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Post-programme:

Technical Data

September 2024

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The Institute of Place Management (the IPM) consists of an internationally acclaimed research group based at Manchester Metropolitan University and a professional network of place practitioners, policymakers, and other academics who work collaboratively to make better places.

ABOUT THE REVIEW PROCESS

This report was reviewed by members of the High Streets Task Force Board and Executive as well as representatives from the Sector Leaders Group and the Professional, Research and Data Group.

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1. Introduction and background

The High Streets Task Force (HSTF) was established in 2019 by the Ministry for Housing, Communities, and Local Government to provide essential tools and expertise to local authorities for revitalising high streets in England. This report, authored by the project team at Manchester Metropolitan University and Cardiff University, documents the approach taken by the HSTF to monitor and evaluate its interventions.

Aims and Objectives

The primary aim of this report is to explain how the HSTF operated and to document the full approach taken to monitoring and evaluation (M&E). The objectives include:

1. **Detailing the operational model:** To provide a clear understanding of the HSTF's structure, governance, and the roles of various consortium partners.
1. **Summarising research and data utilised:** To outline the underpinning research, methodologies, and data sources used by the HSTF.
2. **Evaluating interventions:** To assess the success of various interventions through qualitative and quantitative data, documenting both process and outcome evaluations.
3. **Providing method and analysis for legacy and recommendations.** To show how insights that will inform future policy and practice in high street management and regeneration have been generated.

This report is designed to be read in conjunction with the Findings report, which summarises the results and provides additional insight and interpretation.

1.1 Background to the High Streets Task Force

In July 2018, then High Streets Minister Rt Hon Jake Berry established an Expert Panel to identify the key challenges facing high streets and town centres and propose actionable steps for the government to help reverse their decline. Chaired by Sir John Timpson, the panel included experts from retail, design, property, community sectors, and local government. The Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government (MHCLG) commissioned the Institute of Place Management (IPM) to lead evidence-gathering sessions for the review. IPM held workshops between August and November 2018 in Aldershot, Altrincham, Bristol, Holmfirth, and Shrewsbury. These sessions brought together local stakeholders to discuss structural and consumer behaviour shifts affecting high streets as well as identify barriers and opportunities for change. Additionally, in September 2018, the IPM gathered insights from young people at a Teenage Market franchise in Bolton, interviewing the co-founder and young traders about their views on the future of high streets.

1.1.1 IPM support to Timpson Review

Findings from these evidence collecting activities were outlined in a report produced by the IPM for MHCLG in December 2018 (Millington et al., 2018) which provided the following key insights:

1. **Place leadership and partnerships** - Place-based leadership, collaborative networks, and partnership working was integral to facilitating place change.
2. **Place knowledge** - High Street and town centre stakeholders needed to undertake more evidence-based decision-making through better sharing of data, trends, and local insight.
3. **Place communications** - Effective place leadership involved encouraging open communication flows between a range of place stakeholders.
4. **Places and young people** - Young people needed to be heard and engaged in designing the high streets of the future.
5. **Place professionals** - Professionalisation of the place management sector was required to ensure people act in the long-term interests of places, make effective decisions, and are supported in their action, with sufficient resources.

1.1.3 Key findings of Timpson Review and High Street 2030

Subsequently, drawing from the findings of the Expert Panel and IPM report, Sir John Timpson and his panel produced The High Street Report 2018 which presented the following recommendations for central government to support high streets and town centres:

1. Establish a High Streets Task Force, to provide a single voice for town centres, expert support, encourage sharing and use of data in decision-making, and the formation and maintenance of local networks and partnerships.
2. Create a Future High Streets Fund to offer funding for places with clear visions and capacity for change.
3. Propose short-term solutions, including a National High Street Perfect Day initiative to improve place appearance, innovative repurposing of vacant units, and car parking reviews.

1.1.4 Procuring a High Streets Task Force

Following the recommendations of the High Street Report, in March 2019 the UK government announced that they would create “a new forward-thinking High Streets Task Force (that will) support local leaders to revitalise high streets and town centres”. A pre-market engagement process followed, which sought to gather further evidence of the challenges for high streets and town centres, and capture views on how a Task Force could be configured to address these challenges.

Following this exercise, the tender opened for submissions, with a closing date of May 9th, 2019. The tender document set out that the newly formed Task Force would provide a single place for local leaders in high streets and town centres to access support and guidance, and support them in developing and implementing high quality, evidence based, locally led plans for their high street and town centre. It would do this in four ways (the objectives of the Task Force):

- Increasing coordination between different groups and organisations
- Building placemaking skills
- Boosting Local Authority capacity through provision of expertise and

- Information and data sharing through improving the use of data and sharing best practice and guidance

1.1.5 Problems the High Streets Task Force was set up to address

The major problems the Task Force was originally set up to address have been organised into local and national problems and linked to the HSTF objectives and the original tender document.

HSTF Objective	Local problem	National problem
Boost local authority capacity	On their own, many local authorities struggle to identify the capacity and expertise needed to bring about sustainable, high-street regeneration (p.12).	Competing strategic objectives. Before 2018 Timpson Review, High streets not such a policy priority (with exception of Portas Pilots, 2011)
Improve place making skills	Making better places not the sole responsibility of the local authority. Placemaking is a multi-stakeholder endeavour (p.25).	Making better places is not the domain of one profession/discipline (p.25). Poor understanding of 'place leadership' and range of skills and knowledge required in successful placemaking.
Increase coordination	Little attempt to build consensus locally over issues/opportunities (p.37). Leads to lack of buy-in. Shortage of structures to bring high street interests together productively at local level.	Sector bodies (e.g. local authorities, retailers, community groups) represent their own (not high street) interests. National media narrative one of decline and retail closure. (F)
Share data and knowledge	Objective data/evidence only sparingly used in high street decision making (p.48). Leads to selection/funding of inappropriate projects/interventions.	No shortage of guidance, case-studies, and advice (p.46) but lack of signposting, consistency, and authority. National frameworks and signposting needed to evaluate, structure, and disseminate knowledge that reliably informs practice.




Table i Problems the HSTF was set up to solve





1.2 About the High Streets Task Force





The Institute of Place Management convened a consortium of partners to represent the many forms of expertise the programme would need, providers of data, research and project management expertise, as well as organisations that had access to important local networks. Manchester Metropolitan University (IPM's legal home and the lead partner for HSTF) was awarded the contract for the project, which was signed on 5th July 2019.

1.2.1 Consortium partners

The High Streets Task Force positioned itself as “an alliance of place makers”. Led by the Institute of Place Management at Manchester Metropolitan University the HSTF included 12 other partners. All the consortium partners are introduced in Table ii below.

Consortium Partners	Specialism
Institute of Place Management placemanagement.org 	Institute of Place Management is the international professional body for people involved in making, maintaining and marketing places. The Institute is part of Manchester Metropolitan University whose academics provided the underpinning research and knowledge for the Task Force. The project team matched expertise with local area need, trained experts, developed the training, provided content for the HSTF website, curated the resource library, and produced HSTF communications.
PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (PwC) pwc.co.uk 	PwC is a global professional services network with headquarters in London. PwC has broad experience working with public sector clients, helping to deliver and manage large-scale programmes such as the Task Force. PwC acted as a delivery and planning partner, providing expertise and resources for the coordination of the Task Force.
Royal Town Planning Institute rtpi.org.uk 	The Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) is the UK's leading planning body for spatial, sustainable and inclusive planning and is the largest planning institute in Europe with over 25,000 members. The RTPI identified experts to boost local authority capacity, developed training sessions with town planning professionals, and chaired the HSTF Professional, Research and Data Group

<p>Design Council designcouncil.org.uk</p> 	<p>Design Council is an independent charity and the Government's advisor on design. Their purpose is to make life better by design by enabling better places, products, and processes. The Design Council worked with the Task Force to: develop a sustainable brand; use design tools and methods to challenge people to think innovatively about the future of their high streets; and share expertise in inclusion, healthy placemaking, service design, and social and environmental sustainability</p>
<p>The BID Foundation thebidfoundation.co.uk</p>  THE BID FOUNDATION	<p>The BID Foundation is an industry body for Business Improvement Districts established in January 2018 following a UK-wide consultation. It is an independent and authoritative voice for BIDs and has led the development of industry standards. Its members are active place leaders in towns and cities with extensive networks. The BID Foundation co-chaired the High Streets Task Force Sector Leaders Group and worked with IPM to identify experts and resources for the Task Force</p>
<p>Landscape Institute landscapeinstitute.org</p> 	<p>The Landscape Institute (LI) is the chartered body for the landscape profession. It is an educational charity that promotes the art and science of landscape practice. Its landscape practitioners include landscape scientists, planners, architects, managers, and urban designers. The LI provided a pool of experts to contribute to Task Force delivery and services</p>
<p>Association of Town and City Management atcm.org</p> 	<p>Association of Town and City Management (ATCM) is a not-for-profit membership organisation, dedicated to promoting the vitality and viability of urban centres across the UK and the Republic of Ireland. Its members develop and implement shared visions, strategies and action plans for hundreds of district, town and city centres. ATCM co-chaired the High Streets Task Force Sector Leaders Group and provided resources on how to improve high streets</p>

<p>Civic Voice civicvoice.org.uk</p> 	<p>Civic Voice is the national charity for the civic movement in England. Civic Voice was formed following extensive consultation with hundreds of civic and amenity societies and other interested organisations in 2009. Civic Voice provided relevant advice and guidance for place leaders to understand the contribution of the community, as well as helping to identify place leaders in their own network for capacity mapping.</p>
<p>MRI OnLocation https://www.mrisoftware.com/au/products/onlocation/</p> 	<p>MRI OnLocation is a leading provider of data and intelligence on customer activity in stores and destinations. MRI OnLocation monitors customer behaviour in town and city centres, including footfall, demographic profiling, and capacity monitoring. MRI OnLocation provided the Task Force access to all UK high street and town centre footfall data, as well as training courses and webinars for Task Force users to attend</p>
<p>Maybe* maybetech.com</p> 	<p>Maybe* uses AI to provide sentiment analysis from social media directly to over 150,000 businesses. They have worked to develop the digital evolution of some 30 towns through the 'What do you think' campaign which aims to improve digital influence to drive footfall. Maybe* provided the Task Force with consumer sentiment data for UK towns for benchmarking and held regular webinars that focused on high street data evaluation</p>
<p>Market Innovations (The Teenage Market) theteenagemarket.co.uk</p> 	<p>The Teenage Market, set up in 2012 by two brothers in Stockport, is active in over 30 locations across the UK, giving local young people the chance to actively engage and take part in events in their town or city. The Task Force worked with the Teenage Market over the five years to provide guidance and expertise for local authorities in England to hold their own teenage markets.</p>



<p>Cardiff University cardiff.ac.uk</p> 	<p>Cardiff University's School of Computer Science and Informatics is an internationally leading research School that impacts areas as diverse as healthcare, mobile and social computing, and the environment. They developed and integrated data sets on footfall and other high street performance indicators, as well as contributing to further research.</p>
<p>MyKnowledgeMap myknowledgemap.com</p>  <p>myknowledgemap</p>	<p>MyKnowledgeMap is a leading e-assessment software and solution specialist, with a full product, project, services, and integration delivery. MyKnowledgeMap developed technology solutions that improved skills and knowledge for Task Force users, including high street data dashboards and an online resource repository</p>

Table ii HSTF Consortium Partners.

1.2.2 Phases of HSTF

The HSTF was delivered in four main phases.

Phase 1 (July-Sept 2019): *Planning, Set Up, and Launch*

This was the intensive project set up period led by PwC, including sub-contracting with consortium partners, recruitment to key project posts, and working closely with MHCLG to scope, refine and develop project deliverables and key performance indicators Development of engagement strategy and capacity assessment

- Creation of initial Task Force reports
- Establishment of governance (Experts Register, Board, Executive Group)
- Data and resource assessments
- Task Force PMO setup

Phase 2 (Oct 2019-June 2020): *Scaling Up and Piloting*

By December 2019, the High Streets Task Force was fully operational, with all key posts and delivery partners in place, and a suite of products ready for testing/roll-out. Piloting of Expert-delivered products and services began in December 2019 to an initial group of 14 local authorities.

- Continued product development and expert training
- Visioning workshops and Mentoring Programme
- Feedback and pilot evaluation
- Launch of toolkits and meetings

Phase 2C (July-Sept 2020): *Responding to COVID-19*

- Reprioritisation and deferment of pre-COVID milestones
- Focus on emergent pandemic challenges

Phase 3 (Oct 2020-Nov 2022): *Full Rollout*

- Full rollout of services and reports
- Continued research and publication
- Quarterly meetings of Task Force groups

Phase 4 (Dec 2022-Sept 2024): *Delivery, Legacy, and Evaluation*

- Ongoing delivery of services
- Regular evaluations and revisions
- Building legacy through identifying demand for products and services

1.2.3 HSTF Groups and Governance

Strong governance was embedded into the Task Force to oversee progress and timely delivery of its work. A clear set of processes, structures and responsibilities for all involved was established and maintained throughout the Task Force's lifecycle. Governance was overseen by the following groups:

High Streets Task Force Board

The High Streets Task Force Board met formally twice per year and enabled the changing high street to speak with one informed voice, be an exemplar of cross-sectoral collaboration, and govern the work of the Task Force. The Board had an important role to play in working with the media to raise awareness of the Task Force and the positive impact it had on town centres.

The Board also agreed to meet *informally* twice a year to pool their collective knowledge to help inform thinking on policy matters relating to towns and high streets. This enabled an additional rich seam of insight to be provided, where requested, to policy makers within MHCLG.

Core Responsibilities

The Board's responsibilities in relation to its role and accountabilities included, but were not limited to:

- Sharing/group review of the work and outputs of the Task Force.
- Monitoring overall progress, performance of the Task Force and tracking risk.
- Deciding issues of importance and research to be investigated by the Task Force Professional, Research and Data Group.
- Ensuring that the Task Force met MHCLG's four key objectives: boost local authority capacity, building place-making skills, coordinating stakeholders, and sharing information, data and best practice.
- Sharing collective feedback, suggestions or concerns with relevant stakeholders and delivery groups.
- Determining decisions and information that need to be escalated to Government.

- Public representation of the Task Force through media interviews and presentations to raise awareness of its work and positive impact on local high streets.
- Amplification of the communications of the High Street Task Force through social media, personal networks and contacts.
- Contributing to thought leadership and comment pieces produced by the High Streets Task Force.

High Streets Task Force Executive Group

Acting as a high-level delivery committee, the Task Force Executive Group involved key stakeholders including: the Task Force Executive Director; Task Force stream leads, and subcontractor/partnership representatives. The Group met every quarter and oversaw the direction, success and momentum of the Task Force, discussing operational matters, tracking progress against the set objectives and KPIs for the Task Force and managing any emerging risks and issues. The Group focused on the quality of work delivered by the Task Force to determine whether expectations were being met.

Core Responsibilities

The Executive Group's responsibilities included, but were not limited to:

- Discussing operational matters, such as progress against the plan and the completion of key milestones/deliverables.
- Tracking progress against set objectives and KPIs for the HSTF.
- Managing emerging risks and issues.
- Conducting quality reviews, to determine whether expectations are being met.
- Considering overall progress of the HSTF and determining whether/if to change direction/focus

Professional, Research and Data Group

The Professional Research and Data Group integrated professional bodies that represented HSTF Experts, data providers that had useful information on the changing high street, and UK academics that had research expertise in high street and town centre issues.

The primary purpose of the Professional, Research and Data Group (PRDG) was to pool and review research, resources, data and knowledge and build consensus to help the Task Force adopt a position on significant issues that were felt to be blocking the transformation of England's High Streets. The issues considered by this group were grounded in the every-day challenges the places the Task Force supported but outside the span of control of local place leaders. Where existing knowledge was not available the group could suggest commissioning new research.

Core Responsibilities

The PRDG was responsible for providing research and resources to inform the work of the HSTF, as well as undertaking research itself on behalf of the HSTF. The PRDG's responsibilities included, but were not limited to:

- Investigating issues of importance raised by the Task Force.
- Pooling collective research resources and knowledge to help evidence IPM's state-of-the-art reviews of the issues raised with recommendations for practice and policy (when appropriate).
- Commissioning new research, if necessary, ensuring both local place leaders and relevant stakeholders participate fully in the process of commissioning any new research.
- Providing oversight to the process of auditing and reviewing new high street/town centre knowledge, practice, data, and insight.

The original intention was for the PRDG to meet twice per year. During COVID, however, the PRDG met monthly to understand the likely impact of the pandemic on high streets and businesses. It provided rapid evidence and data to government, including a survey of high street businesses to establish their resilience (see section 1.3). MRI OnLocation provided regular updates on footfall and Maybe* provided data on sentiment and the use of social media.

Sector Leaders Group

The purpose of the Sector Leaders Group was to accelerate the positive transformation of high streets and town centres by influencing the attitudes and behaviours of hundreds of thousands of high street stakeholders, through collaborating with the many organisations, bodies and groups whose members have a sectoral interest in the high street (e.g., retail, property, public services, transport etc.). This group was chaired by the ATCM and The BID Foundation and met on a quarterly basis.

Core Responsibilities

The Sector Leaders Group's responsibilities included:

- Accurately representing how town centre and high street change is impacting on its sector/membership.
- Providing evidence and data - such as local spend, footfall, consumer and business owner sentiment – and sharing these with MHCLG and other government departments to support decision making.
- Identifying the challenges and opportunities facing sectors.
- Sharing examples of sectoral leadership in town centre/high street transformation.
- Sharing examples of successful cross-sector collaboration.
- Supporting the development of webinars, training, and other resources through their knowledge of good practice.
- Raising awareness of the High Streets Task Force offer to their members.
- Disseminating High Streets Task Force knowledge and insight to their members (articles on websites, in newsletters, briefings, regional events).
- Contributing to thought leadership and other High Streets Task Force articles and publications.

- Specific decision-making and intelligence gathering support in response to the impact of COVID-19 on high streets, and efforts to reopen high streets.

Quarterly meeting

The quarterly review meeting was the formal review of the Task Force's work over the preceding quarter, and was attended by representatives from MHCLG, and the Task Force Executive. At the meeting, delivery against target was set out, alongside progress against delivery milestones and key performance indicators for the quarter. The meeting also included a review of active risks and issues being managed, covered any change requests, and updates to the decision log as appropriate. As well as providing the opportunity to review progress quarterly, the meeting acted as the formal mechanism for confirming progression between phases (1-4).

1.2.4 Project Management

Project management is a critical aspect of any successful project. This section provides a concise overview of the structures and methods implemented to ensure that project aims, objectives, and KPIs have been met.

The PMO was responsible for the day-to-day operations and governance of the Task Force, including stakeholder engagement, risk management, planning and progress tracking, ensuring that the project runs to plan as a joined-up partnership across the stakeholder groups. The membership of the PMO comprised representatives from the core delivery partners of the HSTF - IPM and PwC – with responsibility for the day-to-day operations of the Task Force and communications between partners.

