty rates.

¹² White, H., (2006). Impact evaluation: the experience of the Independent Evaluation Group of the World Bank, P.1,3,4,9.

Measure the **changes in child poverty levels and the factors which directly drive this** (i.e. income and costs of living) for the families who have been supported by the Pathfinder.

Look at the **other positive outcomes** experienced by the families which are likely to lead to changes in poverty (such as improved employment, health or educational attendance).

Under option 1, impact would be measured based on the number of children in the relevant geographical area¹³ living in a household with an equivalised net disposable household income below 60% of the UK median. This measurement may be desirable given the wider context in which the Pathfinders sit – i.e. reducing overall child poverty levels in Scotland as part of the *Best Start, Bright Futures* delivery plan. However, we do not recommend relying on this measure alone. This is because child poverty is a complex issue which depends on a vast number of different factors and only meaningfully shifts in the long-term.¹⁴ Additionally, this is compounded by the relatively small scale of the Pathfinders which will make it even more challenging to measure changes in child poverty that can be attributed to this specific programme, even if the child poverty data assessed is restricted to the Pathfinders' specific regions. For example, the relatively light-touch intervention of the Glasgow Pathfinder is unlikely to have an identifiable impact on the child poverty rate across the entire city. This is corroborated by findings from the Welsh Child Poverty Strategy Evaluation, which found that for their population size there had to be large changes in rates of child poverty – at least 3% every year for 3 years – to be statistically significant.¹⁵ Although that study related to poverty at a national level and so operates on a different scale to the Pathfinders, the scale of intervention is also much larger. Therefore, if the scope of both the poverty data analysed and the intervention are scaled down to the level of the Pathfinders, it is possible that the same conclusion may apply.

By contrast, options two and three are more feasible to measure, but with the trade-off that they are a degree of abstraction away from the specific child poverty targets. While they cannot provide evidence on the bigger picture, these options do offer a more detailed view on the exact ways in which families benefit from the Pathfinders and, if not directly measuring poverty, offer a useful proxy measure. This was the approach adopted by the Welsh Child Poverty Strategy Evaluation, which – for the reason above – opted to focus on factors other than child poverty itself.

¹³ This would most likely be Glasgow city and Linlathen in Dundee for the two respective Pathfinders.

¹⁴ The [latest national statistics](#) on households below average income show that in the 20 years from 2002/03-2021/22, the percentage of children in absolute or relative poverty changed on average by 1 percentage-point per year. Over that period, absolute child poverty fell by 10 percentage points and relative child poverty fell by 2 percentage points.

¹⁵ [Welsh Government. \(2014\). Evaluation of the Welsh Child Poverty Strategy Final Report.](#)

As noted in our evaluation aims, alongside the impact on families and child poverty, **the extent to which the Pathfinders have driven systems change should also form part of the impact evaluation.** There is significant amount of literature on what constitutes systems change and how to evaluate this. Approaches best suited to the evaluation of complex public services should consider the following key implications of taking a complexity informed understanding of system behaviour:

Interventions must be understood within their context, and contextual factors must be taken into account when assessing impact

Programmes must make their assumptions explicit and spend some time framing issues to enable an evaluation to reflect the system

Evaluation approaches may need to change to be more problem-orientated, collaborative and inclusive of multiple kinds of evidence

Evaluation may best be embedded into an intervention and/or agency as a developmental process. When evaluation becomes a feedback loop in the system, it can be used to adjust and refine interventions as they develop. In this context, the role of the evaluator shifts from solely providing information to facilitating change and adaptive management.¹⁶

Previous studies also show that in order to overcome the complexities around measuring and evaluating systems change, the evaluation must firstly establish **what constitutes success in relation to systems change**, as well as **defining ‘the system’ and its boundaries**. Key evaluation methods previously used to assess systems change have been contribution analysis and mixed methods research, while ‘action research’ has also been highlighted as an effective way of making the evaluation adaptable and flexible to the complex systems.^{17, 18}

Literature supports that there are three main areas where systems change can be evidenced: strategic learning; changes in the drivers, behaviours, or actors of the system; and changes in the outcomes of the system. Possible indicators of systems change include changes in the scale, quality, and comprehensiveness of pathways or changes in the way these pathways link different steps or are co-ordinated. Methods of determining if there has been changes in the drivers or behaviours of a system include social network analysis, outcome mapping, and outcome harvesting.

On the basis of our literature review ([appendix 2](#)) in relation both to impacts on families / child poverty and systems change, it appears that understanding impacts of this sort of intervention requires **mixed method approaches** in order to overcome the complexities of the topic. Therefore, quantitative analysis, such as measuring changes in income, cost of living and other indicative outcomes, should

¹⁶ [Morton, S. \(2018\). Evaluating Health Technology Wales.](#)

¹⁷ [Cabaj, M. \(2019\). Evaluating Systems Change Results.](#)

¹⁸ [Cordis Bright. \(2020\). Evaluating Systems Change.](#)

also be accompanied by qualitative data to allow for a deeper understanding of the impacts. Consistent with Magenta Book guidance, we will discuss two methods for evaluating impact in the context of the Pathfinders:¹⁹

Quasi-experimental approaches – these aim to provide statistically robust evidence on impact, and can be used as part of a mixed method study.

Impact assessment through a theory-based evaluation – this is a more flexible approach which can incorporate a variety of evidence-gathering techniques, but may yield less clear results.

Within both of these there are several different methodological options. In the following subsections we discuss their merits and suitability to evaluating the Pathfinders. In addition, we present two alternatives to these options which involve embedding ongoing evaluation and learning through **a learning partner**, or enhancing the quasi-experimental approach with **case studies**.

Quasi-experimental approaches

Quasi-experimental approaches use a **counterfactual that is not created by randomisation** (as compared to a randomised controlled trial) to evaluate the effect of an intervention. These approaches create a comparison group that is as similar as possible to the group who received the intervention, based on prior characteristics, meaning that changes in observed outcomes can be attributed to the intervention.²⁰ Therefore, quasi-experimental studies are useful in instances where individuals cannot be randomly assigned to treatment or control groups, such as when this would be unethical or logistically impractical.²¹

A quasi-experimental approach, if implemented properly, would be an effective way of simultaneously measuring the scale of effects of the Pathfinders on supported families, and determining to what extent these effects are directly attributable to the Pathfinders' support. In general terms, a quasi-experiment would measure how outcomes for families who received Pathfinder support (the treatment group) changed before and after the intervention, and compare the same outcomes at the same points in time for a comparable group of families who did not access the Pathfinders (the control group). If a statistically significant difference between the two groups is found, then this could be attributed to the impact of the Pathfinders. Here, we set out the main methodological options for quasi-experimental approaches, and make an assessment of whether they would be suitable for evaluating either the Glasgow or Dundee Pathfinders, based on the requirements for each approach and the features of the Pathfinder models. We focus on four common quasi-experimental methods: propensity score matching (PSM),

¹⁹ This is consistent with Magenta Book guidance, which considers (quasi-)experimental and impact assessment (or 'theory-based') approaches as the two main impact evaluation methods.

²⁰ [White, H. & Sabarwal, S. \(2014\). Quasi-Experimental Design and Methods.](#)

²¹ [White, H. & Sabarwal, S. \(2014\). Quasi-Experimental Design and Methods.](#)

difference-in-difference (DiD), regression discontinuity analysis (RDA), and interrupted time series analysis (ITSA). We do not explore the possibility of using an instrumental variable regression as the existence of a suitable instrumental variable cannot be planned.

Overall, our assessment is that neither Pathfinder model is an ideal subject for any of the main quasi-experimental approaches. Notwithstanding this, for the Glasgow model an ITSA approach appears to be the closest fit, whereas for Dundee a DiD approach would be most suitable. Given the uncertainty of using these approaches to evaluate the Pathfinders, before rolling them out in full it may be valuable to conduct a smaller-scale feasibility study. Following our detailed discussion of the methodological options, therefore, we have set out the parameters for what a feasibility study might look like and what it would achieve.

Propensity Score Methods (PSM)

PSM allows for researchers to statistically construct a counterfactual group in order to evaluate the impact of a programme. A propensity score is the likelihood that an individual received the intervention, and it is calculated with observable characteristics which are believed to effect participation.²² Individuals from both the intervention and comparison groups are matched or weighted on their propensity score, and then the differences in the outcomes can be calculated between these groups.²³

PSM is beneficial because it can control for pre-programme characteristics of the sample for both intervention and comparison groups and can estimate the impact of a programme.²⁴ Additionally, PSM has been mentioned to be suitable to evaluations of anti-poverty programmes because it allows one to examine the difference in impacts of the programme based on pre-programme characteristics.²⁵ However, PSM is most suited to evaluations where large datasets, such as administrative or local authority-level data, are available that include demographic and outcome data on both participants and non-participants.²⁶ It is important that all of this data, on both the intervention and the comparison groups, comes from the same source or is directly comparable.²⁷ Moreover, the matching must be done based on pre-intervention characteristics.²⁸

²² [White, H. & Sabarwal, S. \(2014\). Quasi-Experimental Design and Methods.](#)

²³ [White, H. & Sabarwal, S. \(2014\). Quasi-Experimental Design and Methods.](#)

²⁴ [Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. \(2019\). National Evaluation of the Troubled Families Programme 2015-2020](#)

²⁵ [Jalan, J. & Ravallion, M. \(2003\). Estimating the Benefit Incidence of an Antipoverty Program by Propensity-Score Matching.](#)

²⁶ [Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. \(2019\). National Evaluation of the Troubled Families Programme 2015-2020](#)

²⁷ [HM Treasury. \(2020\). Magenta Book Annex A.](#)

²⁸ [HM Treasury. \(2020\). Magenta Book Annex A.](#)

Additionally, it is important to note that the intervention and comparison groups are only able to be matched based on observable characteristics that are in the dataset.²⁹ This means that if the outcome measured is also affected by unobserved variables, then the estimate of the impact of the programme may be biased.³⁰

Applicability to the Pathfinders

The potential of using PSM to evaluate each of the Child Poverty Pathfinders will now be examined. The main challenge to using PSM to evaluate either of the Pathfinders is the availability of suitable data. For the Glasgow Pathfinder, due to their method of service delivery, where the participants voluntarily access the service through the phonenumber, the main challenge would be the collection of suitable data on non-participants. Obtaining a comparison group of a suitable size to conduct PSM will present several challenges in terms of research ethics and resource use. It may be possible to explore natural variation in who does and does not accept the offer of holistic assessment to construct an exposed and non-exposed group. For example, this could compare people who call and receive immediate support like a food parcel, compared to those who accept the offer for holistic support. If data collected by the Glasgow Pathfinder was expanded to include outcomes and information to create propensity scores for these two groups, that would allow some examination of the benefits of holistic support versus not receiving holistic support. That said, this would not be an evaluation of the Pathfinder, rather an element of it.

The Dundee Pathfinder collects the 'Client Spreadsheet' data which includes data on the clients including number of families, children, and barriers to employment. In addition, through Housing Benefit and Council Tax data, it also has access to information on income before participants enrolled onto the Pathfinder, as well as data on non-participants. This may make it possible to conduct PSM and assess changes in the income of households from before the intervention. The families that are included in this data, but who did not take part in the programme, could make a suitable comparison group. However, these datasets would also need to include information on several pre-intervention characteristics to make the matching robust. Further, consistent outcome data for both participants and non-participants would be needed in order to measure the impact of the Pathfinder. If the Housing Benefit or Council Tax data did not include all of the relevant data points on non-participants then, with the data currently held by the Pathfinders, PSM would not be feasible. In this case, the Pathfinders would need to make an application to access other administrative datasets to conduct PSM. However, it is presently uncertain exactly what data and variables would be required for the evaluation of the Pathfinders, and if this data is available through other administrative data. Overall, this makes it unclear, at present, whether PSM is possible. It is also worth noting that PSM is best suited to evaluations where large datasets are available. The

²⁹ [HM Treasury. \(2020\). Magenta Book Annex A.](#)

³⁰ [HM Treasury. \(2020\). Magenta Book Annex A.](#)

Dundee Pathfinder, due to the relatively small number of families it supports, would also not have a large matched comparison group, which may limit the ability for PSM to provide statistically robust results.

Differences-in-difference (DiD)

DiD, allows one to evaluate the effect of a programme by looking at the after and before differences between the intervention group and the comparison group.³¹ This allows researchers to examine the differences in outcomes between the intervention and comparison groups after the intervention took place. However, DiD rests on the assumption that the outcomes for both the treatment and comparison groups would remain parallel if the programme did not happen.³² To conduct a DiD, data on both the intervention and comparison groups before and after the intervention is required.³³ This can come from panel data or repeated cross-sectional samples.³⁴ By subtracting the before-after differences, DiD helps to control for non-observable factors which influence the outcomes.³⁵ However, to conduct this analysis there needs to be substantial amounts of quality data collected over a sufficient sample size.³⁶

Applicability to the Pathfinders

Similar to the PSM, the main barrier to conducting DiD to evaluate the Pathfinders is the availability of suitable data for both participant and non-participants. Given the data sources that both the Glasgow and Dundee Pathfinder currently hold, which were discussed in the Data Audits, it is unlikely that either Pathfinder holds enough pre and post intervention data on both participants and non-participants to conduct a robust analysis. Even if a data sharing agreement allowed full access to administrative data, it is uncertain whether this would contain all of the information that is needed to conduct a robust DiD. Additionally, now that both Pathfinders are working with clients the opportunity to collect this data has been missed. However, as previously mentioned, the Dundee Pathfinder has access to Housing Benefit and Council Tax data, which helps them determine which families to engage with. This data is collected before the intervention and thus could be used to measure the outcomes for families who were not chosen and those who were. In order to conduct the DiD the evaluators would need to continue to collect this data on an ongoing basis so the before and after comparison can be made. However,

³¹ [Fredriksson, A. & Magalhaes de Oliveira, G. \(2019\). Impact Evaluation Using Difference-in-Differences.](#)

³² [HM Treasury. \(2020\). Magenta Book Annex A.](#)

³³ [Fredriksson, A. & Magalhaes de Oliveira, G. \(2019\). Impact Evaluation Using Difference-in-Differences.](#)

³⁴ [Fredriksson, A. & Magalhaes de Oliveira, G. \(2019\). Impact Evaluation Using Difference-in-Differences.](#)

³⁵ [Fredriksson, A. & Magalhaes de Oliveira, G. \(2019\). Impact Evaluation Using Difference-in-Differences.](#)

³⁶ [HM Treasury. \(2020\). Magenta Book Annex A.](#)

this also requires determining a cut-off point to create the ‘after intervention’ comparison data. Due to the operating model of the Dundee Pathfinder, where intensive support is given to families, and the duration of this support is dictated by the needs of the family, it may be difficult for researchers to establish these clear cut-off points needed for this method. One possibility would be to make this cut-off the average length of support or average number of support sessions.

Regression Discontinuity Analysis (RDA)

RDA is suitable for when membership to the comparison or treatment group is determined by a singular cut-off on a continuous scale (e.g. living below a certain income).³⁷ This threshold creates a discontinuity, and allows researchers to draw a comparison between those just above and just below the discontinuity.³⁸ RDA estimates the impact of the programme by looking at the difference in outcomes between those just above and just below the threshold.³⁹

This method is useful for scenarios when membership in the treatment or comparison groups is not random.⁴⁰ However, a significant limitation of this method is that it only allows an estimation of the effect of the programme for those close to the threshold, as the effect may differ for individuals farther away from this cut-off point.⁴¹

Applicability to the Pathfinders

The requirement to have a defined eligibility cut-off makes this method inappropriate for the evaluation of the both of the Pathfinders, as there have not been suitable eligibility criteria defined on a continuous scale to receive support in either Pathfinder. Additionally, one assumption of the RDA is that this cut-off cannot be the same as other programmes, which may pose complications for evaluation of a Child Poverty Pathfinder, as eligibility for benefits or other support services may be similar (e.g. postcodes) and could therefore confound the results.⁴²

Interrupted time series analysis (ITSA)

In contrast to the previous approaches which require a comparison group, there are some quasi-experimental approaches that do not use a comparison group; one such method is ITSA. This method utilises time series data to test if there is a change in the outcomes after an intervention is in place, and is especially useful for evaluating population-level interventions.⁴³ ITSA uses the pre-intervention trend as

³⁷ [MDRC. \(2019\). Using a Regression Discontinuity Design for Evaluation Studies.](#)

³⁸ [MDRC. \(2019\). Using a Regression Discontinuity Design for Evaluation Studies.](#)

³⁹ [HM Treasury. \(2020\). Magenta Book Annex A.](#)

⁴⁰ [HM Treasury. \(2020\). Magenta Book Annex A.](#)

⁴¹ [HM Treasury. \(2020\). Magenta Book Annex A.](#)

⁴² [MDRC. \(2019\). Using a Regression Discontinuity Design for Evaluation Studies.](#)

⁴³ [HM Treasury. \(2020\). Magenta Book Annex A.](#)

the control period. This is then compared to the period after the introduction of a service. ITSA designs can be strengthened by the inclusion of a comparison group. The advantage of using a comparison group in an ITSA is that it can exclude time-varying confounders, such as other events occurring during the period of the intervention, as these can be difficult to identify based on modelling pre-intervention trends.

Applicability to the Pathfinders

To conduct ITSA, data needs to be collected for a considerable period both before and after the intervention. Due to the fact that neither of the Pathfinders collected pre-intervention data, this would have to come from administrative or national-level survey data.⁴⁴ This is an additional benefit of ITSA, as using administrative data means that an ITSA can be conducted after the intervention, even if no data was collected specifically around the intervention, as is the case with both Pathfinders.⁴⁵ However, as mentioned above, there is a risk that the specific data required for the analysis is not available in these datasets. It also must be considered if it is reasonable to assume they would meaningfully impact on child poverty outcomes within the specific time frame permitted by the evaluation funding.

The fact that ITSA does not require a comparison group means that, on the face of it, it has some appeal for use on the Glasgow Pathfinder, where obtaining a comparison group would be challenging. However, running ITSA without a comparison group relies on the assumption that no other intervention affects the sample during the intervention period. Because the Glasgow Pathfinder operates across the city, we would expect there to be overlap between the Pathfinder and other child/family poverty interventions, meaning this assumption is not met. In cases such as this, ITSA can still be conducted, but with the use of a comparison group. As previously noted, there are significant challenges associated with obtaining a comparison group for the Glasgow Pathfinder, meaning that although ITSA has potential merits, it still has significant limitations for use in Glasgow.

For the Dundee Pathfinder, conducting an ITSA may be more feasible. The Dundee Pathfinder collects the 'Client Spreadsheet' and Housing Benefit and Council Tax data. This data could be analysed to determine if there has been any statistically significant changes in these indicators in the postcodes where the Pathfinder is active. Otherwise, administrative data, including household surveys, could be used to conduct ITSA. Using administrative data will only allow researchers to examine the impacts on key indicators, that are available in the administrative data, for families in the study. However, the geographically-concentrated nature of the service, and relatively small numbers of families that are supported by the Dundee Pathfinder, may result in the sample size being insufficient to conduct analysis with statistically significant results, even if suitable administrative data is available.

⁴⁴ [HM Treasury. \(2020\). Magenta Book Annex A.](#)

⁴⁵ [HM Treasury. \(2020\). Magenta Book Annex A.](#)

Summary

In summary, the Glasgow and Dundee Pathfinders have different delivery models and data collection tools which make them more suited to different evaluation methods. For Glasgow, the difficulties in obtaining a suitable comparison group make ITSA the most suitable quasi-experimental method for its evaluation. This is because ITSA can rely on administrative or national-level datasets and does not require a comparison group, making this the most feasible option for the Glasgow Pathfinder. However, if a suitable comparison group could be found the causal inferences evaluators could make would be much stronger.

As shown previously, the Dundee Pathfinder's delivery model makes it easier to collect data on a comparison group, but it also results in the Pathfinder working with fewer families, which diminishes the potential sample size. Therefore, PSM may not be the most suitable option as this is most suited to evaluation where large datasets are available. As a result of this, the Dundee Pathfinder could use DiD analysis to compare the outcomes of the participants and non-participants. This could involve using either the Housing Benefit and Council Tax data, or other administrative data collected through a sharing agreement, and comparing how the outcomes between the two groups differ over time since the start of the programme.

Alternatively, if it was decided during a feasibility study that the evaluators could not collect enough data on non-participants to form a suitable comparison group, then ITSA could also be used for the evaluation of the Dundee Pathfinder. The process of obtaining a comparison group in each Pathfinder is further elaborated later in this section.

It is important to bear in mind that although suggestions are given for the most suitable quasi-experimental approach for each Pathfinder, this does not mean that a quasi-experiment in general is the most applicable method for evaluating the Pathfinders. Some limitations common to all quasi-experimental approaches in the context of the Pathfinders are discussed later in this section, and include challenges in accessing suitable data and the consideration that holistic support offered by the Pathfinders may not be effectively captured in quantitative datasets that were not collected for this purpose. Ethical issues for this approach are also discussed.

Feasibility study

As is clear from the discussion above, there are a number of challenges associated with quasi-experimental approaches, particularly in the setting of the Pathfinders. This gives rise to a high degree of uncertainty around the efficacy of this method should it be adopted. One way of mitigating this uncertainty is to run a feasibility study of the quasi-experimental approach before full roll-out. The UK Medical Research Council states that feasibility studies "*should be designed to assess predefined progression criteria that relate to the evaluation design (eg, reducing*

*uncertainty around recruitment, data collection, retention, outcomes, and analysis) or the intervention itself (eg, around optimal content and delivery, acceptability, adherence, likelihood of cost effectiveness, or capacity of providers to deliver the intervention)."*⁴⁶ In light of this, it appears that if a quasi-experimental approach is pursued following this evaluability assessment, a feasibility study would be an appropriate first step.

A feasibility study would involve running a pilot, or test, of the evaluation on a small scale to assess whether each of the components necessary to carry out a quasi-experimental approach are in place. It would not seek to yield statistically significant results or establish whether and how the Pathfinders had an impact, but rather is designed to troubleshoot all the different elements. If there are obstacles to completing the feasibility study, then these should be closely considered before continuing with a full study.

To illustrate what a feasibility study would look like for either the Glasgow or Dundee model, we have used the CONSORT checklist extension for pilot studies.⁴⁷ This checklist is based on a set of criteria originally produced by CONSORT in 2010, which is an evidence-based, standardised, minimum set of recommendations for reporting randomised trials.⁴⁸ The extension for pilot trials provides a list of 26 items which need to be explained when reporting on a feasibility study of a randomised control trial, and which determine the key parameters for the trial. Below, we set out the parameters for a quasi-experimental evaluation of the Glasgow and Dundee Pathfinders (respectively) based on the items in this checklist. Although it is stated that the checklist "*does not directly apply to internal pilot studies built into the design of a main trial, non-randomised pilot and feasibility studies, or phase II studies*", studies of this sort – which we consider to include quasi-experimental approaches – "*have some similarities to randomised pilot and feasibility studies and so many of the principles might also apply.*"⁴⁹ As such, we have adapted the checklist to exclude points which are specific to randomised controlled trials, and consider it now to be applicable to quasi-experimental approaches. In addition, there are some items on the checklist which relate to points which should be included in a *report* on a trial (including general reporting information and results), rather than design features of the trial itself, which we have excluded.

The adapted checklist and corresponding design options for the Dundee and Glasgow Pathfinder are set out below. These serve primarily as suggestions for

⁴⁶ [BMJ. \(2021\). A new framework for developing and evaluating complex interventions: update of Medical Research Council guidance.](#)

⁴⁷ [BMJ. \(2016\). CONSORT 2010 statement: extension to randomised pilot and feasibility trials.](#)

⁴⁸ [BMJ. \(2010\). CONSORT 2010 Statement: updated guidelines for reporting parallel group randomised trials.](#)

⁴⁹ [BMJ. \(2010\). CONSORT 2010 Statement: updated guidelines for reporting parallel group randomised trials.](#)

what a feasibility study could look like and what points it could address, in order to help inform whether a feasibility study should take place. It is not exhaustive and would need further development at the point at which a feasibility study is conducted. Any pilot of a natural experiment should seek to establish the minimum data fields in any primary data collection for outcomes and matching / control variables, or availability of these data and permissions and governance requirements for accessing these data if using administrative datasets. One particular point that a feasibility study would pin down is the primary and secondary outcomes that will be measured. Due to the current uncertainties about what data will be available and what can be measured, it is not possible to set the outcomes measured at this point. Nonetheless, we suggest that the primary outcome should be household income, as this is the main determinant of poverty. If possible, household income relative to the national median could be used as a method of indicating whether a household is categorised as being in poverty (either absolute or relative). The secondary outcomes should measure the other factors that the Pathfinders seek to improve, such as health, housing, and education.

Quasi-experimental feasibility study design suggestions checklist

Specific objectives or research questions for pilot trial:

Dundee

- Could DWP data be used to construct a comparison group?
- Is the data collected on the treatment group comprehensive enough?
- What timescales should be used to collect the data?
- Collate data to inform the sample and comparison group size for a full evaluation.

Glasgow

- Is the data collected on Pathfinder users comprehensive enough? Including the type of data and the length of time series.
- Is it feasible to use population-level (i.e. whole of Glasgow) data and is it reasonable to expect the impact of the pathfinder to be detected?
- Do other child poverty / family support interventions pose a barrier to running ITSA?

Description of pilot trial design:

Dundee

- Difference-in-difference

Glasgow

- Interrupted time series analysis

Settings and locations where the data were collected:

Dundee

- DWP data used to identify target households
- Housing benefit and council tax data
- Dundee Pathfinder monitoring spreadsheet
- Social Security awards from Pathfinders
- Client spreadsheet
- Exit interviews

Glasgow

- Scottish Government child poverty data
- Glasgow Helps Monitoring Data
- Exit interviews

How participants in the research were identified and consented:

Dundee

- Identified through DWP data

Glasgow

- Open to all Glasgow residents

The interventions for each group:

Dundee

- Intervention group
 - Key worker visits targeted households and directs them to support at Brooksbank centre, where they are offered a range of tailored services.
- Comparison group
 - Has access to the same statutorily available services, but is not actively directed to them.

Glasgow

- Intervention group
 - Primary intervention is a telephone helpline which conducts a needs assessment and then provides immediate interventions and / or referrals to other services.
- Comparison group
 - Has access to the same statutorily available services, but is not actively directed to them.

Completely defined prespecified assessments or measurements to address each pilot trial objective specified, including how and when they were assessed:

Dundee

- Proportion of households with child living in poverty (either absolute or relative)
- Household income of those who used the service
- Number of people claiming benefits
- Number of people in employment
- Number of people in housing arrears
- Material deprivation
- Educational outcomes
- Housing situation.
- Health indicators.

Glasgow

- Proportion of households with child living in poverty (either absolute or relative)
- Household income of those who used the service
- Number of people claiming benefits
- Educational outcomes
- Housing situation
- Health indicators

If applicable, prespecified criteria used to judge whether, or how, to proceed with future full-scale evaluation:

Dundee

- Can a comparison group be constructed
- What is balance pre-intervention between groups
- What data and governance requirements are needed
- Can a sufficient sample size be recruited / identified to detect a meaningful difference on child poverty / on what timescales would outcomes be observable?

Glasgow

- Can a comparison group be constructed
- What is balance pre-intervention between groups
- What data and governance requirements are needed
- Can a sufficient sample size be recruited / identified to detect a meaningful difference on child poverty / on what timescales would outcomes be observable

Rationale for numbers in the pilot trial:

Dundee

- Number of participants should be maximized within what is possible for the pilot timescales

Glasgow

- Number of participants should be maximized within what is possible for the pilot timescales

Method of obtaining comparison group:

Dundee

- DWP data used to identify target households who chose not to participate in the Pathfinder or who are not in a Pathfinder delivery area.
- Housing benefit and council tax data.

Glasgow

- No comparison group required, unless it is found that there are other interventions affecting child poverty / family incomes. Determining this is an aim of the feasibility study

Methods used to address each pilot trial objective whether qualitative or quantitative:

Dundee

- Changes in % of children living in poverty.
- Changes in average household income.
- Changes in sources of income.
- Changes in the number of people claiming benefits.
- Changes in number of people in housing arrears.
- Changes in debt levels.
- Changes in childcare costs.
- Changes in fuel costs.
- Changes in food costs.
- Acceptability of pathfinder to funders, staff delivering and recipients

Glasgow

- Changes in % of children living in poverty.
- Changes in average household income.
- Changes in sources of income.
- Changes in debt levels.
- Changes in childcare costs.
- Changes in fuel costs.
- Changes in food costs.
- Changes in the number of people claiming benefits.

- Feedback from participants on whether they are aware of / use any other child poverty support interventions.
- Acceptability of pathfinder to funders, staff delivering and recipients

Timing of a quasi-experimental approach

Undertaking a quasi-experimental evaluation approach would involve a much longer timeframe than the other approaches to evaluating impact discussed later in this section. Before going ahead with this approach, the timing should be taken into account, in particular whether it can be conducted within the current Phase 2 timeline (which ends in March 2025). To give a sense of the time taken, an example timeline of a quasi-experiment, which used matched DiD, comes from the evaluation of the ‘Strengthening Families, Protecting Children’ evaluation conducted by What Works for Children’s Social Care. The aim of this programme is to reduce the number of children entering care. This evaluation will use data from the ONS’ National Pupil Database and administrative data from Local Authorities. For this programme, the first Local Authority included in the evaluation implemented the plan starting in September 2020 and the final Local Authority started in April 2022. The observation period for participants will end in March 2024 and data will be collected from the ONS in March 2025. After this, the evaluators predict that the analysis will take place from 2025-2026 with a final report due in 2026.

This timeline suggests that – broadly – a quasi-experimental approach would require around two years post-observation period to be completed. This is based on the set up and design of such evaluations typically taking around six to twelve months, with a similar amount of time required for obtaining a comparison group. Sufficient time would also need to elapse in the observation period in order for enough data points to be gathered, and to allow time for the effects of the Pathfinders to flow through to the outcomes measured. In the example above, an observation period of two years was used, while other previous studies also support allowing 18 months to two years before conducting a quasi-experimental evaluation.^{50, 51}

Overall, this implies that completing a quasi-experimental evaluation before the end of Phase 2 in March 2025 would be challenging – and if a feasibility study was adopted, completion of a subsequent full quasi-experiment would not be possible within this time frame. The implication is that a quasi-experimental evaluation would likely require a shifting of Phase 2 timelines, something which is set out in more detail [below](#).

Obtaining a comparison group

⁵⁰ [Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. \(2019\). National Evaluation of the Troubled Families Programme 2015-2020](#)

⁵¹ [Carolina Population Center. \(2014\). Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty Program Impact Evaluation.](#)

As previously discussed, quasi-experiments are a useful method to evaluate impact when it is not acceptable to randomise.⁵² However, several quasi-experimental methods including DiD and PSM, still require a comparison group to measure the impact of an intervention. These pre-intervention comparison and treatment groups need to be as similar as possible to have a robust evaluation.⁵³

Literature highlights several potential sources of a comparison group for a quasi-experiment. For example, a waiting list of potential participants can be used as the comparison group as they are already familiar with the intervention and are willing to participate in information-gathering steps, and they are most likely have similar demographic characteristics to those in the intervention.⁵⁴

Additionally, data on from national administrative or survey datasets could also be potentially used to obtain a comparison group.⁵⁵ Those in the comparison group would have to be matched to those participating in the intervention through PSM.⁵⁶ However, in order to use administrative data, there must be similar outcome data (e.g. household income) and data to permit the construction of a propensity score that is recorded for both groups to allow for a comparison.⁵⁷ In the evaluation of both the Glasgow and Dundee Pathfinders, the obtination of a comparison group poses difficulty. Various methods specific to each Pathfinder are discussed below.

Glasgow Pathfinder comparison group

As previously mentioned, the Glasgow Pathfinder operates with a 'No Wrong Door' approach and anyone in the city can access the services. This makes obtaining a comparison group which is similar to intervention group more difficult and also introduces several ethical challenges. One possibility would be to look at the initial contact data, and for calls where no action resulted, obtain permission to collect data on these respondents to create a comparison group. However, obtaining a suitable number of both participants and non-participants to conduct this analysis will be another challenge. In addition, this method runs the risk of selection bias as the calls which did not result in an action are unlikely to be random and face the same level and type of needs as those who require action.

Alternatively, there is still the possibility of using administrative data, such as those from DWP or HMRC to derive a comparison group. The challenge in using administrative and national-level data for the evaluation of the Glasgow Pathfinder is that these data have not been collected for this purpose. Therefore, the

⁵² [Levy, Y. et al., \(2011\) A Guide for Novice Researchers on Experimental and Quasi-Experimental Studies in Information Systems Research.](#)

⁵³ [White, H. & Sabarwal, S. Quasi-Experimental Design and Methods.](#)

⁵⁴ [Australian Government. \(2021\). Evidence and Evaluation Support.](#)

⁵⁵ [Australian Government. \(2021\). Evidence and Evaluation Support.](#)

⁵⁶ [Australian Government. \(2021\). Evidence and Evaluation Support.](#)

⁵⁷ [Australian Government. \(2021\). Evidence and Evaluation Support.](#)

evaluation would be limited to using only those variables which are included in these datasets, and these may not fit the needs of the evaluation. The variables available with the administrative data would be determined during the feasibility study / scoping phases of the evaluation, and the measurement of outcomes and indicators adjusted accordingly. Additionally, given that the Pathfinder operates throughout the city – and the only criterion to use the Pathfinder is to live in the city – a comparison group from administrative data would need to cover another entire city with highly comparable characteristics. This may be an unrealistic expectation given the complexities around measuring and attributing changes in child poverty or other indicators and the unique characteristics of Glasgow within Scotland.

Dundee Pathfinder comparison group

Due to the method of service delivery of the Dundee Pathfinder, it will be easier to gather data on non-participants and therefore obtain a comparison group. As previously discussed, using a programme's waiting list is a common method used to obtain a comparison group. This is because those on the waiting list may closely resemble the participants and it is easier to obtain consent and information from this group. The Dundee Pathfinder identifies postcodes with high deprivation and then approaches potential participants in these areas. Therefore, a comparison group could be composed of those families who were identified in these postcodes and decided not to participate, or alternatively families in areas of high deprivation, but whose postcodes were not chosen, could also compose the comparison group.

This method, however, would be unable to account for the distinct characteristics of this area and why it was targeted for the Pathfinder over other postcodes, or those of people who participate vs those who decline participation. Moreover, it is important to note that it is anticipated that the Pathfinder will expand to other postcodes, which may limit the extent to which it is possible to use them as a comparison group. Additionally, although the Dundee Pathfinder originally targeted the Linlathen area, an increasing amount of people from outside this area have heard about the service and have received help from it. This creates an extra challenge for obtaining a suitable comparison group for the Dundee Pathfinder as it may be harder to find an area with no exposure to the Pathfinder. Another key drawback is in the sample size: given that the number of families receiving support from the Pathfinder as it is currently rolled out is relatively small – meaning the control group would not need to be large – a quasi-experiment may be unlikely to provide statistically significant results with a small sample size, although as noted above it is anticipated that the Pathfinder will expand. The options around sampling and the likelihood of obtaining statistically significant results could be scoped out as part of the feasibility study.

Costs of a quasi-experimental evaluation

We estimate that commissioning a quasi-experimental feasibility study would require a budget of £75,000, with the subsequent full roll-out costing £225,000. For

the feasibility study, this is based on an estimated 90 days work @ average £825 / day according to current market rates (between £650-£1000) + VAT = £74,250+ VAT, rounded to £75,000 to allow some contingency. This would comprise 30 days set up and design, 30 days for data collection and obtaining a comparison group, 20 days to conduct the analysis, and 10 days for reporting, reviewing and presenting results. The full study would then require approximately three times this volume.

Overarching considerations before implementing quasi-experimental approaches

Several quasi-experimental methods and their relevance to the Pathfinders have been discussed. However, there are several challenges that are common across quasi-experimental approaches which need to be addressed. Primarily, to conduct a quasi-experiment, the outcomes being evaluated need to be clearly defined, tangible, and measured quantitatively.⁵⁸ Thus, for evaluating the Pathfinders, the objective of reducing child poverty would need to be fully defined and be able to be measured with quantitative data (e.g. household income). Additionally, several of the methods above rely on having defined intervention parameters. Therefore, the Pathfinder 'intervention' would also need a precise definition of who is included as a participant (especially in the case of Glasgow which offers more light-touch support) and when the 'intervention' is complete. The point at which an exit interview is carried out may represent the end point of the intervention on an individual basis, but the support provided by the Pathfinders is designed to happen in multiple doses over time and to be adaptable to changing circumstances. As such, defining a clear end point is inherently difficult.

In addition, because of the lack of suitable data that has previously been collected, a quasi-experimental approach may need to rely on the use of administrative or national-level survey data. This data is not currently held by the Pathfinders and so separate applications to access this data would need to be filed. However, until the initial phases of the evaluation have begun and a data sharing agreement is made, it is uncertain (a) what data will be needed to conduct the quasi-experimental approach, and (b) what data is actually available. As such, the evaluation would be limited to utilising only the variables collected in these datasets, and at present it is not known whether this will enable a robust evaluation to be conducted. A full review of what data is and is not available would form part of the feasibility study (or early evaluation stages if a feasibility study is not adopted), after which point the measurement of outcome and indicator variables can be finalised.

A quasi-experimental approach also presents some ethical challenges around consent, data collection and usage. Obtaining the informed consent of everyone in a comparator group is likely to be challenging given that they are not engaged with a common service, and processing of personal data for research purposes would

⁵⁸ [Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport. \(2023\). Volunteering Futures Fund evaluation: feasibility study.](#)

not be ethical without consent. Administrative data for both groups, however, could be compared provided that they were fully anonymised before sharing or linking, and that there is a clear ethical and data governance justification for this. Part of this agreement to share or link data should therefore include the key ethical considerations and justification for what data are accessed and how they are used.

Moreover, due to the data availability constraints previously mentioned and the need to have quantitative outcome measures, a quasi-experimental approach will only capture quantifiable outcomes on a small number of specified variables. A holistic service such as the Pathfinders, however, is expected to have a wider range of impacts on the participants, such as increased confidence or family wellbeing, which are not routinely measured in administrative data. Going forward, these measures could be added to the primary data collected by the Pathfinders. A mixed-methods assessment approach (discussed below) would be more flexible to incorporating these types of outcomes.

Last, the Pathfinders are a complex, evolving, and loosely defined intervention. One of the fundamental principles behind the Pathfinders is that they provide bespoke, holistic support based on individuals' personal circumstances and needs. For example, the Dundee Pathfinder operates as a navigator model, which provides individual and holistic support. As a result, the Pathfinder intervention does not fit into a single box nor should be expected to achieve a single clear outcome for everyone. By contrast, quasi-experimental approaches rely on interventions with clear parameters which produce distinct, measurable outcomes. If a quasi-experimental approach was implemented and found no statistically significant impact of the Pathfinders on the selected outcomes, this may lead to a conclusion that they were not successful in achieving that outcome. However, these findings could overshadow the potential successes in other key facets of the programme which cannot be captured or otherwise reflected in a quasi-experimental approach. Therefore, we consider there to be a tension between the underlying ethos of the Pathfinder programmes, and that of quasi-experimental approaches.

Randomised controlled trials

If there was a need or desire to go beyond a quasi-experimental evaluation and conduct a full experiment on the Pathfinders, this could be done through a randomised controlled trial (RCT). Whereas quasi-experimental approaches identify a natural comparison group after the intervention has occurred, RCTs create a control group by randomly assigning people to either receive the treatment (in this case, Pathfinder support) or not. If feasible to implement, RCTs provide the highest standard of evidence of causal effects.

We are not aware of any RCTs on interventions in the UK that are closely similar to the Pathfinder programmes. However, there are some instances of RCTs being used to test child poverty interventions elsewhere. A recent study in Norway looked at the impact of a specific family intervention model compared to standard local family intervention practices.⁵⁹ This did not measure child poverty, but rather focussed on parental employment, financial situations, housing situations, and the social inclusion of children. This took place across 29 Labour and Welfare offices and analysed survey responses and administrative data on 862 parents over 12 months.

In Uganda, an RCT was used to calculate the effect on child poverty of savings incentives, mentorship and financial training on 1,383 orphaned children.⁶⁰ Like the Pathfinders, the interest of this programme was that it was a multi-faceted intervention, as opposed to a single treatment. The study noted that capturing child poverty directly was challenging, and so a representative measure of poverty was used which included health, assets, housing and behavioural risks. The impact of the intervention was measured after a period of four years.

There is also an RCT currently in operation to measure the impact on child poverty of the Healthier Wealthier Families programme in Sweden which provides financial advice to families who need it.⁶¹ This will randomly assign parents to be immediately referred to local budget and debt counselling services, with the control group being referred after a delay of three months. It is expected to include 142 participants and to observe a two-year period with study completion an additional year thereafter. Again, this RCT will not measure absolute or relative poverty directly, but rather compares outcomes on child material and social deprivation, household income, and other self-rated outcomes such as mental health.

⁵⁹ [Malmberg-Heimonen, I. and Tøge, A.G. \(2022\) Family Intervention Projects as Poverty-Alleviating Measures: Results from a Norwegian Cluster-Randomised Study.](#)

⁶⁰ [Wang, J., Malaeb, B., Ssewamala, F., Neilands, T., and Brooks-Gunn, J. \(2021\). A Multifaceted Intervention with Savings Incentives to Reduce Multidimensional Child Poverty: Evidence from the Bridges Study \(2012–2018\) in Rural Uganda.](#)

⁶¹ [U.S. National Library of Medicine. \(2022\). A Randomised Trial of Healthier Wealthier Families in Sweden.](#)

The level of existing research involving RCTs on child poverty interventions implies that an RCT could be used to evaluate the Pathfinders, but that a pilot trial would likely be required to test the various components – and the extent to which a trial suits either Pathfinder – of this first. As outlined above in relation to a quasi-experimental feasibility study, the aim of a pilot trial would not be to provide results in relation to the Pathfinders' impacts, but rather to estimate the parameters that would be required in a full roll-out of a trial.

Should an RCT pilot study be pursued, the existing evidence outlined above indicates that the outcome(s) measured should not be direct child poverty measures (relative or absolute), but instead other key indicators such as household income, employment, housing circumstances, childrens' school attainment / attendance. Similar to quasi-experimental methods, six months to a year would likely be required to complete a pilot trial, with a full RCT taking over two years for completion. As above, this would take the evaluation beyond the current timelines for Phase 2. The appropriate design of an RCT would likely be different between Glasgow and Dundee. We suggest that in Glasgow, the randomisation is done on a time-delayed basis, whereby the treatment group receives the support and onward referrals from the phone service immediately, while the control group does not receive support right away, but does at a later point in time. For the Dundee model, it may be appropriate to use a cluster-randomised approach, which randomly allocate entire areas to be the treatment and control groups. A clustered approach would help to avoid complications around obtaining consent at an individual level to be randomly allocated to receiving or not receiving support. The optimal allocation approach would be finalised as part of the pilot phase.

When deciding whether an RCT should be used to evaluate, the following advantages and disadvantages should be considered.

Strengths

RCTs provide the most robust results in terms of identifying the scale of impacts and attributing these to a cause.

RCTs would avoid much of the issues and uncertainty associated relying on data from administrative datasets in quasi-experimental methods, because data for both the treatment and control groups would be collected directly from the trial participants.

Limitations

RCTs frequently raise ethical issues. These concerns are particularly pronounced in the context of child poverty, where the difference between receiving the intervention and being in the control group could have life-changing effects on children and their families. There would be two ethical hurdles to overcome. The first is to provide justification for randomly allocating families to the Pathfinder.

Because the Pathfinders are targeted at particularly marginalised groups, the impact of receiving support could be life-changing. Therefore, it may be challenging to justify whether this support can be allocated on a random basis. Second, consent from all participants in the trial would be required. Previous studies show that obtaining consent is possible, but there may be specific difficulties in doing so where potential participants do not perceive random allocation as fair or do not wish to be allocated to a control group.

RCTs require specific conditions to work properly, including a clearly defined intervention. As explained throughout above under ‘overarching considerations before implementing quasi-experimental approaches’, the Pathfinder models are complex both in terms of what they do and what they aim to achieve. It may be that the Pathfinders (or one of them) cannot feasibly fit into a robust trial design. A pilot study would help to address or otherwise confirm this.

Due to the fact that it reaches a relatively small number of families, the Dundee Pathfinder – by nature of its design – is somewhat limited to a small sample size for an RCT. Having a small sample size may limit the power of an RCT, and could mean that statistically significant results are only possible if a vast change in outcomes occurs. The extent to which this is a limiting factor could be explored further with a preliminary pilot trial before full roll-out.

Conducting an RCT involves substantial financial resources and would likely require a larger budget than the quasi-experimental approaches described above.

On the basis of the above, our current recommendation is that an RCT would not be a suitable method of evaluating the Pathfinders. Notwithstanding this, if an evaluator were to pursue this approach, we recommend that they first conduct a pilot trial, and in doing so ensure that the disadvantages listed above can be overcome.

Impact assessment

The following section outlines additional options to evaluate the Pathfinders which do not use a counterfactual. These options have strengths and limitations which will be discussed below. The options include:

Option 1: To plan an impact assessment of the Pathfinders using theory-based evaluation in the second half of 2024/25. This is to enable enough time for impacts to accrue. This could run concurrently with any quasi-experimental trial commissioned. This would be particularly important to enable learning to be fed into the Third Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan.

Or

Option 2: To develop case studies to supplement a quasi-experimental trial in Phase 2.

and

Option 3: To provide support to the Pathfinders to improve their monitoring, evaluation and learning processes throughout 2023/24 and 2024/25 to ensure they are set up and delivered in the best possible way to maximise their impacts and the value of an evaluation.

As described in Best Start, Bright Futures the Pathfinders will trial different innovative approaches to support changes in the child poverty system. They will test, refine, and adapt these approaches as they learn how best to deliver holistic and person-centred support that meets the specific needs of families.

In this context, where the overarching aspiration of the Pathfinders is to contribute to whole system change in the long run, in the knowledge that the child poverty system is a complex system, this evaluability assessment finds there is value to conducting a longer-term theory-based impact assessment that enables Scottish Government and the Pathfinders to understand **what has changed, why** and **how** the changes have occurred.

This is also important to feed into learning for the continued implementation of the Pathfinder interventions beyond 2025 or for their future replication and scalability. We suggest **Contribution Analysis** as a feasible methodological approach (discussed below) to be used in an impact assessment. Conducting a theory-based impact assessment is not mutually exclusive to running a quasi-experimental trial depending on the outcomes of the feasibility study but should supplement the trial with learning on what has or hasn't worked and why.

A second option suggested involves developing **case studies** to supplement a quasi-experimental trial to enable greater understanding of how the impacts may

have occurred and to provide greater understanding of the dimensions of change in the finances, health and wellbeing of families involved in the Pathfinders.

Finally, in the context of the Pathfinders testing and exploring different approaches, an evaluative approach that is embedded in delivery that enables efficient feedback loops so that learning is captured and can support implementation and adaptation is also recommended. We suggest a **Learning Partner** approach as a feasible methodological approach (discussed below).

Theory-based evaluation, a learning partner approach and / or case studies will provide useful understanding with regard to:

Family outcomes. A qualitative approach that involves engaging families that have been part of the Pathfinders to understand the range of outcomes for families as well as their overall experience and stories of change will be useful in understanding the mechanisms of change in the Pathfinder. This can be supplemented with quantitative assessment, relying on surveys or analysis of administrative data to understand pre and post effects.

Local context. Project level outcomes can be placed in a wider understanding of the context in which the Pathfinders are working. This includes the social, political and economic context within which local, regional and national partners are acting.

Understanding the experiences of priority family groups. These approaches can be used to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of the people most at risk of poverty, who are often 'hard to reach' and 'seldom heard.'

Systems changes. A key aspect of the Pathfinders is to facilitate a process of systems change in their localities, where partners work better together and work to remove barriers. These approaches enable us to understand the drivers of change and the extent to which the Pathfinders' approach is replicable across other localities.

Option 1: Impact Assessment using Theory-Based Evaluation Approaches

We define impact assessment in this section of the report as the utilisation of non-experimental approaches to assess the extent to which the Pathfinders have contributed to outcomes or impacts and why and how they have been realised.

Strengths:

Theory-based impact assessment approaches are useful in allowing for greater understanding of how an intervention may be contributing to impacts in complex and dynamic settings where there may be numerous ways in which inputs and outputs interact and multiple pathways that can lead to the envisaged change.

They are also useful in contexts where direct attribution of an intervention to impacts can be difficult to ascertain due to the unpredictable ways in which outcomes are influenced by multiple internal and external factors.

They can also be used to assess impact at a programme level, as opposed to conducting an impact assessment for each Pathfinder.

They allow us to answer questions such as: “What was it about the intervention or the context that caused the results? Where the expected results were not observed, what was it about the intervention that didn’t work? Was the underlying theory of the intervention wrong, or was the problem a case of poor implementation?”⁶² These questions are useful for understanding whether the intervention can be replicated and how it can be improved.

They can help to focus data collection on the ‘outcomes that matter’, enabling an effective monitoring system to be set up.

Limitations:

These approaches do not enable us to understand how much difference is made by an intervention, that is, they cannot provide a quantitative measure of the amount of change that has occurred as a result of the intervention as compared to a non-treatment area (the amount by which absolute or relative child poverty has been reduced).

Attribution cannot be determined using these approaches. Assessment can only be made on the extent to which the Pathfinders may have contributed to the outcomes/impacts identified e.g. A family’s well-being may be impacted by numerous factors other than the support provided by the Pathfinder. Here, “the relevant evaluation question is: in light of the multiple factors influencing a result, has the intervention made a noticeable contribution to an observed outcome and in what way?”⁶³

Impact assessments can be time intensive. However, data collection and analysis will be significantly aided if a good monitoring system is put in place.

⁶² [Theory-Based Approaches to Evaluation: Concepts and Practices - Canada.ca](#)

⁶³ *ibid*

Theory-based evaluation options

What are Theories of Change?

Theories of Change are commonly used to understand the logic of social change interventions. Theories of Change provide a description of the causal pathways that are expected to lead to desired outcomes. They are used to make the many underlying assumptions about how change happens in a programme or project explicit. Theories of Change can be flexible and can support innovation and improvement in programmes by allowing programme implementers to check, debate and test assumptions making them well suited for understanding change in complex settings.

Developing a well-articulated and robust Theory of Change, co-designed with key stakeholders, and underpinned by existing bodies of evidence, is a good starting point for assessing an intervention's contribution to impact particularly in complex settings. (Vogel, 2012)

Theory-based evaluation approaches to impact assessment are non-experimental approaches that are concerned with understanding the 'theory' of an intervention. Theory-based approaches are method neutral. They are a 'conceptual analytical model'; "a way of structuring and undertaking analysis in in evaluation".⁶⁴ As described above, theory-based approaches seek to understand the contribution of an intervention to observed outcomes and impacts through a detailed examination of the mechanisms / processes of change, assumptions and external factors rather than making comparisons with a counterfactual to determine causation.

There are broadly two different types that are relevant here: **Realistic Evaluation**; and **Contribution Analysis using ToCs**.⁶⁵

A third type of evaluative approach – **Developmental evaluation** – which involves embedded evaluation to improve the implementation of delivery (and its ability to respond and adapt to the context) is discussed in Option 3.

Option 1A Realist Evaluation

In Realist evaluation, programmes are theories which approximate to reality in existence. Realist evaluation is guided by the belief that interventions only work under certain conditions and that the impacts of interventions will differ according to the stakeholders involved and the contexts within which they act - succinctly

⁶⁴ ibid

⁶⁵ Morton, S. (2019).

summed up as “mechanisms + context = outcomes”.⁶⁶ In realist evaluation findings demonstrate what worked, for whom, how and in what circumstances.⁶⁷ Thus, the focus in realist evaluation is rarely on accountability but on learning. “The extent to which a specific intervention has ‘succeeded’ or ‘failed’ ... is of limited interest, given that it cannot be seen as providing reliable insights as to the outcome of future similar interventions.”⁶⁸

Strengths

- Supports learning and understanding of how a specific intervention works through the testing of underlying theories
- Can be used to inform experimental/semi-experimental approaches on the process of change
- Method-neutral, supports a variety of analytical approaches⁶⁹

Limitations

- Is time consuming and resource intensive
- Requires subject-matter expertise to undertake; and
- It may not provide an average net effect of the intervention
- It provides limited insights on the outcomes of future similar interventions⁷⁰

Overall assessment:

Realist evaluation is not a suitable approach to be used for an assessment of the impact of the Pathfinder programme or the Pathfinders themselves as a key objective of the evaluation is to determine not only what has worked in what context, but whether the intervention has been successful and whether there are lessons that can be learned as to its replicability or scalability.

Option 1B Contribution Analysis

Contribution analysis (CA), a complexity informed approach, has been increasingly used for complex programme evaluations over the past decade. As the name suggests contribution analysis does not claim outright “attribution” of impacts to interventions but rather seeks to create a story built on available evidence that establishes how interventions may have had an influence on overall impacts. “Contribution Analysis is an approach to evaluation developed by Mayne (2001, 2008, and 2011) which aims to compare an intervention’s postulated Theory of

⁶⁶ Pawson, R., & Tilley, N., (1997). Realistic Evaluation

⁶⁷ White, H. and Phillips, D., (2012). [Addressing Attribution of Cause and Effect in Small n Impact Evaluations: Towards an Integrated Framework.](#)

⁶⁸ Lucas, H. and Longhurst, R., (2010). Evaluation: Why, for Whom and How? p.31.

⁶⁹ [HM Treasury. Magenta Book Annex A Analytical methods for use within evaluation](#)

⁷⁰ [HM Treasury. Magenta Book Annex A Analytical methods for use within evaluation](#)

Change against the evidence, in order to come to robust conclusions about the contribution that it has made to observed outcomes.” “Verifying the Theory of Change that the programme is based on, and paying attention to other factors that may influence the outcomes, provides reasonable evidence about the contribution being made by the programme.” “Contribution analysis argues that if an evaluator can validate a ToC with empirical evidence and account for major external influencing factors, then it is reasonable to conclude that the intervention has made a difference... Causality is inferred from the following evidence:

- The intervention is based on a reasoned ToC: the results chain and the underlying assumptions of why the intervention is expected to work are sound, plausible and agreed to by key players.
- The activities of the intervention were implemented
- The ToC is verified by evidence: The chain of expected results occurred, the assumptions held, and (final) outcomes were observed.
- External factors (context) influencing the intervention were assessed and shown not to have made a significant contribution, or if they did, their relative contribution was recognized.”

Strengths

- Supports learning and understanding of how a specific intervention works through the testing of underlying theories
- Method-neutral, supports a variety of analytical approaches
- Can validate a ToC or support the adaptation of the ToC
- It is a participatory approach, recognising the importance of broad stakeholder engagement to validation of evaluation measures⁷¹

Limitations

- Attribution cannot be claimed, though causality can be inferred if other factors can be shown to have had minimal influence.
- Relies on a robust, clearly articulated and well-evidenced ToC.
- May not be suitable if there are significant changes to the ToC.

Overall assessment:

Contribution Analysis is a useful approach to assess how and why an intervention may have led to outcomes. Evaluators are able to examine available evidence to interrogate the programme's/ project's ToC and assumptions and use this to come to conclusions on whether the programme/ project is contributing to outcomes as outlined in the ToC.

RECOMMENDATION: Contribution Analysis is recommended as an approach to be used in a formative or a summative evaluation which occurs either at the end or during the implementation period of the Pathfinders in order to

⁷¹ Morton. S. (2019)

assess how the Pathfinders are contributing to observed outcomes and impacts.

Recommended: Option 1B: Plan for Implementation of Contribution Analysis Approach

Outlined below is a proposed approach for a recommended independently commissioned by the Scottish Government impact assessment of the Pathfinders using contribution analysis towards the end of their implementation period. This is in addition to any quasi-experimental trials that may be commissioned.