The PMO worked with local authorities and Experts to coordinate and arrange delivery of support. This included all contractual, operational, and logistical aspect, from on-boarding of local authorities through to post-support delivery evaluation.

The PMO reported into the Sector Leaders Group, PRDG, Executive Group and the Board to update on HSTF progress. In addition, the PMO was responsible for all reporting to MHCLG, including the monthly delivery updates and the formal quarterly review meetings. This included monitoring and updating key performance indicators.

The PMO also produced an Annual Report - a summary of all Task Force delivery over the preceding twelve months, including Expert delivered support to local authorities, and resources and materials developed and available online. The report also included a summary of all key performance indicators.

1.2.5 HSTF Expert network

The core support provided to places by the High Streets Task Force was derived from the deployment of a multi-disciplinary pool of Experts, Mentors and Facilitators drawn from the membership of the following professional bodies: Institute of Place Management (IPM), Landscape Institute (LI), Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) and The Design Council (DC).

Through working with these bodies, the HSTF was able to give local authorities access to professionals in place management, urban planning, landscape architecture, transport planning, surveying, place making and urban design.

HSTF Experts provided in-situ diagnostic support, based on a robust empirical framework, to ascertain the issues affecting a place and crucially recommend solutions to overcome them. They provided dedicated specialist support, led visioning and place making programmes, disseminated best practice, facilitated introductions to others who overcame similar issues, and signposted follow-up support. HSTF Mentors assisted in the brokerage of effective relationships between local authorities and stakeholders whilst HSTF Facilitators supported the effective running of diagnostic, visioning and place making programmes.

Professional Bodies and Specialisms

A strength of the HSTF Expert Network was the range of specialisms covered by each professional body enabling bespoke support to be tailored to the specific needs of each location.

Professional Body	Specialism
Design Council	Healthy place making Sustainable building design Urban and street design Heritage and historic buildings Architecture Repurposing buildings Visioning Diversity and inclusive design
Institute of Place Management	Place leadership, management and visioning Place marketing and branding Governance and partnership structures Stakeholder engagement and management Place activation Improving local vitality and viability Identifying and communicating complex trends.
Landscape Institute	Urban design, master planning and modelling of plans Procurement of public realm/greenspace design & planning implementation Landscape and visual impact assessment Sustainable Drainage Systems Community engagement Inclusive design Management of green spaces

Royal Town Planning Institute	Town centre planning – retail/residential/commercial Planning for heritage Planning for leisure, art, tourism Environmental planning and sustainability Transport and infrastructure planning Development and regeneration frameworks Modelling/visualisation of visions/plans
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Table iii Professional Bodies and their respective specialisms

Recruitment, selection, and training

The High Streets Task Force compiled a register of Experts/Mentors/Facilitators who were selected based on their knowledge and recent, significant and successful experience of enabling town centres and high streets to transform. They had to be at either Member or Fellow (or in the case of the Design Council, Built Environment Experts) level in their professional body. To be on the register they had to agree to abide by the HSTF Code of Conduct and have successfully completed HSTF training. This training comprised of on-line sessions to familiarise people with the purpose and objectives of the HSTF, the journey of support that a place can expect from the HSTF, as well as bespoke training on each product, to equip the expert with the relevant understanding of how to apply them. This training was mandatory.

Assignment process and quality control

When the need for an Expert/Mentor/Facilitator had been identified, except for the Design Council, the HSTF team consulted the register and engaged an appropriate person with the requisite expertise, usually within the geographic region of the assignment. In the case of the Design Council, the HSTF team engaged with the Design Council who then selected the most appropriate person.

The quality of service provided by HSTF Experts/Mentors and Facilitators was evaluated by PwC to pre-agreed KPI standards. Monitoring was through formal on-line surveys issued to all participants in workshops and to those who dealt directly with Experts/Mentors during the provision of bespoke support. These scores were analysed as part of regular management activity and reported to MHCLG and the HSTF Board monthly. Should remedial action be needed, additional training/support could be offered, although this was never required. Although all experts were valued by the locations, feedback revealed that several experts received exemplary reviews, leading to a tiered listing from which the most demanding tasks were assigned to maintain high satisfaction ratings.

This process, combined with direct engagement to obtain feedback from experts, led to enhancements in HSTF processes and products throughout the Task Force's lifespan. For instance, during the Unlocking Your Place Potential (UYPP) workshop, both experts and attendees felt that the data and information provided in the PowerPoint presentation were overly dense. This feedback prompted a reduction in the presentation content, allowing more time to address specific issues relevant to each location.

Additionally, it was noted that some locations were reluctant to undertake a full UYPP, feeling they already understood their needs. In response, a 'UYPP Lite' process was introduced, where the HSTF

Executive Director engaged with a select group from those areas for a focused 2-hour immersion into their issues, leading to tailored recommendations for further HSTF support.

Similarly, feedback on the Developing a Shared Vision workshops indicated that the time commitment was too demanding. In response, the workshops were redesigned, resulting in increased satisfaction and boosted attendance.

Furthermore, the HSTF management team reviewed the draft output reports of the Experts/Mentors to ensure the materials met the high standards required. All reports were screened through a 4-stage process to ensure accuracy, saliency, political sensitivity, and that tangible and robust support was recommended and subsequently provided. The management team worked closely with the Experts (and in some cases the local authorities) to craft and refine reports to maximise their usefulness and impact.

All data on each location, product and the involvement of each Expert/Mentor/Facilitator was held on the online data platform Monday.com enabling HSTF management, researchers and, where appropriate, the experts themselves, to have access to the relevant parts of the system. This enabled HSTF management to have a timely and accurate view of the performance of the programme at a macro and micro level simultaneously.

1.2.6 HSTF Products

This section introduces the products that the High Streets Task Force developed and offered by providing a short summary of their features and benefits.

Transforming Your High Street

The Transforming your High Street report was a short report based on MHCLG feedback, EOI analysis (to the Future High Street Fund round 1, where applicable), and IPM's extensive knowledge of the main barriers to transforming a high street/centre. The report included:

- Benchmark indicators of the health of the high street, compared to national benchmarks
- Feedback on the EOI (where applicable) based on extensive understanding of high street and town centre transformation.
- Signposting of resources for planning, data and design.
- A personalised place action plan, linked to Task Force resources, containing priority actions to address.

Need and capacity assessment

All local authorities were assessed and classified before HSTF support started based on their need and capacity. The purpose of this was to enable us to form a view of overall need and focus resources appropriately. A defined methodology was used to make this assessment/classification. To establish a local authority's need, the assessment used a scale from low need (LA possessing strong economic indicators, maintaining or increasing footfall, and positive sentiment), to high need (LA possessing poor economic indicators, declining footfall, and negative sentiment). To establish capacity, our model used a scale from low capacity (LA possessing a poorly defined vision, weak partnership working, and a lack of integration), to high capacity (LA possessing a well-defined vision, robust partnerships, and good integration).

Unlocking Place Potential

The Unlocking your Place Potential visit was a one-day Task Force visit to the applicant area and its local authority to diagnose what further technical/professional expertise is needed to unlock strategic potential. This diagnosis is based on the Institute of Place Management's 4Rs of Regeneration: Repositioning; Reinventing; Rebranding and Restructuring, which covers planning, data, design, activation, multi-functionality, investment, branding, communication, collaboration, partnership working with businesses and communities, and governance. The diagnosis was developed through an extensive research project (High Street UK 2020) and has been subject to academic scrutiny, through the peer-review process and empirical testing with 10 UK high streets. The visit ended with a clear recommendation of what can be progressed by the local authority/partners and what additional expertise/workshops/other support can be offered by the Task Force.

Expert

Task Force Experts offered technical/professional expertise to local authorities to unlock strategic potential. As high streets and town centres moved from mono-functional spaces to multifunctional places, wide-ranging expertise was needed to support this change, including planning, data and design.

Together, the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI), Landscape Institute (LI), Design Council, and Institute of Place Management oversaw a register of Task Force Experts in specialist areas such as planning, urban design, placemaking, landscape architecture, transport, valuation, asset management, investment, governance, data and analytics, place management and leadership. Task Force Experts were respected professionals who could demonstrate significant experience working on high street/town centre issues. This approach enabled us to provide individual Task Force Experts, or teams of Task Force Experts, to develop a sound strategic solution for the local authority.

Mentor

Where capacity issues were identified through the UYPP visit, the Task Force provided an experienced Task Force Mentor to boost the capacity of local authorities. Mentors were successful place managers/leaders from another location, who could inspire and support better partnership working. The Mentor provided services such as brokering meetings with the local authority and important stakeholders, and development of partnership agreements for joint working.

Developing a Shared Vision for your high street

The Developing a Shared Vision workshop was delivered by the Design Council. It offered a programme of support intended to help local authorities and wider stakeholders begin the development of a collaborative and transformative vision for a particular location. As well as guidance and support, the workshop included a follow-up report to help the group design and implement effective strategies to achieve the vision, with a capacity plan, including signposting additional support from the Task Force as well as additional capacity available in the wider partnership.

Teenage Market

To encourage the participation of young people on their high streets, the High Streets Task Force offered local authorities a licence to run a Teenage Market in their locality. Alongside provision of the licence, the Task Force provided support and guidance from the Teenage Market to support the local authority to set up and operate the markets successfully. This enabled the Task Force not only to reach this important demographic but also to engage young people in the process of making the centres they want and use.

Online learnings: 4 Rs

The High Streets Task Force developed online learning material designed to build both capacity and expertise in placemaking. The learning material was based around IPM's '4Rs framework of regeneration'. This learning material covered:

- Repositioning – training that is focussed on understanding data and trends and building collective visions and forward-looking strategies to meet catchment needs.
- Reinventing – training focused on how to activate town centres and attract different uses and users as well as refresh and reinvigorate the existing offer (e.g. retail).
- Rebranding – training focussed on changing perceptions, place marketing and better stakeholder communications.
- Restructuring – training focused on governance models and partnership working.

Online learnings: V&V

The High Streets Task Force developed an online learning resource based on IPM's Vital and Viable factors. This resource was based on research conducted by IPM, which identified 237 factors that contribute to making a high street or town centre both *vital* (full of reasons for people to visit) and *viable* (attractive to both visitors and investors in the longer term). The initial list of 237 factors was reduced to a more manageable 25, which were deemed to be both impactful, whilst also being controllable. The e-learning resource provides participants with the underpinning research and knowledge, before encouraging them to apply the learning to their location.

Online learnings (General)

Working with consortium partners, the High Streets Task Force published a set of online learning/webinars, the purpose of which was to provide a basic overview of important aspects of place making/management. These resources included Principles of Place Making, produced by the Landscape Institute, Understanding BIDs, produced by the BID Foundation, and Principles of Town Planning (produced by the Royal Town Planning Institute). These resources provided accessible and easy to follow introductions and contributed to the Task Force's aim of boosting knowledge and capacity of those involved in making better high streets and town centres.

Place Making Programme

The Place Making Programme concentrated on building place leadership skills and capacity in a particular location, and elected members, officers, business leaders, BID managers, civic leaders, young people, property owners, retailers, etc. are invited to in-situ workshops using the network of contacts the Task Force has, in partnership with the host local authority. Up to 70 delegates could attend the workshop.

The Place Making Programme included baseline analysis, a 3-hour interactive workshop and a post-workshop report to identify 'quick wins' (how vitality and viability can be improved through focussing on one or more of 25 priorities identified in the High Street UK 2020 project) as well as more strategic recommendations (for repositioning, reinventing, rebranding or restructuring).

Developing Place Leaders

The Developing Place Leaders workshop helped to develop place leadership networks that connect cities and towns. Place leaders from across each Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) area were invited to participate. This included LA officers and members, BID managers and their chairs, chairs and managers of town and city centre partnerships, and area-based association leaders across public, private and civic sectors. The expectation was that in each session, all towns and cities in a particular LEP area would be represented.

The content of the programme was adapted to support relevant policy and programmes (e.g. Future High Streets Fund and The Stronger Towns Fund). It included training on the data that is available through the Task Force Dashboard, and how this could be used locally and at a regional level. The Developing Place Leaders course was targeted at all 38 LEP areas, allowing further resources and learning to be signposted through the High Street Task Force repository.

Developing Place Analysts

MRI On Location (formerly Springboard) - a leading provider of town centre footfall data - delivered the Developing Place Analysts course. This online learning course was created to encourage and improve on the use of evidence in place-based decision making. The course provides an introductory overview of key metrics and datasets available in the Task Force Dashboard (e.g. footfall, sentiment, and weather) and how to interpret them, explaining the importance of these data sets to towns and cities and how this data can and should be shared.

Understanding place data

MRI On Location delivered a monthly webinar introducing basic data principles and the Task Force dashboard. The webinar covered the basic definitions of data, understanding how data can be used, followed by key trends for the regions and wider UK. The webinar also covered the impact of key footfall influencing events (e.g. Christmas, Easter, Black Friday) allowing participants to better understand and plan for determinants of high/low footfall.

Understanding place sentiment

Project partners Maybe* provided a live monthly webinar that enables high street stakeholders to understand and evaluate their high streets using the sentiment data provided through the Task Force Dashboard and understand how it impacts other KPI's such as footfall. Importantly, the webinars demonstrated how delegates can use data and insights extracted from social media to inform evidence-based decision making. All webinars were made accessible on demand and revealed key data-driven case studies from UK High Streets.

Resource library

The Task Force research team reviewed and abstracted over 1000 resources which are hosted on the website's resource repository. The repository included reports, information, research, guidance, and best practice examples. Users of the Task Force were encouraged to submit resources for review,

whether this be information produced locally, useful reports they have found, or case studies they may have written.

Evidence on a page

The Task Force produced a factual summary of each of IPM's 237 factors impacting vitality and viability and its relevance to high street renewal, with links to further reading (all available in the public domain).

Best practice guides

The Task Force has developed 20 best practice guides, encompassing learning from on the ground Task Force activity. The guides cover areas of strategy, leadership, management and technical knowledge, enabling different actors to access the resources most appropriate to them and their specific needs. Where relevant, the best practice guides signpost national and local organisations who can offer further practical advice.

Case studies

As well as providing a vehicle for disseminating best practice examples from high streets up and down the country, case studies provided examples of how local authorities have benefitted from Task Force support, and the impact that this support has had.

Toolkits/Diagnostics

Several toolkits and diagnostics were developed for the Task Force, based upon peer-reviewed research and best-practice evidence. These included 'Capacity and structures for managing change', 'Creating a transformation route map' and a toolkit designed to support local authority leaders establish their leadership style.

Standard Dashboard

The standard version of the dashboard included data on:

- Footfall (estimated)
- Sentiment (real - what are the perceptions of the town, based on social media harvesting)

As footfall data is not collected in all locations, researchers at Cardiff and Manchester Metropolitan University developed forecasting methods to estimate hourly footfall in town centres, based upon their catchment population. Basic Dashboard users were given clear instructions on how to undertake manual counts to calibrate this estimated footfall data to produce a more accurate estimate. This enabled local leaders to identify their town type (e.g. comparison, speciality, holiday or multifunctional), as well as its size (Major city, Regional Centre, Town, District/Neighbourhood) – which is important information for future decision making.

Advanced Dashboard

An advanced version of the dashboard was offered to locations willing to share their footfall data. This advanced dashboard included actual footfall data as well as sentiment data. This dashboard integrates all the functions developed through the 'Bringing Big Data to Small Users' InnovateUK project and allows place leaders to compare their day, evening and night-time economies. The dashboard has the function to export graphs and other data, and uses sophisticated algorithms to identify similar towns, for collective learning.

Dashboard support

To support places using both the standards and advanced dashboard, a helpline/support function was available. This provided places using the dashboard with help and guidance when required.

HSTF Monthly newsletter

Each month, the Task Force issued a newsletter to all stakeholders that registered through the Task Force website. The newsletter was an opportunity to cover key updates on high street/place issues, as well as promote products and services produced by the Task Force.

HSTF Annual Review of High Streets

The High Streets Task Force encouraged all local authorities, community groups and place management organisations to engage in footfall analysis, whether that's through estimated data that the Task Force could provide, manual counting, or automatic counting technology. The Annual Review of High Streets presented a summary of key footfall developments over the preceding twelve months, allowing places to compare their results with national trends.

Capacity mapping

The capacity map, hosted on the Task Force website, set out a variety of place management organisations and capacity present across all areas of the country. The map represented partnerships, civic societies, and business improvement districts. Having capacity visible - for the first time - in this way allowed the Task Force, and other people, to coordinate place management and leadership at a local level.

Annual research study

The Annual Research Study, produced by the IPM research team, focussed on a different subject area each year, providing an in-depth academic study into that area. Subjects were place leadership, the viability of town/city centres, and place partnerships and their sustainability. The research findings and learnings identified feed into other areas of Task Force activity and support, as well as providing useful data and evidence for MHCLG.

HSTF Communications

In addition to the monthly newsletter, Task Force communications activity included any website/news updates. . It also included events/promotional activity that the Task Force undertook (for example, the Task Force Road Shows run in early 2024).

2. Knowledge frameworks

The HSTF was led by the Institute of Place Management at Manchester Metropolitan University who have an international reputation for their development of knowledge that underpins successful place transformation. This knowledge developed by Manchester Metropolitan University researchers and others, has provided the theoretical underpinning for the project, from concept all the way through to delivery and evaluation. This section summarises the research that informed the project, along with insights developed throughout its course. Relevant theories, frameworks, and best practices are applied to analyse the project's performance, explaining both the successes and areas where certain aspects fell short.

This section outlines the core research frameworks used by the HSTF, specifically the 25 Priorities for Vital and Viable High Streets, the 4Rs of Renewal, High Street Viability, COVID-19 Resilience, Place Leadership, and Place Partnerships.

2.1 25 Priorities for Vital and Viable High Streets

The 25 Priorities framework was developed to identify critical factors that influence the vitality and viability of high streets. It emerged from the Economic and Social Research Council funded High Street UK 2020 (HSUK2020) project, a comprehensive literature review, and stakeholder engagement. The HSUK2020 study identified 237 factors that influence high street performance, which were refined through expert review to the top 25 controllable priorities that have the most influence on high street vitality and viability (Parker et al., 2017).

The 25 priorities are grouped into categories, such as activity hours, cleanliness, governance, and public realm, to provide local authorities with practical interventions. This framework is highly actionable, allowing place managers to focus on specific, controllable elements that can have a measurable impact on high street performance (Parker et al., 2017). The priorities have been used extensively throughout the HSTF's interventions, particularly in diagnostic processes such as the Unlocking Your Place Potential (UYPP) visits.

2.2 The 4Rs of Renewal

The 4Rs framework – Repositioning, Reinventing, Rebranding, and Restructuring – is a strategic model developed through the HSUK2020 project to guide high street transformation (Ntounis et al., 2020). Each of the 4Rs represents a key dimension of change that can support high street renewal:

- Repositioning involves collecting and interpreting data about local demographics, economic trends, and consumer behaviour to ensure high streets align with the evolving needs of the local catchment area.
- Reinventing focuses on adapting the high street to contemporary uses, such as introducing leisure, entertainment, and community spaces, to attract diverse footfall.
- Rebranding refers to improving the external perception and identity of the high street, often through marketing and communications strategies aimed at fostering a positive image.

- Restructuring entails improving governance and partnership structures to enhance coordination among local stakeholders and ensure sustainable high street management.

The 4Rs were employed in HSTF interventions to diagnose the most significant barriers to high street performance and to recommend targeted strategies for improvement.

2.3 Viability

High street viability traditionally focuses on financial metrics such as retail yields and property values. However, the HSTF broadened this concept to include social, environmental, and economic dimensions, proposing a model that encompasses sustainability, resilience, and adaptability (Ntounis et al., 2023). This expanded view recognises that viable high streets are not solely economically successful but also socially inclusive, environmentally sustainable, and able to adapt to future challenges.

The HSTF developed tools for measuring viability, including the Viability Index, which considers factors such as footfall, vacancy rates, and local economic performance. This tool was used to assess the medium- and long-term viability of high streets and to guide local authorities in making informed decisions about investments and interventions.

2.4 COVID-19 Resilience

The COVID-19 pandemic introduced unprecedented challenges for high streets, requiring new approaches to resilience. The HSTF conducted surveys and research to assess the impact of the pandemic on high street businesses, particularly in sectors like hospitality and retail (Ntounis et al., 2022). These findings informed the development of the COVID Resilience Composite Score (CRCS), which measured the resilience of different types of businesses based on factors such as financial support uptake, operational changes, and future confidence.

The CRCS revealed significant disparities in resilience across sectors, with tourism-dependent businesses being the most vulnerable. The HSTF used these insights to tailor support for high streets facing the greatest challenges, providing targeted interventions such as expert workshops and guidance on navigating government financial assistance schemes.

2.5 Place leadership

Effective place leadership is crucial for high street renewal. The HSTF's research into place leadership highlighted six key barriers to effective leadership in local authorities: reticence towards adopting a place leadership role, overreliance on masterplans, lack of resources, political barriers, institutional inertia, and apathy (Colledge et al., 2022). Successful place leaders were found to be those who are passionate, resilient, and able to catalyse collaboration across diverse stakeholder groups.

The HSTF developed the Collaborative Cycle of Place Leadership, which provides a framework for nurturing place leadership at the local level within local authorities. This model has been used to support the development of visionary leadership and improve coordination between public and private stakeholders.

2.6 Place partnerships

Strong partnerships between local authorities, businesses, and communities are critical for sustainable high street regeneration. The HSTF's research into Place Partnerships revealed that successful partnerships tend to grow organically, are built on trust, and produce visible results that are valued by local stakeholders (Sewell et al., 2024). The HSTF facilitated the formation of such partnerships in many of its intervention areas, ensuring that local stakeholders were actively involved in shaping high street strategies.

2.7 Annual footfall reviews

Footfall has been a central indicator used to monitor the health of high streets throughout the HSTF programme. The Task Force emphasised the importance of regular footfall monitoring as a simple yet powerful metric for understanding high street activity (Mumford et al., 2021).

- **Footfall data:** Footfall was used to assess the impact of interventions and diagnose potential issues with the vitality of places. By tracking footfall trends over time, some places were able to correlate specific interventions (e.g., events, public realm improvements) with changes in visitor behaviour.
- **Viability Assessments:** Footfall data was incorporated into broader viability assessments, helping places to benchmark themselves against national trends and understand how their high street is performing in terms of activity and visitor engagement.

The HSTF also developed dashboards for local authorities to easily monitor footfall data and use it to inform their decision-making processes.

The footfall data used in the project builds on a framework developed by the InnovateUK-funded Bringing Big Data to Small Users (BDSU) project, which classified towns into four types based on footfall patterns: Comparison Towns, Holiday Towns, Multifunctional Towns, and Speciality Towns (Mumford et al., 2021). These classifications were derived using K-Means clustering, examining up to ten years of data from towns and cities across the UK.

- **Comparison Towns** typically exhibit peaks in footfall during December and summer months, associated with retail and holiday activities.
- **Holiday Towns** see peaks during warmer months, driven by tourism and leisure activities.
- **Multifunctional Towns** show consistent foot traffic year-round, catering to local needs.
- **Speciality Towns** blend features of holiday and comparison towns, with peaks in both summer and December due to unique attractions and tourism (High Streets Task Force, 2024).

2.7.1 Aim and Methodology

The analysis, conducted by teams from Cardiff University and Manchester Metropolitan University, examined footfall data from 90 to 180 centres across England. Data was sourced from automated footfall counters provided by MRI OnLocation. The study explored how footfall varied across different times of the year, during holidays, and post-pandemic recovery. Advanced statistical techniques, such as Auto-ARIMA, ETS, TBATS, and NNETAR forecasting models, were used to predict footfall patterns in the absence of the pandemic (Mumford et al., 2023).

2.7.2 Key findings

Impact of COVID-19 (2020–2021)

- Footfall fell by 90% during the lockdown in March 2020 (Mumford et al., 2021).
- Smaller towns and neighbourhood centres recovered better than larger towns, regional centres and major cities, which saw slower footfall recovery (High Streets Task Force, 2021).
- A shift in consumer behaviour was noted, with a move from Comparison Towns to Multifunctional Towns, and a substantial decline in night-time economy activity (Mumford et al., 2021).

Post-Pandemic Footfall (2022)

- Although high street activity remained stable in terms of hourly and weekly patterns, the frequency of visits dropped by 17% from 2019 levels (Mumford et al., 2022).
- Holiday and Speciality Towns retained their unique identities, while Comparison and Multifunctional Towns showed signs of evolving to adapt to new consumer habits (Mumford et al., 2022).

Recent Trends (2023)

- Footfall increased by 3.5% in 2023 compared to 2022 but remained 9% lower than expected for full post-pandemic recovery (High Streets Task Force, 2023).
- While major cities and small districts recovered well, regional centres and large towns struggled with slower footfall recovery (Mumford et al., 2023).
- The number of Multifunctional Towns decreased, with an increase in Comparison, Holiday, and Speciality Towns, indicating a potential shift in high street dynamics (Mumford et al., 2023).

The findings emphasised the role of footfall as a critical metric for high street health, offering insights into recovery trajectories post-COVID and shifting consumer patterns.

3.HSTF locations

A core aspect of the programme was to deliver in situ expert support to boost the capacity and capability of local authorities and stakeholders responsible for 152 high streets. This section outlines the process by which the locations were selected and provides an evaluation of the selection and exit criteria. Additionally, it explores key characteristics of the High Street Task Force locations, offering a comparison to the broader population of English High Streets. A full list of HSTF locations is contained in Appendix A.

3.1 English town and retail centres

At the beginning of HSTF there were a total of 2,747 high streets in England – these consisted of 2,450 (89.2%) high streets 'in town' high streets (town centres) and 297 (10.8%) 'out-of-town' (retail centres). A town centre is an area which contains the main concentration of attractions in a traditional centre, like its shops, services, market square, town hall etc. A retail centre is a concentration of shops that is not in a town centre, like an out-of-town retail park.

There are many ways to identify town and retail centres, and the High Street Task Force used those produced by the Consumer Data Research Centre (CDRC) by researchers at the University of Liverpool, who were members of the HSTF Professional, Research and Data Group. They were created in 2015 as centroid locations taken from those definitions of retail cores defined as part of the DCLG State of the Cities Report in 2005. Whilst high streets do change over time, especially when they are new centres constructed on edge or out of town sites, 'traditional' high streets, those in neighbourhoods, towns and cities, tend to remain quite constant. Their offer and size may change – they may shrink or expand – but they rarely disappear. This is because they are afforded a certain degree of protection in planning terms.

The CDRC retail centre boundaries used in HSTF were created using a 2015 national occupancy data of 437,260 locations by the Local Data Company (including postcode, latitude and longitude coordinates, type of retail or service business, and vacancy of units) (Local Data Company, 2015). A clustering technique (Density based spatial clustering of applications with noise (DBSCAN)) that allows for calculation of a centre's local density, and consideration of a maximum distance between neighbouring retail units within a certain radius and walking distances (max distance of 300m) was used to identify retail centre boundaries and clusters (Pavlis et al, 2018). The retail centre boundaries were also compared with 339 "retail places" from the company Geolytix (comparing the boundaries against retail unit locations and associated clusters), which showed that almost 90% of the clustered points were within the Geolytix boundaries. Overall, the method yielded 15 clusters, with 5 broad groups of retail centres identified (Dolega et al, 2021). These are:

1. Local retail and service centres
2. Retail, shopping and leisure parks
3. Leading comparison and leisure destinations
4. Primary food and secondary comparison destinations
5. Traditional high streets & market towns

The HSTF Town Centres were groups 1, 3, 4 and 5 and the HSTF Retail Centres are group 2 (CDRC Data, 2015).

HSTF support was for traditional town centres rather than out-of-town retail centres. Using data from the Consumer Data Research Centre, Cardiff University identified that the average three-mile population surrounding town centres was 281,365 compared to 168,892 for retail centres, a statistically significant difference ($p = .01$), justifying the focus on town centres as areas with higher local relevance.

3.2 Breakdown of all HSTF locations by size

The High Streets Task Force adopted a high street hierarchy to classify town centres by size, based on the Simplified Activity Hierarchy (Mumford et al, 2021) which identifies just four sizes of centre (Major City, Regional Centre, Town Centre and District Centre) as this allows a wider range of stakeholders to agree on a centre's size, without having to resort to measuring units, footfall, or catchment etc.

Further analysis using the Simplified Activity Hierarchy showed that 63.7% of all high streets in England are in district or neighbourhood centres, yet only 18% of HSTF locations were of this size, indicating a selection bias toward larger centres. A chi-square test confirmed that this difference in size distribution was significant ($p = .001$), suggesting that HSTF locations were not representative of the overall size profile of English high streets.

Finally, a simple linear regression was conducted to assess whether the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD Av) predicts the percentage change in footfall. The regression model was statistically significant, $F(1, 168) = 5.193$, $p = .024$, explaining approximately 3.0% of the variance in the percentage change in footfall. Nevertheless, this is important to the HSTF as the programme only worked with the most deprived high streets. There was a (weak) relationship with deprivation and footfall recovery after COVID.

	All Town Centre		HSTF Locations	
	Numbers	%	Numbers	%
Major City	13	0.5%	6	4%
Regional/Sub-Region	104	4.2%	42	27.7%
Town	773	28.6%	76	50.5%
District/Neighbourhood Centre	1559	63.7%	27	17.8%
TOTAL	2449	100%	151	100%

Table iv. Number of HSTF locations compared to national figure.

3.3 Number of Town Centres in a LA administrative area

When the High Streets Task Force started in 2019 each Local Authority was responsible, on average, for 8 high streets (which could be in town or retail centres). This was simply the number of high streets (2,746) divided by the number of local authorities (333).

After the reorganisations of 2023, and by re-doing the analysis, based on both town centres and retail centres, each local authority is still responsible for 8 high streets. This is simply the number of high streets (2,745) divided by the number of local authorities (317).

These 8 high streets were, in general, a mixture of town and district centres with one retail park. However, there is a large amount of variability across local authorities when it comes to how many high streets in traditional centres they are responsible for. For example, Broadland is responsible for just one district and one retail centre and Crawley is responsible for one town, but Leeds is responsible for one major city centre, nine towns, forty-six district centres and six retail centres.

3.4 Selection, onboarding and exit

The selection of locations for the High Streets Task Force (HSTF) was based on a rigorous assessment of local authority (LA) need, primarily using the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) (Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2019)). An IMD score of all LAs in England calculated by averaging the LSOA scores after they had been population weighted. This gave a measure of the whole area covering both deprived and non-deprived areas. For HSTF purposes we used the Local Authority Average IMD score rather than the more commonly used rank as the programme existed to support deprived high streets, and highly polarised areas will tend to score higher on the average score measure than on the average rank. The IMD data was given 80% weighting and combined with a score formed from the number of retail units (using data supplied by MHCLG) and population size in each locality (together given a weighting of 20%) to produce a ranking list of all local authorities in England.

The selection process returned the top 138 most deprived LAs selected for HSTF participation, alongside 14 pilot locations, totalling 152 local authorities. The selection process ensured that nearly 50% of English LAs were included in the programme, targeting high streets and town centres most in need of support.

After being selected to participate in the HSTF programme of direct support, local authorities were then free to select a particular high street (traditional retail centre) that would receive the expert products and were given guidance and training on how to do this (Table v).

Criteria	Description
Size	Is the selected location both manageable and meaningful? You are free to define any location for support. This could be a district centre, a town, a single high street, or a defined quarter. The only requirement in selecting the spatial area is that it is meaningful (to people locally) and is manageable (i.e. not so large that support can't be focused and impactful)
Capacity	Who will the Task Force work with, in your selected location? There should be enough capacity to engage with support, as well as scope to build existing capacity over 12-24 months. Examples of existing capacity could include local community groups, BIDs, more formal partnerships, or working groups within the local authority.
Need	Why does the selected location need support for transformation? You should identify a location with a relative level of 'need' for support. Consider the domains of the Indices of Multiple Deprivation; does the location have challenges with income, employment, health, education and skills, crime, housing and services, or living environment?
Story so far...	What experience and existing plans do you have in the location? While locations are not defined by previous and existing plans, it is useful to consider aspects such as visions, masterplans, strategic frameworks, local plans, BIDs and place partnerships. Similarly, a recent history of engagement around local challenges and opportunities, even if no plans have come forward, would give a starting point for HSTF support

Table v. Guidance LAs were given by HSTF to help them select a location.

In addition, Cardiff University (consortium partner) developed a method and software for developing an average deprivation score for every high street (or retail centre) in England. This data was utilised in the Transforming Your High Street reports and the Unlocking Your Place Potential visit. The mean deprivation score for an HSTF location (i.e. specific high street or centre chosen to receive direct support) is 40.00, with a standard deviation of 16.31. The mean deprivation score for a non-HSTF location is 24.44, with a standard deviation of 14.97. This was investigated further, through a t-test which identified the mean IMD scores for HSTF locations and non HSTF locations were statistically different ($p = .01$).

Further analysis was undertaken to understand more about deprived high streets that were not supported by the HSTF programme of direct support. In total, 310 deprived high streets were not supported by the HSTF programme of direct support. That is more than double the number of deprived high streets that were supported. Out of those 310 high streets, the vast majority of these ($n = 290$; 94%) were in local authorities selected to be part of the HSTF programme of direct support.

The onboarding process involved local authorities selecting a specific high street or locality to receive HSTF support. A cohort delivery model was implemented with each one launching with a webinar which introduced selected authorities to the Task Force and gave them guidance on how to select a suitable high street to take part.

Of the 152 local authorities participating in the HSTF programme, 12 (7.8%) withdrew, and 5 (3.3%) were signed off, leaving 135 or 89% of local authorities that completed the programme. Results show that there was no significant difference in deprivation between LAs who completed HSTF support or were in the progress of completion ($M = 39.38$; $SD = 15.84$) and those that withdrew/signed off ($M = 39.82$; $SD = 16.55$) (Cohen's $d = 0.03$). A t-test was conducted to examine the relationship, yielding a statistically non-significant result, $t(151) = 0.1$, $p = .92$, indicating that deprivation levels were not a determining factor for completion.

In total, 135 local authorities completed the programme. 2 local authorities did not engage while an additional 15 did not fully complete the programme. The remainder of this section explores three potential reasons for the lack of engagement by these 17 local authorities: the pressure of serving a more deprived catchment, capacity challenges related to administering funding, or dissatisfaction with the programme.

There was discussion at the beginning of the HSTF programme that the selected LAs could have additional capacity and capability constraints and challenges as they served areas of relative deprivation. Therefore, the concern was that the LAs that may be most in need of support, those with the most deprived catchments, may find it difficult to engage with the HSTF programme.

Results show that there was no significant difference in deprivation between LAs who completed HSTF support or were in the progress of completion ($M = 39.38$; $SD = 15.84$) and those that withdrew/signed off ($M = 39.82$; $SD = 16.55$) (Cohen's $d = 0.03$). A t-test was conducted to test the relationship between deprivation levels and programme completion, yielding a statistically non-significant result, $t(151) = 0.1$, $p = .92$. This suggests that deprivation is unlikely to be the reason for some local authorities (LAs) withdrawing or not completing the programme.

Next, a chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the association between being awarded regeneration funding and the likelihood of leaving or remaining on the High Street Task Force (HSTF) programme. The relationship between these variables was also not significant, $\chi^2(1, N = 152) = .045$, $p = .832$, indicating that receiving funding did not influence an LA's decision to leave or continue with the programme.

A subsequent analysis explored whether there was a difference in mean satisfaction scores between LAs that had withdrawn or been signed off the programme and those that were in progress or had completed it. A significant difference was found, with LAs that withdrew from the programme reporting a mean satisfaction score of 3.8063 ($SD = .75347$), while those having completed the programme had a mean score of 4.3076 ($SD = .57885$), $t(117) = -2.316$, $p = .022$. In other words, those

LAs that withdrew or were signed off were less satisfied with their HSTF experience than those that completed the programme.

Further analysis of the locations that did not complete or engage sought to identify factors that could have improved their experience. However, the available data was limited, with UYPP satisfaction data for only 7 of the 15 locations, and some responses relying on feedback from a single respondent. Despite this, a few themes emerged. Online UYPPs, without in-person contact, appeared to hinder satisfaction, as initial impressions were crucial for establishing effective working relationships with LAs. Ineffective online delivery may have led to a lack of perceived value in continuing with the full HSTF programme.

Exit interview data was available for only 3 of the 15 locations, providing limited insights. One interview offered strong criticism, stating, "the Expert was very unprepared, had no presentation skills and no expert knowledge". Another remarked that the presentation was "too heavy in terms of information on trends/data" and noted that the expert "seemed to not fully understand <town>". Both critiques pertained to the same expert, who was subsequently not used again. A third exit interview revealed few issues, though it suggested that the HSTF could have been "more explicit" and would have benefited from more "live case studies" and "comparator examples".

Based on the analysis of available data, the most likely reason for non-engagement or non-completion appears to be the fact that these locations were among the earlier HSTF participants. As the programme advanced, improvements based on feedback and the New Product Development (NPD) process resulted in higher satisfaction levels and reduced programme attrition.