Aim

To assess the impact of the Pathfinders by examining to what extent and how the Pathfinders have been effective in providing holistic person-centred support that contributed to improved resilience, health and wellbeing, incomes, and reductions in costs of living as key drivers for the reduction of child poverty. This will provide learning on the processes that have led to observed changes and understanding on how and whether they may be adapted and delivered elsewhere.

The challenges of evaluating the impact of interventions seeking systems change.

Systems change, where systems are understood as “constructs used for engaging with and improving situations of real-world complexity,” is a non-linear process (Reynolds and Holwell, 2010). It is characterised by “emergence (behaviours or other things that arise as a result of the interactions between parts of a complex system), co-evolution (parts of the system react and respond to one another’s behaviour), and self-organisation (the tendency for systems to generate new structures and patterns based on internal dynamics)” (Reynolds and Holwell, 2010). Effecting change in a system needs a ‘whole-systems perspective’, which means working simultaneously at multiple levels, focusing not only on the individual units of adoption (organisations, sectors or personnel) but also on the interactions between the parts of the system.

Deborah Ghate notes that an important implication of working in this way, that is, dealing with systems change, is that attention needs to be placed “more clearly on causal pathways, and on leverage points for change that may exist at different levels” in implementation (Ghate, 2022). There are also implications for evaluation. A literature review by Morton (2019) exploring approaches best suited to the evaluation of complex public services outlines the following key implications of taking a complexity informed understanding of system behaviour:

Interventions must be understood within their context, and contextual factors must be considered when assessing impact.

Programmes must make their assumptions explicit and spend some time framing issues to enable an evaluation to reflect the system. Evaluation approaches may need to change to be more problem-orientated, collaborative and inclusive of multiple kinds of evidence. Evaluation may best be embedded into an intervention and/or agency as a developmental process. When evaluation becomes a feedback loop in the system, it can be used to adjust and refine interventions as they develop. In this context, the role of the evaluator shifts from solely providing information to facilitating change and adaptive management.

Feasibility of conducting an evaluation of the Pathfinders using contribution analysis

As part of the commission, we have co-designed, with the Pathfinders, ToCs with assumptions and risks, and developed a detailed monitoring framework based on data audit exercises undertaken with the Pathfinders (see ToC and Monitoring report). The latter provides a framework to enable the collection of relevant and necessary data to support a theory-based evaluation. However, the framework though necessary is not sufficient. The Pathfinders also will need to:

improve **data collection tools and systems** to collect both quantitative and qualitative data needed from staff, partners, as well as people and families who engage with the Pathfinder

improve their **internal monitoring systems** to store and analyse the data collected

develop a **regular process to reflect on progress** against systems change outcomes in the ToC and **to report against the indicators in the monitoring framework** to funders, partners and stakeholders.

Contribution analysis process (Mayne, 2008)

Step 1: Set out the attribution problem to be assessed

Step 2: Develop a Theory of Change and risk to it

Step 3: Gather the existing evidence on the Theory of Change

Step 4: Assemble and assess the contribution story, and challenges to it

Step 5: Seek out additional evidence

Step 6: Revise and strengthen the contribution story

“[W]ithin contribution analysis, a plausible narrative is considered to have been developed when four different conditions are met (Mayne 2008).

1. The ...intervention is based on a sound Theory of Change, accompanied by agreed and plausible assumptions, that explains how the intervention sought to bring about any desired changes.
2. The activities of the ... intervention were implemented properly.

3. There is adequate evidence showing that change occurred at each level of the Theory of Change.
4. The relative contribution of external factors or other development interventions can be dismissed or demonstrated.” (INTRAC, 2017)

In addition, an **independently commissioned external theory-based evaluation** will not just rely on the data collected by the Pathfinders but will also collect additional evidence to assess the impacts on families beyond the timeframe of the Pathfinder. Overall, the evaluation will draw on the following forms of data:

Qualitative and quantitative data collated by the Pathfinders in their **internal monitoring systems and reports**

Evidence and data reported against **the monitoring framework**

Additional evidence, collected as part of the independently commissioned evaluation, for example, through independent interviews and surveys conducted by the evaluation team.

In sum, for an evaluation using contribution analysis to be done well, the following elements are needed:

A robust Theory of Change for the Pathfinders and/or the Pathfinder programme

- A ToC has been co-produced with each of the Pathfinders as part of this evaluability assessment. A ToC has also been developed for the programme. The finalised versions of the ToCs need to be shared and reflected upon with the Pathfinders. However, the current versions provide a good basis for undertaking a future evaluation using contribution analysis. It is recommended, however, these ToCs are revisited and updated prior to the commissioning of the impact assessment.
- **Robust data that has been collected by the Pathfinders, using appropriate monitoring frameworks that allow assessment against all levels of the ToC**
 - The Pathfinders are currently collecting data in a variety of ways. The Glasgow Pathfinder has a monitoring system in place. The Dundee Pathfinder does not have a streamlined process for monitoring. As identified in the ToC and Monitoring report, the Pathfinders are not currently collecting all the data that is needed to make an assessment of progress against the ToCs. Suggestions for improvements to the Pathfinders’ monitoring systems are made in the accompanying report. In summary, the Pathfinder data collection processes and systems will need to be improved and aligned with the monitoring framework.
- **Additional data and evidence is needed a) to triangulate evidence collected from the Pathfinders, b) to gain an insight into longer term**

changes resulting from the Pathfinders/ Programme and the sustainability of the Pathfinders/ Programme

- Additional evidence will need to be collected by the evaluation team commissioned. The expectation is that a mixed methods approach will be used to collect the additional qualitative and quantitative data for example, a review of documentary evidence from Pathfinders, qualitative interviews with families, stakeholders, staff and partners, and a survey (building on the baseline and monitoring surveys developed by the Pathfinders as suggested in the ToC and Monitoring report). The evaluation team should gather evidence that will be able to assess the persistence of effects (sustainability of employment) by interviewing or surveying families sometime after their engagement with the Pathfinder has ended. Any proposal submitted should explain the methodology for undertaking a theory-based evaluation, for example, revising ToCs, identifying data gaps and undertaking interviews and surveys.

Recommended Approach

The recommended evaluation approach involves using contribution analysis principles to assess progress of the Pathfinders against their ToCs and to test the assumptions. Contribution analysis, in this approach, involves developing evaluation questions specifically to test the assumptions in the ToCs and to test whether outcomes have been achieved. Evaluation questions can be developed against the Pathfinders' ToCs or against the Programme-level ToC. Below we focus on the Pathfinders, as the evaluation questions developed relate to the Pathfinders and a more extensive data audit exercise has taken place for the Pathfinders but a similar approach could be developed for the Programme level.

Mixed Methods

Theory-based evaluation approaches are method neutral. Contribution analysis in an evaluation, for example, can be used alongside the experimental design approach. "In short, while quantitative methods produce data that can be aggregated and analysed to describe and predict relationships, qualitative research can help to probe and explain those relationships and to explain contextual differences in the quality of those relationships." (Garbarino and Holland), 2009)

Quantitative methods

Quantitative data will be essential for determining the scale of the impacts – how many families have been supported, and how big a positive impact this had. This includes data on the reach of the Pathfinders, financial circumstances (increases in income from employment or benefits), health and overall wellbeing. Crucially, to measure the changes in these indicators, the same information would need to be collected at the end of a family's Pathfinder journey to provide a before and after

comparison. For this reason, a survey is recommended in the ToC and Monitoring report. In the evaluation of the Welsh Government's Child Poverty Strategy, 23 indicators consisting of relative and in-work poverty, employment and worklessness, education, qualifications, housing, and health inequalities, were used to measure the Strategy's impact. The evaluation looked at the change in these indicators, using data from 2005 as the baseline year, and the most recent data available for each indicator in 2014. (Welsh Government, 2014). They determined if these changes were statistically significant and compared these trends to those of the North of England, and concluded that there was no evidence of the Welsh Strategy being more or less effective than the policies in the North of England.

Qualitative methods

Qualitative methods will allow the evaluation to:

Understand why things happened the way they did, and what the drivers of change were.

Gather information on what worked well and what could be improved.

Take individuals' barriers and values into account.

Collect longitudinal data to provide ongoing learning at different points.

Incorporate the views of families and partner organisations.

Take a person-centred approach.

Qualitative data can also serve to supplement the quantitative data discussed above, in order to capture process and outcome data. This is supported in the literature, which demonstrates that qualitative data is helpful for getting a deeper understanding of the impacts and outcomes, as administrative data used in large scale evaluations can often be hard to disaggregate to the local level or understand the impact on small priority groups (SG, TCPDP, Annex 2, 2022-2026) Having qualitative feedback from families would also help to evidence the level of attribution that can be assigned to the Pathfinder, as it can indicate whether a positive change was a result of this service or some other factor. Qualitative interviews have been used successfully in evaluations of similar programmes, such as the Local Authority Child Poverty Innovation Pilot and the Welsh Government evaluation of the Housing Act (2014), which addressed homelessness (GHK, 2010). These both relied extensively on interviews with service users, service delivery staff, stakeholders, and partners. It was noted that this method was vital in cutting through the complexities of the issues at hand, providing comparative perspectives, and incorporating the views of people with lived experience of poverty / homelessness. The former of these two evaluations also used the findings from the qualitative fieldworks to inform the quantitative aspects of the research including a Cost-Effectiveness Analysis.

Evaluation Questions

The following evaluation questions were co-produced with the Scottish Government (see the [evaluation plan](#) section). Using a contribution analysis approach, they will be used to examine and interrogate the links and outcomes in the ToCs of both the Dundee and Glasgow Pathfinder. We have included the data sources for each Pathfinder separately in the table below.

The ToC and Monitoring report describes in more detail what data is available currently in the Pathfinders, its suitability for the evaluation and what needs to be done to improve data collection and monitoring to support an effective evaluation. In this table below, data is highlighted where it is available though the quality maybe variable (see Monitoring Report for more detail). For example case notes in the Dundee Pathfinder are available though baseline information is not collected against the indicators in the Monitoring framework in a systematic way for every family to enable effective comparison and analysis. For example, childcare costs are not calculated for every family at the time of engagement with the Pathfinder. Where data is accessible but not yet being used or the data is not available yet (e.g. the pre/post survey) this is also noted in the table. The Monitoring Framework describes in more detail how data from these sources should be used. Where data is currently not accessible, and further investigation will need to occur to determine whether it is a viable data source this is highlighted.

It should be noted here that if the Pathfinders improve their monitoring systems, most of the relevant data to address these questions would have been collected against the the Monitoring Framework developed. However, some process questions related to the shorter-term outcomes in the ToC (e.g. the levels of ‘How they feel’ and ‘What they learn and gain’) will not have regular data collected against the Monitoring framework. This is because as explained in the Monitoring report, the Monitoring Framework was designed a) to be a practical tool that could realistically be implemented by the Pathfinders b) to focus primarily on the indicators that are most easily measured c) to focus on the longer term outcomes and impact of the Pathfinder.

Consequently, the successful evaluation team will need to review in addition to the Monitoring Framework data additional data including qualitative documentation held by the Pathfinders in their monitoring systems as well as undertake additional data collection to assess the persistence of outcomes and longer-term impacts. This data collection may include interviews with families, staff and partners at the local and national level involved in the Pathfinder as well as potentially a survey. The survey will be most valuable if baseline data is available.

For this reason it is a recommendation of this evaluability assessment that the Pathfinders are supported to develop monitoring systems that effectively collect a baseline and that are closely designed with the evaluation in mind. That is, they are

a) set up to collect baseline data b) they continue to collect data on families after their direct involvement in the Pathfinder (See ToC and Monitoring report)

Evaluation Questions against the levels in the Theories of Change

Level in the Theory of Change	Evaluation Questions	Where will data come from in the Dundee Pathfinder?	Where will data come from in the Glasgow Pathfinder?
<p>What difference does it make</p>	<p>What was the impact on the finances, employment, resilience, health, and wellbeing of families?</p>	<p>Data available though quality may be variable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dundee Pathfinder Internal Monitoring System⁷² extracting data from case notes • Pathfinder programme documentation (highlight reports etc), feedback from families • Income maximisation data held by DCC and SSS⁷³ <p>Data not currently accessible, and further investigation will need to occur to determine whether it is a viable data source</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data extracted from universal credit accounts held by DCC 	<p>Data available though quality may be variable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glasgow Helps Internal Monitoring System⁷⁴ extracting data from Holistic Needs Assessments • Exit Interviews • Financial Gain estimates⁷⁵ • Pathfinder programme documentation (highlight reports etc), feedback from families <p>Data not currently accessible, and further investigation will need to occur to determine whether it is a viable data source</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data extracted from universal credit accounts held by DCC

⁷² The Dundee Monitoring System is yet to be developed, suggestions for why this and how this might take place is included in the ToC and Monitoring Report.

⁷³ Dundee City Council and Social Security Scotland

⁷⁴ The Glasgow Helps Monitoring System has been developed. However, a few adaptations will need to be made in order for it to effectively collate all the data needed to evaluate against the Monitoring Framework. More information is included in the ToC and Monitoring Report.

⁷⁵ Holistic Needs Assessments, Exit Interviews and Financial Gain estimates are carried out by Glasgow Helps staff when they engage with families, they follow a specific structure and are recorded on MS forms. An extra level of analysis is done on the Holistic Assessments to track progress against the Glasgow Helps Monitoring System

Level in the Theory of Change	Evaluation Questions	Where will data come from in the Dundee Pathfinder?	Where will data come from in the Glasgow Pathfinder?
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits data held by DWP • HMRC RTI Data from DWP • Customer Information System data from DWP • SSS benefits data <p>Data is accessible but not yet being used or the data is not available yet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-Post survey of families • Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction Data • Common Housing Register • Discretionary Housing Payments Datasets • Scottish Welfare Fund Datasets • Additional data collection by evaluators from Interviews and Survey • Data reported against the Monitoring Framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits data held by DWP • HMRC RTI Data from DWP • Customer Information System data from DWP • SSS benefits data <p>Data is accessible but not yet being used or the data is not available yet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pre-Post survey of families • Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction Data • Discretionary Housing Payments Datasets • Scottish Welfare Fund Datasets • Additional data collection by evaluators from Interviews and Survey • Data reported against the Monitoring Framework

Level in the Theory of Change	Evaluation Questions	Where will data come from in the Dundee Pathfinder?	Where will data come from in the Glasgow Pathfinder?
<p>What they do differently</p>	<p>To what extent is the right support available for families – are there any gaps in resource, partners or services leading to unmet need?</p>	<p>Data available though quality may be variable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dundee Pathfinder Internal Monitoring System extracting data from case notes • Pathfinder programme documentation (highlight reports etc) • Feedback from families • Income maximisation data held by DCC and SSS <p>Data is accessible but not yet being used or the data is not available yet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional data collection by evaluators from Interviews and Survey 	<p>Data available though quality may be variable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glasgow Helps Internal Monitoring System extracting data from Holistic Needs Assessments • Exit Interviews • Financial Gain estimates • Pathfinder programme documentation (highlight reports etc), feedback from families <p>Data is accessible but not yet being used or the data is not available yet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional data collection by evaluators from Interviews and Survey
	<p>To what extent are families accessing support before crisis point – prevention? (Glasgow)</p>	<p>Data available though quality may be variable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dundee Pathfinder Internal Monitoring System extracting data from case notes 	<p>Data available though quality may be variable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glasgow Helps Internal Monitoring System extracting data from Holistic Needs Assessments • Exit Interviews • Pathfinder programme

Level in the Theory of Change	Evaluation Questions	Where will data come from in the Dundee Pathfinder?	Where will data come from in the Glasgow Pathfinder?
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pathfinder programme documentation (highlight reports etc) • Feedback from families • Income maximisation data held by DCC and SSS <p>Data is accessible but not yet being used or the data is not available yet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional data collection by evaluators from Interviews and Survey • Data reported against the Monitoring Framework 	<p>documentation (highlight reports etc), feedback from families</p> <p>Data is accessible but not yet being used or the data is not available yet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional data collection by evaluators from Interviews and Survey • Data reported against the Monitoring Framework
	<p>To what extent are families obtaining and sustaining high quality and fair employment?</p>	<p>Data is accessible but not yet being used or the data is not available yet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional data collection by evaluators from Interviews and Survey • Data reported against the Monitoring Framework 	<p>Data is accessible but not yet being used or the data is not available yet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional data collection by evaluators from Interviews and Survey • Data reported against the Monitoring Framework

Level in the Theory of Change	Evaluation Questions	Where will data come from in the Dundee Pathfinder?	Where will data come from in the Glasgow Pathfinder?
	<p>To what extent are agencies working in partnership beyond organisational boundaries?</p>	<p>Data available though quality may be variable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dundee Pathfinder Internal Monitoring System extracting data from case notes • Pathfinder programme documentation (highlight reports etc) • Feedback from families • Partnership Data <p>Data is accessible but not yet being used or the data is not available yet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional data collection by evaluators from Interviews and Survey • Data reported against the Monitoring Framework 	<p>Data available though quality may be variable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glasgow Helps Internal Monitoring System extracting data from Holistic Needs Assessments • Exit Interviews, Pathfinder programme documentation (highlight reports etc) • Feedback from families • Partnership Data <p>Data is accessible but not yet being used or the data is not available yet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional data collection by evaluators from Interviews and Survey • Data reported against the Monitoring Framework
	<p>To what extent are employers providing more fair, flexible work locally that is more accessible for families in poverty?</p>	<p>Data available though quality may be variable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dundee Pathfinder Internal Monitoring System 	<p>Data available though quality may be variable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glasgow Helps Internal Monitoring System extracting data from • Holistic Needs Assessments

Level in the Theory of Change	Evaluation Questions	Where will data come from in the Dundee Pathfinder?	Where will data come from in the Glasgow Pathfinder?
		<p>extracting data from case notes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pathfinder programme documentation (highlight reports etc), feedback from families • Employer Portfolio Spreadsheet • Childcare Providers Data <p>Data not currently accessible, and further investigation will need to occur to determine whether it is a viable data source</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work Coach History Notes <p>Data is accessible but not yet being used or the data is not available yet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional data collection by evaluators from Interviews and Survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exit Interviews • Pathfinder programme documentation (highlight reports etc), feedback from families <p>Data not currently accessible, and further investigation will need to occur to determine whether it is a viable data source</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work Coach History Notes <p>Data is accessible but not yet being used or the data is not available yet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional data collection by evaluators from Interviews and Survey
	To what extent is the required data, learning and insight shared between partners?	<p>Data available though quality may be variable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dundee Pathfinder Internal Monitoring System extracting data from case notes 	<p>Data available though quality may be variable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glasgow Helps Internal Monitoring System extracting data from Holistic Needs Assessments • Exit Interviews

Level in the Theory of Change	Evaluation Questions	Where will data come from in the Dundee Pathfinder?	Where will data come from in the Glasgow Pathfinder?
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pathfinder programme documentation (highlight reports etc) • Feedback from families <p>Data is accessible but not yet being used or the data is not available yet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional data collection by evaluators from Interviews and Survey • Data reported against the Monitoring Framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pathfinder programme documentation (highlight reports etc), feedback from families <p>Data is accessible but not yet being used or the data is not available yet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional data collection by evaluators from Interviews and Survey • Data reported against the Monitoring Framework
	<p>To what extent are public and third sector organisations working successfully together in partnership?</p>	<p>Data available though quality may be variable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dundee Pathfinder Internal Monitoring System extracting data from case notes • Pathfinder programme documentation (highlight reports etc), feedback from families • Partnership Data 	<p>Data available though quality may be variable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glasgow Helps Internal Monitoring System extracting data from Holistic Needs Assessments • Exit Interviews • Pathfinder programme documentation (highlight reports etc), feedback from families • Partnership Data

Level in the Theory of Change	Evaluation Questions	Where will data come from in the Dundee Pathfinder?	Where will data come from in the Glasgow Pathfinder?
		<p>Data is accessible but not yet being used or the data is not available yet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional data collection by evaluators from Interviews and Survey • Data reported against the Monitoring Framework 	<p>Data is accessible but not yet being used or the data is not available yet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional data collection by evaluators from Interviews and Survey • Data reported against the Monitoring Framework
	<p>To what extent are resources between partners pooled successfully where needed?</p>	<p>Data available though quality may be variable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dundee Pathfinder Internal Monitoring System extracting data from case notes • Pathfinder programme documentation (highlight reports etc) • Feedback from families • Partnership Data <p>Data is accessible but not yet being used or the data is not available yet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional data collection by evaluators from 	<p>Data available though quality may be variable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glasgow Helps Internal Monitoring System extracting data from Holistic Needs Assessments • Exit Interviews • Pathfinder programme documentation (highlight reports etc) • Feedback from families • Partnership Data <p>Data is accessible but not yet being used or the data is not available yet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional data collection by evaluators from

Level in the Theory of Change	Evaluation Questions	Where will data come from in the Dundee Pathfinder?	Where will data come from in the Glasgow Pathfinder?
		<p>Interviews and Survey</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data reported against the Monitoring Framework 	<p>Interviews and Survey</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data reported against the Monitoring Framework
	<p>To what extent has the Pathfinder helped resolve barriers at the local and national level</p>	<p>Data available though quality may be variable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dundee Pathfinder Internal Monitoring System extracting data from case notes • Pathfinder programme documentation (highlight reports etc) • Feedback from families • Partnership Data <p>Data is accessible but not yet being used or the data is not available yet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional data collection by evaluators from Interviews and Survey • Data reported against the Monitoring Framework 	<p>Data available though quality may be variable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glasgow Helps Internal Monitoring System extracting data from Holistic Needs Assessments • Exit Interviews, Pathfinder programme documentation (highlight reports etc) • Feedback from families • Partnership Data <p>Data is accessible but not yet being used or the data is not available yet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional data collection by evaluators from Interviews and Survey • Data reported against the Monitoring Framework

Level in the Theory of Change	Evaluation Questions	Where will data come from in the Dundee Pathfinder?	Where will data come from in the Glasgow Pathfinder?
What they learn and gain	To what extent is support co-produced with families?	<p>Data available though quality may be variable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dundee Pathfinder Internal Monitoring System extracting data from case notes • Pathfinder programme documentation (highlight reports etc) • Feedback from families <p>Data is accessible but not yet being used or the data is not available yet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional data collection by evaluators from Interviews and Survey 	<p>Data available though quality may be variable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glasgow Helps Internal Monitoring System extracting data from Holistic Needs Assessments • Exit Interviews • Pathfinder programme documentation (highlight reports etc) • Feedback from families <p>Data is accessible but not yet being used or the data is not available yet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional data collection by evaluators from Interviews and Survey
	To what extent is the support provided to families more flexible, holistic, targeted to need, and accessible?	<p>Data available though quality may be variable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dundee Pathfinder Internal Monitoring System extracting data from case notes • Pathfinder programme documentation 	<p>Data available though quality may be variable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glasgow Helps Internal Monitoring System extracting data from Holistic Needs Assessments • Exit Interviews • Pathfinder programme documentation

Level in the Theory of Change	Evaluation Questions	Where will data come from in the Dundee Pathfinder?	Where will data come from in the Glasgow Pathfinder?
		<p>(highlight reports etc)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback from families <p>Data is accessible but not yet being used or the data is not available yet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional data collection by evaluators from Interviews and Survey 	<p>(highlight reports etc), feedback from families</p> <p>Data is accessible but not yet being used or the data is not available yet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional data collection by evaluators from Interviews and Survey
	<p>What was the impact on the families' confidence to manage future challenges?</p>	<p>Data available though quality may be variable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dundee Pathfinder Internal Monitoring System extracting data from case notes • Pathfinder programme documentation (highlight reports etc) • Feedback from families <p>Data is accessible but not yet being used or the data is not available yet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional data collection by evaluators from Interviews and Survey 	<p>Data available though quality may be variable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glasgow Helps Internal Monitoring System extracting data from Holistic Needs Assessments • Exit Interviews • Pathfinder programme documentation (highlight reports etc) • Feedback from families <p>Data is accessible but not yet being used or the data is not available yet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional data collection by evaluators from Interviews and Survey

Level in the Theory of Change	Evaluation Questions	Where will data come from in the Dundee Pathfinder?	Where will data come from in the Glasgow Pathfinder?
Who with/How they feel	Who received support from the Pathfinder - scale and demographics?	<p>Data available though quality may be variable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dundee Pathfinder Internal Monitoring System extracting data from case notes • Pathfinder programme documentation (highlight reports etc) • Feedback from families <p>Data is accessible but not yet being used or the data is not available yet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data reported against the Monitoring Framework 	<p>Data available though quality may be variable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glasgow Helps Internal Monitoring System extracting data from Holistic Needs Assessments • Exit Interviews • Pathfinder programme documentation (highlight reports etc) • Feedback from families • <p>Data is accessible but not yet being used or the data is not available yet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data reported against the Monitoring Framework
	To what extent were families in need successfully identified, engaged and supported – are there areas of unmet need?	<p>Data available though quality may be variable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dundee Pathfinder Internal Monitoring System extracting data from case notes • Pathfinder programme documentation (highlight reports etc) • Feedback from families 	<p>Data available though quality may be variable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glasgow Helps Internal Monitoring System extracting data from Holistic Needs Assessments • Exit Interviews • Pathfinder programme documentation (highlight reports etc) • Feedback from families

Level in the Theory of Change	Evaluation Questions	Where will data come from in the Dundee Pathfinder?	Where will data come from in the Glasgow Pathfinder?
		<p>Data is accessible but not yet being used or the data is not available yet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional data collection by evaluators from Interviews and Survey 	<p>Data is accessible but not yet being used or the data is not available yet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional data collection by evaluators from Interviews and Survey
	<p>To what extent is the Pathfinder sharing learning and influencing stakeholders to work differently?</p>	<p>Data available though quality may be variable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dundee Pathfinder Internal Monitoring System extracting data from Pathfinder programme documentation (highlight reports etc) • Partnership Data <p>Data is accessible but not yet being used or the data is not available yet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional data collection by evaluators from Interviews and Survey • Data reported against the Monitoring Framework 	<p>Data available though quality may be variable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glasgow Helps Internal Monitoring System extracting data from Pathfinder programme documentation (highlight reports etc) • Partnership Data <p>Data is accessible but not yet being used or the data is not available yet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional data collection by evaluators from Interviews and Survey • Data reported against the Monitoring Framework

Recommended Option 1B: Timelines and Costs

Timeline: Towards the end of 2024/2025. This is to allow sufficient time for impacts to emerge, for people to enter into employment, sustain employment, gain benefits from reductions to costs of living and to identify evidence of systems change

Costs: It is anticipated an impact evaluation would occur over 6 months, at an estimated 80 days work @ average £825 / day according to current market rates (between £650-£1000) + VAT = £66,000 + VAT including 15 days planning, desk research, creation of data instruments, 40 days field work, 15 days data analysis and 10 days report preparation. The team should include senior level expertise in contribution analysis for evaluation. The budget for the evaluation should also include costs for workshops with the Pathfinder core teams to revisit and revise the ToCs and reassess the data audit process. The overall budget is estimated at around £90,000 including VAT.

Option 2: Case Studies

A second option for assessing the impact of the Pathfinders involves developing case studies to supplement any quasi-experimental trial commissioned. The objective of the case studies is to provide a deeper understanding of the Pathfinders, how they work, and what processes may or may not have led to successes. Ultimately, the aim of the case studies is to identify what has worked, for whom and why and to provide learning to feed into future approaches for tackling child poverty.

Strengths

- Provides rich and detailed qualitative understanding of how the Pathfinders have worked, from a process perspective
- May be valuable in understanding the extent to which systems change has occurred and how
- Rely on the analysis of multiple sources of evidence, supporting a deep and robust understanding of change
- Provides valuable stories of change, context and the lived reality of the families involved in the Pathfinders
- Can support learning to feed into future approaches to tackling child poverty including the third Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan.
- Can enable us to test and validate the ToC
- Can be used at any point in the timeline of the Pathfinders to support understanding (for example, of process or outcomes).

Limitations:

- Case studies can present issues around external validity, or generalizability. Findings may not be generalisable as the case study focuses on the specifics of the one case.
- Case studies carry the risk of bias from the subjective interpretation of the evaluator/researcher.
- While a deep understanding of the experience of families can be gained, without a control group, it is difficult to robustly determine if the changes would have occurred had the Pathfinder not existed.