The delivery journey offered to each cohort is set out below in Figure 1:

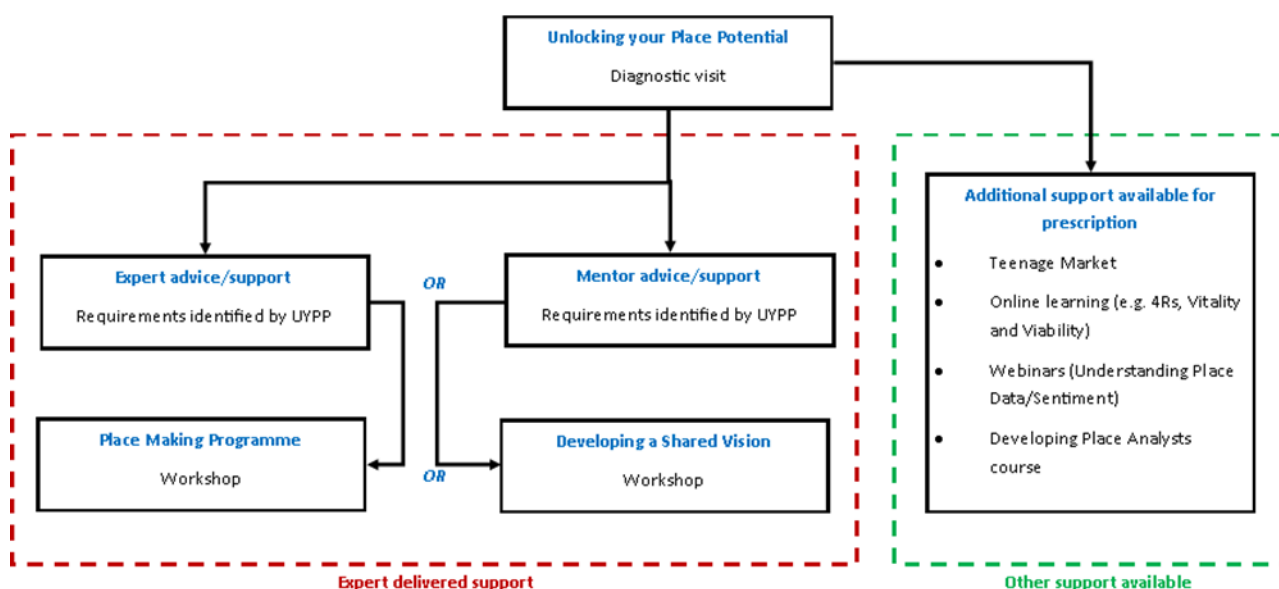


Figure 1 Support pathway for HSTF locations

3.5 Place capacity

Place capacity for transformation refers to the resources a location has that can be used to manage change. There are 5 dimensions to place capacity for transformation:

1. Place-based partnerships, networks or groups that bring together several stakeholders from across local government, public organisations, business and the wider community, to work collaboratively to maintain and improve a location's vitality and viability.
2. Widely adopted visions and plans, based on good quality data and transparent decision-making.
3. Up-to-date action plans that are making improvements now, have clear lines of responsibility, and adequate funding.
4. A place 'brand' or narrative - which celebrates distinctiveness and local identity.
5. Capable and trusted place managers and leaders who have place expertise, professional knowledge and skills to guide and coordinate action.

Three organisations were partners in the HSTF consortium that represented individuals and groups that provided place capacity for transformation, the Association of Town and City Management, The BID Foundation, and Civic Voice. Both The BID Foundation and Civic Voice provided a map of where their members were located, that was then used by the High Streets Task Force.

Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) are business led partnerships which are created through a ballot process to deliver additional services to local businesses. A BID operates within a defined area and English BIDs were included in HSTF's place capacity map. BIDs can be important organisations for local place making and providing services in addition to that of a local authority. They also liaise with the local business community and other stakeholders so can provide a conduit to high street users and providers.

There are 319 locations in England that are members of Civic Voice which represents these local voluntary civic and amenity societies across England. These societies provide a focus of voluntary and community action to improve the places where people live, work and relax (Civic Voice, 2024).

In early discussions about the project, it was explored whether there was a difference in average levels of deprivation between areas with additional capacity, such as a Business Improvement District (BID) or a Civic Voice member. First, a comparison was made between areas with and without a BID. A significant difference was found in the average levels of deprivation across the two groups. Areas with BIDs ($n = 235$) had an average Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) score of 28.6851 ($SD = 17.4000$), while areas without BIDs ($n = 2213$) had a mean IMD score of 24.7259 ($SD = 15.0830$), $t(2448) = -3.357$, $p = .001$. This suggests that more deprived areas are more likely to have a BID. Next, the investigation focused on whether there was a difference in average levels of deprivation between areas with a Civic Voice member and those without one. There was no significant difference in the average levels of deprivation across the two groups. Areas with Civic Voice members ($n = 319$) had an average IMD score of 25.6386 ($SD = 17.4000$) and areas without Civic Voice membership ($n = 2129$) had a mean IMD score was score of 25.0261 ($SD = 16.1977$) conditions; $t(2448) = -.644$ $p = .507$. More deprived areas are no more (or less) likely to have a Civic Voice Member. Both these findings challenge potential preconceptions that deprived areas have less social infrastructure or capacity to lead or facilitate transformation.

4. Methodology

This section provides a detailed account of the systematic approach used to monitor and evaluate the HSTF project. It outlines the steps taken to ensure the reliability, validity, and rigour of the evaluation process. It describes the data collected and the analytical methods used to derive meaningful insights, conclusions and recommendations.

4.1 HSTF approach to M&E

The HSTF's approach built on current monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, supplementing existing KPI indicators with a combination of quantitative and qualitative data to illustrate the impact and influence that the HSTF programme had.

As well as highlighting the strengths, weaknesses, overall effectiveness, and impact of the HSTF programme, the approach was intended to further understand the changing context for high streets, both during the lifespan of the HSTF programme, as well as establishing a picture of the current/future issues high streets (will) face. Combined with the programme evaluation, this has enabled us to make a series of recommendations for the legacy of the programme, in the accompanying Findings report.

The M&E framework was anchored in four key pillars: process evaluation, outcome evaluation, impact evaluation, and legacy evaluation. These pillars allowed the HSTF to systematically track whether interventions were delivered as planned, assess the immediate effects of the support provided, and identify the medium- to long-term outcomes for high streets – at both local and national (policy) level.

4.1.1 Process evaluation

The process evaluation aimed to assess whether the HSTF interventions were delivered according to plan, identifying factors that facilitated or hindered delivery. Given the dynamic nature of high street challenges, particularly the unforeseen disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, this aspect of the evaluation was crucial in understanding how the HSTF adapted its methods and timeline in response to external pressures. The focus here was on compliance with the original project design, the adjustments made to account for delays or changing conditions, and the satisfaction of local authorities with the process.

4.1.2 Outcome evaluation

Outcome evaluation focused on the short-term effects of HSTF interventions, particularly in terms of the knowledge, skills, and capacity built among local authorities and other stakeholders. This evaluation assessed whether the interventions led to observable improvements in local governance, placemaking capabilities, and collaborative efforts to manage high streets more effectively. Key performance indicators (KPIs) were used to measure progress, such as the number of partnerships formed, the development of place leadership skills, and the satisfaction levels of stakeholders who engaged with the HSTF products and services.

4.1.3 Impact evaluation

The impact evaluation sought to understand the medium-term changes resulting from the HSTF's work, focusing on whether the interventions made a tangible difference to high streets and local authorities. This involved using data such as footfall, as well as evidence of enhanced place branding, improved governance structures, and more high street activation (e.g. organisation of festivals and events). Statistical methods, including t-tests and correlation analysis, were employed to analyse the relationships between HSTF support and improvements in capacity and high street performance. Additionally, case studies from locations provided qualitative insights into how the HSTF's recommendations were implemented and the changes that resulted.

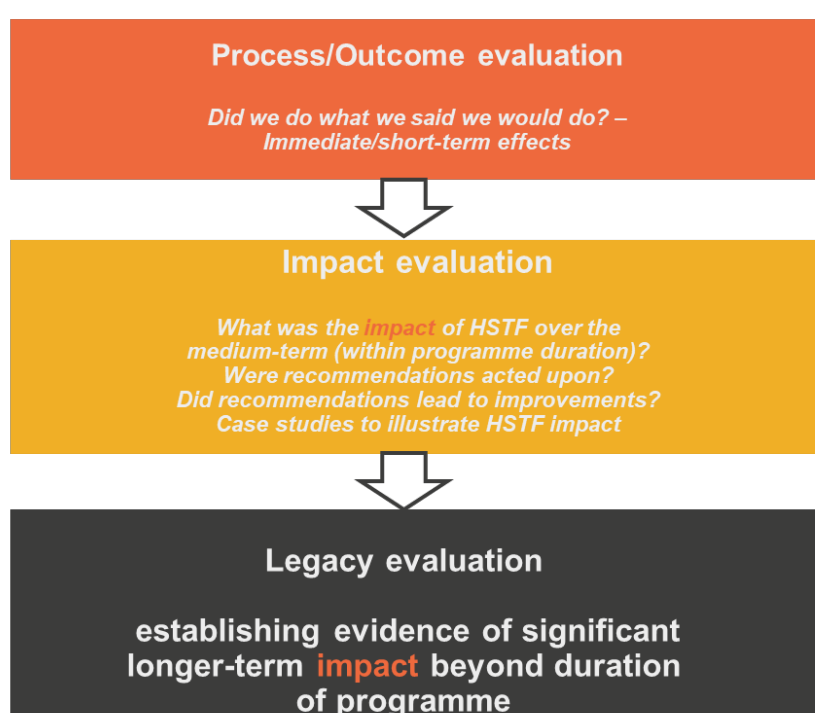


Figure 2. HSTF approach to monitoring and evaluation.

3.1.4 Legacy evaluation

The M&E approach has identified that legacy analysis is difficult. The primary barrier in seeking to demonstrate long-term impact was allowing requisite time for HSTF support outcomes to develop into demonstrable benefits (impact). As such, capturing legacy impact within the duration of the current programme has presented a challenge.

The legacy evaluation has used a variety of sources to explore the long-term sustainability of the HSTF's impact, both on the problems it was set up to solve as well as considering whether the structures and processes established during the interventions could endure beyond the programme's conclusion. Legacy evaluation has led to the development of a theory of change for the long-term curation and viability of high streets which includes the institutionalisation of place

management practices, the seeding and support of more place partnerships, and the capacity for future leadership within local authorities. The legacy evaluation was crucial for identifying how the knowledge, frameworks, and networks used in the HSTF consortium can continue to support high street regeneration in the future.

4.2 Specific M&E activities

As part of the planning process for Phase 4, a set of monitoring and evaluation activities was proposed to meet the primary objectives of the phase. These activities, agreed upon by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, provided the data and analysis for this report, and the Findings report, and are outlined in Table vii.

Task Force legacy outlined through identifying products and services with further demand		
Activity	Data	Method
Assess compliance with tender	Tender response Delivery plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify all products/services from tender. List with all products/services from delivery plan. Explain any variations
Explain original phases of project, major amendments to project, and other context that impacted on delivery	Tender response Amendments to contract	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce diagram showing original phases of project and timeframes Produce diagram showing amendments to project and timeframes (e.g. Phase 2c) Produce diagram that shows any disruption to delivery (bidding and LA capacity) Summarise
Identify satisfaction and delivery levels for all products/services supplied	Qualtrics Delivery plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish mean satisfaction score for each product/service Establish standard deviation of satisfaction score for each product/service Establish expected deliveries for each product/service Establish number of products/services supplied for each product/service Establish number of satisfaction scores for each product/service
Identify products/services that met KPIs	Qualtrics Delivery Plan Quarterly KPI tracker Tender response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish products/services that met KPIs

	HSTF journeys	
Identify products/services that did not meet KPIs	Qualtrics Delivery Plan Quarterly KPI tracker Tender response HSTF journeys	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish products/services that did not meet KPIs
Identify products/services amended through NPD	Monday.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> List all products/services that undertook some amendment
For each product/service amended through NPD identify change(s) made and reason for change	Monday.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> List changes made to all products/services amended (by product/service) List reasons for changes made to all products/services amended (by product/service) Categorise reasons for changes made
Compare products/services amended through NPD with products/services not delivered to plan	Delivery plan Monday.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish correlation between any amendments made and ability to deliver to plan.
Identify existing HSTF products/services with future demand	Qualtrics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify products/services with satisfaction above 80% (or alternative metric if Qualtrics data not available)
Identify new products/services to replace/improve products/services based on qualitative feedback	Qualtrics Monday.com Executive meeting with partners (June 24)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify products/services with satisfaction below 80% (or alternative metric if Qualtrics data not available) Analyse qualitative feedback to identify product/service adaptation/replacement suggestions (e.g. positives and negatives – thematic analysis) Suggest improvements/replacements
Identify legacy provision for all existing and new/amended products/services	Executive meeting with partners (June 24)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify what products/services would be provided by which partners and plan for this <p>Identify what products/services would not be provided by partners</p>

Evaluation of the success and impact of Task Force local interventions		
Establish compliance to all KPIs	Quarterly KPI tracker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Measure all KPIs + establish compliance with each KPI
Summarise the problems/issues/barriers the HSTF was set up to solve	Tender document	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify what problems/issues/barriers the HSTF was set up to solve
Identify problems/issues/barriers identified by HSTF	2 nd Deep dive Monday.com Expert meetings Board and exec workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Re-run deep dive analysis with more recent data Findings from Expert Workshop Board and exec perceptions
Map relationship between expected problems, problems encountered and KPIs	Board and exec workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board and exec perceptions
Identify future issues to impact high streets	Board and exec workshop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Board and exec perceptions
Identify impact by stakeholder type and categorise by expected/unexpected	Monday.com HSTF Dashboards Qualtrics Interviews Web review 2023 Annual Research Study - Place Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What was the outcome/impact (and were these expected/unexpected) of HSTF on. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local Authorities - were recommendations acted upon? Did recommendations lead to improvements? Improved bidding performance? Increased capacity/capability (through partnerships) Places - activation, increased footfall, improved perceptions, etc. People - skills acquired etc. Consortium Partners - changes in behaviour/practice MHCLG - changes in policy Other stakeholders - changes in attitude/behaviour/practice/policy (including media)

Further evidence of improvements in town centres / high streets because of the Task Force's work		
Case-studies	Monday.com Interviews HSTF dashboards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further evidence of improvements in town centres / high streets because of the Task Force's work
Assessment of partnership working	Annual Research Project 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Desk research/Interviews with 4 case study partnerships at differing stages of maturity.
Recommendations	Expert meeting Executive meetings with partners Board and exec workshop SLG PRDG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IPM <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - by IPM - by consortium partners - by Experts - by other national/regional bodies - by local place stakeholders including local authorities and Government
Close		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project completion meeting • Final Report

Table vi. *M&E activity.*

4.3 Data sources

Data for monitoring and evaluation has been collected from various sources, as summarised in the Table viii overleaf:

Data Source	Description
Tender response	Information provided by the response to the original tender for the Task Force.
Amendments to contract	Document highlighting all the formal changes that were made to the HSTF contract; due to national emergencies and feedback on products.
Qualtrics	Software which recorded all responses to questionnaires regarding HSTF products.
Delivery plan	A document which tracked the projected and actual delivery of HSTF products.
Monday.com	Project management software which tracked information on interactions with all HSTF locations, the products they received, the dates delivered, delays etc.
Executive meetings with partners	Feedback from partner's recorded to help analyse products and legacy.
Board meeting	Feedback from HSTF Board members about the strengths and weaknesses of the programme.
Quarterly KPI tracker	KPI tracker to highlight whether the HSTF was on target to meet its KPIs.
Tender document	A document produced by Government to outline the scope of the HSTF contract.
Expert reports	Reports produced by Task Force experts about the places they had visited and worked with. Includes qualitative information on additional challenges in location.
PWC final evaluation	A document produced by PWC which evaluated the impact of the HSTF.
IPM evidence to the HoL inquiry	A document written by the IPM to describe the work of the HSTF .
Barrier output from expert workshop	Menti exercise and the report that was produced following the delivery of the HSTF expert workshop.
Barrier output from the DPL	Menti exercise and the report that was produced following the delivery of the DPL course.

UYPP reports	Diagnostic reports outlining the main barrier to transformation in a location, strengths, meeting attendees, and any prescription for expert support given.
All English retail locations context	A spreadsheet containing information on all 2,447 'high streets' in England including Indices of Multiple Deprivation, number of retail units, size of centre, 3-mile resident population and results of HSTF capacity mapping (location of BIDs, Civic Voice Members and Regeneration Funds).
Exit reports	Short reports completed by Executive Director or Expert Coordinator to establish efficacy of interventions, whether recommendations were adopted and improvements that could be made to products/process.
HSTF journeys	SPSS file containing all data collected from HSTF programme relating to delivery.
Overton	A searchable index of policy documents and think tank publications.
Internet search	A systematic Google search (google.co.uk) for information in the public domain, such as online media outlets.

Table vii. Description of data sources.

4.4 Data analysis

In the monitoring and evaluation process, two types of analysis were used. Quantitative analysis involves the use of numerical data and statistical methods to measure and analyse variables, such as satisfaction scores, the time it takes for a High Street Task Force (HSTF) location to complete the programme, or the number of attendees at an event. This approach focuses on quantifying issues by using surveys, experiments, or data analysis to identify patterns and draw conclusions based on measurable data. Qualitative analysis, on the other hand, deals with non-numerical data, such as opinions, experiences, and emotions. It uses methods like interviews, focus groups, or content analysis to gain insights into people's thoughts and feelings. This approach helps to understand the underlying reasons and motivations behind certain behaviours or trends.

4.4.1 Statistical analysis

SPSS v29 was used for conducting the statistical analyses, with a focus on simple tests such as T-Tests, Bivariate Correlations, and Chi-square. For those unfamiliar with statistics, the types of tests used, how they work, and their significance, are summarised below with examples.

T-Test

A t-test compares the averages of two groups to see if they are significantly different. For example, to determine if Local Authorities (LAs) in more deprived areas were more likely to withdraw from the programme than those in less deprived areas, the following steps were taken:

1. Data was collected, including the average Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) scores for all LAs in the HSTF programme.
2. Two groups of LAs were formed: Group 1 (those that did not engage, withdrew, or were signed off the programme) and Group 2 (those that completed or were still in progress).
3. The average IMD scores for Group 1 and Group 2 were calculated.
4. A t-test compared these averages, considering how much variation there was within each group.
5. The results were interpreted. If the difference between averages was significant, it indicated a difference in deprivation levels between the two groups. If not significant, deprivation was unlikely to impact an LA's engagement with the programme. In essence, a T-Test helps determine whether observed differences are likely due to the factor being tested (e.g., deprivation) or just random chance.

Bivariate correlation

Bivariate correlation measures the relationship between two variables to see if they change together. For example, to assess whether the number of attendees at a UYPP meeting affected satisfaction levels:

1. Two variables were identified: the number of UYPP attendees and satisfaction with the event.
2. Data was collected from attendance sheets and online evaluations.
3. A Pearson product-moment correlation was conducted to determine whether a relationship existed, its strength, and whether it was positive (both variables increase or decrease together) or negative (as one increases, the other decreases).
4. The results showed a weak, negative correlation, between variables, with **significant** relationship, indicating that more attendees at the UYPP meetings were associated with lower satisfaction levels. In simple terms, bivariate correlation answers the question: "When one variable changes, does the other also change?"

Chi-square

A chi-square test examines whether there is a significant relationship between two categorical variables (i.e., variables divided into distinct groups or categories). In short, a chi-square test helps determine if two variables are related or independent. For example, to test if having a Business Improvement District (BID) in a location was linked to the BID's participation in a UYPP meeting:

1. The categorical variables were defined: whether there was a BID in the location (yes/no) and whether a BID representative attended the UYPP meeting (yes/no).
2. The chi-square test compared the observed data (e.g., how often BID representatives attended UYPPs in BID locations) with what would be expected if there was no relationship between the variables.
3. The chi-square statistic was calculated to measure how much the observed data deviated from what was expected, determining if the difference was large enough to suggest a real connection between the variables. The results showed that if a BID was present in a location, a representative was likely to have been invited to the UYPP meeting.

5. Process evaluation

This section outlines the evaluation of the High Street Task Force (HSTF) processes and the identification of factors that facilitated or impeded delivery throughout the project's lifespan.

5.1 Tender compliance

Tender compliance was evaluated by identifying all the products/services and activities that had been developed by the HSTF and comparing these to those identified in the original tender response. The High Streets Task Force (HSTF) demonstrated a high level of compliance with its original tender response, successfully developing 91% of the products and services outlined in the initial project plan.

An investigation was conducted to determine what happened to the remaining 9% of products. By reviewing past correspondence and product records, it was found that these products were either substituted, or not developed, due to external factors. Specifically, 5.5% of the products were replaced with equivalent services, primarily because of disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which required changes to the delivery of in-person support.

Two products – postgraduate credits for the Developing Place Leaders course and the collection of demographic data – were not developed. The former was discontinued following changes to the Manchester Metropolitan University's credit system, and the latter was excluded due to concerns over data protection. Despite these exceptions, the HSTF delivered most of its commitments, ensuring that 99% of the products were available for use (or substituted by other products) by the extended project deadline of September 2024.

5.2 New Product Development process

HSTF used the Institute of Place Management's 5-stage NPD process with a feedback loop back to the stage before, if the review process 'fails' (see Table ix below). Data for monitoring and evaluation was captured from satisfaction surveys (two qualitative questions asking respondents what they liked most and least about a product) and the amends and feedback from product developers (the HSTF research team) and Experts. The data sources which were used to analyse the product changes, included the change control document, alongside the COVID changes, as well as annexes of specific products such as the Developing a Shared Vision product. This data was analysed using template methods to find common themes and categories.

Strengths of the HSTF NPD Process:

Structured and Iterative Development: The HSTF NPD process followed a clear, staged approach that allowed for constant feedback and iteration. By moving through concept, prototype, pilot, release, and monitoring stages, each product was refined through practical insights before being fully rolled out.

Informed by cutting-edge research: All products drew from peer-reviewed research published by experts at Manchester Metropolitan University, ensuring they were conceptually and empirically sound.

Feedback-Driven: The NPD process incorporated ongoing feedback from local authorities, experts, and users, which ensured that the products were continuously improved based on real-world applications and evolving needs. This flexibility allowed for adjustments during development, particularly in response to issues such as capacity barriers or time constraints for local authorities.

These strengths made the NPD process an effective engine for the creation of practical, impactful products to regenerate high streets. The satisfaction with the programme increased over time, demonstrating the efficacy of the new product development process in making incremental improvements to products and delivery.

Stage	Description
Concept	Written document explaining need for product, product benefits and product components
Prototype	Mock-up of all product components for feedback)
Piloting	Development of functional version of product for testing with beneficiaries)
Release	Roll out of product
Monitoring	Regular review of satisfaction/feedback

Table viii The five-stage process of NPD development.

COVID was the biggest factor to change for HSTF products; this was due to the need to move away from face-to-face delivery to online programmes and resources. It impacted the aims and goals of local authorities and the challenges that they faced. Shifts in the national context impacted how HSTF products developed and were changed.

The NPD process resulted in many improvements to products as the programme progressed. For example, the Unlocking Your Place Potential was adapted based on participant feedback, leading to changes in its structure and content. The Place Making Programme improved as more iterations of the product were implemented. Developing a Shared Vision underwent two formal and major structural changes. The feedback from Local Authorities was that there were too many session and capacity barriers for them initially, so the product needed to be changed to encourage LA's engage with it.

A Spearman's rho correlation analysis was conducted to explore the relationship between cohort number and mean survey scores. The results indicate a weak, yet statistically significant, positive correlation between cohort number and mean survey score ($r = 0.192$, $p = .038$), with a sample size of 117 participants. As cohort numbers increase (as programme developed), there was a slight increase in the mean survey scores. The significance level ($p < .05$) indicates that the correlation is unlikely to have occurred by chance.

<i>Product</i>	<i>Number of amends</i>	<i>Type of amends</i>
Unlocking your Place Potential	3	2 Informal 1 COVID-related
Expert Visit	2	1 Formal 1 Informal
Mentor	2	1 Formal 1 Informal
Developing Shared Vision	2	2 Formal
Developing Place Leaders	1	1 COVID-related
Place Making Programme	4	3 Informal 1 COVID-related
TOTAL 6	14	

Table ix. Products amended through NPD.

5.3 Project timeframes

The original timeline for the HSTF delivery anticipated that each local authority (LA) would complete the programme within 9 months. However, due to significant delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and local authority resource constraints, the average delivery period extended to 16–18 months, excluding the six-month pause in 2020.

To mitigate these delays, the project executive modelled various scenarios and proposed a project extension of three months to September 30th, 2024. This extension allowed 135 local authorities to complete their support journeys, with 98% of products and services delivered by the revised deadline.

5.4 Satisfaction and delivery levels

All delivery was tracked through the HSTF's project management office (PMO) and delivery levels were monitored through the monthly and quarterly meetings with MHCLG.

Satisfaction levels for HSTF products and services were assessed using surveys conducted at the end of each intervention. These surveys utilised a 5-point Likert scale to measure satisfaction across various HSTF products. The question used a one-item, five-point Likert scale (1 = very dissatisfied; 2 = dissatisfied; 3 = neither satisfied nor dissatisfied; 4 = satisfied; 5 = very satisfied). This question was consistently replicated for each product/service and phrased as follows: "How satisfied were you with the [name of the HSTF product/service]?". Responses from all completed surveys were exported from Qualtrics and analysed using SPSS (v.29.0.1.0) through descriptive statistics of product and service satisfaction variables. Most expert products received scores between 4.25 and 4.45, indicating that participants were generally satisfied or very satisfied with the services provided. However, one product—Developing a Shared Vision (DaSV)—received lower satisfaction scores

<i>Product/Service</i>	Mean	Std Deviation	Respondents
PMP	4.45	0.70	532
EFUS	4.42	0.58	48
DPL	4.37	0.83	94
MFUS	4.33	0.50	9
UYPP	4.25	0.81	279
DaSV	3.60	1.05	20

Table x. Satisfaction (mean) of HSTF Expert-led products/services: Place Making Programme (PMP); Experts Follow-up Support (EFUS); Developing Place Leaders (DPL); Mentor Follow-up Support (MFUS); Unlocking Your Place Potential (UYPP); Developing a Shared Vision (DaSV).

To determine the future demand for HSTF products, satisfaction data and qualitative feedback were analysed. Products with a satisfaction rate above 80% were considered likely to have future demand. These included the Place Making Programme (PMP), Experts Follow-up Support (EFUS), and Developing Place Leaders (DPL).

Conversely, products with lower satisfaction scores, such as Developing a Shared Vision (DaSV) and Mentor Follow-up Support (MFUS), were identified as needing further revision or replacement. For example, the MFUS product could be repositioned as part of the Experts Follow-up Support offering. Thematic analysis of the feedback revealed that stakeholders valued the collaborative nature of the DaSV workshops but found that some sessions were too general, lacked place-specific insights, and were dominated by a small number of voices. Based on this feedback, the HSTF recommended that future versions of the DaSV product focus on more place-based delivery, allowing for deeper engagement with local challenges.

5.5 KPIs

A full list of KPIs is attached as Appendix B.

5.6 Process evaluation of expert delivery

The PMO tracked the results of the initial diagnostic (Unlocking Your Place Potential) as well as the selection of experts and the subsequent support given. Data was collected from UYPP and Expert reports and analysed qualitatively and quantitatively.

The UYPP diagnostic process identified local challenges and provided tailored recommendations to improve governance, partnership structures, and high street activation. A total of 46% of UYPP diagnoses focused on issues related to restructuring, particularly the lack of effective governance and collaborative working, which was a recurring challenge across many high streets.

As restructuring problems were the most frequently identified, there was a legitimate concern that more experts from the Institute of Place Management were being selected for expert delivery, to support locations with their governance and partnership working. 70% of the expert assignments were led by IPM. This was an unexpected outcome of the process. Previously, before embarking on

the HSTF, the Institute of Place Management had tended to work in locations where place partnerships, even if very informal, already existed (Parker et al., 2017).

To assess whether the recommendations provided through the UYPP process aligned with subsequent expert support, a chi-square test was performed. The results showed no significant relationship between the type of diagnosis (e.g., restructuring, repositioning, reinventing, rebranding) and the focus of expert support ($\chi^2 12, N = 135, p = .448$). This indicates that expert interventions were broadly aligned with the needs identified in the initial UYPP diagnostics, regardless of the specific challenges diagnosed.

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relationship between the initial diagnostic result and whether this had formed the basis of the expert or mentor support that followed. The relationship between these variables was not significant, $\chi^2(8, N = 136) = 7.485, p = .485$. There was no type of barrier that was more (or less) associated with congruency in the follow up expert or mentor support. This was a reassuring given that Local Authorities may not have been so familiar with each of the four barriers, especially rebranding.

A follow-up analysis explored whether the alignment between UYPP diagnostics and expert support had an impact on the implementation of recommendations. The analysis found that expert support congruent with the UYPP diagnosis was more likely to lead to the successful implementation of recommendations ($p = .001$). This finding underscores the importance of maintaining a clear focus on the original challenges diagnosed during the UYPP process and ensuring that expert interventions are aligned with these priorities. This is important because it highlights the value of staying focused on the original issues identified in the diagnostic process. Ensuring that expert advice directly addresses these challenges increases the likelihood of effective outcomes, making the support more targeted and impactful.

Further examination of the 16 locations where expert support was not congruent with the UYPP diagnosis did not reveal any anomalies, they were all different experts undertaking the assignments. However, the length of time elapsed between the UYPP diagnosis, and the start of the Expert or Mentor support did appear to influence the degree of congruency between diagnosis and support. An investigation was conducted to determine whether there was a difference in the number of days elapsed between the UYPP and the start of Expert or Mentor support, comparing locations where the diagnosis and support were congruent with those where the focus of support diverged from the original diagnosis. A significant difference was found between the two groups ($p = .08$).

Congruent locations ($n = 58$) had an average of 179 days elapse between UYPP and support. Incongruent locations ($n = 12$) had an average of 254 days elapse.

Additionally, while examining the alignment between barriers and expert support, it was also explored whether some barriers were easier to overcome than others. First, a chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relationship between the initial diagnosis from the UYPP (i.e. restructuring, reinventing, repositioning or rebranding) and the likelihood that the HSTF recommendations had been implemented. The relationship between these variables was not significant, $\chi^2(6, N = 135) = 7.795, p = .254$. There was no evidence to suggest that the HSTF programme recommendations were more likely to be implemented in locations based on their initial diagnosis.

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relationship between the initial diagnosis from the UYPP (e.g., restructuring, reinventing, repositioning, or rebranding) and the likelihood of the HSTF programme making a difference. The relationship was not significant $X^2(6, N = 135) = 10.51, p = .105$, indicating no significant difference in the programme's impact based on the initial diagnosis. This highlights the importance of all four diagnostic categories (4Rs) in the process.

Finally, an ANOVA was conducted to compare satisfaction scores among the professional bodies leading the expert support (IPM, LI, DC, and RTPI). No significant difference was found between them, with all professional bodies having a mean satisfaction score above 4 out of 5. It is important to note the relatively small number of completed surveys for the expert product, as each Local Authority was only asked to complete one survey.

Professional Body	Number of surveys	Mean satisfaction
Design Council	7	4.29
Institute of Place Management	26	4.46
Landscape Institute	4	4.50
Royal Town Planning Institute	2	4.50

Table xi. Number of surveys and score by professional body.

5.7 Process evaluation of management and governance

The HSTF had five management and governance groups: the HSTF Board, the HSTF Executive Group, Professional, Research and Data Group, Sector Leaders Group, and meetings with MHCLG (quarterly and monthly). A survey was sent to all members of these groups in September 2024 to gauge satisfaction and find to what extent members felt the groups had met their original terms of reference.

Overall satisfaction with the management and governance of the HSTF through its regular meetings was high, with all an average of 90% satisfaction across all groups, with every individual group scoring at least 80% (Table xv).

HSTF Group	Number of respondents	Mean satisfaction (%)
HSTF Board	5	96%
HSTF Consortium	5	95
PRDG	2	88
SLG	5	82

Table xii. Number of surveys and score by professional body.

Respondents were satisfied with the running of meetings (as illustrated in Table xvi) with all aspects scoring more than 3.5 out of 5.

HSTF Group	HSTF Board	HSTF Exec	PRDG	SLG
Suitable frequency of meetings	4.2	4.25	3.5	4
Well chaired	4.8	4.25	4	4.5
Relevant agenda	4.8	4	4	4.5
Speakers prepared	4.6	4.25	3.5	4.5
Actions implemented	4.4	4.5	4	4

Table xiii. Evaluation of the running of HSTF meetings (n=17).

The management and governance of the HSTF through its meeting was assessed by group members, with all agreeing that Terms of Reference had been met (Table xvii).

HSTF Group ToR	Number of respondents	Score (out of 5)
HSTF Board	5	4.33
HSTF Consortium	5	4.55
PRDG	2	4.66
SLG	5	4.07

Table xiv. To what extent original ToRs for individual management and governance groups were met.

Group members also gave qualitative feedback. The feedback highlights that the meetings were well-organised and balanced, allowing for effective discussions. The diversity of participants was valued, as it brought a variety of perspectives to the table. Participants appreciated the chance to collaborate with individuals from different sectors, which added depth to the discussions about high street challenges. The leadership was commended for facilitating the meetings effectively, ensuring

that everyone had the opportunity to contribute actively. The Executive was also praised for providing good quality reports and papers.

In relation to weaknesses and areas for improvements, there was some uncertainty about the strength of linkages across the HSTF groups. Meetings were too infrequent, and it was difficult for the Board to truly feel part of the HSTF delivery. There was uncertainty about just how much influence the group had over actions. In-person meetings were preferred over remote ones – although one respondent was critical of the distance to travel. Finally, the group felt underutilised as ambassadors for the Task Force.

The HSTF Executive Group feedback highlighted several positive aspects of the meetings. Participants appreciated the opportunity to hear how others were involved in the initiative, which facilitated valuable networking opportunities. The presentations delivered by the Institute of Place Management (IPM) team were particularly praised for their excellence in sharing research findings. Additionally, the range of project delivery feedback was well-received, and the collaboration among various experts and partners to share updates and influence change was recognised as an important aspect of the process. The qualitative feedback also expressed concerns that the meetings often felt like a tick-box exercise, lacking energy and engagement. Individual updates were perceived as an afterthought, with participants sometimes appearing unprepared. A key challenge highlighted was the difficulty in maintaining consistency among participants, which was seen as critical for building trust and fostering open relationships in partnership settings. Additionally, there was frequent turnover of organisational representatives, which created challenges for the coordinating body. Not all suppliers consistently attended the meetings, but there was a desire for more in-person meeting opportunities to enhance engagement.

The feedback from SLG members identified the forum as a valuable platform for hearing from various sectors and high street stakeholders. It allowed participants to explore both common ground and specific issues. There was an appreciation for the opportunity to hear diverse perspectives, including those from sectors they would not typically engage with. The forum also facilitated peer-to-peer knowledge exchange, support, and open dialogue, which were seen as critical to the success of the discussions and a valuable synthesis for government. The feedback also indicated that the meetings were not interactive enough, particularly in the early stages. One participant acknowledged that they joined halfway through the process and may not have a complete perspective, but they felt the discussions were often dominated by one or two sectors and could have benefited from better chairing. The brief updates from organisations were perceived as more of a formal exercise than a genuine attempt to foster collaboration. One participant suggested holding an annual in-person meeting to complement the virtual meetings. All emphasised the importance of continuing the SLG (Sector Leaders Group).

6. In-programme impact evaluation

The in-programme impact evaluation aimed to assess the direct outcomes and effectiveness of the High Streets Task Force (HSTF) interventions, with a focus on local authorities, high streets, stakeholder groups, and place makers. This section details the evaluation of the impact of the High Street Task Force (HSTF) on various stakeholder groups, employing both qualitative and quantitative methods.

6.1 Evaluation of the success and impact of Task Force local interventions

PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC), assessed the short-term and potential long-term impacts of HSTF interventions. The PwC report found that there was strong evidence of short-term positive impacts in most locations, but the availability of long-term impact data was limited due to the original design of monitoring and evaluation and subsequent data collection.

The Contribution Analysis method used by PwC concluded that the HSTF is likely to contribute to long-term high street improvements, though future iterations of the programme would benefit from more embedded evaluability mechanisms to facilitate long-term impact tracking. The report also recommended that future programme phases should implement a Theory of Change at the outset to allow for more systematic data collection and analysis (PwC, 2024). This would enable clearer attribution of outcomes to HSTF interventions, allowing for more robust evaluations of both short- and long-term impacts.

The report argued that the case studies and exit interviews, provide an interesting insight into the short-term impact of the HSTF but they are not representative of all high streets. The PwC report highlights that qualitative data will only provide a snapshot of impact for the HSTF Evaluation and Monitoring Report and they suggest that primary data collection (based on a ToC) will need to be considered at the outset of any future phase of HSTF. In essence, the report highlights the importance of the HSTF, but it calls for more robust methods of evaluation in the future which need to be considered before any future project begins. However, it should be noted that PwC did not collect any primary data for themselves which would have helped in their own quantitative analysis. In terms of impact on high streets, it is important to highlight that the qualitative methods, are useful as they show that good place leaders, collaboration with communities, and engagement with the HSTF will produce good results and this should not be ignored.

While limited statistical data is available to directly demonstrate the impact of HSTF on high streets, there is ample data to evaluate the HSTF against its original objectives. This included assessing its impact on capacity and capability, placemaking skills, coordination and representation, and the use of data and knowledge.

6.2 Impact on Local Authorities

Impact was operationalised through the development of a standard framework that researchers used to review written records (such as expert reports, committee minutes, internet news stories, emails, conversation notes, etc.) to answer the research questions “were recommendations acted on?”, “has capacity been increased?”, and “is there evidence that HSTF has made a difference?”.