Options for Case Studies

We outline two options for implementing a case study approach below.

Option 2A Qualitative Comparative Analysis

Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) is a research methodology increasingly applied in monitoring and evaluation. It is a case study based approach used to analyse and compare multiple cases in complex settings. Through QCA, patterns can be identified across multiple cases to understand what makes change happen in some cases and not in others. QCA depends on the projects (or 'cases') having a ToC. This is important because the ToCs enable the evaluators to a) understand the change the project is seeking to bring about and b) to identify the key factors needed to bring about the change. In QCA, the factors are scored in each case study. Criteria are developed by the evaluator to assess whether the factor is considered present or absent in the case being examined. This can be done in a binary way, scoring 0 (factor is absent) or 1 (factor is present) or can be done on a scale 0, 0.33, 0.66, or 1. Once the factors are scored in each case, patterns can be identified, i.e. change happens in circumstances when X, Y, Z happens etc. If comparison occurs across multiple cases, computer software is often used to conduct the scoring.⁷⁶

Strengths

- QCA can help address why change is occurring in some cases and not in others
- It can support learning in change processes, supporting understanding of what works and what doesn't and what may be replicated.
- It can help validate a ToC.

Limitations

- QCA generally requires a minimum number of cases, around 10, to be most useful in drawing out patterns.

⁷⁶ Simister, N. and Scholz, V. Qualitative Comparative Analysis, INTRAC

- It involves comparison between the cases implemented by the programme, i.e. between the Pathfinders, rather than comparison with a control group.
- Information must be available on all factors to determine to what extent the factor is present or absent.
- Setting up criteria to determine to what extent a factor can be considered present or absent can be complex, and unless done rigorously may become too subjective.
- It is difficult to judge when it is best to do QCA. If done too early it may produce misleading results.⁷⁷

Overall assessment:

While QCA is an interesting methodology and appropriate for the context of the Pathfinder programme in principle, the programme is not at a stage where the implementation of this approach would be useful. There are only 2 cases (Dundee and Glasgow); if there were more Pathfinders, which had more time to develop and produce outcomes this may be a useful approach to implement.

Option 2B Single Case Study Design

This involves researching a case as a 'singular interpretable entity', which focuses on providing an in-depth, empirically rich, explorative, descriptive and analytic understanding of a case. Data is examined for a project to determine how participants may have been affected by a project or intervention by examining context and evidence before the intervention, during and after the intervention. Case studies will still require analysis of multiple sources and within-case triangulation of sources and methods.

Strengths

- They can provide in-depth, empirically rich and holistic understanding of a project and the underlying processes of change.
- Can support learning to support experimentation, adaptation and improvement.
- Can be used to obtain the direct experiences and the stories of change from the people involved in the Pathfinder

Limitations

- Causality cannot be inferred.
- Case studies can present issues around external validity, or generalizability. Case studies focus on the details of one particular case, and there is less firm evidence on whether the findings from this one case are generalisable.

⁷⁷ Simister, N. and Scholz, V. Qualitative Comparative Analysis, INTRAC

Overall assessment:

Case studies can be very valuable in giving us an in-depth understanding of a particular project and the processes of change and providing stories of change from the individuals involved. However, they lack the rigour of a comparative case study approach or a randomised control trial.

Recommendation: A case study approach can be combined with a quasi-experimental trial if commissioned to provide the level of detail and understanding of the Pathfinders required to extract learning to feed into the next Tackling Child Poverty Plan.

Recommended Option 2B: Plan for implementation of a Single Case Study Approach

We outline below a proposed approach for implementing a case study approach to supplement any quasi-experimental trial commissioned.

Aim

To better understand how the Pathfinders are working, what has changed for families and what factors have made a difference.

Feasibility of conducting a case study

A case study relies primarily on qualitative data gathered by the evaluator / researcher during the implementation period of the Pathfinders. The main factor that will determine the success of the case study approach, then, is the degree to which the evaluators can interview families and staff who have been involved in the Pathfinder. The longer the period families have not been accessing the services of the Pathfinder, the more difficult it will be to engage them in the case study.

Recommended approach

If a case study approach is adopted it is recommended that a single case study design is adopted, with a case study developed for each Pathfinder allowing a deep dive into the context and experience of each Pathfinder and scope for cross comparison (for example, identification of common themes/patterns). Though there are limits to the external validity of these findings, the case studies will provide a potentially useful starting point for, and learning for other Pathfinders, particularly with respect to strategies and approaches adopted to influence systems change. It will also enable the evaluators to capture the lived reality of families participating in the Pathfinders.

For each Pathfinder, the case studies will involve qualitative interviews with a sample of families, project staff and national or local partners. It will also involve site visits to the Pathfinders to observe processes and activities and to conduct some of the interviews with project staff face-to-face.

Recommended Option 2B: Timelines and Costs

Timeline: Case studies with a focus on impact should be planned towards the end of the implementation period of the Pathfinders to allow time for impacts to accrue. Case studies with a focus on learning can be developed earlier in the timeline of the Pathfinders. It is anticipated the case studies will be developed over a four-month period, with the site visits occurring within the first two months.

Costs: It is estimated 15 days preparation and field work and 10 days analysis and write up per Pathfinder at a total of 50 days' work @ average £825 / day +VAT =

£41,250 + VAT. Subsistence and travel for the site visits will also need to be costed into the budget.

Option 3: Embedding ongoing monitoring, evaluation and learning by the Pathfinders.

This option involves providing added support to the Pathfinders to enable them to set up monitoring, evaluation and learning processes that will support an effective evaluation (quasi or theory-based). It will also enable the Pathfinders to maximise their impact on a local level by responding and adapting implementation as they learn, as well as enabling learning to influence policy and practice at a national level. Learning is also needed to support understanding of what works and how the approaches implemented by the Pathfinders might be replicated or scaled.

Strengths:

- Improving monitoring processes ensures data is collected effectively and is relevant to the indicators being tracked in the Monitoring Framework. These systems will support evaluation by capturing baseline information.
- Self-evaluation embedded in programme delivery or 'reflection' occurring at regular intervals ensures learning is continuously fed back into implementation, allowing a programme to improve, adapt and respond, a critical aspect of the Pathfinders.
- The process of regular reflection and learning is critical for achieving systems change, as it can enable implementers to gain a better understanding of leverage points for influence e.g. regular reflection can identify key stakeholders that need to be engaged, key policy that can be influenced and other entry points for change. The focus would be on understanding the mechanisms of change, regularly reflecting on progress against outcomes, and identifying key leverage points for influence and action.

Limitations:

- Robust monitoring systems need to be in place, aligned with monitoring frameworks and ToCs. This may require evaluation expertise in the early phase to assist the Pathfinders to set up effective data collection and monitoring processes to ensure that Pathfinders will have baseline information and will be able to track the longer term impacts on families after their engagement with the Pathfinder.
- Self-evaluation and learning processes embedded in delivery are not a substitute for the planned impact evaluation. It would be an add on to support the Pathfinders to be ready for evaluation and to enhance their ability to have impact.

- Self-evaluation and learning can be time and data intensive for individuals delivering a project. Additional resources in the form of a learning partner may be needed to ensure the best use is made of data and feedback in a timely way.

Options for ensuring learning is embedded in programme delivery

There are a number of different options to ensure learning is embedded in project delivery. These could include informal processes developed by the Pathfinder to regularly extract data and learning from its monitoring system and to create protected time to regularly reflect on progress with staff and stakeholders. Two other more formal approaches are outlined below.

Option 3A Developmental Evaluation

As described by Patton (2011), developmental evaluation occurs when evaluation becomes embedded in programme/project development and implementation. It is the on-going process of “facilitat[ing] systematic data-based reflection and decision making in the developmental process” and well suited to “guide adaptation of projects and programmes to emergent and dynamic realities in complex environments.” Within developmental approaches, ongoing learning can be embedded in the evaluation, and performance indicators adapted as the programme develops. Developmental evaluation relies on an evaluator or someone with evaluation experience being embedded in the delivery team to reflect on data on an ongoing basis as opposed to an external evaluator conducting an evaluation at a specific point in time such as with formative or summative evaluation.

“CA [Contribution Analysis] is a useful framework for ongoing learning and development, given its flexibility in being used for strategic planning, ongoing monitoring by managers, in addition to formative, summative and developmental evaluations (Wimbush et al 2012).” This developmental approach to evaluation allows timely adjustments to be made in order to ensure improved results: “The process of planning, evaluating and acting makes this evaluation approach more dynamic and able to accommodate some of the complexity of interactions allowing for the creation of feedback loops within the system, creating a more likely chance of successful outcomes. Similar adjustments can be made if external factors change or have unanticipated consequences” (Morton et al 2019 p.11).”

Strengths

- Supports learning and understanding of how a specific intervention works through the continuous process of reflection on data, supporting refinement and adaptation of the ToC
- Enables an ongoing process of improvement in programme implementation and evaluation

- Allows an intervention to be adaptive and responsive
- Well-suited to supporting systems change in complex settings⁷⁸

Limitations

- Can be data intensive
- Attribution cannot be claimed
- The evaluator is part of the delivery team, though data and evidence from developmental evaluation may feed into other formative and summative evaluations, which would need to be commissioned separately.

Overall assessment:

Developmental evaluation holds value as an approach to support the Pathfinders to learn and improve their delivery processes. It fundamentally depends on robust monitoring frameworks being developed, enabling data and evidence to be reviewed at regular intervals allowing project teams to make judgements on how delivery should change. Data and evidence from developmental evaluation can feed into an independently commissioned impact assessment.

Recommendation: The principles of developmental evaluation are recommended to support the Pathfinders' ongoing ability to learn, adapt and **improve**. The approach can be adapted as a 'learning partner approach,' where the latter not only provides support to the Pathfinders to extract, share and communicate learning (see below) but also provides the upfront evaluation support required to enable the Pathfinders to develop the monitoring systems they need to be effective. A learning partner (see below), with evaluation experience, providing support in both aspects (setting up monitoring system and extracting learning) is therefore recommended.

Option 3A Learning Partner Approach

Learning partnerships are becoming increasingly common to support change projects or programmes operating in complex environments. A learning partnership takes the form of a relationship developed with a practitioner, consultant or academic (organisation) that seeks to facilitate a process of gathering and analysing data, embedding reflection and reflexivity and supporting experimentation, adaptation and improvement. This "is intended to help people, organisations reflect on their work and build understanding about themselves, the organisation, system, context and process (Lowe & French, 2019)."⁷⁹ A learning partnership will vary depending on the organization, project or programme.

⁷⁸ Morton, S. (2019)

⁷⁹ [Hesslgreaves, H. et al. \(2021\). New development: The emerging role of a 'learning partner' relationship in supporting public service reform](#)

However, the work of a learning partner can be described as involving three aspects: convening, conversing, and curating. 'Convening' spaces for sense-making, co-creation and reflection. 'Conversing' - involving developing relationships with project staff, partners and stakeholders to understand, facilitate, encourage and influence. 'Curating' and collating and analysing data to support reflection, learning and change processes. Activities can include coaching, workshops, facilitation or convening communities of practice or analysis of data, patterns and reporting to identify key learnings to support change processes.

Strengths

- Supports learning and understanding of how a specific intervention works through the testing, refinement, and adaptation.
- Enables an ongoing process of improvement in programme implementation and evaluation.
- Allows an intervention to be adaptive and responsive.
- Well-suited to supporting systems change in complex settings.

Limitations

- Can be data intensive.
- Can be influenced by their own biases.⁸⁰
- There is a risk that the learning partner is perceived as an 'outsider' and is not successful in accessing the relevant data or the relevant people to be effective in their role.

Overall assessment:

A learning partnership would be extremely valuable to the Pathfinders. There is a danger however, given current data sharing challenges between partners, the learning partner will fail to be as effective as it could be in a 'curating' role.

Recommendation: A learning partner is recommended where the role is strongly focused on supporting the Pathfinders with their evaluation processes, and on supporting the Pathfinders to undertake developmental evaluation, without needing to have an evaluator on their team. The role is conceived as focusing on the aspects of 'convening' and 'conversing' in order to support and empower the Pathfinders to engage in reflexive practice and to regularly engage with the data they are collecting to identify key leverage points, key stakeholders and make meaningful decisions that can help them to adapt and improve their processes. Ideally the learning partner would also support the Pathfinders to improve their monitoring processes and how they collect data.

Recommendation: Given the learning partner's advantage in understanding the Pathfinders and their work, it is also recommended that the learning partner

⁸⁰ [Hesslgreaves, H. et al. \(2021\). New development: The emerging role of a 'learning partner' relationship in supporting public service reform](#)

supports the evaluation with the collection and analysis of data for the *proposed case studies*.

Recommended Option 3A + 3B combined: Plan to implement a learning approach

Aim

To implement a monitoring system, enhanced by a learning partnership, which enables the Pathfinders to collate and analyse relevant data that not only supports effective evaluation but also facilitates developmental evaluation – on-going reflection, learning and improvement. This will improve the impact of the Pathfinders. It will also improve SG’s understanding of the Pathfinders, what works and how the approach might be replicated or scaled.

Instead of an evaluator embedded in the team supporting the Pathfinder to reflect and analyse data, we recommend the Pathfinders are supported in two functions: (1) to develop effective monitoring systems and (2) to make space for sense-making and reflection through a learning partnership. The developmental evaluation approach is adapted as a ‘learning partner approach,’ where the latter not only provides support to the Pathfinders to extract, share and communicate learning (see below) but also provides the upfront evaluation support required to enable the Pathfinders to develop the monitoring systems they need to be effective. A learning partner, with evaluation experience, providing support in both aspects (setting up monitoring system and extracting learning) is therefore recommended.

Feasibility of a learning approach

Given a key aim of the Pathfinders is to gather learning and evidence of what is working to support national efforts to reduce child poverty at scale, an approach that places emphasis on learning and facilitates learning is well-suited. However the Pathfinders’ monitoring systems do not currently support regular reflection and learning and do not currently gather all the required data need to track progress against the Monitoring Framework or ToC.

Therefore, in order for a learning approach to be implemented well, the following elements are required:

- **Upfront support setting up the internal monitoring systems**
 - The Pathfinders require additional up-front support to set up their internal monitoring systems. This may involve supporting Pathfinders to understand how to develop a monitoring system aligned to the ToC, and to understand how to develop the required data collection tools needed to effectively capture data.
 - In the ToC and Monitoring report we set out the improvements needed to the Pathfinders’ monitoring systems to ensure they are strongly

aligned to the co-developed ToCs and to facilitate developmental evaluation/ impact evaluation.

- **Learning Partner**
 - A learning partner can support the Pathfinders to engage in reflexive dialogue and to empower them to regularly engage with the data they are collecting to identify key leverage points, key stakeholders and make meaningful decisions that can help them to adapt and improve their processes. This is especially important with respect to the systems change component of the projects. More detail on the Learning Partner approach is provided below.
 - A learning partner is recommended to support the Pathfinders in this process of setting up their monitoring systems to collect, analyse and reflect on data.

Recommended Approach

- 1) Set up monitoring systems to enable data to be collected against the ToC. Gaps in the current systems are outline in the ToC and Monitoring report.
- 2) Consider setting up a learning partnership for the Pathfinders to facilitate experimentation, adaptation and improvement to support a process of systems change.

Learning Partner approach

The aim of the learning partner is to support monitoring and evaluation in the Pathfinder and to convene forums to enable the Pathfinders to engage in sense-making, reflection and analysis of their data with each other.

Minimum requirements:

- The learning partner will facilitate Pathfinder partner meetings to support a collective approach to assessing progress against the ToC. The learning partner will also facilitate group sense-making, reflection and analysis of data. The learning partner may be responsible for survey development, and inputting data into additional data collection tools aimed at tracking progress against short-term and process outcomes in the ToCs (for example, the impact and systems change logs suggested in the ToC and Monitoring report.)
- The learning partner will support the Pathfinders to report against the monitoring framework.

The learning partner may also:

- Support the Pathfinders to set up their monitoring systems to ensure they are aligned to the Monitoring Framework and the evaluation.
- Support the evaluation (quasi-experimental trials) by collecting primary data and analysing data to develop case studies as described in the section above.

Recommended Option 3A + 3B combined: Timelines and Costs

Timeline: It is advised a learning partner is engaged as soon as possible, particularly if the learning partnership is developed to support the Pathfinders to improve their monitoring systems.

Costs: A budget for the learning partnership should be agreed depending on the boundaries of the work.

Recommendations

A theory-based evaluation based on contribution analysis is recommended and should be planned towards the end of 2024/25 to enable lessons to be fed into the Third Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan. This is not mutually exclusive to a quasi-experimental trial, if one is commissioned.

A case study approach should be adopted to supplement a quasi-experimental trial if recommendation (1) cannot be implemented.

Pathfinders need to improve their monitoring systems and data collection processes and ensure they are aligned to the indicators in the monitoring framework and to their ToCs to facilitate effective evaluation and learning. A learning partner with evaluation experience can support the Pathfinders to implement this.

A learning partnership should be considered to support the Pathfinders to engage in sense-making, reflection and analysis of data in order to help them to adapt and improve implementation and extract learning that may be useful to feed into future approaches to tackling child poverty.

Methods for evaluating value for money

Understanding value for money

Getting value for money from a policy intervention means making optimal use of resources in order to achieve desired outcomes. It does not mean that the best approach is the cheapest one, rather that the best approaches achieve a high level of impact for a given amount of input. The Department for International Development (now the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office) defined value for money as having four elements:⁸¹

Economy – inputs should be of suitable quality and quantity while not being unduly costly.

Efficiency – the delivery mechanism should produce the optimal level of output for the given inputs.

Effectiveness – the outputs should give rise to the intended outcomes.

Equity – the extent to which the beneficial impacts of a programme are distributed fairly.

In the context of Pathfinders, 'economy' relates to the costs of the respective Dundee and Glasgow programmes and the number of staff. In the case of the Dundee model, this may include the amount of time staff spend with individuals in their caseload; for the Glasgow model it also includes costs of direct interventions such as food parcels.

The efficiency of the Pathfinders would take into account the rate at which the services deliver immediate benefits for their users, such as entering a job, accessing financial support, or receiving housing support.

Effectiveness is then the extent to which these direct impacts lead to the overarching aims of increasing income and reducing child poverty.

Last, equity would consider whether the support the Pathfinders provide and the associated positive outcomes reached those who need it.

Value for money can be assessed through **economic evaluation**. In broad terms, economic evaluations capture the four parts of value for money by comparing the value of the economic benefits and public savings from an intervention against the costs. Evaluations of previous child poverty interventions, such as the Local Authority Child Poverty Innovation Pilot and the Troubled Families Evaluation, have used economic evaluations to evidence their impact.

⁸¹ [Department for International Trade \(2019\). VfM Guidance: The 4th E Equity.](#)

For Pathfinders, there are likely to be two broad sources of benefits to account for and value:

Increased economic and social value from reductions in poverty. For example, a family may have increased their income or gained a qualification through training or education. This increase in value can also include non-financial factors such as improved communities.

Fiscal savings from reduced demand. If implemented successfully, Pathfinders should lead to reduced strain on education services, DWP benefits, the NHS and so on.

Within both of these wide categories there will be a number of more specific benefits. Below, and in [Appendix 5](#), we set out more detail on the scope of who experiences benefits and what these are.

Approaches to evaluating value for money

Economic evaluations revolve around comparing the costs of an intervention with its benefits. There are several ways of doing this, and the first stage in an economic evaluation is to decide which approach is most suitable. The primary options are:⁸²

Cost effectiveness analysis (CEA): Where there are multiple intervention options with the same end goal, CEA compares the cost per unit of each option. The unit in this case is a non-monetary measure of output. For example, in relation to Child Poverty Pathfinders, CEA may assess the cost per family removed from poverty. This approach is desirable in cases where there is a clear measurable output from the intervention, and where it is not possible to calculate the monetary value of benefits. CEA is most useful when comparing across multiple different options – a value of cost per output means little on its own, but when put in context against the same figure for comparable options, it can be used to rank the value for money in each case. Whereas cost benefit analysis (discussed below) requires assumptions and estimation about the value of the benefits from a programme, CEA is more transparent and relies solely on known measurements of costs and output. However, this simplicity comes with the trade-off of CEA providing little detail in terms of wider benefits outside of the single output measure, and how the outputs vary over time and at different scale.

Social cost benefit analysis (CBA): CBA assesses the total costs and benefits of an intervention to compare whether the benefits are greater than the costs. If the benefits outweigh the costs, then the intervention can be said to provide value for

⁸² An additional method not discussed here is cost utility analysis. This looks at costs relative to the amount of utility produced – the latter being based on individual preferences used to value the output of the intervention. This is typically used in the health sector and relies on quality-adjusted life years (QALYs) to measure utility. Therefore, we do not consider it relevant in the context of the Pathfinders.

money. CBA includes not just the direct financial costs and benefits, but incorporates all relevant economic, social and environmental costs and benefits associated with the intervention. Unlike CEA, this approach is based entirely in monetary terms, and so a key challenge is to determine the pounds value of benefits which are often non-financial (such as improved wellbeing or health) as well as estimating the value of financial benefits for which there is not direct data (for example, the value of reduced rent arrears). Also unlike CEA, it is not just one output that is measured, but the value of all impacts associated with the intervention. For instance, whereas CEA may focus only on the number of families removed from poverty, CBA would seek to quantify the value of this reduction in poverty, as well as other intermediary and tangential outcomes. Outputs from CBA are the net present value (benefits minus costs) as well as the benefit-cost ratio (benefits divided by costs) of the intervention. In situations where there are multiple identifiable, measurable benefits which can be assigned a monetary value, CBA may be the best approach to use. CBA is an effective way of comparing the value for money of different options. However, it can also be used to assess a single intervention in isolation, as the results will indicate whether the net financial impact of the policy is positive or negative.

We do not recommend using CEA for the economic evaluation of Child Poverty Pathfinders; this is for two reasons. First, the Pathfinders' aims are to address a number of different issues which vary between families, meaning that there is not a single measure of output.⁸³ CEA takes a narrow view of value for money, which does not reflect the complexity of the Pathfinders. Second, CEA requires a comparison between different options in order to assess whether the cost per output is good or bad. While there are two Pathfinder models, the purpose of the evaluation is not to compare them and establish whether one should be retained and the other discontinued, but rather to understand their merits in their own rights and how they best serve the local community.

CEA has been used to evaluate similar programmes to the Pathfinders, such as the Local Authority Child Poverty Innovation Pilot. However, a lack of data on outputs and differences in data collection between each pilot resulted in the final report only being able to provide partial estimates on the cost-effectiveness of the programme.⁸⁴

By contrast, **a social CBA approach would be an effective way of evaluating the value for money of the Pathfinders.** Because CBA is flexible in the number and types of benefits that are included, it is well-suited to assess the value for

⁸³ While the ultimate aim of the Pathfinders is singular (reduce child poverty), it would not be appropriate to rely on this as the sole metric of output because (i) there are significant challenges in measuring child poverty and attributing the impact of the Pathfinders, and (ii) using a single output measure would hide the other positive benefits of the Pathfinders, which in combination may also lead to reductions in poverty.

⁸⁴ [GHK. \(2011\). Local Authority Child Poverty Innovation Pilot Evaluation: Final Synthesis Report.](#)

money of a programme such as the Pathfinders, where (i) the main output – child poverty – is difficult to measure, and (ii) there are many different sources and types of benefits which should be accounted for in order to reflect the true value for money. In setting out the type and size of the different benefits that arise, CBA would also provide a deeper understanding of *how* the respective Glasgow and Dundee models give rise to financial value, which can help to assess whether the models deliver what is expected and required. The detailed breakdown of costs and benefits in CBA would also make it possible to see the relative impact of different aspects of the Pathfinders, and assess the key contributors to costs / benefits and whether these can be focussed on more.

CBA has previously been employed successfully in relation to children and families research and evaluation. One recent study estimated the costs and benefits of an additional \$1,000 allowance for families in the US.⁸⁵ This included benefits such as increased future earnings of children, improved health, and reduced crime; with the costs being increased education expenditure, administrative costs and increased tax burden. The impacts were quantified by triangulating existing research into the effect of a change in income on the different areas of benefits. The study showed that the annual benefits of the additional allowance would be nearly 10 times the cost. Another example of CBA being used in a child poverty context is in a study by Impact on Urban Health looking at the benefits of providing free school meals.⁸⁶ This similarly estimated benefits using external research and secondary data analysis. Benefits were identified using a ToC, and categorised into education and employment, health and nutrition, and school food economy impact pathways. It compared two different policy scenarios to illustrate the cost-benefit ratios of different levels of intervention.

CBA was also conducted as part of the Troubled Families Programme evaluation.⁸⁷ This used data from the 124,000 families who joined the programme in 2017/18. The CBA was based on outputs from the quasi-experiment aspect of the evaluation, which included the following outcomes: looked after children, children in need, adult convictions, child convictions, claimant status, and adult employment status. Only the outcomes that were statistically significant between the treatment and control groups in these models were included in the CBA. This highlights a key challenge to overcome in a CBA: how to determine the level of impact that can be attributed to the intervention. As the example here shows, one method would be to make use of the findings from other quantitative aspects of the evaluation which identify the statistical relationships. Other methods of establishing attribution include gathering information through surveys, direct qualitative feedback from

⁸⁵ [Garfinkel, I. et al. \(2022\). The Benefits and Costs of a Child Allowance.](#)

⁸⁶ [Impact on Urban Health \(2022\). Investing in Children's Future: A Cost Benefit Analysis of Free School Meal Provision Expansion.](#)

⁸⁷ [Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. \(2019\). National Evaluation of the Troubled Families Programme 2015-2020](#)

families (as was done in the evaluation of the Local Authority Child Poverty Innovation Pilot) and collating various evidence sources through literature reviews. Other limitations of CBA that have been highlighted include whether the quantitative data is robust enough to assign monetary value to the impacts. In its evaluation of the Child Poverty Strategy, the Welsh Government found that a CBA is impractical for evaluations where monetised impact data is not available.⁸⁸ This emphasises the importance of gathering robust financial proxies and applying the appropriate level of optimism bias, to ensure that the monetary value of benefits is not overstated. Equally, when using proxies it is also important to ensure that there is a clear justification for why the proxy reflects the impact being measured. While financial proxies are inherently an imperfect measure of value, we do not see this as a reason to avoid doing CBA, as when implemented properly they can still serve as an accurate representation of economic value. CEA, by contrast, would avoid much of this difficulty, as it does not require estimating the monetary value of all benefits.

Using a social CBA method to evaluate the Child Poverty Pathfinders would also be consistent with the approach taken in research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, which estimated the social cost of child poverty.⁸⁹ This is rooted in the idea that child poverty creates challenges in children's lives which in turn create government costs to intervene, and economic costs for children who cannot reach their full potential.

Given this approach, the next decision is to set out **what costs and benefits are within the scope** of the evaluation and should be accounted for. A general principle for determining this is to only include first-hand – or direct – impacts which arise due to the programme that is being evaluated. For example, in relation to the Pathfinders, a first-hand benefit that is within scope is the increase in income for families using the service; a second-hand benefit outwith the scope of evaluation would be the increase in spending in local areas that arises due to the aforementioned income rise.

In our evaluability assessment workshops, we gathered a longlist of beneficiaries from the programme, and what benefits each party experiences. This longlist was subsequently refined to establish which benefits are in or out of scope for the analysis. The workshops were also used to identify the main costs that need to be captured. These were categorised into costs coming from the direct funding of the Pathfinders, and in-kind costs. This categorisation of costs and benefits categorisation is provided in [Appendix 5](#) at the end of this report. Because the Glasgow and Dundee models help people in slightly different ways, the exact benefits included may differ between the two, although there will also be some overlap. This will depend on what evidence is found and the available data in relation to impacts.