6.2.1 Were recommendations acted on?

To address this, expert reports were reviewed to identify key recommendations given to local authorities (LAs). In some cases, recommendations were documented at the end of the expert's involvement or during the implementation phase, indicating that these recommendations had been acted upon. More commonly, experts provided recommendations and left the local authority or HSTF group to implement them. For these cases, additional information was sourced from published case studies, pipeline case studies, testimonies, the internet, or directly from experts and mentors.

So, in Barnstable, for example:

1. The main barrier identified was restructuring and lack of partnership working. Forming a partnership was the focus of expert support. Progress was made by the Expert through holding a stakeholder meeting and establishing a draft structure for a new partnership and sharing this with senior officers at LA.
2. At end of Expert support – the LA was left with the recommendation to establish a Town Board based on the structure/ToRs that the Expert had drafted in consultation with stakeholders and senior officers. This led to the key impact question. Have they established a board?
3. A Google search undertaken on 12th June did not return any evidence of a Town Board being established in Barnstable. So the town is currently a ‘Don’t know’ as there is lack of evidence either way. Barnstable is therefore a candidate for a follow-up Key Informant Interview...to establish if a Town Board has been created. What progress has been made? If not, why not?

At the end of the programme 115 completed HSTF ‘journeys’ had been reviewed, to assess whether HSTF recommendations had been acted on. Barnstable remained one of the 26 ‘Don’t knows’.

	Numbers	%
Yes	38	33%
Partly	34	30%
No	17	15%
Don't know	26	22%
TOTAL	115	100%

Table xv. Were recommendations acted on?

Analysis of the 115 locations that have fully completed their HSTF journey reveals that 72 locations (63%) have acted on the expert recommendations, either fully or in part (as of the 24th of September 2024). It should be noted that the more recently a HSTF location completed their expert support the less likely is it to have had sufficient time to implement recommendations.

There are 26 locations that have completed their HSTF journey, but it remains unclear whether they have acted on the recommendations due to insufficient evidence. This underscores the need to keep monitoring for impact after the programme ends.

	Acted on recommendations	%
Restructuring	28	39%
Reinventing	19	26%
Rebranding	13	18%
Repositioning	7	10%
UYPP Lite	5	7%
TOTAL	72	100%

Table xvi. Type of recommendation.

Of the 63 locations that have acted on the HSTF's recommendations, 28 (39%) had been prescribed the process of Restructuring to address their main barrier to transformation. Of these 28 locations, 20 had a governance restructuring diagnosis - and were advised to address partnership working (71%), whilst 8 had issues relating to physical restructuring – and were recommended improvements in the public realm (29%). This is an important distinction to make as the two forms of restructuring (governance and physical) are quite different – although the larger scale physical restructuring is also likely to rely on governance and statutory functions (i.e. planning) to facilitate change (Peel and Parker, 2018).

Nevertheless, as 1/3rd of the restructuring prescriptions would have utilised landscape and/or planning experts, this may explain why there was no significant relationship between the original diagnosis and the professional body that provided the follow-up expert support, even though 46% of UYPP's resulted in a restructuring diagnosis.

The next highest strategic approach prescribed that had resulted in action being taken was Reinventing, with 19 locations (26%) focusing on activation and delivery, followed by 13 for Rebranding (18%) with a focus on communication and messaging, and 7 for Repositioning (10%) with a focus on data-collection and high-level vision development. In addition to the above, 5 locations were considered UYPP Lite (7%) which involved a lighter-touch approach to determining the form of expert support (often strongly influenced by the Local Authority) than the traditional UYPP full diagnostic, which was much more rigorous and objective.

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relationship between whether recommendations were acted upon and if a UYPP had taken place. The relationship between these variables was significant (at 10% level), $\chi^2(1, N = 79) = 3.161$, $p = .075$. Having a UYPP (rather than a UYPP Lite) meant that recommendations were more likely to be implemented.

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relationship between whether the expert or mentor support was aligned to the original UYPP diagnostic and whether HSTF recommendations were implemented. The relationship between these variables was significant, $\chi^2(4, N = 136) = 71.85$, $p = .001$. If the expert work had been aligned to the original UYPP diagnosis, then recommendations are more likely to be implemented.

6.2.2 Was capacity/capability increased?

In addition to evaluating the recommendations provided and their implementation, the assessment also aimed to determine if working with the HSTF had led to improvements in capacity and capability. Through a review of annual research studies on viability, leadership, and partnership working, as well as empirical evidence from expert reports, case studies, testimonials, and regular communication between the Expert Coordinator and experts/locations, six measures of capacity were developed.

	Numbers	%
Improved internal working	74	65%
Improved external working	65	56%
External consultants appointed	24	21%
New partnership developed	18	16%
Existing partnership improved	11	10%
New place management post recruited	6	5%
TOTAL	115*	

**The total used is the number of locations assessed, rather than the sum of the number of times each factor was identified*

Table xvii. How capacity increased.

Among the 115 locations that have fully completed their HSTF journey, the most frequently observed improvement was in internal working, specifically enhanced cross-departmental and place-focused collaboration among local authority officers, noted in 65% of locations. This was closely followed by improved external working, with 56% of locations reporting enhanced collaborative efforts between the local authority and external organisations.

There was then a significant drop in improvements being evidenced before external consultants being appointed i.e. third-party contractors commissioned to produce, for example, a Place Action Plan or address an issue with the public realm, emerges as the next most frequent improvement (21%), followed by new partnerships being developed (16%), existing partnerships improved (10%) and new place management posts being recruited (6%). The lack of additionality (i.e. new resource) also reinforces findings from HSTF place leadership research which identified the lack of capacity, resource and expertise in place management as being a common barrier to place leadership and the process of transformation.

The interventions made by the HSTF were shown to contribute directly to these local improvements. A Pearson correlation analysis indicated a significant positive relationship between the amount of support received (in terms of the number of HSTF products delivered) and the capacity-building outcomes ($r = 0.330$, $p = .001$).

6.3 Impact on places – did HSTF make a difference?

Of the 72 locations that have acted on the expert recommendations provided, over three quarters (77%) required support from the HSTF to help address the main barrier to transformation that was identified at the UYPP stage. Only a small number (6%) were able to address the problem without the support of the HSTF. This determination was made by reviewing the evidence collected to demonstrate how a location has acted upon recommendations before considering whether it is likely that further HSTF support made a difference in achieving this outcome (usually this required an explicit reference to be made to HSTF's role). This determination was based on information available in the public domain. To have a clearer picture of the impact that the HSTF experts have had on 63 locations, a location for a case-study that corresponds to each "R" of the 4R's framework was selected. Case studies from Accrington, Scarborough, Streatham, and Neasden demonstrated tangible improvements in governance structures, place activation, branding, and community engagement.

	Numbers	%
Yes	32	44%
Partly	24	33%
No	4	6%
Don't Know	12	17%
TOTAL	72	100%

Table xviii. Was HSTF support needed?

There are still a number of these locations (17%), where it is unclear if HSTF was required for them to act on recommendations. This is due to a lack of evidence to make an accurate assessment, that could be collected from local authority officers and wider stakeholders through surveys and interviews, post-HSTF.

In **Accrington**, a new Town Centre Stakeholder Group and a Town Centre Partnership Board were established. These groups developed the Accrington Town Centre Investment Plan 2022-2032, which improved collaboration and governance structures. This collaborative effort has facilitated ongoing dialogue and decision-making among local stakeholders, leading to a more cohesive approach to town centre development.

Scarborough saw the repurposing of vacant high street spaces into creative hubs, contributing to place activation and supporting the local arts community. The creation of a new Artistic Quarter with galleries and art studios has revitalized the area, providing affordable spaces for artists, and fostering a vibrant cultural scene.

In **Streatham**, a new place identity and branding were developed for the area, improving community cohesion and business engagement. This initiative brought a renewed sense of pride to the community, resulting in local businesses renovating storefronts and enhancing public spaces. The

new branding has helped create a unified identity for Streatham High Road, making it a more attractive destination for consumers and businesses.

Neasden, Brent benefited from surveys and consultations with residents and businesses, which informed the development of a new Town Centre Placemaking and Sustainability Action Plan. This plan aims to create a fairer, greener, and more connected Neasden, with increased community engagement and data-driven decision-making guiding the process.

In **Ellesmere Port**, the HSTF helped form a new partnership to deliver long-term plans for the town. This partnership focuses on bringing public services, housing, and cultural offerings into the town centre, supporting local businesses, and enhancing the overall quality of life for residents.

Tower Hamlets (**Whitechapel**) appointed a Town Centre Manager to improve local engagement and practical action. This role has facilitated a significantly increased programme of events and activities for residents and businesses, transforming shopfronts and vacant spaces with the help of local artists. Collaboration between Camden, Brent, and Westminster councils has also improved, addressing the challenges facing Kilburn.

In **Luton**, the council appointed a Town Centre Director and Activation Manager, developed a new place brand, and created a High Street Hub. These efforts have led to a successful programme of events and activities, enhancing the town's image and feel, and fostering a stronger sense of community.

Armley established the Armley Action Team as a Community Interest Company, securing funding for local projects and initiatives. This team has improved local engagement and place-making activities, demonstrating the power of community-driven efforts in transforming the high street.

Paignton formed the Paignton Town Team to develop and implement a Town Centre Action Plan. This team has increased local stakeholder engagement and collaboration, organizing events and activities to attract more visitors and enhance the town centre's vibrancy.

In **Grimsby**, the Grimsby 2025 Group was established as a Community Interest Company, developing an activation plan strategy to increase footfall and vibrancy. The group has implemented public realm improvements and creative initiatives, mobilizing local stakeholders under the campaign slogan "Be Part of the Positive."

Barnsley developed a strong local identity and brand for the town centre, leading to increased footfall and business engagement. Enhancements to public spaces and community events have improved perceptions of the town, making it a more attractive destination for residents and visitors.

Earlestown formed the Earlestown Thrives group to organize local events and activities, increasing community engagement and place-making efforts. This group has improved the town centre's appearance and vibrancy, demonstrating the impact of collaborative efforts in revitalizing high streets.

These locations have demonstrated various forms of impact, including improved governance, increased community engagement, enhanced public spaces, and stronger local identities. The HSTF programme has played a role in facilitating these positive changes.

6.4 Impact on groups – coordination and representation

The HSTF played a key role in increasing stakeholder representation and coordination at both the local and national levels. In this section the focus was on one product, Unlocking Your Place Potential to assess the impact it has had on the representation of various stakeholders and the coordination of groups and interests at the local level. These workshops involved 1,673 stakeholders across the programme, with representation from local authorities, businesses, community groups, and public sector organisations.

As part of the onboarding for the HSTF programme, detailed guidance was sent to local authorities to ensure that there was representation at the UYPP from the business, community and the Business Improvement District, if there was one in the area. Other organisations were also recommended, such as culture, public sector, anchor organisations, employers, transport providers, retail and other business networks etc. Following on from the support provided to Sir John Timpson's review (High Street Task Force, 2018), HSTF explicitly suggested that the UYPP should include representation young people (under 25) and provided guidance suggesting useful contacts (schools, colleges, youth clubs etc.) who might help suggest a suitable delegate.

	Numbers	%
Local Authority Officers	684	41
Councillors	196	12
Businesses	360	22
Community	156	9
BIDs	57	3
Other place partnerships	61	3
Public organisations/other	97	6
Other	62	4
TOTAL	1673	100

Table xix. Proportion of stakeholders present at UYPP meetings.

During registration, attendees were asked to indicate if they were under 25. Whilst this data is not necessarily entirely accurate, only 14 people indicated they were under 25. That's less than 1% of delegates – compared to 12% that were councillors, for example.

The data also examined gender representation of the attendees (Table xxviii). There was fairly equal representations of men and woman.

	Numbers	%
Men	964	58%
Women	703	42%
TOTAL	1667	100%

Table xx. Gender representation at UYPP meetings.

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relationship between having a BID in the area and representation of the BID at the UYPP meeting. The relationship between these variables was significant, $X^2(2, N = 152) = 81.021$, $p = .001$. If there was a BID in the area, then a representative from it was likely to have been invited. Nevertheless, there were still 14 UYPPs that took place without representation from their local BID.

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relationship between having a Civic Voice member in the area and representation of the community at the UYPP meeting. The relationship between these variables was not significant, $X^2(2, N = 152) = 1.067$, $p = .587$. If there was a Civic Voice member in the area, then it was no more (or less) likely that a community representative would be present at the UYPP meeting. There were 27 UYPPs that took place without representation from the community, even though there was a Civic Voice member in the location.

In over half (53%) the UYPP's the leader, CEO or their deputy was present. Again, HSTF guidance made it clear that senior sponsorship would help get the most out of the programme. Nevertheless, even when the leadership was not present, other senior representatives were present. 397 (or 24%) of the delegates had 'Head', 'Director' or some other senior job title. The investigation examined whether the presence of the leader/CEO or their deputy was related to satisfaction with the meeting. There was no significant difference in the mean satisfaction score between the two groups (leader present/leader absent). When the leader was present ($n = 64$) the mean satisfaction score was 4.2217 ($SD = .55$) and when they were not present ($n = 52$) the mean satisfaction score was score of 4.3229 ($SD = .65$) conditions; $t(116) = .901$ $p = .369$.

There was a wide variation in the number of stakeholders that were invited to UYPP meetings. The average number of attendees were 11 but one UYPP took place with 4 attendees (Blackburn and Darwen) another with 35 (Tameside). A Spearman's rho correlation analysis was computed to assess the relationship between the number of attendees at the UYPP and the mean satisfaction score. There was a weak, negative correlation between the two variables, $r = -.215$, $N = 83$; but the relationship was significant ($p = .50$). Having more attendees at the UYPP meetings appears to be associated with a lower level of satisfaction.

The investigation examined whether there was a difference in mean satisfaction score between UYPP that had business representatives present and those that did not. There was a significant difference in the mean satisfaction score between the two groups. When businesses were represented ($n = 95$) the mean satisfaction score was 4.2847 and when they were not represented ($n = 11$) the mean satisfaction score was score of 3.8864 $p = .020$. If businesses were represented respondents were more satisfied with the UYPP.

In addition, to check if there was a difference in mean satisfaction score between UYPPs that had Business Improvement District (BID) representatives present and those that did not. There was no significant difference in the mean satisfaction score between the two groups. When BIDs were represented ($n = 24$) the mean satisfaction score was 4.2186 ($SD = .69512$) and when they were not represented ($n = 58$) the mean satisfaction score was score of 4.1467 ($SD = .70738$) conditions; $t(82) = -.424$ $p = .672$.

An investigation was conducted to determine whether there was a difference in mean satisfaction score between UYPP that had community representatives present and those that did not. There was a significant difference in the mean satisfaction score between the two groups. When the community were represented ($n = 47$) the mean satisfaction score was 4.0543 and when they were not represented ($n = 35$) the mean satisfaction score was score of 4.3900 $p = .030$. Community representation was associated with lower levels of satisfaction with the UYPP product.

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relationship between whether recommendations were acted upon and if a UYPP had taken place. The relationship between these variables was significant (at 10% level), $X^2(1, N = 79) = 3.161$, $p = .075$. Having a UYPP (rather than a UYPP Lite) meant that recommendations were more likely to be implemented.

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relationship between whether the HSTF programme had made a difference and if a UYPP had taken place. The relationship between these variables was significant (at 10% level), $X^2(2, N = 79) = 5.523$, $p = .063$. Having a UYPP (rather than a UYPP Lite) was associated with the HSTF programme having made a difference to the location.

Finally, an investigation was conducted to determine if the presence of senior leadership (CEO, Council Leader or their deputy) was related to implementing the recommendations of the HSTF, making an impact on the location, or the amount of capacity developed. A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relationship between whether recommendations were acted upon and if senior leadership was present. The relationship between these variables was significant (at 10% level), $X^2(4, N = 152) = 38.512$, $p = .075$. Having senior council leadership attend the UYPP meant that recommendations were more likely to be implemented.

An independent samples t-test was performed to examine if capacity was more likely to increase if senior leadership was present at the UYPP but there was no significant difference in capacity that resulted. When the senior leadership was represented ($n = 79$) the mean capacity score was 1.1389 ($SD = 1.1297$) and when they were not represented ($n=72$) the mean capacity score was 1.2532 ($SD = 1.29564$) conditions; $t(151) = -5.579$ $p = .282$ A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relationship between impact and if senior leadership was present at the UYPP. The relationship between these variables was not significant, $X^2(4, N = 152) = 4.637$, $p = .327$. Having senior council leadership attend the UYPP was not associated with HSTF having impact.

6.5 Impact on place makers

The HSTF's impact on place makers was assessed through exit interviews and key performance indicator (KPI) tracking. Of the exit interviews conducted, 71.5% of participants commented positively on the new skills and expertise they acquired because of HSTF interventions, and 76% reported positive experiences with the expert support provided. The HSTF had a direct impact on many different types of place makers as developing placemaking skills was a key objective of the programme. There are a variety of skills mentioned, including expertise and knowledge from the HSTF Resource Library, enhanced place marketing initiatives, people feeling encouraged to take ownership for issues and actions, and feeling their thinking had been inspired or stimulated which would help them "take the place forward". The positive comments also mentioned that following the HSTF support resulted in an informed action plan and a unified vision.

6.6 Evidence from Developing Place Leaders' surveys

Feedback from the DPL product has been consistently high, with 92% of respondents agreeing that "my knowledge about leadership, governance, and place making has increased" and 97% agreeing that the course "encouraged me to continue collaborating with others to improve my high street" (see Table xxix).

	"My knowledge about leadership, governance, and place making has increased"	"It encouraged me to continue collaborating with others to improve my high street"
Strongly agree	31.25%	63.54%
Agree	60.41%	33.33%
Neither agree nor disagree	7.29%	0%
Disagree	0%	1.04%
Strongly Disagree	1.04%	2.08%

Table xxi. Feedback from the Developing Place Leaders programme.

6.7 Impact on policy

This section reviews the impact, HSTF has had on national policies related to high streets and town centres.

An analysis of Overton data (a searchable index of policy documents and think tank publications), revealed that the HSTF was mentioned in 125 policy documents between January 2019 and July 2024. Thematic analysis was used to identify all policy references to the HSTF and showed that 73% of policy documents referencing the HSTF were produced at the national level, underscoring the Task Force's influence on shaping high street policy.

6.7.1 High Street Accelerators

As members of the High Street Accelerators Expert Working Group, the Chair of the HSTF board and the research lead for the HSTF were able to bring the data and evidence collected from HSTF deep dives to inform thinking on how to ensure the impact of the pilots was optimised. This helped to bake in the following key factors into the pilot:

- Establish an effective place partnership, chaired independently from the local authority, and comprised of key stakeholders from across the place, to drive change directly and collaboratively.
- To ensure each place has a bespoke and compelling vision that resonates with and is owned by the people of that place.
- Ensure that high street accelerators access HSTF professional capacity and expertise in an area of need.
- To consider how post-pilot places can continue their work in a sustainable manner.

In December, the HSTF, on behalf of MHCLG, hosted a one-day HSA induction which was attended by all ten places. Speakers from HSTF and MHCLG provided information on the programme, including the packages of support available and attendees benefited from master class sessions by experts from the Institute of Place Management and Platform Places. An evaluation of attendees was carried out, with the event recording a satisfaction rating of 95%.

6.8 Impact on perceptions

To collect and analyse public perceptions of the HSTF, a Google search was conducted using the query "High Streets Task Force" and related terms such as "HSTF" and "High Streets Taskforce." The search results were filtered for 'News' and customised to include stories from January 2023 to June 2024. The objective was to gather relevant content from sources such as regional and local online news outlets (e.g., Manchester Evening News). Both negative, positive, and neutral perceptions were included. Each news headline was assigned a sentiment score by answering the question: "What is the effect of the news headline on HSTF perception from reading it?". From a total of 50 online media mentions of the HSTF, the majority (90%) conveyed a positive perception of the Task Force and its work during the programme's lifetime. A minority of results is neutral (8%), and a very slim portion of mentions is negative (2%).

6.8.1 Perceptions of the HSTF programme

To collect and analyse public perceptions of the HSTF, a Google search was conducted using the query “High Streets Task Force” along with alternative phrasing such as “HSTF” and “High Streets Taskforce.” The search was filtered for ‘News’ and customized to cover all news stories from January 2023 to June 2024. The objective was to gather Google search results most relevant to the HSTF, including content from regional and local online news outlets. Both negative, positive, and neutral perceptions from the selected news were included, with sentiment scores assigned based on the question: “What is the effect of the news headline on HSTF perception from reading it?” From a total of 50 online media mentions of the HSTF, the majority (90%) convey a positive perception of the Task Force and its work during the programme's lifetime. A minority of results was neutral (8%), and a very slim portion of mentions was negative (2%).

6.8.2 Perceptions of the local high street

One of the objectives of the High Streets Task Force Executive, its stakeholders and appointed Experts was to change the predominant narrative of a ‘dying high street’ to a more nuanced discussion of its evolution. Each local authority was supported with a template press release and media advice to share news of work with the Task Force to local press. This approach was successful with many local outlets following the progress of support, emphasising community engagement, and taking a balanced approach to the debate on the future of local areas, rather than focusing solely on negative symptoms of change, such as vacant stores or planning blight.

6.9 Impact on the national media narrative

One of the problems the HSTF was set up to solve was to challenge the prevalent national media depiction of the high street which was focussed on shop closures and a simplistic “death of the high street” narrative. This section highlights some examples of where the HSTF has provided evidence and commentary that has challenged this narrative, and shown another story of hope for, and renewal of, the high street.

On the 15th February 2024, the Task Force Executive Director spoke to the BBC on The One show, visiting Ashton-under-Lyne high street to discuss the positive future for high streets.

Although the high street was a filming location to reflect on the closure of the Body Shop, he was able to highlight the Town Board recently formed and look ahead to future investment and transformation. This continues the Task Force messaging, delivered via HSTF’s Executive and wide network of Experts and supporters, that high streets are evolving and need support to continue this work.

On the 12th July 2023, the New York Times covered a story about how a UK landlord had offered tenants free rent. “The rent-free period has transformed the street, which now has a constant flow of foot traffic in an area that many locals used to avoid. Even the adjacent shopping mall is bucking the national trend, with more visitors now than in 2019”.

Half of the original 10 businesses offered space on Kingland Crescent are still there, and those that left were quickly replaced by new local businesses ready to pay rent. There is a sense that momentum is building in Poole’s transformation.

“...Mark Robinson, chair of the High Streets Task Force, a body set up by the government (said) likewise, there are places that are still going to get worse. But on balance, we can really look to having been through the worst, and I genuinely don't think people are talking about the death of the high street anymore.”

On 3rd January 2022, the Research Lead for the High Streets Task Force, appeared on BBC Radio 4 You and Yours on 3rd January 2022, marking 10 years since the Portas Pilots and looking at the topic of 'High Street Revival'. Speaking with host Sam Fenwick to close the 40 min special episode, she reflected on the trends that are driving change in town centres. In a wide-ranging discussion, the HSTF Research Lead touched on the economics of town centres, looking at Stockton as a case study and its number of hair and beauty businesses and future, before moving on to how high streets are transitioning their offers.

Reflecting on the work of the High Streets Task Force, she spoke about how towns are now focused on a much broader range of issues, including the local environment and liveability. As recently as 2019, she said, this was not case, even if people were aware of the challenges such as air quality, congestion, and the need for more sustainable centres. But, she said, this changed as many towns are now being encouraged to be more ambitious about the scope of their transformation and ambitions.

Outside of these examples, the High Streets Task Force Board and appointed Experts provided particularly useful media commentary on strategic place issues, including high street banking, innovating in retail, consumer trends, place 'monocultures,' and localism.

6.10 Impact on research

The High Streets Task Force (HSTF) generated new academic research on the vitality, viability, and resilience of England's high streets. During the COVID-19 pandemic, research into business resilience revealed key insights into the impacts on various economic sectors, leading to the development of a Business Resilience Composite Score. This research has been cited in top academic publications and demonstrated significant real-world impact (as policy decisions were made based on the research's data and evidence). Further, the HSTF developed a new model of high street viability, moving beyond economic indicators to encompass sustainability, resilience, adaptability, and liveability. This framework has been tested in real-world settings, providing valuable tools for measuring high street health.

Research into place leadership identified key traits of successful leaders and highlighted barriers such as lack of resources, politics, and negativity, resulting in the creation of the Collaborative Cycle of Place Leadership model. Studies on place partnerships also identified the importance of trust and key ambassadors. Annual footfall reviews revealed activity trends and changes since the pandemic, with insights shared through major media outlets and high-profile governmental events. The Task Force's focus on engaged scholarship emphasized practical solutions through collaboration with professional bodies, bridging the gap between academic research and real-world application. This approach has been widely disseminated, enhancing both academic understanding and practical responses to high street challenges. A table of knowledge produced is included as Appendix C.

7. Current and future problems

The High Streets Task Force (HSTF) uncovered several unforeseen problems, barriers, and issues that hindered high street transformation efforts. These challenges were identified through a survey with the HSTF Board (n = 9), and MHCLG (n = 2) and consortium partners (n = 12) as well as from the expert network deployed to support local authorities. Data was collected from the expert network on Thursday 23rd March 2023 by asking for their responses to five questions:

1. “What worked well?”
2. “What could have been improved?”
3. “What have you learned?”
4. “What blocks or enables positive place change?”
5. “What should future support look like?”

7.1 Unexpected issues

The issues identified were categorised into three levels of challenges: micro-level (project-related issues), meso-level (issues specific to local authorities or places), and macro-level (broader systemic or national issues).

7.1.1 Micro-level problems

Micro-level problems refer to issues inherent in the design or execution of the HSTF project. One of the major micro-level problems identified was the short-term nature of the project, which limited the ability to observe long-term impacts.

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relationship between when support was given and if recommendations had been implemented. The cohorts were divided into two groups. Group 1 consisted of cohorts 1-5 were those locations that started their HSTF journey before December 2021. Group 2 consisted of cohorts 6-11 who started their journey from 2022. The relationship between these variables was significant, $\chi^2(2, N = 152) = 6.233, p = .044$. HSTF locations that started their journey in 2021 (or before) were more likely to implement the HSTF recommendations.

Another identified challenge was the lack of promotion of the HSTF brand and activities. Consortium members noted that, while the project delivered substantial outcomes, it was often not effectively communicated to stakeholders and the broader public. Brand awareness amongst those that attended the Developing Place Leaders course was measured with 75% of 206 respondents stating they had heard of the HSTF before they booked up for the course.

Insufficient delivery time was also a recurring issue. For some local authorities (LAs) the 5 days of support was not sufficient to address the full scope of their challenges. The experts supporting these authorities expressed concerns that short-term interventions often failed to address deeper structural issues within LAs or communities. To assess the relationship between delivery time and capacity-building outcomes, a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was calculated. The

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analysis revealed a weak but significant positive correlation between the number of HSTF products delivered and improvements in capacity ($r = 0.330$, $p = .001$), indicating that longer engagement with the HSTF tended to result in better outcomes.

7.1.2 Meso-level problems

Meso-level problems emerged at the level of individual places and local authorities, many of which related to local authority resource constraints. The length of time (mean = 453 days) it took to deliver the programme to LAs/locations was an issue. The majority of HSTF locations completed the programme in less than 500 days ($n=37$) with some ($n=16$) taking longer. A cutoff of 500 days was used to divide the data into two groups: Group 1, which completed within 500 days, and Group 2, which took longer. A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relationship between having a longer delivery window and the likelihood that recommendations had been implemented. The relationship between these variables was not significant, $X^2(1, N = 53) = 3.291$, $p = .193$. HSTF locations that had longer delivery windows were no less likely to implement recommendations.

7.1.3 Macro-level problems

Macro-level problems were challenges that affected all locations and were often beyond the control of individual LAs or the HSTF. The most significant macro-level problem was the COVID-19 pandemic, which delayed project delivery and disrupted many of the planned interventions. Although the HSTF adapted by moving much of its support online, a t-test comparing satisfaction levels between virtual and in-person interventions showed that online delivery was associated with lower satisfaction scores ($M = 3.74$ for virtual vs. $M = 4.34$ for in-person, $p = .024$).

Finally, the lack of alignment between HSTF support and regeneration funding was identified as a key issue. A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relationship between being awarded funding for regeneration and the likelihood of the expert or mentor recommendations being implemented. The relationship between these variables was not significant, $X^2(1, N = 152) = .590$, $p = .745$. HSTF locations that received funding were no more likely to implement the HSTF recommendations.

A chi-square test of independence was performed to examine the relationship between being awarded funding for regeneration and the *likelihood* that the HSTF programme made a difference to the location. The relationship between these variables was not significant, $X^2(2, N = 152) = 3.06$, $p = .222$. There was no increased likelihood of finding evidence that the HSTF programme had made a difference in locations that received funding.

A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between the amount capacity was increased with the level of regeneration funding allocated. There was no significant correlation ($p = .712$). between the two variables, $r = -.030$, $N = 152$. The award of more (or less) funding was not related to an increase in capacity

Finally, many respondents identified the additional pressure it put on LAs to apply for funding.

A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between the number of days it took a local authority to complete the HSTF programme and the number of funds they won. There was a weak, negative correlation between the two variables, $r = -$

1.18, $N = 54$; however, the relationship was not significant ($p = .396$). Administering funds did not appear to be associated with taking more time to complete the programme. Applying for funds (i.e. bidding) was often cited as a reason why local authorities wanted to pause or delay HSTF support. However, we do not have the data to test whether the process of bidding (rather than administering) funds was associated with taking longer to complete the programme.

This relationship was further tested by comparing the average number of days it took for Local Authorities that received funding to complete the programme with those that did not receive funding. There was no significant difference in the time it took to complete between the two groups. LAs that received funding took 457 days ($SD = 226$) and LAs that didn't receive funding took 443 days ($SD = 249$) conditions; $t(54) = -2.06$ $p = .366$.

A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between the average level of deprivation across a local authority area and the number of days it took them to complete the programme. There was a weak, correlation between the two variables, $r = 3.18$, $N = 54$; and the relationship was significant ($p = .019$). Higher levels of deprivation appear to be associated with taking more time to complete the programme.

Finally, a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to assess the relationship between the number of days it took a local authority to complete the HSTF programme and the number of centres they are responsible for. There was a weak, positive correlation between the two variables, $r = .247$, $N = 54$; but the relationship was significant ($p = .072$) at the 10% confidence level (in other words, there is a 10% chance of these results occurring by chance). Having more centres appears to be associated with taking more time to complete the programme.

7.2 Identify future issues to impact high street

Through a Menti survey, the HSTF gathered feedback from its Board, Consortium, and other stakeholders on the key issues expected to impact high streets in the future. A total of 41 issues were identified and categorised into several broad themes: economic challenges, environmental challenges, social wellbeing, leadership and resourcing, collaborative local governance, diversification and planning, technology and consumer shifts, data-driven placemaking, political challenges, and safety and accessibility.

The future issues identified by the stakeholders largely reflect the macro-level challenges the HSTF has faced throughout its interventions. Economic and environmental challenges are expected to have significant impacts on the viability of high streets, particularly as businesses face rising operational costs and towns adapt to net-zero policies.

7.2.1 Future issues from Expert reports

As part of their HSTF commitment all Experts had to complete a report that summarised issues/challenges that they came across as they worked on their assignment, as well as the activities they undertook, progress they made, and advice and recommendations given. The expert reports provide a detailed description of issues and challenges in the 106 locations for which completed reports are available. These issues have been categorised using the 25 priorities framework, and all 880 issues or challenges mentioned in the reports are presented in Table xxxii.

Priority	Number of occurrences	% of problems	Cumulative % of problems	% of locations priority present in
Vision, strategy, and leadership	136	15.45	15.45	80%
Place marketing	85	9.66	25.11	54%
Appearance	73	8.30	33.41	63%
Attractiveness	67	7.61	41.02	56%
Place management	66	7.5	48.52	57%
Activity	63	7.16	55.68	52%
Experience	59	6.7	62.38	50%
Partnerships with council	46	5.23	67.61	37%
Accessible	38	4.32	71.93	29%
Retail offer	36	4.09	76.02	31%
Non-retail offer	33	3.75	79.77	31%
Walking	33	3.75	83.52	28%
Total	735	100	83.52	

Table xxii. Pareto analysis of problems facing high streets categorised using 25 vitality and viability priorities.

There were 136 references to issues relating to a lack of vision, strategy or place leadership. Put another way this a problem in 84 out of 106 places (80%). Another significant issue is place marketing – in this category experts made 85 references to the need to communicate about the place more effectively, citing problems of a lack of place identity, low levels of civic pride, and poor perceptions which were present in 57 (54%) of locations. There were 73 instances of poor appearance – with poorly maintained public realm, litter, graffiti, scruffy frontages etc. affecting 66 (62%) of HSTF locations. Attractiveness, or declining economic attractiveness was mentioned 67 times, with problems such as high vacancy, a lack of investment, falling footfall etc. appearing in 59 (56%) of locations. Place management, usually associated with problems such as the lack of capacity or coordination/ownership of activities was referenced 66 times – or, put another way, a problem affecting 57% of locations. Activity – or inconsistent opening times, a lack of temporary attractions, like events or festivals to attract footfall was referenced 63 times or in 55 (52%) of locations. There

were 59 references to experience, associated with a poor image, low levels of satisfaction, a lack of – or negative – atmosphere affecting 53 (50%) of locations.

To identify the most common issues faced by high streets and town centres, the focus was placed on the priorities that encompassed 80% of the problems mentioned in the expert reports. These are listed in Table xxxii below with the last column identifying the % of HSTF locations that have this priority as a problem.

During the classification of problems, similarities and relationships between priorities were observed. These have been organised into three overarching themes, which are presented here. The first theme relates to longer-term ambition and performance. Vision, strategy, and leadership (or the lack of it) was often related to (the lack of) attractiveness. In other words, the decline in performance of the high street (falling footfall, increasing vacancy) was attributed to a lack of vision, leadership and strategy. One or both priorities were present in 97 locations (or 92%).

The second theme relates to experience or feelings about the high street and its identity. There was similarity between the problems classified as place marketing and experience. With experts identifying issues relating to negative perceptions, a lack of identity, poor communications, poor image, and low levels of satisfaction with the high street. One or both priorities were present in 71 or in 67% of locations.

The final common theme relates to place management – coordination and capacity/capability to do basic things like ensuring the high street is clean (appearance) and activated (*activity*) as well as coordinate opening hours amongst service providers as well as facilitate partnerships/networks between the council and business/community to mobilise additional capacity and capability. This was present in 102 (or 96%) of locations.

All the themes relate to either micro or meso issues identified by partners etc. Because the themes were identified from work with places the focus of the analysis has been either on the local authority (micro) or the place (meso). In contrast our partners also identified macro issues – national problems/challenges that impact on all places – like the economy, high street policy, climate change. What is important is micro and meso issues do not get confused with macro issues. For example, crime and safety was only identified as a problem in 28 out of 106 location (or 26%). Likewise recreational space was only identified in 21 out of 106 places (or 20% of locations). In the places where crime and safety or the lack of green space is an issue then it is important that both are addressed. However, national policy that assumes *all* places have crime and safety problems, or a lack of green space, is going to be flawed.

Nevertheless, national policy that supports/funds place leadership and vision/strategy development, improves the experience of the high street, and its identity, as well as increases place management capacity is likely to be successful (and improve the attractiveness or performance of the high street) because these are all in deficit in most locations.

7.2.2 Solving issues – HSTF examples

To understand more about how these issues can be tackled, case-studies illustrating the main themes of increasing capacity; building partnerships; improving the high street experience and identity, and hyperlocal governance and place leadership were explored in the findings report. Data for the case-studies came from HSTF records, as well as interviews with key informants.

8. Conclusions

In this section, the problems the HSTF was designed to address are revisited to evaluate the model's performance. This analysis also aids in developing legacy recommendations.

For each major problem, results are presented from surveys conducted with the HSTF Board (n = 9), MHCLG (n = 2), and the HSTF Consortium (n = 12). Respondents were asked to rate their agreement with various statements on a 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 2 = disagree; 3 = neither agree nor disagree; 4 = agree; 5 = strongly agree).

- HSTF has raised awareness of the problem.
- HSTF has demonstrated how to solve the problem.
- HSTF has made significant progress in solving the problem.

The results of the survey are below in Table xxxiii.

<i>Problems</i>	<i>Items</i>	<i>HSTF Board</i>	<i>HSTF Consortium</i>
Capacity and capability gaps in Local Authorities	HSTF has made significant progress in solving the problem	3	2.7
	HSTF has demonstrated how to solve the problem	4	3.7
	HSTF has raised awareness of the problem	4.9	4
Competing strategic objectives: High streets not seen as a priority for policymakers	HSTF has made significant progress in solving the problem	3	3.9
	HSTF has demonstrated how to solve the problem	3.3	3.9
	HSTF has raised awareness of the problem	4.1	3.9
Improve place making skills	HSTF has made significant progress in solving the problem	3.3	3.7
	HSTF has demonstrated how to solve the problem	3.9	4
	HSTF has raised awareness of the problem	4.8	4.1
Communities, businesses, and other interests are excluded from public funded high street place making	HSTF has made significant progress in solving the problem	3.7	3
	HSTF has demonstrated how to solve the problem	4.4	3.9
	HSTF has raised awareness of the problem	4.9	4

Lack of consensus over local problems and opportunities	HSTF has made significant progress in solving the problem	3.3	3.3
	HSTF has demonstrated how to solve the problem	3.9	3.9
	HSTF has raised awareness of the problem	4.1	4
Sector bodies represent their own (not high street) interests	HSTF has made significant progress in solving the problem	3.5	3.7
	HSTF has demonstrated how to solve the problem	4.3	4
	HSTF has raised awareness of the problem	4.8	4.1
Negative high street national media narrative	HSTF has made significant progress in solving the problem	3.3	2.7
	HSTF has demonstrated how to solve the problem	3.8	2.4
	HSTF has raised awareness of the problem	4.8	3.7
Objective data and evidence used sparingly in high street decision making	HSTF has made significant progress in solving the problem	2.6	3.1
	HSTF has demonstrated how to solve the problem	3.1	3.7
	HSTF has raised awareness of the problem	4	4.1
Trusted source/authority for information/guidance so local leaders can choose best course of action	HSTF has made significant progress in solving the problem	3	3
	HSTF has demonstrated how to solve the problem	3.8	3.7
	HSTF has raised awareness of the problem	5	3.9

Table xxiii. Survey response to questions regarding the problems the HSTF was designed to address are revisited to evaluate the model's performance.