⁸⁸ [Welsh Government. \(2014\). Evaluation of the Welsh Child Poverty Strategy Final Report.](#)

⁸⁹ [Hirsch, D. Estimating the costs of child poverty \(2008\). Joseph Rowntree Foundation.](#)

Quantifying the value of benefits in a CBA requires two main pieces of information: the **number of people who experience the benefit**, and the **financial value of the benefit** per person. The financial value generally relies on financial proxies from external sources (which are discussed more below). By contrast, measuring the number of beneficiaries requires internal data directly from the Pathfinder. The way in which this is measured, and the types of benefits that are ultimately included in the CBA, could vary depending on the methodology used in the impact evaluation. We have proposed two main options to evaluating the impact of the Pathfinders on families and child poverty: a quasi-experimental approach, or an impact assessment using quantitative and qualitative data mapped against the ToC. There are then two possible ways of measuring the number of people assigned to the CBA benefits – the first being an available option in both of the above impact evaluation methods, and the second applying only if a quasi-experimental approach is adopted.

The first approach would be to use the individual Pathfinder ToC to identify impact pathways, which illustrate what types of benefits accrue to whom. Next, each of the impact points identified is matched to a data source that can be used to measure the number of people who experience the benefit. The data audit carried out as part of the Monitoring and Evaluation framework development provides a key source for checking if there is existing data already collected by the Pathfinder. If there is no existing data source in relation to an identified benefit, then collecting this information can form part of the impact evaluation. If taking the impact assessment approach to the impact evaluation, this data collection / identification would likely be happening anyway as part of the impact assessment. That is, the purpose of the impact assessment is to collate evidence through data to demonstrate the impact pathways identified in the ToC – many of the benefits included in the CBA would already be included in this process, so additional data would only be required for specific CBA benefits not captured in the impact assessment. If a quasi-experimental approach was adopted, then the data collection for the CBA would entail more of an additional step beyond the main impact evaluation.

For example, the ToCs (see [appendix 1](#)) identify that families will have increased income from employment – something which applies to both the Dundee and Glasgow services. This is an impact which has quantifiable benefits and so should be included in the CBA – it is also a benefit which was highlighted in our economic evaluation workshop longlist of benefits (see [appendix 5](#)). The number of people who experience this benefit will be the number who – as a result of the Pathfinder intervention – enter employment after previously being unemployed. The data audit does not identify a specific data source in the Dundee Pathfinder that would provide this figure. It is possible that the not-yet-developed Dundee Pathfinder monitoring Data Excel Spreadsheet or exit interviews would provide this; otherwise it would be a requirement of the impact evaluation to gather data on the numbers of people who entered employment. For Glasgow, the current main source of this information appears to be the exit interviews. However, the reliability of these depends on what proportion of service users take part in an exit interview. If only a small number are

conducted, then a more focussed collection of data on job entries (and other similar impacts that are included in the CBA) should form part of the impact evaluation. For the full CBA, this process of impact identification and data matching should be repeated to reach a comprehensive set of benefits. In [appendix 5](#), we have set out suggestions for how the number of beneficiaries for each of the longlist of benefits could be measured, and data sources for each of the Pathfinders that may contain this.

In order to include a benefit in a CBA there needs to be sufficient evidence to show that the intervention being assessed did in fact give rise to that benefit – i.e. the benefit needs to be demonstrably attributed to the intervention. If not using a quasi-experiment in the impact aspect of the evaluation, this attribution will not automatically come out of the impact evaluation. There are a handful of options to establish whether a benefit can reliably be attributed to the Pathfinders and be included in the CBA, which can be used in tandem for maximum robustness. First, drawing on the findings from contribution analysis can show whether the Pathfinders contributed to the impact – this may not be 100% attribution, but can indicate the areas where the Pathfinders clearly contributed to impacts.

Second, drawing on qualitative evidence can be an effective way of bolstering quantitative data. For example, if the exit interviews, informal impact records, or case notes show that families have stated that they have experienced a particular benefit, then this can act as evidence to support inclusion of that benefit. Using qualitative information in this way can help to unpack what numbers alone cannot tell us, and to establish impacts which are not obvious from the quantitative data. Third, combining the CBA with evidence from previous studies can help to support attribution of impacts. Reviewing CBAs (or more general impact evaluations) from other similar policies can demonstrate what benefits are proven to arise from interventions like the Pathfinders, and so this can support inclusion in the Pathfinders CBA.

Last, uncertainty in the benefits included can be mitigated by applying attribution and deadweight discounts in the CBA calculations. The attribution discount relates to the proportion of an impact that can be said to be caused by the Pathfinders. Deadweight is an adjustment to account for the amount of impact that would have occurred even if the Pathfinder had not been present. The level of attribution and deadweight discounts that are applied are usually based on an informed assumption. If there is little evidence to support this assumption, then it is appropriate to apply a larger discount to ensure benefits are not overstated. For the Pathfinders, these discounts could be informed by data sources such as the Dundee client spreadsheet or case notes, and the Glasgow customer service advisor forms, holistic needs assessment, or Glasgow Helps monitoring spreadsheet, which would indicate the starting point of users when they access the services, which in turn can reflect the extent to which any impact is due to the Pathfinder specifically.

The second approach to measuring the number of beneficiaries in a CBA would be possible only if a quasi-experimental approach was used in the impact evaluation. In this case, the quasi-experimental approach would need to test the impact on a range of different relevant outcomes. The results of this would then be applied to the CBA, with outcomes only being included if a statistically significant impact was found. For those which were statistically significant, the results of the quasi-experiment can then be used to calculate the number of people who experienced the benefit. This method was used in the CBA of the Troubled Families Programme. Here, propensity score matching was used to test for impacts in a number of outcomes, with the following found to be statistically significant and included in the CBA:

- Number of adults claiming JSA
- Number of looked after children
- Number of juvenile crimes
- Adult prison years
- Juvenile prison years
- Number of children on a child protection plan.

These would likely be relevant outcomes to explore should a quasi-experimental approach be used for the Pathfinders evaluation. Based on our benefits scoping so far, the following would also be applicable:

- Employment
- Income from employment
- Income from social security benefits
- Childcare costs
- Qualifications and skills level
- Mental wellbeing
- Housing situation / arrears
- Child poverty levels.

The advantages and disadvantages of the two approaches for measuring the number of beneficiaries (collecting quantitative data mapped against the ToC impact pathways versus adapting results from a quasi-experimental approach) are clear. The former method allows for a wider scope of benefits, being more flexible around what can be included. This would likely also allow for more benefits which are not directly related to families (e.g. wider social and public sector impacts). The downside to this option is that it has less certainty in whether the Pathfinder can truly be attributed to impacting that exact amount of people. By contrast, building on a quasi-experimental approach would have more limited scope as to what is

included, because any benefits need to both (a) be measurable through the quasi-experimental method, and (b) show a statistically significant impact. The advantage here is that any benefits that are included are robust, and have demonstrably been brought about by the Pathfinder itself.

As noted above, as well as the number of beneficiaries, the other key data point for calculating benefits is the financial value of each benefit. In some specific cases, it may be possible to get direct financial data. For example, if quantifying the value of increased income from benefits / social security, data could be collected on what benefits families register for, and therefore the financial value of this. In the case of the Glasgow Pathfinder, this may be collected through the holistic needs assessment or exit interview data; and for Dundee the housing benefit and council tax reduction data may include this.

However, in the majority of cases, it is likely that actual financial data is not accessible and so instead a financial proxy is used. Proxy values should be used in cases where: (a) the benefit is financial, but data is not available: or (b) the benefit is non-financial, such as social, health, or environmental benefits. Financial proxies for social benefits have been estimated in previous studies – for example, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority CBA tool provides proxies for a range of social benefits which could be applied here.⁹⁰

This source was used extensively in the CBA as part of the Troubled Families Programme evaluation. Other useful sources for financial proxies include HACT⁹¹ and DWP's Social Cost Benefit Analysis Framework⁹². In addition, individual proxy values may have been estimated in academic research and so evidence reviews can be used to identify proxies not provided in the above databases. When using this approach, the CBA can be made more robust by identifying multiple sources which estimate the relevant financial value, and making a judgement over which is the most applicable / reliable, or alternatively taking an average. In [appendix 6](#), we have provided some suggested financial proxies for use in a CBA of the Pathfinders; this is not exhaustive, and the actual proxies required will vary depending on which benefits are included in the final CBA. This contains proxies from the three sources mentioned above, as well as from Scottish Government colleagues' own bank of proxies which is under development.

⁹⁰ [Greater Manchester Combined Authority CBA tool](#)

⁹¹ [HACT. \(2014\). Measuring the Social Impact of Community Investment: A Guide to using the Wellbeing Valuation Approach.](#)

⁹² [Fujiwara, D. \(2010\). The Department for Work and Pensions Social Cost Benefit Analysis framework.](#)

Methods evaluating the processes of the Pathfinders

Understanding process evaluation

The process evaluation is distinct from the impact of the Pathfinders as it focusses on their internal operations, as opposed to the broader changes that occurred as a result. Key factors that this aspect of the evaluation will look at are:

- The extent to which the programme is implemented as it was intended.
- Whether the target groups have been reached.
- The extent to which families found the service accessible.
- The views of Pathfinder staff on the programme's effectiveness.

The process evaluation is closely related to the systems change element of the impact evaluation but has two key differences. First, the impact on systems change will assess the state of the system before and after the programme to establish the degree to which it has evolved from its baseline position. The process evaluation is based on **what happens during the programme, and how smoothly and effectively it ran**. Second, the focus of the process evaluation will be the internal operations within the Pathfinders themselves. On the other hand, systems change refers to both the Pathfinders and the broader family support system, looking at how Pathfinders have shifted the approach to tackling poverty at a macro scale. Process evaluations seek to understand 'how' an output was achieved. However, looking at this in isolation – that is, without simultaneously considering 'what' was achieved – can be challenging. For this reason, process evaluations are often commissioned in conjunction with an impact evaluation. Therefore, we **recommend that the evaluation of Pathfinder processes links closely to the impact evaluation aspects discussed above**.

The Pathfinders target priority groups who are particularly vulnerable and often face multiple barriers and inequalities. For many, it is challenging even to access the services offered by the Pathfinders (as has been evidenced in the Dundee model, where many individuals do not even know such support services exist). Therefore, an important aspect of the process evaluation should be to investigate how well the Pathfinders overcome these barriers and overcome inequalities by making the services as accessible as possible to everyone. For instance, the Dundee approach involves directly targetting people with specific needs, and working with them closely on an individual basis to ensure they get the support they need. In some cases this can require repeated visits from the key worker before they attend the Brooksbank centre. The process evaluation could look into what this method does and does not provide for the supported families, and what the implications around fairness are for those who are not targetted. In the case of Glasgow, key considerations around equality include:

whether the level of information sharing and engagement is sufficient to ensure that all those who need the service are aware of it

whether the criteria to use the Pathfinder (i.e. simply having a Glasgow postcode) cuts out people on the fringes of the area, or crowds out people within it.

Approaches to process evaluation

The process evaluation asks different questions to the impact evaluation, however it will ultimately draw from the same ToCs, quantitative and qualitative methods discussed above. We expect that the nature of assessing processes means that this will primarily be qualitative-based research, however, drawing on quantitative evidence which informs the ToC will also be important.

The benefits and methods involved in qualitative research are discussed in more detail above in relation to impact assessment. Using a combination of these methods would be the best way of gathering different types of evidence on the Pathfinder processes from a range of different people involved. While the process evaluation should focus on working with staff, stakeholders and individuals involved from Scottish Government, there would also be value in gathering evidence from the families who use the Pathfinders. A well-functioning process should ultimately lead to a more effective service, and so views from families in relation to their experience of the service, and how useful it has been, can provide an alternative – and perhaps more objective – insight into how well the processes have worked.

How can learning be assessed and integrated?

The final aim of the evaluation (“learning”) is designed to combine and articulate the findings from the previous four. Learning will help the Scottish Government to make future decisions about continuing and expanding the Pathfinders, with the added benefit of providing greater cohesion to the different aspects of the evaluation. Arguably, this aim is not standalone, but forms an implicit part of the others. However, we believe that it is of sufficient importance and magnitude that it warrants being separated out as an additional aim.

Within the evaluation learning, there will be two critical strands: learning on the features of the Pathfinder models and learning on how the Pathfinder approach can drive systems change. Learning around the Pathfinder model features will relate to what it is about the Dundee approach of intense key worker support, or the Glasgow no-wrong door approach, that works and what doesn’t. This can inform what aspects of these models could or should be utilised elsewhere in the country or at a larger scale.

Distinct from this, it will also be important to take stock of learning around what it is about the general Pathfinder approach which can lead to systems change. This looks at the Pathfinders at a higher level and considers what it is about the principles underlying the Pathfinders that can drive systems change. For example, it may look at how the approach can create cultural shifts, or how different aspects of the system can be joined-up. As well as learning that can be reflected upon in a summative evaluation, learning can be integrated into the Pathfinders through a learning partner approach (in combination with a developmental evaluation) as discussed above. This embeds learning as the core of the evaluation, and allow for flexibility in the indicators used to measure success, making it a well-suited approach to assessing and integrating learning.

What is the best way of procuring an evaluation?

Timing

The table overleaf sets out our suggestions on the approximate timings of the evaluation. The timings depend both on the type of data required and how this is collected (for example, baseline data should be collected straightaway), as well as the nature of what is being evaluated

Proposed timing of evaluation

Evaluation aim	Element of methodology	Suggested timing
Impact on families, child poverty, and the system that supports them	<p>Quasi-experiment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difference-in-difference for Dundee • Interrupted time series analysis for Glasgow • Supporting case studies 	<p>Foundations for experiment should be laid out as early as possible.</p> <p>For a feasibility study, this may mean beginning in mid-2023. Set up and data collection / sharing agreement would take approximately 6 months, meaning the feasibility study would require 6 months - a year for completion (i.e. completion early-mid-2024).</p> <p>For the full study, this would then begin in 2024. Based on previous studies, an observation period of 18 months - 2 years would be needed before the impact is evaluated.</p> <p>It follows that, in totality, a feasibility study followed by full roll-out would take approximately three years. Assuming the earliest this could be commissioned is late 2023, then this approach could be completed by mid-2026.</p>
	<p>Impact assessment using contribution analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management and performance data analysis • Engagement with families, stakeholders, partners and Pathfinder staff • Longitudinal survey with Pathfinder staff 	<p>A slight delay in the start of the contribution analysis would allow time for outcomes to be realised. Therefore, we recommend beginning in early 2024, with completion in 2025. This would align with the first year of the quasi-experimental studies, and provide results before that study is completed.</p> <p>Engagement through interviews or focus groups should happen at the start as a way of setting a baseline, with follow-up engagement 6 months to a year after.</p> <p>A longitudinal staff survey could capture data at three points in time, each 6 months apart.</p>
	<p>Embedding ongoing evaluation with a learning partner</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developmental evaluation 	<p>It is advised a learning partner is engaged as soon as possible, particularly if the learning partnership is developed to support the Pathfinders to improve their monitoring systems.</p>
Value for money	Social cost benefit analysis	To allow the benefits to be realised and relevant data to be collected through the

Evaluation aim	Element of methodology	Suggested timing
		<p>impact evaluation, the CBA should take place at least 1 year after the Pathfinders began. If relying on results from a quasi-experimental study to identify the scale and scope of benefits, then the CBA should take place after that study is finalised.</p>
Process evaluation	Longitudinal surveys with Pathfinder staff, stakeholders, and partners	Initial roll-out as early as possible with follow-ups at regular intervals: we recommend every 6 months .
	Interviews and focus groups with stakeholders and partners	<p>Initial engagement as early as possible with follow-ups at regular intervals: we recommend every 6 months and to coincide with the survey.</p> <p>Some flexibility will be required as different aspects of the process will only be able to be evaluated at certain times.</p>
Learning	Combine findings from previous stages	Once the above stages are substantial enough to combine and draw learnings.
	Hold group discussions or workshops with stakeholders and Scottish Government staff	After the bulk of the evaluation has taken place or the initial phase of the Pathfinders is completed.

Commissioning

In terms of commissioning Phase 2 of the evaluation, it is recommended that:

The procurement process should be held in a two to three stages, with an expression of interest phase, including an information / market warming event for interested / invited potential contractors, a formal written response stage, and possibly a third interview stage.

The procurement should be led by the Scottish Government with input from both Pathfinders.

Glasgow and Dundee Pathfinders are evaluated separately but by the same organisation. For the evaluation of process and value for money, the same broad methodology could be used for both Pathfinder models. The impact evaluation methodology will need to account for the differences between the two models. For example, we have recommended that a quasi-experimental evaluation use the DiD approach for Dundee and ITSA for Glasgow. It may also be the case that Dundee is appropriate for a quasi-experiment whereas Glasgow is not. If using the impact-assessment approach, the specifics of how this is implemented would be confined within the respective Dundee and Glasgow ToCs.

There is only one lot for the whole evaluation, but that consortium / partnership offers are welcomed, as these would help to address the wide scope and multiple facets of the programme and evaluation.

We estimate budgets for the different aspects of the evaluation as follows:

- Quasi-experimental feasibility studies: £75,000
- Full quasi-experimental study: £225,000
- Theory-based evaluation using contribution analysis: £90,000
- Learning partner: to be determined depending on the boundaries of the work.
- Supplementary case studies: £41,250
- Social cost benefit analysis: £25,000-£35,000
- Process evaluation: £35,000-£40,000

Evaluation Plan

Conclusions and recommendations

1. What is a Child Poverty Pathfinder?

No single definition of a Pathfinder has been established yet, and the two models in operation have little in common.

There are a number of key features which apply to Pathfinders, such as being: (i) designed to drive systems change; (ii) flexible and adaptable in how they are implemented; (iii) a person-centred approach; (iv) place-based and co-designed in partnership with local organisations; and (v) a holistic support service.

As part of this commission, a ToC has been developed for each Pathfinder to understand the causal pathways and the processes of change, as well as to make explicit assumptions about how change happens. A M&E framework has also been developed for each Pathfinder to support the process of learning and improvement within each Pathfinder as well as an external evaluation.

- **Recommendation 1.1:** There would be benefits from improving the common understanding of ‘what’ the Pathfinder programme is, and how the overall programme, Glasgow Pathfinder and Dundee Pathfinder are connected. A suggestion for this is provided in section 2.
- **Recommendation 1.2:** The differences between the design of the Dundee and Glasgow models should be capitalised on for learning on what works.

2. What factors need to be considered before evaluating the Pathfinders?

There is a lack of shared understanding of the definition of the Pathfinder programme. It will be difficult to translate evaluation findings into informing the development of the Pathfinder programme unless there is a clearer sense of what is meant by “a Pathfinder”. We have provided a suggested definition in this report.

This issue is further compounded by the current lack of understanding around what Scottish Government’s role in the Pathfinders is or should be.

The above points mean that at present it may not be feasible to evaluate through a programme-level lens. Therefore, for the purposes of this evaluability assessment, the evaluand should be the two Local Child Poverty Pathfinders (rather than ‘the programme’).

There are concurrent child poverty interventions and an existing evaluation of the Glasgow Pathfinder. These could be used to leverage the findings from an

evaluation of the Pathfinders but may also create additional complexities or give rise to duplicative efforts.

- Recommendation 2.1: Use the suggested Pathfinder definition provided in this report as a basis for an agreed definition of a Pathfinder.
- Recommendation 2.2: Agree on the role that Scottish Government should play in the continuation of the Pathfinders.
- Recommendation 2.3: The evaluand should be the individual Pathfinder models and the evaluation should focus on gathering learning from these.
- Recommendation 2.4: The effect of concurrent child poverty interventions – in particular the WFWF – will need consideration. The evaluation should consider whether families may simultaneously benefit from these interventions as well as the Pathfinder, and account for this when estimating the Pathfinders' impact.
- Recommendation 2.5: The existing evaluation of the Glasgow Pathfinder should be taken into account when conducting the Phase 2 evaluation, both to avoid duplication, and to build further on those findings.

3. What ethical framework should guide an evaluation?

Given the sensitivity of the topic area and vulnerability of families in poverty, the ethical considerations around research and evaluation are important considerations in how programmes are evaluated.

- Recommendation 3.1: The ethical framework developed in appendix 3 should guide the evaluative process.

4. What key aims should an evaluation focus on?

We have suggested four aims for the evaluation. These are to evaluate (i) the impact on families, child poverty, and the system that supports them; (ii) the value for money; (iii) the processes of the Pathfinder; and (iv) the learning that can be captured.

These are presented separately but have inherent overlap between them.

We have identified a set of research questions associated with the above aims, which are provided as a longlist of detailed evaluation questions in the evaluation aims and methods section below.

- Recommendation 4.1: When conducting the evaluation, the interlinkages between the aims should be taken into account, both in terms of how they are evaluated, and the conclusions drawn.
- Recommendation 4.2: The evaluation questions should be further refined to align with the methodology chosen to evaluate the Pathfinders.
- Recommendation 4.3: The questions should not only focus on the ‘difference’ the Pathfinders have made in terms of impact, but also on the processes of change. For this, the Theories of Change of the Pathfinders are of central importance in this evaluation.

5. What are the methodological options for meeting these aims?

We have identified the key methodological options for the four evaluation aims.

Impact on families, child poverty and the system that supports them could be evaluated through quasi-experimental studies, a theory-based approach using contribution analysis, or a learning partner approach with a developmental evaluation. The latter two represent clearly viable options, but with the trade-off that they cannot provide a statistically robust measure of the impact on child poverty itself. Quasi-experimental approaches, on the other hand, can achieve this, but would benefit from an initial feasibility study to test their efficacy.

For evaluating value for money, the main options would be CEA or social CBA, with the latter being preferable. Robustly conducting an economic evaluation will require specific data to be available, comprehensive identification of the outputs/outcomes and costs of the programme, and financial proxies to quantify non-monetary outcomes. We provide suggestions for this in appendices 5 and 6. Identifying the exact benefits included in a CBA can be tied with the impact evaluation approach.

A process evaluation will draw on the same ToC and data as the impact aspects of the evaluation, but will build on these to answer different questions around ‘how’ the outcomes were achieved.

The impact and process evaluations should together draw evidence in relation to the extent to which the Pathfinders have created systems change.

- Recommendation 5.1: If a quasi-experimental approach to evaluating is desired, an initial feasibility study would improve the efficacy of this. However, running a feasibility study followed by full roll-out of the approach would require longer than the current Phase 2 evaluation timelines. In Dundee, we recommend a difference-in-difference approach, and an interrupted time series analysis (ITSA) for Glasgow.

- Recommendation 5.2: Whether or not a quasi-experimental evaluation is adopted, a learning partner should be appointed to assess impact (using a developmental evaluation approach). If a quasi-experimental approach is adopted, then either a contribution analysis theory-based evaluation should also be used to evaluate impact, or qualitative-based case studies should be included as evidence alongside the quasi-experimental approach.
- Recommendation 5.3: Child poverty is complex and depends on a wide range of different factors which may be beyond the scope of the Pathfinders' intervention, particularly given the relatively small scale of the programme. Therefore, the impact evaluation should not rely *wholly* on measuring changes in absolute or relative child poverty figures. Instead, it should assess impact based on other factors which directly relate to poverty, such as changes in income, as well as wider positive outcomes.
- Recommendation 5.4: Social cost benefit analysis should be used to evaluate the Pathfinders' value for money.
- Recommendation 5.5: The process evaluation should be linked with the evidence on impacts on child poverty and systems change to understand 'how' these were achieved.

6. How can learning be assessed and integrated

Learning is of central importance in the evaluation. The evaluation will seek to extract learning to support Scottish Government's decisions about the continuation and expansion of the Pathfinders.

Learning must be captured from the Pathfinders to ensure wider impacts on child poverty are achieved. The ToCs and M&E frameworks for the Pathfinders designed as part of this commission which will provide a strong foundation for doing this.

The data and evidence collated by the Pathfinders will also enable a more robust and useful summative evaluation to be undertaken.

- Recommendation 6.1: The Pathfinders should be sufficiently supported and resourced to maintain robust MEL processes, to ensure learning is effectively captured to improve delivery and to inform Scottish Government decision-making processes.

7. What is the best way of procuring an evaluation?

The different aspects of the evaluation will be able to begin at various times, and so a staged approach will likely be necessary.

A solid procurement process will ensure that the right evaluation partners are commissioned and that the Pathfinder staff and stakeholders are engaged.

- Recommendation 7.1: A quasi-experimental evaluation would require an extension of the Phase 2 timelines in order to allow time for a feasibility study, evaluation set up, observation period, and reporting period.
- Recommendation 7.2: To allow time for impacts to be realised, a theory-based evaluation may also require slightly longer than the current Phase 2 timelines.
- Recommendation 7.3: The Dundee and Glasgow Pathfinders should be evaluated by the same organisation but following different approaches where relevant and as set out in this report.

Evaluation aims and methods

Pulling together the evaluation aims and methods, the table below summarises the techniques to be used in relation to each aim. In addition, it sets out the evaluation questions we are proposing within each aim. These questions are a more specific guide to the individual parts of the evaluation, and when answered should mean that the aim has been achieved.

Evaluation plan

Aim		Method
1	Impact on families, child poverty and the system that supports them	<p>Theory-based approaches using contribution analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management and performance data analysis, focussing on families' financial situation, and other outcomes which relate to poverty • Engagement with families to collect qualitative information • Engagement with stakeholders, partners and Pathfinder staff through interviews and focus groups • Longitudinal survey with Pathfinder staff • Review feedback from supported families <p>Embedded monitoring using a learning partner and developmental evaluation approach</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up monitoring systems to enable data to be collected against the ToC. Set up a learning partnership for the Pathfinders to facilitate experimentation, adaptation and improvement to support a process of systems change. <p>Quasi-experimental methods applied separately for Dundee (difference-in-difference) and Glasgow (ITSA), potentially paired with case studies</p>
1A	Who received support from the Pathfinder – scale and demographics?	
1B	To what extent were families in need successfully identified, engaged and supported – are there areas of unmet need?	
1C	What was the impact on the finances, employment, resilience, health, and wellbeing of families?	
1D	What was the impact on the families' confidence to manage future challenges?	
1E	What was the impact on child poverty?	
1F	To what extent does the support provided prevent crisis within families?	
1G	To what extent are families obtaining and sustaining high quality and fair employment?	
1H	To what extent are agencies working in partnership beyond organisational boundaries?	
1I	To what extent is the support provided to families more flexible, holistic, targeted to need, and accessible?	
1J	To what extent is the right support available for families – are there any gaps in resource, partners or services leading to unmet need?	
1K	To what extent are families accessing support before crisis point – prevention? (Glasgow)	
1L	To what extent are employers providing more fair, flexible work locally that is more accessible for families in poverty? (Dundee)	
2	Value for money	Social cost benefit analysis
2A	Do the impacts measured lead to any reduction in demand for public services?	
2B	Do the impacts measured contribute to any impacts on the wider economy?	

2C	Does the value of benefits outweigh the costs?	
3	Process evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Longitudinal surveys with Pathfinder staff, stakeholders, and partners • Interviews and focus groups with stakeholders and partners
3A	How well do the Pathfinders fit within, and work with, the existing service landscape?	
3B	How are local needs being identified, understood and used to inform service design and delivery?	
3C	What mechanisms are in place to learn from what is being delivered? How is the learning shared within and across places?	
3D	To what extent are decisions being informed by evidence on what works and the ongoing learning from the Pathfinder?	
3E	To what extent is support co-produced with families?	
3F	To what extent is the required data, learning and insight shared between partners?	
3G	To what extent are public and third sector organisations working successfully together in partnership?	
3H	To what extent are resources between partners pooled successfully where needed?	
3I	To what extent are the most successful approaches scaled up?	
3J	To what extent are partners working well together including shared vision, trust, governance, communication, and effective delivery?	
3K	What is the cost effectiveness of the service – how does it compare with other similar forms of support?	
3L	How accessible are the Pathfinders to those who benefit from them?	
3M	Do the Pathfinders' designs ensure equality in how they are accessed and the support provided?	
4	Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combine findings from previous stages • Hold group discussions or workshops with stakeholders and Scottish Government staff
4A	What have we learned about what works in addressing Child Poverty?	
4B	What have we learned about what needs to be in place to support implementation?	

4C	What have we learned about the challenges and how to overcome them to support implementation?
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Evaluation plan data

In one of our evaluability assessment workshops, we combined the data sources identified in the M&E framework and the above evaluation methods to map out what data is available for each element of the evaluation, as well as what might be missing. This is summarised in the tables overleaf.

Dundee data for evaluation plan

Evaluation aim	Method	Available data	Data not currently collected
<p>Impact on families, child poverty and the system that supports them</p>	<p>Management and performance data analysis, focussing on families' financial situation, and other outcomes which relate to poverty</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better-off calculations • Social Security awards from Pathfinders • Client spreadsheet • Fuel well data • Case management data • Housing benefit and council tax reduction data • Universal credit accounts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dundee Pathfinder monitoring spreadsheet • Informal impact report
	<p>Engagement with families to collect qualitative information, and review of feedback from supported families</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employer portfolio spreadsheet • Service user journeys • Pathfinder activity logs, documents and reports • Case management data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case studies • Feedback from people and families • Exit interviews • Informal impact report
	<p>Engagement with stakeholders, partners and Pathfinder staff through interviews and focus groups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board/working group papers • Leadership collaborative minutes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership reports • Partnership working insights • Service mapper
	<p>Longitudinal survey with Pathfinder staff</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff survey • Partnership reflective impact log • Systems change reflective impact log

Evaluation aim	Method	Available data	Data not currently collected
	Difference-in-difference quasi-experimental approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better-off calculations • Client spreadsheet • DWP data used to identify target households • Housing benefit and council tax data • Dundee Pathfinder monitoring spreadsheet • Social Security awards from Pathfinders • Exit interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dundee Pathfinder monitoring spreadsheet • Outcomes data on control group • Other control variable data
Value for money	Social cost benefit analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fuel well data • Universal credit accounts • Housing benefit and council tax reduction data • Pathfinder tracking spreadsheet • Social security Scotland spreadsheet • Better-off calculations • Childcare providers data • Client spreadsheet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost data from Dundee Pathfinder and partners • Partnership working insights • Exit interview • Health information and HSCP support received • People and families feedback • Outcomes data from quasi-experimental approach (if adopted)
Process evaluation	Longitudinal surveys with Pathfinder staff, stakeholders, and partners		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff survey

Evaluation aim	Method	Available data	Data not currently collected
	Interviews and focus groups with stakeholders and partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership collaborative minutes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback data from workshops • Board/working group papers • Partner reports • Partnership working insights • Pathfinder activity logs • Service mapper
Learning	Combine findings from previous stages		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback data from workshops • Board/working group papers • Partner reports • Dundee monitoring spreadsheet • Partnership working insights • People and families feedback
	Hold group discussions or workshops with stakeholders and Scottish Government staff		

Glasgow data for evaluation plan

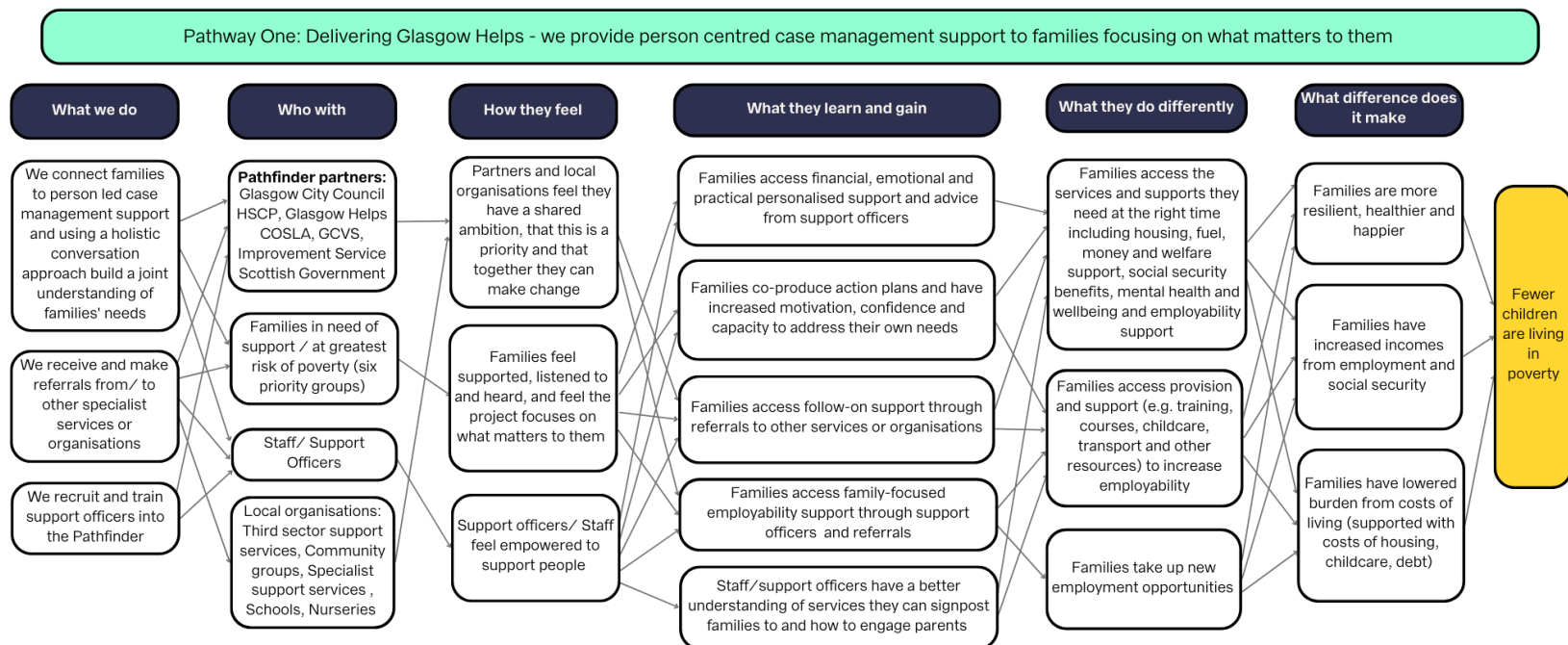
Evaluation aim	Method	Available data	Data not currently collected
Impact on families, child poverty and the system that supports them	Management and performance data analysis, focussing on families' financial situation, and other outcomes which relate to poverty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glasgow Helps Monitoring Data • Case management services data • Holistic needs assessment • Anxiety matrix spreadsheet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informal impact report • Documents on impact
	Engagement with families to collect qualitative information, and review of feedback from supported families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case management services data • Pathfinder activity logs, documents and reports • Exit interview • Holistic needs assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People and families feedback
	Engagement with stakeholders, partners and Pathfinder staff through interviews and focus groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glasgow Helps Monitoring Data • Pathfinder activity logs, documents and reports • Case studies with partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder engagement strategy • Partner reports • Board papers
	Longitudinal survey with Pathfinder staff		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership reflective impact log • Staff survey • Systems change reflective impact log
	ITSA quasi-experimental approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glasgow Helps Monitoring Data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data to identify families to form control group • Other control variable data

Evaluation aim	Method	Available data	Data not currently collected
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outcomes data on control group
Value for money	Social cost benefit analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NDRS app (additional to holistic needs assessment) • Exit interview • GCVS collection returns (for foodbank referrals) • Holistic needs assessment • Anxiety matrix spreadsheet • Glasgow Helps Monitoring Data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost benefit analysis spreadsheet • Economically vulnerable database • Cost data from Glasgow Helps and partners • Partnership working insights • Health information and HSCP support received • Housing information • People and families feedback • Outcomes data from quasi-experimental approach (if adopted)
Process evaluation	Longitudinal surveys with Pathfinder staff, stakeholders, and partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exit interview 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff survey
	Interviews and focus groups with stakeholders and partners		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback data from workshops • Board papers • Partner reports

Evaluation aim	Method	Available data	Data not currently collected
Learning	Combine findings from previous stages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glasgow Helps monitoring data • Case management services data 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback data from workshops • Board papers • Partner reports • Partnership working insights • People and families feedback
	Hold group discussions or workshops with stakeholders and Scottish Government staff		

Appendix 1 – Theories of Change

Glasgow Theory of Change



Assumptions
Key Assumptions of Pathfinder Outputs (what we do, who with)

- Families need and want help navigating a complex landscape
- The Pathfinder can identify and reach families at most risk of poverty
- Staff and partners have adequate time and resources of their own to make in kind contributions to Pathfinder activities
- Families continue to engage with Glasgow Helps beyond the first contact

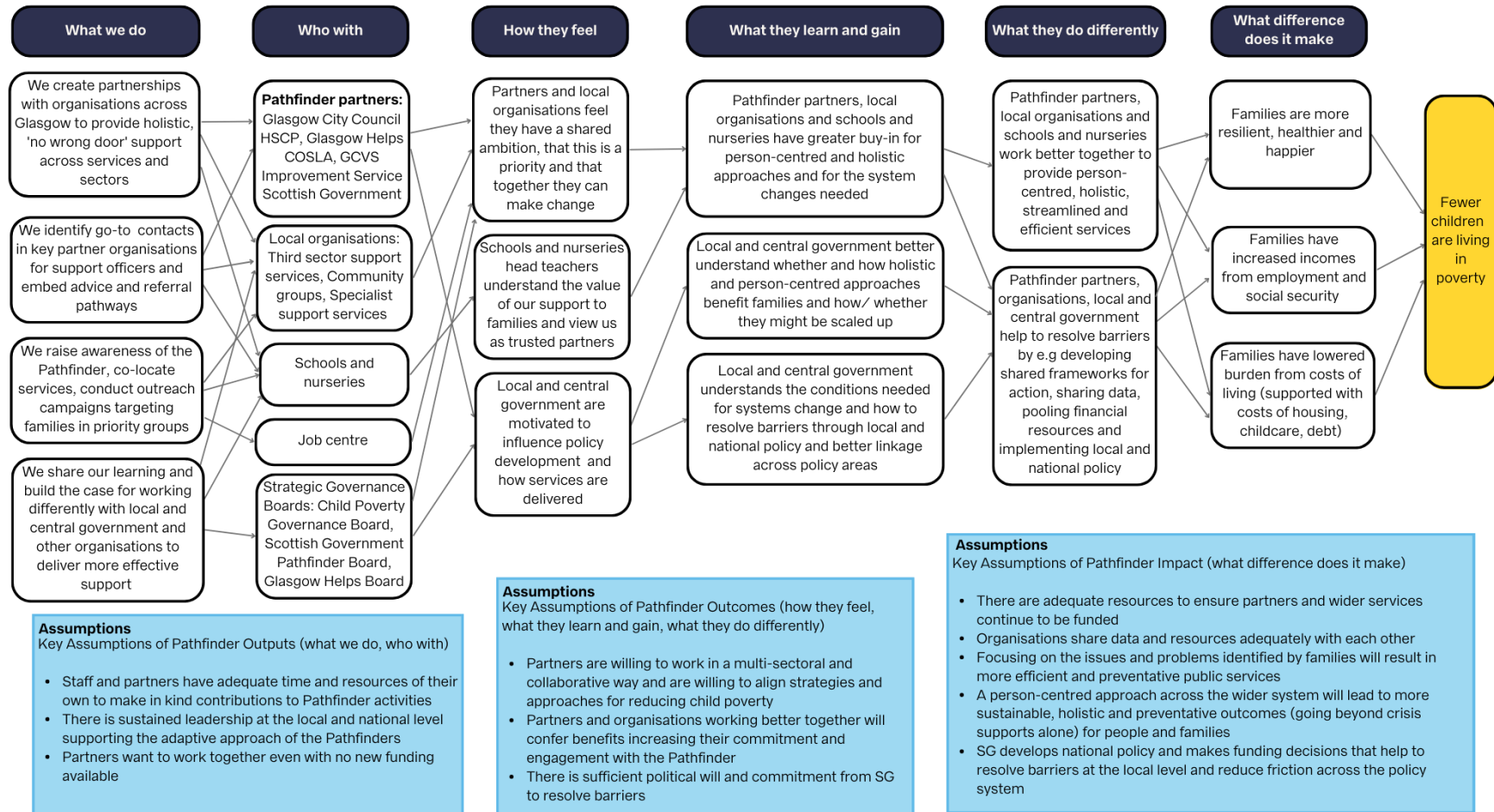
Assumptions
Key Assumptions of Pathfinder Outcomes (how they feel, what they learn and gain, what they do differently)

- The 'trusted person' – the support officer - can effectively pass on the relationship of trust to the next support/service provider
- More partners and service organisations in the city adopt a holistic and person-centred approach focused on the needs of people and families
- There is sufficient infrastructure to support families who are engaging with the Pathfinder e.g. for childcare and (mental) health and wellbeing
- Case management sufficiently supports families through advice and referrals to find and enter employment that meets their needs
- There are wider benefits to employment and people believe work is worthwhile

Assumptions
Key Assumptions of Pathfinder Impact (what difference does it make)

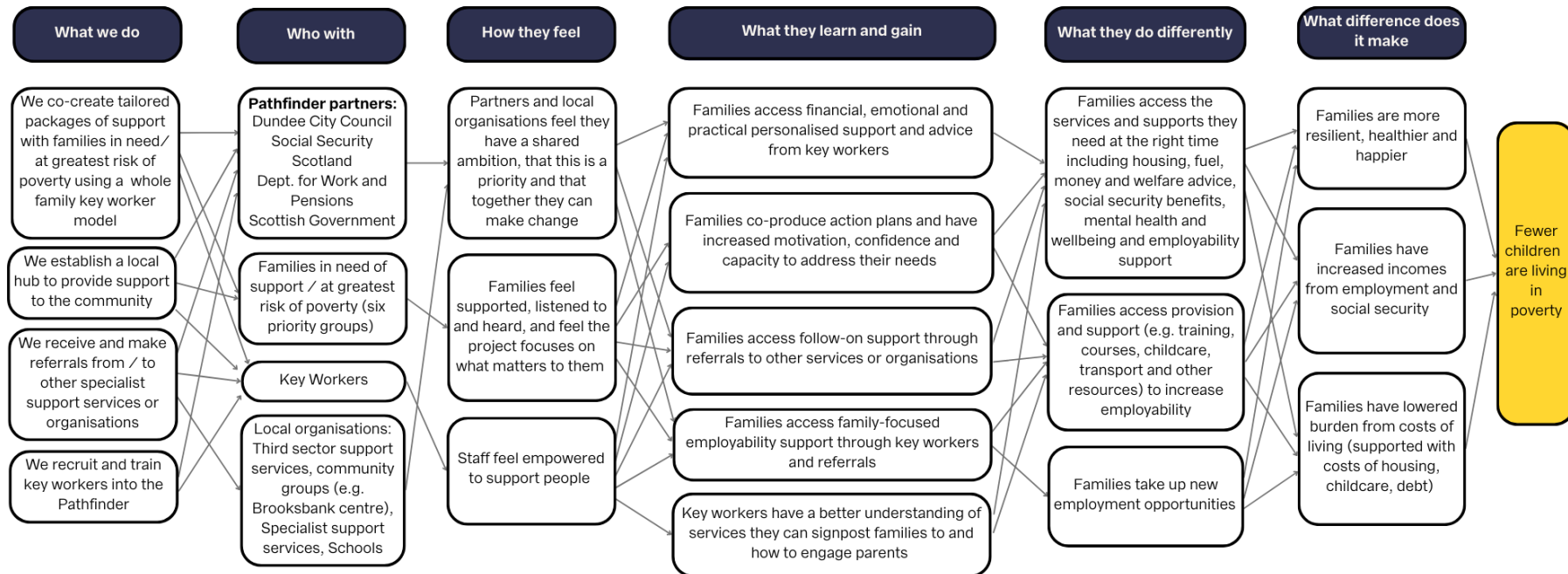
- The Pathfinder is scaled up and has significant reach
- A person-centred approach will lead to more sustainable, holistic and preventative outcomes supporting health and wellbeing for parents and families
- Families will access additional supports that will increase their income
- Gains in income and from savings will have whole family benefits
- Parents enter sustained employment, which delivers increases in income
- The Pathfinder operates within the framework of wider national policy on child poverty (e.g. GIRFEC)

Pathway Two: Building support for and partnerships in the Pathfinder locally and nationally and creating the conditions for systems change



Dundee Theory of Change

Pathway One: Co-creation of tailored packages of holistic person-centred support for families at greatest risk of poverty using a key worker model of support



Assumptions

Key Assumptions of Pathfinder Outputs (what we do, who with)

- Families need and want help navigating a complex landscape
- The Pathfinder can identify and reach families at most risk of poverty
- Staff and partners have adequate time and resources of their own to make in kind contributions to Pathfinder activities

Assumptions

Key Assumptions of Pathfinder Outcomes (how they feel, what they learn and gain, what they do differently)

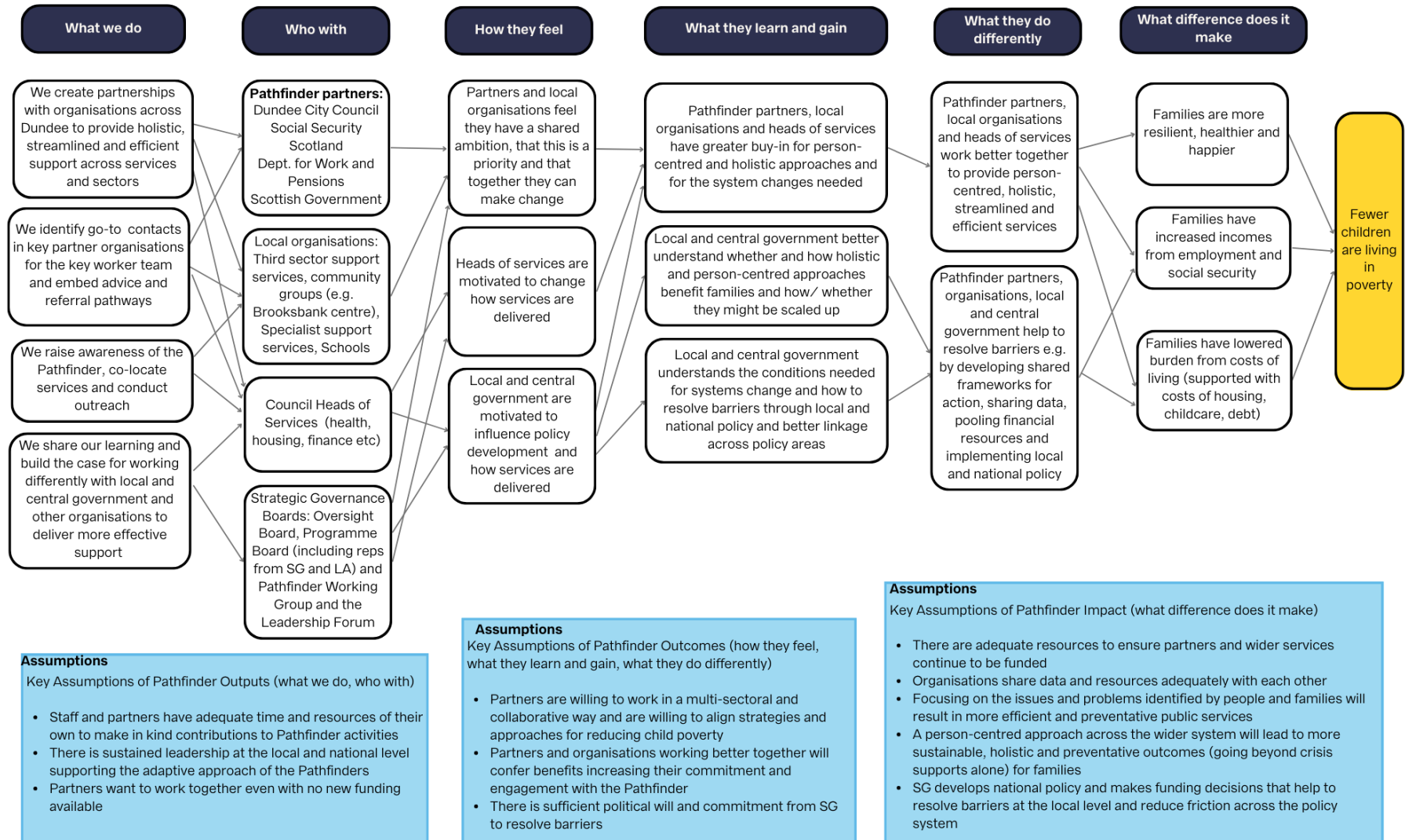
- The 'trusted person' – the key worker - can effectively pass on the relationship of trust to the next support/service provider
- More partners and service organisations in the city adopt a holistic and person-centred approach focused on the needs of families
- There are wider benefits to employment and people believe work is worthwhile
- There is sufficient infrastructure to support families who are engaging with the Pathfinder e.g. for childcare and (mental) health and wellbeing

Assumptions

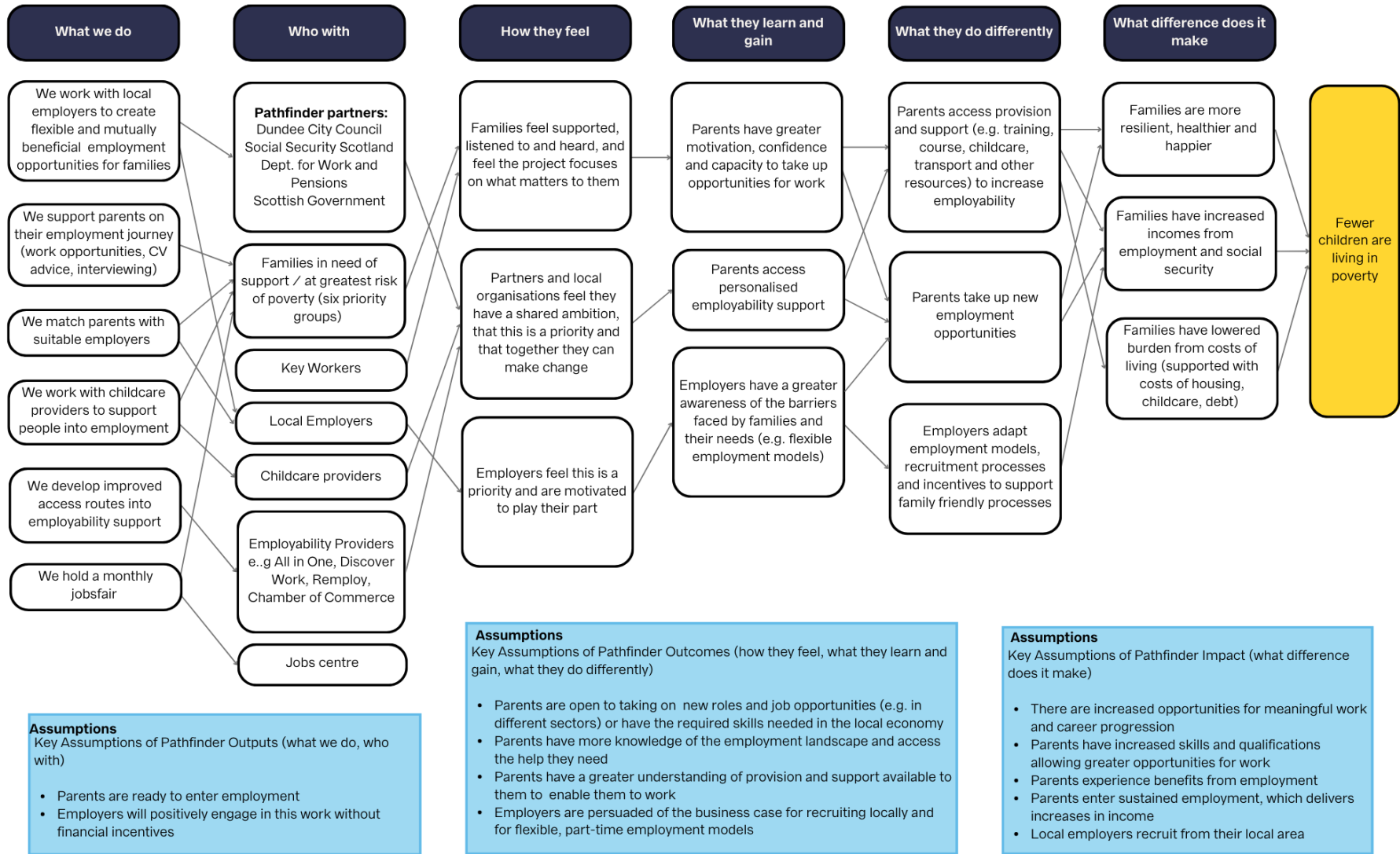
Key Assumptions of Pathfinder Impact (what difference does it make)

- The Pathfinder is scaled up and has significant reach
- A person-centred approach will lead to more sustainable, holistic and preventative outcomes supporting health and wellbeing for parents and families
- Families will access additional supports that will increase their income
- Gains in income and from savings will have whole family benefits
- Parents enter sustained employment, which delivers increases in income
- The Pathfinder operates within the framework of wider national policy on child poverty (e.g. GIRFEC)

Pathway Two: Building support for and partnerships in the Pathfinder across local and national organisations and creating the conditions for systems change



Pathway Three: Working with local employers to improve employment opportunities for parents



Appendix 2 – Best Practice Literature Review

Introduction

This document provides a brief overview of the literature reviewed so far on the how programmes similar to the Child Poverty Pathfinders have been evaluated. It will highlight considerations about data collection and methodologies that are relevant to the Evaluability Assessment of the Child Poverty Pathfinders. It will also give detailed examples of how other evaluations have employed each of these methods.

Defining child poverty

There exists several definitions of poverty and the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 outlined targets relating to relative poverty, absolute poverty, low-income and material deprivation, and persistent poverty.⁹³ However, for a full evaluation of the impact of a programme on poverty, there needs to be an understanding of not only the prevalence of child poverty, but also the severity and extent of child poverty.⁹⁴ To evaluate any effects of a Pathfinder on child poverty, a definition and indicators of child poverty need to be agreed.

A Welsh Government evaluation of child poverty used 23 indicators of child poverty across a range of areas including income poverty, worklessness, skills and qualifications, housing services, and health.⁹⁵ Indicators around work security are also important, as reflected in Scottish Government experience of evaluating poverty programmes, as having paid work is often not enough to lift families out of poverty, creating a need to account for their income, working conditions, transport accessibility, food, and fuel poverty.⁹⁶ Furthermore, specifically in the case of evaluating holistic services, learning from the Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan highlights how that from the start, data needs to be collected around potential longer-term impacts of holistic services addressing poverty, such as health, to evidence these outcomes.⁹⁷

⁹³ [Scottish Government. \(2022\). Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-2026 Annex 2.](#)

⁹⁴ [MPPN. Child Poverty: How to Measure and For What Purpose.](#)

⁹⁵ [Welsh Government. \(2014\). Evaluation of the Welsh Child Poverty Strategy Final Report.](#)

⁹⁶ [Scottish Government. \(2022\). Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-2026: Annex 3.](#)

⁹⁷ [Scottish Government. \(2022\) Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-2026 Annex 2.](#)

Data

Best practice on evaluating child poverty and holistic service programmes emphasises the need for early collection of baseline data and monitoring and outcome data that includes every aspect of the operation, including inputs, process, outcomes, and long-term effects.⁹⁸ To understand the impact of child poverty programmes and their impact on families, evidence highlights the importance of involving those with lived experience to help define the problems they face, and the impact similar programmes have had on their lives.⁹⁹

To inform what data needs to be collected, there needs to be Theories of Change developed for each programme that outline potential impacts and outcomes, so that data can be collected to evidence these. Learning from the Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan highlights the need for individual logic models for each of the Pilots in their local context.¹⁰⁰ These models were collated and used to create local monitoring and evaluation plans that allowed the programmes to be evidenced, while also maintaining commonality and a shared language across the Pilots.¹⁰¹ In regards to ensuring that commonality is maintained across different programmes, the Local Authority Child Poverty Innovation Pilot evaluation, highlighted the importance of having agreed tools for collecting data on participants and families (such as on ethnicity, job status, and gender) and also a common outcome framework, so that the data can be comparable across programmes.¹⁰²

In terms of the amount of amount data collected, the need for practicality and resources needs to be balanced.¹⁰³ Learning from the Welsh Child Poverty Strategy Evaluation highlighted the need to manage expectations in terms of findings from evaluations of child poverty strategies, as they found that with their population size there had to be large changes in rates of child poverty – at least 3% every year for 3 years – to be statistically significant.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁸ [HM Treasury. \(2020\). Magenta Book.](#); [Scottish Government. Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-2026 Annex 2.](#)

⁹⁹ [Scottish Government. Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-2026 Annex 2.](#)

¹⁰⁰ [GHK. \(2010\). Local Authority Child Poverty Innovation Pilot: First National Evaluation Report.](#)

¹⁰¹ [GHK. \(2010\). Local Authority Child Poverty Innovation Pilot: First National Evaluation Report.](#)

¹⁰² [GHK. \(2010\). Local Authority Child Poverty Innovation Pilot: First National Evaluation Report.](#)

¹⁰³ [HM Treasury. \(2020\). Magenta Book.](#)

¹⁰⁴ [Welsh Government. \(2014\). Evaluation of the Welsh Child Poverty Strategy Final Report.](#)

Methods

Overall, the literature and other evaluations highlighted that it is important to use a range of qualitative and quantitative methodologies to evaluate child poverty, holistic services, and systems change programmes. Qualitative, quantitative, quasi-experimental methods, and contribution analysis are discussed below.

Qualitative methods

Qualitative data is helpful for getting a deeper understanding of the impacts and outcomes, as administrative data used in large scale evaluations can often be hard to disaggregate to the local level or understand the impact on small priority groups.¹⁰⁵ For example, these methods can include focus groups, interviews, participant observation, and case studies. A guide written on systems change evaluation by the Center for Evaluation Innovation emphasised how qualitative methods can be a useful tool for understanding the ‘how’ behind observed outcomes.¹⁰⁶

To illustrate, a Welsh Government evaluation of the Housing Act (2014), which addressed houselessness, shows the importance of incorporating qualitative methods into policy evaluations.¹⁰⁷ In their evaluation, they interviewed stakeholders, service delivery staff, and service users.¹⁰⁸ They highlighted that these interviews gave crucial insight into the implementation and delivery and also provided a comparative perspective for how these aspects differed from previous programmes.¹⁰⁹ On the other hand, they also interviewed service users, which they noted was essential for bringing the opinions of those with lived experience in houselessness and experience navigating the service into the evaluation.¹¹⁰

Additionally, the Local Authority Child Poverty Innovation Pilot evaluation also conducted semi-structured interviews with service delivery staff, stakeholders, partners, children, and families to enrich their evaluation.¹¹¹ They noted that the qualitative fieldwork was essential for understanding the depth and complexity in which child poverty can impact an individual and the impact of the Innovation Pilots.

¹⁰⁵ [Scottish Government. Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-2026 Annex 2.](#)

¹⁰⁶ [Latham, N. \(2014\). Systems Change Evaluation Toolkit.](#)

¹⁰⁷ [Welsh Government. \(2018\). Post-Implementation Evaluation of Part 2 of the Housing Act \(Wales\) 2914: Final Report.](#)

¹⁰⁸ [Welsh Government. \(2018\). Post-Implementation Evaluation of Part 2 of the Housing Act \(Wales\) 2914: Final Report.](#)

¹⁰⁹ [Welsh Government. \(2018\). Post-Implementation Evaluation of Part 2 of the Housing Act \(Wales\) 2914: Final Report.](#)

¹¹⁰ [Welsh Government. \(2018\). Post-Implementation Evaluation of Part 2 of the Housing Act \(Wales\) 2914: Final Report.](#)

¹¹¹ [GHK. \(2010\). Local Authority Child Poverty Innovation Pilot: First National Evaluation Report.](#)

¹¹² The findings from the qualitative fieldwork were used in conjunction with analysis of monitoring and outcome data and a cost effective analysis. ¹¹³

Quantitative methods

In addition, quantitative methods, including analysis of performance indicators and outcome measures, have also been used in evaluations of the similar programmes. Quantitative analysis can be used to examine data trends and determine if there has been any statistically significant change in performance or outcome indicators.

For example, the evaluation of the Welsh Child Poverty Strategy, tracked 23 indicators of child poverty, comparing the indicators in 2005 to the most recent data collected to 2014. ¹¹⁴ This analysis allowed the evaluators to track changes in the rate of relative poverty, employment, health, and education, and compare the changes seen in Wales to those seen elsewhere in the UK. ¹¹⁵ Similarly, an evaluation of the Welsh Government's Out of Work Service used quantitative data and methods to track performance against the programme targets and monitor the outcomes relating to participants who enter work, obtain qualifications, and health outcomes. ¹¹⁶

Quasi-experimental approaches

Quasi-experimental approaches are also useful when evaluating social policies. These approaches use a counterfactual that is not created by randomisation (as compared to randomised controlled trial) to evaluate the effect of an intervention. ¹¹⁷ These approaches create a control group that is as similar as possible to the group who received the intervention, based on prior characteristics, so that the differences in the outcomes observed can be attributed to the intervention. ¹¹⁸ Therefore, these approaches are useful in instances where individuals cannot be randomly assigned to treatment or control groups, such as when this would be unethical or logistically impractical. ¹¹⁹ These methods can also be used to conduct retrospective evaluations, but this is subject to the availability of suitable data. ¹²⁰ Experimental approaches are best used to explore the impact of an intervention in a closed system where the relationship between the intervention and the outcome is linear

¹¹² [GHK. \(2010\). Local Authority Child Poverty Innovation Pilot: First National Evaluation Report.](#)

¹¹³ [GHK. \(2010\). Local Authority Child Poverty Innovation Pilot: First National Evaluation Report.](#)

¹¹⁴ [Welsh Government. \(2014\). Evaluation of the Welsh Child Poverty Strategy Final Report.](#)

¹¹⁵ [Welsh Government. \(2014\). Evaluation of the Welsh Child Poverty Strategy Final Report.](#)

¹¹⁶ [Welsh Government. \(2020\). Evaluation of the Out of Work Service: Final Report.](#)

¹¹⁷ [Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. \(2019\). National Evaluation of the Troubled Families Programme 2015-2020](#)

¹¹⁸ [White, H. & Sabarwal, S. \(2014\). Quasi-Experimental Design and Methods.](#)

¹¹⁹ [White, H. & Sabarwal, S. \(2014\). Quasi-Experimental Design and Methods.](#)

¹²⁰ [White, H. & Sabarwal, S. \(2014\). Quasi-Experimental Design and Methods.](#)

and direct. Wimbush et al (2012) caution against the inappropriate nature of experimental methodologies for complex programmes.¹²¹

Propensity score matching

Propensity score matching (PSM) is one quasi-experimental method than can be used in programme evaluations. A propensity score is the likelihood that an individual received the treatment, and it is calculated with observable characteristics which are believed to effect participation.¹²² Individuals from both the treatment and control groups are matched on their propensity score, and then the differences in the outcomes can be calculated.¹²³

PSM is beneficial because it can control for pre-programme characteristics of the sample for both control and comparison groups and can measure impact of a programme.¹²⁴ Additionally, PSM has been mentioned to be suitable to evaluations of antipoverty programmes because it allows one to examine the difference in impacts of the programme based on pre-programme characteristics.¹²⁵ However, PSM is most suited to evaluations where large datasets, such as administrative or local authority-level data, are available that includes demographic and outcome data on both participants and non-participants.¹²⁶ PSM is also limited because it can only match the participants and non-participants based on observable characteristics.¹²⁷

In the evaluation of the Troubled Families Programme, a local linear regression was used to match those in the control and comparison groups, using a combination of family and individual characteristics.¹²⁸ This the data for the PSM was obtained through matching 5 years of administrative data and data provided by the Local Authorities, including the National Impact Study and the Family Progress Data.¹²⁹ From this combined data, they were able to compare the outcomes between the comparison and control groups relating to: out-of-work benefits, looked after

¹²¹ [Morton, S. \(2018\). Evaluating Health Technology Wales.](#)

¹²² [White, H. & Sabarwal, S. \(2014\). Quasi-Experimental Design and Methods.](#)

¹²³ [White, H. & Sabarwal, S. \(2014\). Quasi-Experimental Design and Methods.](#)

¹²⁴ [Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. \(2019\). National Evaluation of the Troubled Families Programme 2015-2020.](#)

¹²⁵ [Jalan, J. & Ravallion, M. \(2003\). Estimating the Benefit Incidence of an Antipoverty Program by Propensity-Score Matching.](#)

¹²⁶ [Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. \(2019\). National Evaluation of the Troubled Families Programme 2015-2020](#)

¹²⁷ [White, H. & Sabarwal, S. \(2014\). Quasi-Experimental Design and Methods.](#)

¹²⁸ [Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. \(2019\). National Evaluation of the Troubled Families Programme 2015-2020](#)

¹²⁹ [Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. \(2019\). National Evaluation of the Troubled Families Programme 2015-2020](#)

children or children in need, and instances of adult and juvenile offending.¹³⁰ However, it was noted that this approach was limited because the quality of the matches was highly dependent on the quality of data supplied by the Local Authorities, and just over half of Local Authorities were able to supply this data.¹³¹

Case Study: Trabajar Programme in Argentina¹³²

This programme is an anti-poverty programme which started in 1997 in Argentina, it was supported by the government and a loan and technical assistance from the World Bank. The programme provided short-term work for the poor and located social projects in more deprived areas to develop the local community.

The authors of the evaluation chose propensity score matching because pre-intervention data was not available, and a randomised control group was not possible. The main outcome of focus in the evaluation was the participants' income. In their study they used two surveys: one was a national household survey and the other was of programme participants. The participants and non-participants were matched using pre-intervention characteristics and were also matched within their region. They used kernel density estimation techniques to ensure good matches. However, they noted that there is still room for bias because of unobservable characteristics.

To compare the two, the observed distribution of household income and the estimated distribution of the counter-factual income were compared. The authors estimated that the programme resulted in a 15 percentage-point drop in the occurrence of poverty. These outcomes were then further compared based on the profiles of the participants, including difference for families where female or younger members of the family participated in the programme.

Difference-in-differences

Another commonly used quasi-experimental approach used in impact evaluations, is called difference-in-differences (DiD), which uses both before and after and treatment and control comparisons.¹³³ DiD, allows one to evaluate the effect of a programme by subtracting the after-before difference of the control group from this difference in the control group.¹³⁴ To conduct a DiD, you need data for both the treatment and control groups after the intervention, however this can come from

¹³⁰[Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. \(2019\). National Evaluation of the Troubled Families Programme 2015-2020](#)

¹³¹[Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. \(2019\). National Evaluation of the Troubled Families Programme 2015-2020](#)

¹³² [Jalan, J. & Ravallion, M. \(2003\). Estimating the Benefit Incidence of an Antipoverty Program by Propensity-Score Matching.](#)

¹³³ [Fredriksson, A. & Magalhaes de Oliveira, G. \(2019\). Impact Evaluation Using Difference-in-Differences.](#)

¹³⁴ [Fredriksson, A. & Magalhaes de Oliveira, G. \(2019\). Impact Evaluation Using Difference-in-Differences.](#)

panel data or repeated cross-sectional samples.¹³⁵ By subtracting the before-after differences, DiD helps to control for non-observable factors which influence the outcomes.¹³⁶

It is also important to note that DiD can also accommodate several treatment and control groups.¹³⁷ This means that, for example, DiD can account for staggered start dates between treatment groups.¹³⁸ The models which include several time periods also offer the possibility of utilising state-level data, rather than individual-level data.¹³⁹

However, there are several assumptions made in DiD calculations. First, it assumes that there is no spill-over between the control and treatment groups and that the control variables are unaffected by the intervention.¹⁴⁰ Additionally, central to DiD is the parallel trends assumption, which states that the treatment group would have followed the same path as the control group if they did not receive the intervention.¹⁴¹ If there is data which allows researchers to look at the trends for several periods before the intervention, this can help to show that the DiD is more robust.¹⁴² Another method to check if this assumption is met is to conduct a DiD on the pre-treatment data, if there is no significant effect, it provides support that the assumption is met.¹⁴³ The availability of sufficient data to check if assumptions are being met is a significant consideration for using DiD.

An example of a DiD is What Works for Children's Social Care's evaluation of Strengthening Families, Protecting Children, which took a holistic and whole-systems approach to reduce the number of children in care.¹⁴⁴ For their evaluation, they matched local authorities which were part of the Strengthening Families, Protecting Children programme to similar local authorities which did not take part, based on quarterly data on care outcomes for four years before the programme, to create the treatment and control groups.¹⁴⁵ After the local authorities are matched, data was then matched on the individual basis based on: gender, age of children at

¹³⁵ [Fredriksson, A. & Magalhaes de Oliveira, G. \(2019\). Impact Evaluation Using Difference-in-Differences.](#)

¹³⁶ [Fredriksson, A. & Magalhaes de Oliveira, G. \(2019\). Impact Evaluation Using Difference-in-Differences.](#)

¹³⁷ [Fredriksson, A. & Magalhaes de Oliveira, G. \(2019\). Impact Evaluation Using Difference-in-Differences.](#)

¹³⁸ [Fredriksson, A. & Magalhaes de Oliveira, G. \(2019\). Impact Evaluation Using Difference-in-Differences.](#)

¹³⁹ [Fredriksson, A. & Magalhaes de Oliveira, G. \(2019\). Impact Evaluation Using Difference-in-Differences.](#)

¹⁴⁰ [Fredriksson, A. & Magalhaes de Oliveira, G. \(2019\). Impact Evaluation Using Difference-in-Differences.](#)

¹⁴¹ [Fredriksson, A. & Magalhaes de Oliveira, G. \(2019\). Impact Evaluation Using Difference-in-Differences.](#)

¹⁴² [Fredriksson, A. & Magalhaes de Oliveira, G. \(2019\). Impact Evaluation Using Difference-in-Differences.](#)

¹⁴³ [Fredriksson, A. & Magalhaes de Oliveira, G. \(2019\). Impact Evaluation Using Difference-in-Differences.](#)

¹⁴⁴ [Sanders, M. Trial Evaluation Protocol: Strengthening Families, Protecting Children- Family Safeguarding Model- Difference-in-differences Analysis.](#)

¹⁴⁵ [Sanders, M. Trial Evaluation Protocol: Strengthening Families, Protecting Children- Family Safeguarding Model- Difference-in-differences Analysis.](#)

referral age, ethnicity, disability, free school meal eligibility, asylum-seeking status, and if they child has previously been in care.¹⁴⁶ They then conducted a random effects regression model using generalised least square estimates.¹⁴⁷

Case Study: Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty, Ghana

Another of example of evaluating child poverty programmes using both propensity score matching and difference-in-differences comes from the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) programme in Ghana. The programme attempts to address child poverty through cash transfers and health insurance, which although the approach differs from the Pathfinder, the evaluation is still a useful example.¹⁴⁸

The evaluation method used was a longitudinal propensity score matching and they then used DiD estimate the effects of the programme.¹⁴⁹ The evaluators highlighted that they chose this combination of PSM and DiD because DiD can provide one of the strongest estimates of causal impact.¹⁵⁰ Also, using longitudinal data shows the change in the comparison group, which allows for overall changes to be accounted for. For example, this would be important if, over the length of the programme, there was significant overall changes in in conditions which affected both treatment and control groups.¹⁵¹

For the PSM, the same survey instruments were also used on household that were eligible but not yet enrolled in the programme, which created the control group, and these families were then matched to families in the treatment group based on data on eligibility criteria using a probit model.¹⁵² The propensity score was then used to in inverse probability weighting in the further statistical analysis.¹⁵³ This means that households which were more similar received a greater weight. The outcome

¹⁴⁶ [Sanders, M. Trial Evaluation Protocol: Strengthening Families, Protecting Children- Family Safeguarding Model- Difference-in-differences Analysis.](#)

¹⁴⁷ [Sanders, M. Trial Evaluation Protocol: Strengthening Families, Protecting Children- Family Safeguarding Model- Difference-in-differences Analysis.](#)

¹⁴⁸ [Carolina Population Center. \(2014\). Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty Program Impact Evaluation.](#)

¹⁴⁹ [Carolina Population Center. \(2014\). Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty Program Impact Evaluation.](#)

¹⁵⁰ [Carolina Population Center. \(2014\). Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty Program Impact Evaluation.](#)

¹⁵¹ [Carolina Population Center. \(2014\). Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty Program Impact Evaluation.](#)

¹⁵² [Carolina Population Center. \(2014\). Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty Program Impact Evaluation.](#)

¹⁵³ [Carolina Population Center. \(2014\). Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty Program Impact Evaluation.](#)

measure used was changes in food consumption. In the analysis demographic variables, such as age, gender, household size, and community-level effects were also controlled for.

Regression discontinuity analysis

Another quasi-experimental method is regression discontinuity analysis (RDA). This method is suitable for when membership to the control or treatment group is determined by a singular cut-off on a continuous scale (e.g., living below a certain income).¹⁵⁴ This threshold creates a discontinuity, and allows researchers to draw a comparison between those just above and just below the discontinuity.¹⁵⁵ The requirement to have this defined eligibility cut-off may not make this a suitable method for the evaluation of the Pathfinders, as there has not been suitable defined eligibility criteria to receive support. Additionally, one assumption of the RDA is that this cut-off cannot be the same as other programmes, which may pose complications for evaluation of a child poverty pathfinder, as eligibility for benefits or other support services may be similar and could therefore confound the results.¹⁵⁶

However, geographic regression discontinuity employs geographic or administrative boundaries (such as postcodes) which split groups into treatment and control.¹⁵⁷ However, this method is not without these limitations, as these boundaries are often shared with other programmes. In the case of Glasgow for example, the eligibility criteria of having a Glasgow postcode, also overlaps with other services offered by that local authority, this would make it difficult to isolate and attribute the outcomes of the Pathfinder. It is also necessary in this approach to track spatial correlations. However, to conduct this, the literature highlights that there needs to be clear geographic data collected for those in and outside the treatment area.

Contribution analysis

Contribution analysis can be useful to explain outcomes when quasi-experimental or experimental approaches are not available.¹⁵⁸ Contribution analysis relies on robust Theories of Change and can help evidence a programme's influence on specific outcomes.¹⁵⁹ Literature also highlights that in the Scottish context, contribution analysis has been shown to generate public value.¹⁶⁰ It also is useful

¹⁵⁴ [MDRC. \(2019\). Using a Regression Discontinuity Design for Evaluation Studies.](#)

¹⁵⁵ [MDRC. \(2019\). Using a Regression Discontinuity Design for Evaluation Studies.](#)

¹⁵⁶ [MDRC. \(2019\). Using a Regression Discontinuity Design for Evaluation Studies.](#)

¹⁵⁷ [Keele, L. & Titiunik, R. \(2015\). Geographic Boundaries as Regression Discontinuities.](#)

¹⁵⁸ [Better Evaluation. Contribution Analysis.](#)

¹⁵⁹ [Better Evaluation. Contribution Analysis.](#)

¹⁶⁰ [Connolly, J. \(2016\). Contribution Analysis as an Approach to Enable Public Managers to Demonstrate Public Value: The Scottish Context.](#)

for evidencing impact in complex landscapes.¹⁶¹ The Scottish Government has previously used contribution analysis, including in relation to National Outcome 12 and by NHS Scotland.¹⁶²

For a contribution analysis, evidence is gathered about the assumptions made in the Theory of Change, the links, and external factors that could affect outcomes. From this evidence, a contribution story can be synthesised and analysed. The idea is that if programme's implementation followed a Theory of Change that is supported by the evidence gathered, and external factors have been examined to show they did not significantly impact the outcomes, then the contribution of a programme to the outcomes can be shown.¹⁶³ However, it should be noted that problems of this approach include inferring causality and uncertainty in the contribution of the programme to the outcomes observed.¹⁶⁴

Case Study: Keep Well Programme, Scotland¹⁶⁵

Contribution analysis is becoming more popular and has recently been used to evaluate the Keep Well programme by NHS Scotland. This programme was aimed at the entire Scottish population and provided health checks in an effort to reduce cardiovascular and associated diseases and reduce health inequalities. The programme was able to be tailored and implemented across each health board.

NHS Scotland conducted an evaluation of the programme. The authors noted that quantitative research was limited by not having adequate data available, so contribution analysis was used. The evaluation followed similar steps of a contribution analysis including defining a model of change, gathering evidence, and plausibility reporting. To gather evidence for the impact study, they conducted group interviews, and synthesised existing evaluations and mapping studies. The evaluation found that the programme did not have an impact on the diagnosis rate of cardiovascular disease in Scotland. However, the authors also noted that contribution analysis allowed for an understanding of the impact of the programme in its local context.

Systems change

¹⁶¹ [Connolly, J. \(2016\). Contribution Analysis as an Approach to Enable Public Managers to Demonstrate Public Value: The Scottish Context.](#)

¹⁶² [Scottish Government. Guide 6: Contribution Analysis.](#)

¹⁶³ [Scottish Government. Guide 6: Contribution Analysis.](#)

¹⁶⁴ [Better Evaluation. Contribution Analysis.](#)

¹⁶⁵ [Connolly, J. \(2016\). Contribution Analysis as an Approach to Enable Public Managers to Demonstrate Public Value: The Scottish Context.](#)

There is significant amount of literature on what constitutes systems change and how to evaluate this. First, it is necessary to note that a system can be an entity or a collection of individuals, organisations, institutions.¹⁶⁶ Because of variety of actors and movement, change in a complex system is most likely non-linear and difficult to predict.¹⁶⁷ Therefore, in order to have systems change, “public policy and practice managers should avoid highly specified, over-determined and over-monitored approaches that fight with the natural way that change processes work in complex systems.”¹⁶⁸

Defining successful systems change

There is not one definition of systems change in the literature, but rather a wide range of definitions, theories, frameworks, and methods.¹⁶⁹ The exact definition of systems change and what this entails is different for each system and depending on local context, needs and challenges. Definitions from systems change do highlight a number of key factors which contribute to the success of systems change, and define when systems change is ‘completed’:

The University of Sheffield and CFE Research defined systems change as the opposite of the ‘status quo’: “Any change to a system which improves outcomes for the intended beneficiaries of a system, is sustainable in the long-term, and is transformational.”¹⁷⁰ This type of change is different to tokenistic changes, changes that rely on the work of individuals rather than services, and one-off developments.¹⁷¹

The Lankelly Chase Foundation and New Philanthropy Capital’s guide on *Systems Change: A guide to what it is and how to do it* highlighted systems change as an intentional process which requires buy-in from involved stakeholders and beneficiaries:

“Systems change [is] an intentional process designed to alter the status quo by shifting the function or structure of an identified system with purposeful interventions. It is a journey which can require radical change in people’s attitudes as well as in the ways people work. Systems change aims to bring about lasting

¹⁶⁶ Ghate, D. (2022). [Theory of Change for Making Children’s Rights Real in Scotland: Rapid Review of the Change Process no.2.](#)

¹⁶⁷ [Ghate, D. \(2022\). Theory of Change for Making Children’s Rights Real in Scotland: Rapid Review of the Change Process no.2.](#)

¹⁶⁸ [Ghate, D. \(2022\). Theory of Change for Making Children’s Rights Real in Scotland: Rapid Review of the Change Process no.2.](#)

¹⁶⁹ Hargreaves, M. (2010). *Evaluating System Change: A Planning Guide*. Princeton, NJ: Mathematica Policy Research.

¹⁷⁰ [Cordis Bright \(2020\). Evaluating Systems Change: Literature Review.](#)

¹⁷¹ Ibid. (Cordis B)

change by altering underlying structures and supporting mechanisms which make the system operate in a particular way."¹⁷²

Systems change may also occur as an unintentional process, through shifts in one part of the system which have repercussions on another part, whether positive or negative.

To understand the journey of systems change and its 'completion' requires an understanding of the characteristics of complex systems, which are "*comprised of multiple diverse interacting actors, and non-linear and non-proportional interactions between them.*"¹⁷³ Systems do not operate as siloes, but rather have **fluid boundaries** which shift and adjust as the system changes. Defining the change in a system therefore requires **a thorough understanding and mapping of what the system looks like**, which boundaries are used and subsequently who is included in the system and who is not.¹⁷⁴

A final key factor of successful and sustainable systems change is **the inclusion of experts**, being **people with lived experience**. As systems change often ultimately results in a change or improvement to how people with lived experience are supported, these people need to be able to directly influence the design and delivery of systems change: "*Experts provide a powerful and authentic voice and unique insights that can challenge assumptions, motivate organisations to do things differently and pinpoint areas for change.*"¹⁷⁵

Evaluating systems change

In terms of evaluating systems change, learning from Revolving Doors emphasised the need for an early definition of what would constitute success, what is included in the system, and what data needs to be collected to evidence this. Literature supports that there are three main areas where systems change can be evidenced: strategic learning; changes in the drivers, behaviours, or actors of the system; and changes in the outcomes of the system.¹⁷⁶ Possible indicators of systems change include changes in the scale, quality, and comprehensiveness of pathways or changes in the way these pathways link different steps or are co-ordinated.¹⁷⁷ Methods of determining if there has been changes in the drivers or behaviours of a system include social network analysis, outcome mapping, and outcome harvesting.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷² [Abercrombie, Harries, and Wharton \(2015\). Systems Change: A guide to what it is and how to do it.](#)

¹⁷³ Cordis B (2020).

¹⁷⁴ Abercrombie, Harries, and Wharton (2015).

¹⁷⁵ Cordis Bright (2020).

¹⁷⁶ [Cabaj, M. \(2019\). Evaluating Systems Change Results.](#)

¹⁷⁷ [Latham, N. \(2014\). Systems Change Evaluation Toolkit.](#)

¹⁷⁸ [Cabaj, M. \(2019\). Evaluating Systems Change Results.](#)

In terms of evaluating the effects of systems change on the outcomes of the programme, methods previously used have been contribution analysis and mixed methods research.¹⁷⁹ However, there are some challenges to systems change evaluations. Principally, because of the nature of systems change, the scope of the evaluation must be bounded, and it is often impossible to establish a counterfactual and attribute outcomes in a systems change evaluation.¹⁸⁰ The literature also highlights that action research is suited to systems change evaluations.¹⁸¹ This is because conducting action research allows findings to inform the decisions of stakeholders as they are being made.¹⁸² This adaptive research style reflects the need to be flexible when evaluating complex systems.¹⁸³

An example of a systems change evaluation is that of Fulfilling Lives, a holistic support programme that focused on systems change approach to multiple disadvantages.¹⁸⁴ This evaluation used qualitative research including interviews and focus groups with partnership staff and stakeholders. The audio transcripts from these sessions were coded in an Excel framework according to the themes of the evaluation framework.

Economic analysis

In terms of economic assessment and evaluations that are several approaches including: cost benefit analysis (CBA), social return on investment, and cost-effective analysis (CEA). CEA is most suited to situations when the full costs can be estimated and compared and attributed to specific outcomes. The Local Authority Child Poverty Innovation Pilot Evaluation used a CEA to compare the cost effectiveness of the different Pilots. However, the authors noted that there were significant problems with the CEA because of a lack of data on outputs and outcomes. Moreover, there were great differences in the approaches taken by each pilot to data collection, making it difficult to compare outcomes, even when data was available.¹⁸⁵ The final report for this programme was only able to provide partial estimates on the cost-effectiveness of the programme due to the lack of data. The case study highlights the need to collect suitable data and use standard tools to measure and report outputs and outcomes across the programme.

¹⁷⁹ [Cabaj, M. \(2019\). Evaluating Systems Change Results.](#)

¹⁸⁰ [Cordis Bright. \(2020\). Evaluating Systems Change.](#)

¹⁸¹ [Cordis Bright. \(2020\). Evaluating Systems Change.](#)

¹⁸² [Cordis Bright. \(2020\). Evaluating Systems Change.](#)

¹⁸³ [Cordis Bright. \(2020\). Evaluating Systems Change.](#)

¹⁸⁴ [CFE Research. \(2022\). Creating Systems Change: Evaluating the Contribution of the Fulfilling Lives Programme.](#)

¹⁸⁵ [GHK. \(2011\). Local Authority Child Poverty Innovation Pilot Evaluation: Final Synthesis Report.](#)

Further, in their evaluation of their Child Poverty Strategy, the Welsh Government highlighted how a CBA may be impractical for evaluations of child poverty strategies where monetised impact data is not available.¹⁸⁶

Case Study: Troubled Families Evaluation¹⁸⁷

The national evaluation of the Troubled Families Programme conducted a cost benefit analysis based on data from the 124,000 families who joined the programme in 2017/18. The CBA was based on the outputs from the Propensity Score Matching, which included the following outcomes: looked after children, children in need, adult convictions, child convictions, claimant status, and adult employment status. Only the outcomes that were statistically significant between the treatment and control groups in these models were included in the CBA.

The monetisation values used in the CBA came from the New Economy Manchester Unit Cost Database. The evaluation looked the economic case, including all economic and social benefits, to examine the public value of the Troubled Families Programme. It also looked the fiscal case, which estimated the budgetary impacts.

Common challenges

The evidence reviewed so far has highlighted two main challenges in evaluating programmes concerning child poverty, holistic services, and systems change. First, is the problem of attribution. This is partly because these programmes operate in a larger policy environment. The Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-2026, notes that especially for policies concerning poverty in Scotland, it is impossible to isolate the impact of programme as outcomes are inherently tied to macroeconomic conditions in the UK.¹⁸⁸

Second, another problem present is around data quality and data lag. The time lag in data reporting and publishing and the dynamic nature of poverty, means that the data only represents a snapshot of the situation. Additionally, the lag between collection and publication of large administrative datasets often means that evaluations are using data that is usually over a year old.¹⁸⁹ Additionally, for holistic services, especially those operating across several levels, evaluations rely on locally collected data which can be of variable quality.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁶ [Welsh Government. \(2014\). Evaluation of the Welsh Child Poverty Strategy Final Report.](#)

¹⁸⁷ [Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. \(2019\). National Evaluation of the Troubled Families Programme 2015-2020](#)

¹⁸⁸ [Scottish Government. \(2022\). Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-2026 Annex 2.](#)

¹⁸⁹ [Scottish Government. \(2022\). Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022-2026 Annex 2.](#)

¹⁹⁰ [Welsh Government. \(2014\). Evaluation of the Welsh Child Poverty Strategy Final Report.](#)

Key implications

The initial key implications that are relevant to the Child Poverty Pathfinders are highlighted below:

- Child poverty should be measured using a variety of indicators including relative and income poverty, worklessness, skills and qualifications, housing, and health
- The Theories of Change should be used to guide the creation of data collection priorities and tools. These should be continually adapted to local contexts and respond to the experiences of service users
- Evaluation methodologies and data collection tools need to be flexible enough to account for unintended outcomes and longer-term impacts that are characteristic of systems change and holistic services. These also should incorporate and respond to learning throughout the evaluation
- To have a comprehensive evaluation that is tailored to local contexts and can help account for unintended outcomes, both qualitative and quantitative methods are important for the evaluation
- Quasi-experimental methods can be used to show the impact of a programme using a non-randomised counterfactual. However, the robustness of the analysis is reliant on data quality and availability
- Contribution analysis can evidence impact and is useful when experimental or quasi-experimental approaches are not possible
- Systems change can be evidenced through examining changes in the drivers, behaviours, or outcomes of a system
- The economic impact of programmes can be assessed through CEA, CBA, and SROI
- Attribution and data quality are of primary concern for evaluations

Appendix 3 – Ethical framework

Ethical Consideration	Implications for evaluation
Managing disclosures made by families during field research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Escalation pathways to access support for individuals, appropriately skilled researchers
Minimising harm to research participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adhering to the rights of children and families, particularly protective responsibilities around vulnerable groups • Trauma informed approaches • Voluntary participation and ability to withdraw, and ensuring there isn't an expectation on families to participate in research when receiving support • Ensuring evaluation activities are justified in terms of need to answer the research questions • Focus on what is relevant and vital to the research need • Tailor research approach to individual need • Lived experience input into research design
Managing identification of fraud or illegal activity through field research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear guidance on what to do with this information • Appropriately skilled researchers • Understanding of how to interpret data where there may be inaccuracies as a result of fraud
Managing conversations on sensitive issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trauma informed approaches • Being cognisant of stigma around poverty • Appropriately skilled researchers

<p>Reducing barriers to participation in field research</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible research in terms of practicality to participate and the way conversations are had to enable meaningful contribution and productive and positive conversations • Tailor approaches to individual need, ensuring there isn't an expectation on families to participate in research when receiving support
<p>Ensuring research is mutually beneficial for the researcher and participant</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback loops of findings • Incentive/thank you vouchers • Efficient and careful use of participant's time, lived experience input into research design
<p>Ensuring informed consent</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing detail on the context and purpose of the work • Ensuring people know participating is voluntary • Explaining how their information will be protected and used • Not over promising benefits of participating • Framing it as a pilot that will inform service delivery • Ensuring there isn't an expectation on families to participate in research when receiving support
<p>Ensuring efficient and justified expenditure on research and evaluation activity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing detail on the context and purpose of the work • Ensuring people know participating is voluntary • Explaining how their information will be protected and used • Not over promising benefits of participating • Framing it as a pilot that will inform future service delivery

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring there isn't an expectation on families to participate in research when receiving support
Protecting the time of research participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring evaluation activities are justified in terms of need to answer the research questions • Focus on what is relevant and vital to the research need • Having a clear focus for the research • Designing efficient and prioritised methods and tools • Aligning research activities to minimize duplication and inefficient processes
Ensuring robust and useable research findings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A clear understanding of the standards required for evidence collection, analysis and reporting • Ensuring that we are articulating the complexity and variability of what success looks like given the needs of families vary • Building rapport and trust with research participants to ensure high quality evidence gathered from field research
Managing implicit bias/generalising/stereotyping during research and analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriately skilled researchers • A clear understanding of the standards required for evidence collection, analysis and reporting
Protecting the wellbeing and time of non-participating research groups (e.g. control groups who aren't receiving Pathfinder support)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring evaluation activities are justified in terms of need to answer the research questions • Focus on what is relevant and vital to the research need
Protection of personal and sensitive data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong data protection processes

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Analysis and reporting protecting anonymity, appropriately skilled researchers
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Appendix 4 – Feasibility of theory-based evaluation methods for Child Poverty Pathfinders

A theory-based approach to evaluating the Pathfinders is feasible and well suited to this type of intervention. The Pathfinders are operating in complex environments, where it is unlikely impacts may be attributed to one programme or intervention. Contribution analysis (CA), specifically, is an ideal theory-based evaluation methodology to assess the impact of complex programmes – where the focus is on assessing the degree to which a programme’s interventions can be said to have contributed to (rather than have definitively caused) outcomes and impact.

“[W]ithin contribution analysis, a plausible narrative is considered to have been developed when four different conditions are met (Mayne 2008).

1. The ...intervention is based on a sound Theory of Change, accompanied by agreed and plausible assumptions, that explains how the intervention sought to bring about any desired changes.
2. The activities of the ... intervention were implemented properly.
3. There is adequate evidence showing that change occurred at each level of the Theory of Change.
4. The relative contribution of external factors or other development interventions can be dismissed or demonstrated.” (INTRAC, 2017)

As part of the commission, we have co-designed Theories of Change with assumptions and risks with the Pathfinders, and developed detailed M&E frameworks based on data audit exercises undertaken with the Pathfinders (see ToC and MEL report), which will enable evaluators to examine the data collated by the Pathfinders (and collect further data) and to assess the evidence at each link in the Theories of Change, and develop a contribution story. There is also an existing body of evidence underpinning the Theories of Change from previous evaluations, which have tested elements of the Theories of Change including the ‘support models’ used by the Glasgow and Dundee Pathfinder (see below), which suggests that key elements of the Theories of Change are sound. The process study planned will also provide useful information on the implementation aspects of the Pathfinders.

We have discussed the potential of using CA here as part of a summative evaluation. However, as discussed above it may also be used to guide developmental evaluation. Developmental evaluation is well-suited to interventions in complex settings. In Developmental Evaluation, evaluation occurs at regular intervals, such that learning is continuously fed back into programme delivery, allowing it to improve, adapt and respond, a critical aspect of the Pathfinders. We

have developed detailed M&E frameworks for the Pathfinders which will enable them to track change over time. They have already started establishing M&E and data systems (see ToC and MEL report) and the M&E framework will support them to continue establishing their systems. Evaluation expertise is often required to set up M&E frameworks and provide early guidance. However once evaluative thinking becomes normative within the delivery team, developmental evaluation can be embedded without the need for evaluative expertise.¹⁹¹

Given a key aim of the Pathfinders is to gather learning and evidence of what is working to support national efforts to reduce child poverty at scale, an evaluation approach that places emphasis on learning seems well-suited. Developmental evaluation though time intensive may be a cost-effective option in the short-term. In any case, any investment on developing robust M&E processes by the Pathfinders in the implementation phase will not only support learning, but also the ability of the Pathfinders to adapt and improve. Furthermore, the data and evidence collated by the Pathfinders will also, of course, enable a more robust and useful summative evaluation to be undertaken.

Existing evidence on the approaches taken by the Pathfinders

There is a reasonable body of evidence on the effectiveness of key features of both the Glasgow and Dundee pathfinder. The key features which the literature emphasises as crucial for addressing poverty is offering personalised, holistic, and whole-family support. The Supporting Families framework, outlines that strong local partnerships that can identify and support families in need seamlessly across a range of services will be critical for addressing child poverty.¹⁹² Similarly, a review of best practice in this area conducted by the government of Northern Ireland concluded that successful interventions were characterised by: parental engagement, targeted approaches, harnessing existing resources, and holistic services.¹⁹³

There is also previous research that suggests that having one access-point to several services can help expand individuals access to a variety of services.¹⁹⁴ In their research, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, highlights that children and family service should be combined and delivered together wherever possible, to ensure

¹⁹¹ Software such as OutNav, developed by Matter of Focus, for example, can help teams to collate relevant and useful data against outcomes and indicators, allowing the team to regularly reflect on delivery, and adapt and respond.

¹⁹² [Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. \(2021\). Supporting Families 2021-22 and Beyond.](#)

¹⁹³ [Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister. \(2013\). Best Practice in Addressing Child poverty.](#)

¹⁹⁴ [The Poverty Alliance. \(2022\). Child poverty Delivery Plan 2022-2026: Voices From Our Communities.](#)

that the whole family is supported.¹⁹⁵ Moreover, echoing Glasgow Pathfinder's approach, they also recommend co-ordinating local services so that families can access the support they need without being passed around between services.¹⁹⁶ Similarly, this is reflected in the Supporting Families which advocates for a single-access point for families as a gateway to holistic and co-ordinated services.¹⁹⁷

Previous research has also shown that the key worker model is effective in delivering direct and holistic support, especially for families and children with several and complex needs.¹⁹⁸ Although not solely focused on child poverty, the Institute of Health Visiting states that an integrated whole-systems approach is necessary for ensuring that a child has the best start to life. This is because often children and their families need support from a range of services. It also suggests that this also allows for 'trusting relationships' to be formed between the key worker and the family. "Across the children's sector, there is increasing acknowledgement that meeting the complex needs of children, ... , means focusing on whole-system approach to understanding and mitigating risk in a young person's wider environment."¹⁹⁹ Similarly, the identification and service delivery through home visits, can also be important in reducing poverty and its impact.²⁰⁰ This is especially true if this occurs within the first few years of a child's life.²⁰¹ This is also reflected in the Supporting Families Framework, which advocates that vulnerable families need to be identified by local service providers and supported, so that no family is left behind and it also reinforces a preventative approach.²⁰² Moreover, the outreach approach taken to approach families has been shown to be important in reaching families who may not know that support is available or are not comfortable accessing services by themselves.²⁰³

¹⁹⁵ [Joseph Rowntree Foundation. \(2016\). We Can Solve Poverty in the UK.](#)

¹⁹⁶ [Joseph Rowntree Foundation. \(2016\). We Can Solve Poverty in the UK.](#)

¹⁹⁷ [Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. \(2021\). Supporting Families 2021-22 and Beyond.](#)

¹⁹⁸ [CanChild](#)

¹⁹⁹ [Research in Practice. \(2022\). What is Early Help? Concepts, Policy, Directions, and Multi-agency Perspectives.. Link](#)

²⁰⁰ [Molloy, D. \(2019\) Child poverty and Early Intervention.](#)

²⁰¹ [Molloy, D. \(2019\) Child poverty and Early Intervention.](#)

²⁰² [Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. \(2021\). Supporting Families 2021-22 and Beyond.](#)

²⁰³ [Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. \(2021\). Supporting Families 2021-22 and Beyond.](#)

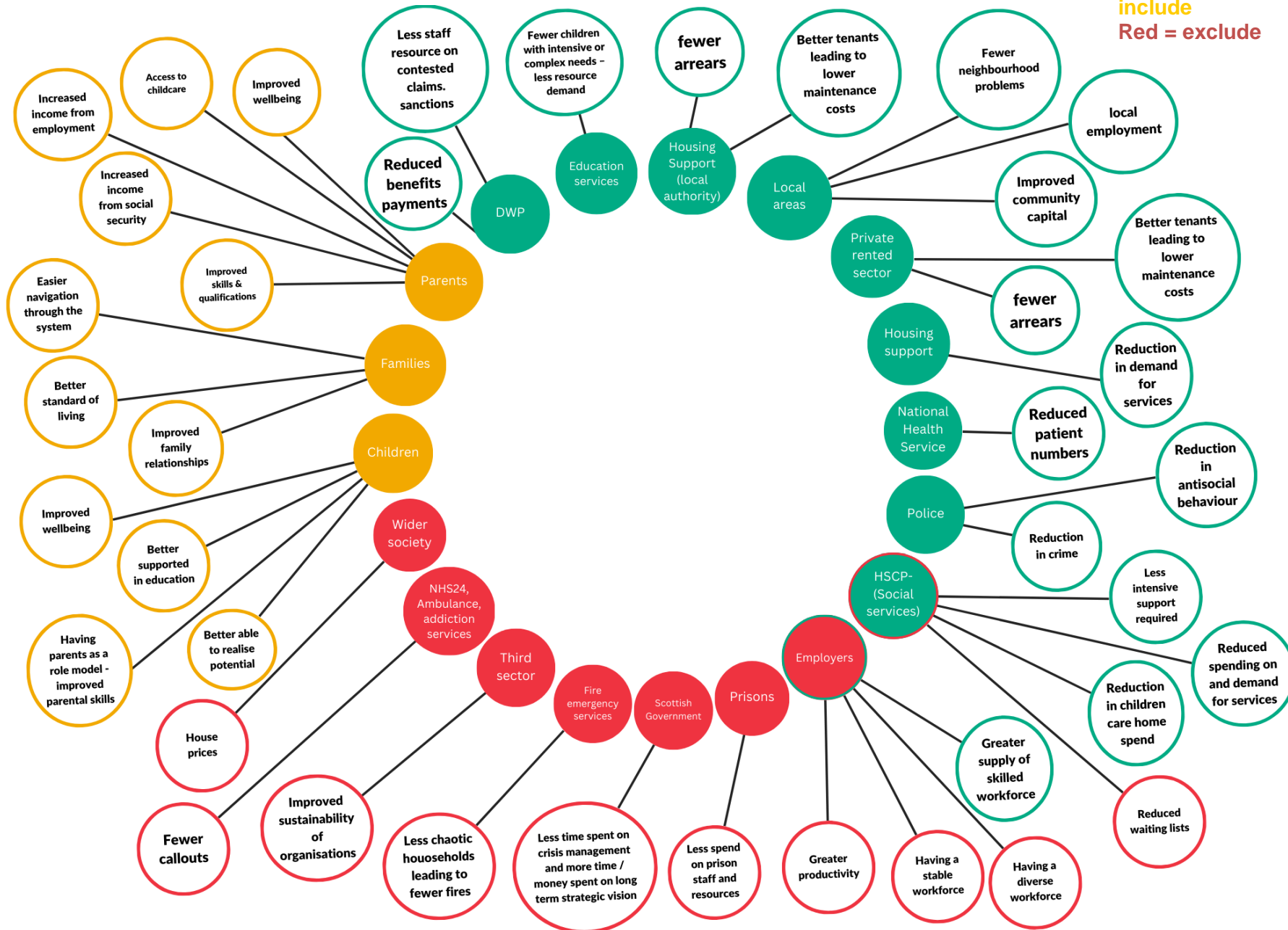
Appendix 5 – Costs and benefits in scope for the economic evaluation

The main costs of the service to capture in the evaluation were identified in the economic evaluation workshop. These were categorised into costs coming from the direct funding of the Pathfinders, and in-kind costs, as shown below.

	Costs
Direct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enrolment of Glasgow Helps customer care team • Procurement of services – delivery of referral • Rent of buildings • Customer record management (IT system) • Telephony system • Evaluation activities • Direct Pathfinder delivery team (staffing costs) • Local authority Pathfinder team – coordination role
In-kind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scottish Government costs to support Pathfinder • In-kind referrals – food parcels etc. • Staff in partner organisations • Fuel support scheme costs • Costs to DWP and SSS budgets • Costs to ELC budget • Fire and rescue team member • Scottish Government analytical support, project management and policy impact

On the benefits side, in the workshop we collected a longlist of benefits that could arise, and then categorised these based on whether they should be included or excluded. This categorisation was based on whether the beneficiary was part of the first-hand impacts of the Pathfinder (in which case they should be included), or whether the benefits arose as indirect, knock-on effects (in which case they were excluded). The diagram overleaf illustrates the beneficiaries and associated benefits in scope for the evaluation.

Green = external benefits to include
 Yellow = service user benefits to include
 Red = exclude



As set out in detail in the section on evaluating value for money, if adopting a quasi-experimental approach, it is possible to quantify benefits based on the outcomes measured in the impact evaluation. This would limit the benefits in the CBA to those included in the impact evaluation. On the other hand, if not using this approach, and instead relying on internal data from the Pathfinders – or other data collected as part of the impact evaluation – then the following data sources may be used to identify the number of beneficiaries against each benefit.

Data sources for calculating the number of beneficiaries

Benefit	Method of counting beneficiaries	Dundee data source	Glasgow data source
Fewer children with intensive or complex needs – less resource demand (education services)	People supported with children with complex needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case management data • Client spreadsheet • Dundee Pathfinder monitoring Data Excel Spreadsheet • Exit interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exit interviews • Glasgow Helps Monitoring Data Excel Spreadsheet • Holistic Needs Assessment
Reduction in demand for services (housing support)	People provided support in relation to housing	As above	As above
Reduction in children care home spend	People supported with care-experienced children	As above	As above
Less intensive support required (HSCP)	People with health and social care issues resolved	As above	As above
Reduced spending on and demand for services (HSCP)	People with health and social care issues resolved	As above	As above
Fewer arrears (housing)	People provided support in relation to housing costs	As above plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing benefit and council tax reduction data 	As above

Better tenants leading to lower maintenance costs (housing)	People provided support in relation to housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case management data • Client spreadsheet • Dundee Pathfinder monitoring Data Excel Spreadsheet • Exit interviews 	As above
Reduced patient numbers (NHS)	People provided health-related support	As above	As above
Less staff resource on contested claims/sanctions (DWP)	People provided support on benefits	As above plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DWP customer database 	As above
Reduced benefits payments (DWP)	People who moved off benefits and into employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case management data • Client spreadsheet • Dundee Pathfinder monitoring Data Excel Spreadsheet 	As above
Greater supply of skilled workforce (employers)	People gaining qualifications	As above plus: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exit interviews 	As above
Reduction in antisocial behaviour (Police)	Support provided for people at risk of antisocial behaviour / crime	As above	As above
Reduction in crime (Police)	Support provided for people at risk of antisocial behaviour / crime	As above	As above
Fewer neighbourhood problems	Support provided for people at risk of antisocial behaviour / crime	As above	As above
Improved community capital (spending)	People with increased income	As above	As above

in local businesses plus community feeling)			
Local employment	People entering employment in local business	As above	As above
Improved family relationships	Number of families supported reporting improved relationships	As above	As above
Better standard of living	People with increased income; people who entered employment; people reporting improved health	As above	As above
Easier navigation through the system	People who reported improved understanding of the system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exit interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exit interviews
Improved wellbeing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater confidence • Enhanced resilience 	People who reported improved wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Case management data • Client spreadsheet • Dundee Pathfinder monitoring Data Excel Spreadsheet • Exit interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anxiety matrix spreadsheet • Exit interviews • Glasgow Helps Monitoring Data Excel Spreadsheet • Holistic Needs Assessment
Increased income from employment	People who entered employment	As above	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exit interviews • Glasgow Helps Monitoring Data Excel Spreadsheet • Holistic Needs Assessment
Increased income from social security	People who accessed social security	As above	As above
Improved skills and qualifications	People who gained a qualification	As above	As above
Access to childcare	People who accessed childcare	As above	As above

Better supported in education	People supported with children with attendance or attainment issues	As above	As above
Better able to realise potential	People supported with children with attendance or attainment issues	As above	As above
Having parent as a role model – improved parental skills	People who reported improved parental relationships/abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exit interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exit interviews

Appendix 6 – Initial Proxy Bank for the economic assessment

This Appendix outlines a suggested list of financial proxies to use in a cost benefit or social return on investment analysis for the economic evaluation. Financial proxies are used to represent the monetary value associated with the impacts of an intervention where an exact financial measure is not available. When the evaluators are conducting the economic assessment they will be able to draw from this list, as well as supplement it with additional or alternative proxies, as appropriate.

Impact	Proxy measure(s)	Proxy value	Source
DWP: Reduced benefits payments	Fiscal benefit of fewer JSA payments	£19,153	Greater Manchester Combined Authority CBA model ²⁰⁴
Parents: Increased income from employment	Increased income	£10,504	Greater Manchester Combined Authority CBA model
	Reduced debt	£13,000	CAB ²⁰⁵
Parents: Improved skills and qualifications	Increase in earnings amongst residents achieving Level 2 NVQ	£443	Greater Manchester Combined Authority CBA model
	Increase in earnings amongst residents achieving Level 3 NVQ progressing from Level 2	£921	Greater Manchester Combined Authority CBA model
	Achieving 5 good National 5 Qualifications	For Males- £115,851 For Females- £118,714	The economic value of key intermediate qualifications: estimating the returns and lifetime productivity gains to GCSEs, A levels and apprenticeships , 2014
	Achieving 4 good Higher Qualifications	For Males- £101,309 For Females- £85,643	The economic value of key intermediate qualifications: estimating the returns and lifetime productivity

²⁰⁴ <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/research/research-cost-benefit-analysis/>

²⁰⁵ [Delivering Debt Advice during a Pandemic](#)

Impact	Proxy measure(s)	Proxy value	Source
			gains to GCSEs, A levels and apprenticeships , 2014
	Employment training	£807	HACT ²⁰⁶
Children: Better supported in education	Cost of School Packed Lunch for one week	£10	Evaluation Universal Infant Free School Meals (UIFSM) policy, 2018 ²⁰⁷
Children: Better able to realise potential	Avoidance of longer term, post-school costs (e.g. around economic inactivity, health, social costs associated with being NEET) that are associated with low levels of literacy (per year)	£28,286	The long term costs of literacy difficulties, 2009, Every Child a Chance Trust
Families: Easier navigation through the system	Increase in income: additional interests rates and charges that people on low incomes pay, Economic Benefit	£500	Financial Inclusion Centre ²⁰⁸
Education services: Less resource demand	Persistent truancy cost per year	£1,965	Greater Manchester Combined Authority CBA model
	Permanent Exclusion from School	£12,007	Greater Manchester Combined Authority CBA model
NHS: Reduced patient numbers	Reduced health cost of interventions	£4,671	Greater Manchester Combined Authority CBA model
	Reduced cost of unnecessary A&E attendance	£134	Greater Manchester Combined Authority CBA model

²⁰⁶ [HACT. \(2014\). Measuring the Social Impact of Community Investment: A Guide to using the Wellbeing Valuation Approach.](#)

²⁰⁷ <https://epi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/UIFSM-evaluation-7.compressed.pdf>

²⁰⁸ [Circle Anglia, The Real Cost of Christmas](#)

Impact	Proxy measure(s)	Proxy value	Source
	Reduced cost of an average admission to hospital (elective and non-elective)	£2,941	Greater Manchester Combined Authority CBA model
	Reduced NHS costs from getting a person into employment	£508	The Department for Work and Pensions Social Cost Benefit Analysis framework ²⁰⁹
Police: Reduction in antisocial behaviour	Reduced incident requiring no further action	£153	Greater Manchester Combined Authority CBA model
	Reduced incidents requiring further action	£618	Greater Manchester Combined Authority CBA model
	Estimated annual cost to society of child or young person with a conduct disorder	£3,700	A Social Return on Investment (SROI) Evaluation of the Houghton Project ²¹⁰
Police: Reduction in crime	Reduced police, other criminal justice costs, health costs per actual crime	£3,497	Greater Manchester Combined Authority CBA model
	Cost of property crime	£444-£5,170 (depending on age and gender)	The Department for Work and Pensions Social Cost Benefit Analysis framework
Housing support: Fewer arrears and better tenants	Reduced costs of legal proceedings and repair of property	£6,680	Greater Manchester Combined Authority CBA model
	Reduced costs of temporary housing etc.	£2,501	Greater Manchester Combined Authority CBA model
Education services: Less resource demand	Reduced cost of safeguarding	£65,905	Greater Manchester Combined Authority CBA model
	Cost of 2 teaching assistants, one day weekly	£5,280	A Social Return on Investment (SROI)

²⁰⁹ [Fujiwara, D. \(2010\). The Department for Work and Pensions Social Cost Benefit Analysis framework.](#)

²¹⁰ [Leck, C. \(2018\). A Social Return on Investment \(SROI\) Evaluation of the Houghton Project.](#)

Impact	Proxy measure(s)	Proxy value	Source
			Evaluation of the Houghton Project
	Annual average childcare expenditure	£694-£477 (depending on parent type)	The Department for Work and Pensions Social Cost Benefit Analysis framework
Children: Better able to realise potential / better supported in education	Reduced persistent truancy (<85% attendance at school)	£2,351	Greater Manchester Combined Authority CBA model
	Reduced exclusion from school	£9,748	Greater Manchester Combined Authority CBA model
Parents / children / families: Improved wellbeing	Increased wellbeing of the population	£13,000	Greater Manchester Combined Authority CBA model
	Can rely on family	£6,784	HACT
	Member of social group	£1,850	HACT
	Good overall health	£20,141	HACT
	Feel in control of life	£12,470	HACT
	Positive functioning (autonomy, control, aspirations)	£3,500	Greater Manchester Combined Authority CBA model
	High confidence (adult)	£13,080	HACT
	Improvements in confidence (youth)	£9,283	HACT
	Increased confidence / self-esteem	£3,500	Greater Manchester Combined Authority CBA model
	Increased confidence	£13,080	Big Lottery Fund ²¹¹
	Average cost of service provision for <u>adults</u> suffering from depression and/or anxiety disorders, per person per year	£4,741	Greater Manchester Combined Authority CBA model

²¹¹ [Big Lottery Fund. \(2014\). Wellbeing Programme: An introduction to Social Return on Investment.](#)

Impact	Proxy measure(s)	Proxy value	Source
	Average cost of service provision for <u>children/adolescents</u> suffering from mental health disorders, per person per year	£284	Greater Manchester Combined Authority CBA model
Local areas: Fewer neighbourhood problems	Good neighbourhood	£1,747	HACT
	Feel belonging to neighbourhood	£3,753	HACT
	Talks to neighbours regularly	£3,848	HACT
	Able to obtain advice locally	£2,457	HACT
Cost of a food parcel	Average cost of Food parcel (1 week supply)	£17.66	Furey, Sinead & Caraher, Martin. (2018). The differential cost of an emergency food parcel and a consensually acceptable basket of healthy food . Primary Health Care Open Access. 08. 10.4172/2167-1079-C6-031.



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This document is also available from our website at www.gov.scot.
ISBN: 978-1-80525-825-4

The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

Produced for
the Scottish Government
by APS Group Scotland
PPDAS1288022 (05/23)
Published by
the Scottish Government,
May 2023



Social Research series
ISSN 2045-6964
ISBN 978-1-80525-825-4

Web Publication
www.gov.scot/socialresearch

PPDAS1288022 (05/23)