8.1 Legacy recommendations

To make key legacy recommendations, we revisited the case-studies developed to revisit the key findings of the High Streets Task Force to develop a Theory of Change to address the most pressing issues which were:

- Getting the basics right: investing in place management capacity
- Building *inclusive* partnership and networks that mobilise and empower people
- Improving the high street experience and identity
- Long-term viability through place leadership and hyperlocal governance



Figure 3 : A Legacy Theory of Change for the HSTF to achieve long-term high street viability

The key legacy recommendation is to reflect the key findings of the HSTF model at a national level to evolve a partnership that mobilises the significant capacity and capability of several important stakeholders who have a long-term interest in the regeneration of England's high streets.

This should be a national, and strategic partnership that is focused on delivering the HSTF Legacy Theory of Change (Figure 9) through providing insight and expertise to policy makers but also providing a forum/conduit linking all those who deliver and support the Theory of Change together. Any future national partnership of this nature needs to embody the sustainability agenda more closely and include social value and community well-being as key indicators of success.

As we close the High Streets Task Force we reflect that there is still much work to do – as the main barrier to town and city centres reviving and meeting the needs of their communities is still the lack of suitable local governance structures (place partnerships) that can mobilise stakeholders (including young people), as well as a serious deficit of enabling place management and leadership capacity and capability in local authorities to improve the high street experience.

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Appendix A – List of all HSTF locations

Cohort 1

<i>Name</i>	Support location	Local Authority
<i>Accrington</i>	Accrington Town Centre	Hyndburn Borough Council
<i>Aldershot</i>	Aldershot Town Centre	Rushmoor Borough Council
<i>Ellesmere Port</i>	Ellesmere Port Town Centre	Cheshire West and Chester Council
<i>Hartlepool</i>	Hartlepool Town Centre	Hartlepool Borough Council
<i>Huyton</i>	Huyton Village Centre	Knowsley Council
<i>Thornton Heath</i>	Thornton Heath	Croydon London Borough Council
<i>West Bromwich</i>	West Bromwich	Sandwell Council

Cohort 2

<i>Name</i>	Support location	Local Authority
Cheadle	Cheadle	Staffordshire Moorlands District Council
Coventry	Coventry	Coventry City Council
Kendal	Kendal	Westmorland and Furness
Preston	Friargate	Preston City Council
Stirchley	Stirchley	Birmingham City Council
Swinton	Swinton	Salford City Council
Withington	Withington	Manchester City Council

Cohort 3

<i>Name</i>	Support location	Local Authority
Blackburn	Darwen Town Centre	Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
Bradford	Bradford City Village	Bradford Council
Bristol	Bedminster	Bristol City Council
Burnley	Burnley Town Centre	Burnley Council
Earlestown	Earlestown town centre	St. Helens Borough Council
Hackney	Hackney Central	Hackney London Borough Council
Hastings	Hastings	Hastings Borough Council
Horncastle	Horncastle	East Lindsey District Council
Hyde	Hyde Town Centre	Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council
Newcastle-upon-Tyne	Blackett Street Area, Newcastle Upon Tyne city centre	Newcastle City Council
Newham	East Ham Town Centre	Newham London Borough Council
Nottingham	Nottingham City Centre	Nottingham City Council
Plymouth	Plymouth City Centre	Plymouth City Council
Rochdale	Rochdale town centre	Rochdale Borough Council
Stoke-on-Trent	Longton Town Centre	Stoke-on-Trent City Council

Cohort 4

<i>Name</i>	Support location	Local Authority
Armley	Armley Town Centre	Leeds
Attercliffe	Attercliffe	Sheffield
Bootle	Bootle Town Centre	Sefton
Corby (North Northamptonshire)	Queens Square, Corby	North Northamptonshire
Enfield	Enfield Town	Enfield
Gateshead	Gateshead Town Centre	Gateshead
Lincoln	Lincoln City Centre	Lincoln
Luton	Luton Town Centre	Luton
Peterborough	Peterborough City Centre	Peterborough
Sheerness	Sheerness Town Centre	Swale
Whitechapel	Whitechapel Road, Tower Hamlets	Tower Hamlets

Cohort 5

<i>Name</i>	Support location	Local Authority
Barrow-in-Furness	Barrow-in-Furness Town Centre	Westmorland and Furness Unitary Authority
Blackpool	Blackpool Town Centre	Blackpool
Dagenham Heathway	Dagenham Heathway	Barking and Dagenham
Great Yarmouth	Great Yarmouth	Great Yarmouth
Grimsby	Grimsby Town Centre	Northeast Lincolnshire
Halton Lea	Halton Lea	Halton
Ipswich	Ipswich	Ipswich
Kingston upon Hull	Whitefriargate, Kingston upon Hull	Kingston upon Hull, City of
Margate	Margate High Street	Thanet
Middlesbrough	Middlesbrough Town Centre	Middlesbrough
Oldham	Oldham Town Centre	Oldham
South Shields	South Shields Town Centre	South Tyneside
Walsall	Walsall Town Centre	Walsall
Wavertree	Wavertree High Street	Liverpool
Wednesfield	Wednesfield, Wolverhampton	Wolverhampton

Cohort 6

<i>Name</i>	Support location	Local Authority
<i>Barnoldswick</i>	Barnoldswick	Pendle
<i>Barnsley</i>	Barnsley Town Centre	Barnsley
<i>Bolton</i>	Farnworth Town Centre	Bolton
<i>Clacton</i>	Clacton Town Centre	Tendring
<i>Doncaster</i>	Doncaster Town Centre	Doncaster
<i>Earby</i>	Barnoldswick	Pendle
<i>Guisborough</i>	Guisborough Town Centre	Redcar and Cleveland
<i>Leicester</i>	Belvoir St/Market Street Leicester City Centre	Leicester
<i>Liscard</i>	Liscard Town	Wirral
<i>Mansfield</i>	Mansfield Town Centre	Mansfield
<i>Paignton</i>	Paignton Town Centre	Torbay
<i>Rotherham</i>	Rotherham Town Centre	Rotherham
<i>Sunnyside</i>	Sunnyside Town Centre	Sunderland

Cohort 7

<i>Name</i>	Support location	Local Authority
<i>Ashton-in-Makerfield</i>	Aston-in-Makerfield	Wigan
<i>Darlington</i>	Darlington Town Centre	Darlington
<i>Derby</i>	St Peter's Cross Area, Derby	Derby
<i>Halifax</i>	Halifax Town Centre	Calderdale
<i>Lewisham</i>	Lewisham Town Centre	Lewisham
<i>Nag's Head</i>	Nag's Head, Islington	Islington
<i>Neasden</i>	Neasden	Brent
<i>Norwich</i>	Norwich City Centre	Norwich
<i>Peterlee</i>	Peterlee Town Centre	County Durham
<i>Portsmouth</i>	Commercial Road, Portsmouth	Portsmouth
<i>Scarborough</i>	Scarborough	North Yorkshire Council
<i>Southampton</i>	Southampton City Centre	Southampton
<i>Stockton-on-Tees</i>	Stockton-on-Tees High Street	Stockton-on-Tees
<i>Streatham</i>	Streatham Town Centre	Lambeth
<i>Sutton Town</i>	Sutton in Ashfield Town Centre	Ashfield
<i>Tottenham</i>	Tottenham	Haringey
<i>Wakefield</i>	Wakefield Cathedral Precinct	Wakefield

Cohort 8

<i>Name</i>	Support location	Local Authority
<i>Bideford</i>	Bideford	Torridge
<i>Boston</i>	Boston Town Centre	Boston Borough Council
<i>Burnham on Sea</i>	Burnham-on-Sea Town Centre	Sedgemoor District Council
<i>Carlisle</i>	Carlisle City Centre	Cumberland Borough Council
<i>Chesterfield</i>	Chesterfield Town Centre	Chesterfield
<i>Cleveleys</i>	Cleveleys Town Centre	Wyre Borough Council
<i>Dawley</i>	Dawley Town Centre	Telford and Wrekin
<i>Eastbourne</i>	Eastbourne High Street	Eastbourne
<i>Gillingham</i>	Gillingham	Medway
<i>New Romney</i>	New Romney	Folkestone and Hythe
<i>Redditch</i>	The Canopies, Redditch Town Centre	Redditch
<i>Sandown</i>	Sandown, Isle of Wight	Isle of Wight
<i>Slough</i>	Slough	Slough Borough Council
<i>Southend-on-Sea</i>	Hamlet Court Road, Southend-on-Sea	Southend-on-Sea
<i>Wallsend</i>	Wallsend Town Centre	North Tyneside

Cohort 9

<i>Name</i>	Support location	Local Authority
<i>Bedford</i>	Bedford Town Centre	Bedford Borough Council
<i>Bexhill on Sea</i>	Bexhill-on-Sea	Rother District Council
<i>Caistor</i>	Caistor Town Centre	West Lindsey
<i>Cannock Chase</i>	Cannock Chase	Cannock Chase District Council
<i>Cockermouth</i>	Cockermouth	Cumberland Borough Council
<i>Feltham</i>	Feltham Town Centre	Hounslow London Borough Council
<i>Gloucester</i>	Gloucester City Centre	Gloucester City Council
<i>Gravesend</i>	Gravesend Town Centre	Gravesham Borough Council
<i>Newark</i>	Edwinstowe and Ollerton Town Centres	Newark and Sherwood District Council
<i>Sherwood</i>	Edwinstowe and Ollerton Town Centres	Newark and Sherwood District Council
<i>Stevenage</i>	Stevenage Town Centre	Stevenage Borough Council
<i>Uttoxeter</i>	Uttoxeter	East Staffordshire Borough Council
<i>Warrington</i>	Orford Lane, Warrington	Warrington Borough Council
<i>Watton</i>	Watton	Breckland Council
<i>Westminster</i>	Westminster	Westminster City Council
<i>Whitehaven</i>	Whitehaven Town Centre	Cumberland Borough Council

Cohort 10

<i>Name</i>	Support location	Local Authority
<i>Bolsover</i>	Bolsover	Bolsover District Council
<i>Brighton</i>	Queens Road and West Street, Brighton	
<i>Earl's Court</i>	Earl's Court Road District Centre	Kensington and Chelsea London Borough Council
<i>Felixstowe</i>	Felixstowe	East Suffolk Council
<i>Fulham</i>	North End Road, Fulham	Hammersmith and Fulham London Borough Council
<i>Gosport</i>	Town Hall, High Street, Gosport	Gosport Borough Council
<i>Hammersmith</i>	North End Road, Fulham	Hammersmith and Fulham London Borough Council
<i>Harlow</i>	Harlow Town Centre	Harlow District Council
<i>Havant</i>	Havant Town Centre	Havant Borough Council
<i>Hove</i>	Queens Road and West Street, Brighton	
<i>Kilburn</i>	Kilburn High Road, Kilburn Town Centre	Camden London Borough Council
<i>Leytonstone</i>	Leytonstone Town Centre	Waltham Forest London Borough Council
<i>London</i>	The City Cluster, City of London	City of London Corporation
<i>Prudhoe</i>	Prudhoe	Northumberland County Council
<i>Retford</i>	Retford	Bassetlaw District Council
<i>Southcote</i>	Coronation Square, Southcote, Reading	Reading Borough Council
<i>Stalham</i>	Stalham	North Norfolk District Council
<i>Wisbech</i>	Wisbech Town Centre	Fenland District Council

Cohort 11

<i>Name</i>	Support location	Local Authority
<i>Barnstaple</i>	Barnstaple Town Centre	North Devon Council
<i>Bedworth</i>	Bedworth Town Centre	Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council
<i>Dover</i>	Dover Town Centre	Dover District Council
<i>Dudley</i>	Lye Town Centre, Dudley	Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council
<i>Ealing</i>	Southall Broadway and the Green, Ealing	Ealing London Borough Council
<i>Grays</i>	Gray's Town Centre, Thurrock	Thurrock
<i>Haslingden</i>	Haslingden	Rossendale Borough Council
<i>Huddersfield</i>	Huddersfield	Kirklees Council
<i>King's Lynn</i>	King's Lynn	King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council
<i>Morecambe</i>	Morcambe Town Centre	Lancaster City Council
<i>Newcastle-under-Lyme</i>	Newcastle-under-Lyme town Centre	Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council
<i>Peckham</i>	Peckham	Southwark London Borough Council
<i>Scunthorpe</i>	Scunthorpe Urban Centre	North Lincolnshire Council
<i>St Austell</i>	St Austell	Cornwall Council
<i>Stockport</i>	Prince's Street, Stockport Town Centre	Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council
<i>Stourport-on-Severn</i>	Stourport-on-Severn	Wyre Forest District Council
<i>Tamworth</i>	Tamworth Town Centre	Tamworth Borough Council
<i>Whitefield</i>	Whitefield, Bury	Bury Metropolitan Borough Council
<i>Woolwich</i>	Woolwich Town Centre	Royal Borough of Greenwich
<i>Worcester</i>	Worcester City Centre	Worcester City Council
<i>Yeovil</i>	Yeovil Town Centre	Somerset

Appendix B – Key Performance Indicators

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Number of Local Authorities Engaged	7	19	54	53	18
Cumulative number of Local Authorities engaged	7	26	80	133	151

KPI 1.1 - There is an increase in the number of previously unengaged high streets and town centres given expert advice each year.

Number of Products delivered	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
TYHS report	14	138	0	0	0
UYPP Workshop	7	19	54	53	18
Developing a Shared Vision Workshop	7	8	16	23	17
Expert visit	0	11	36	44	29
Mentor visit	0	1	7	11	2
Number of unique areas given expert advice	14	138	54	53	18

KPI 1.2 - Increase in number of areas given expert advice year on year, as measured through engagement with High Streets Task Force products and services.

N/A.

KPI 1.3 - Demonstrate impact of the Task Force on working with local areas on developing proposals for round 2 of the Future High Street Fund.

This KPI became obsolete following the discontinuation of the Future High Street Fund round 2.

% of positive feedback from expert delivery	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
TYHS report	77%	42%	57%	N/A	N/A
UYPP Workshop	94%	76%	84%	84%	87%
Developing a Shared Vision Workshop	N/A	36%	76%	68%	80%
Expert visit	N/A	100%	94%	96%	84%
Mentor visit	N/A	N/A	N/A	90%	100%
Place Making Programme	N/A	N/A	83%	93%	92%

KPI 1.4 Provide evidence of positive feedback from local areas who receive advice and support from the Task Force with a year-on-year increase in feedback.

Items	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Number of case studies from Local Authorities who have received on-the-ground support	0	0	3	5	13
Number of case studies from Local Authorities who have received enhanced Dashboards	0	2	0	0	0

KPI 1.5 - Where high streets and town centres have been given on the ground support, the Task force will evaluate impact locally through (see 'Items' column).

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Total number of feedback forms received (Qualtrics)	192	73	122	357	353
Average % positive feedback received	84%	77%	79%	90%	89%

KPI 2.1 - Provide evidence on the quality of Task Force services (e.g. training and expert advice), including number of feedback forms received from participants after attending classes and demonstrating impact of learning in their placemaking skills.

The Task Force should aim for 90% positive feedback.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Total number of feedback surveys that agreed or strongly agreed that placemaking skill improved following expert product or Place Making Programme delivery	50	72	87	263	286
Percentage of feedback that agreed or strongly agreed that placemaking skills improved due to expert product or Place Making Programme delivery	81%	64%	73%	89%	89%

KPI 2.2 - A year on year increase in the number of participants who feel their placemaking skills have improved due to training (from the UYPP + PMP product only).

Places accessing the following training courses:	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Place Making Programme (LAs)	0	0	3	17	20
Developing Place Leaders (LEPs)	0	1	7	20	9
Developing Place Analysts (students accessed)	0	57	75	78	20

KPI 2.3 - Year on year increase in the number of previously unengaged local high streets accessing and completing training courses.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Total number of previously unengaged areas	112	81	79	85	70

KPI 3.1 - Increase in the number of previously unengaged places (not limited to local authorities) receiving on-the-ground Task Force support (e.g. training and expert advice) each year.

N/A.

KPI 3.2 - Evidence of engagement and partnership with national stakeholder organisations to include representatives of businesses, business improvement districts, community groups, local authorities, young people, and others as appropriate.

This indicator is obsolete as it relates to support to be provided linked to Future High Street Fund round 2, which did not occur.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Total number of products/services with local organisation engagement	7	29	64	90	43

Organisations involved in these engagements:

Local Authorities	11	22	36	49	72
BIDs	2	10	13	1	16
Businesses/Representative Organisations	23	60	141	111	25
LEPs	0	1	7	20	9
Community Groups	12	36	41	111	25
National Stakeholder Groups	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Young People (Teenage Market deliveries)	0	0	6	14	0

KPI 3.3 - Evidence of work with different types of local organisation, to include Business Improvement Districts, Local Authorities, LEPs, Community Groups, businesses/representative organisations, National stakeholder groups and young people.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Total of organisations/places mapped in the year*	0	847	778	94	1252
Total number of visitors to mapping pages	0	359	111	143	71†

** Refers to the number of unique visitors to the website. † Affected by tracking issues in Google Analytics for part of the year.*

KPI 3.4 - Web analytics demonstrating successful mapping of existing work on high streets and town centres and evidence of the reach of this increasing year on year.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Total number of website visits*	9,742	17,085	9,478	8,341	5,601†
Total number of website registrations	1,822	1,206	343	165	477
Total number of website views	6,099	91,186	37,747	25,924	19,860†

* Refers to the number of unique visitors to the website. † Affected by tracking issues in Google Analytics for part of the year.

KPI 4.1 - Web analytics, covering the reach and downloads of Task Force advice and guidance. Baseline followed by year-on-year percentage increases.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Number of High Street/Town Centre representatives who have attended virtual/webinar training	0	898	1,083	792	TBC†
Number of High Street/Town Centre representatives who have accessed face to face training*	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

* Training was delivered online only. Online learning was developed at the onset of the covid pandemic. Due to the initial success/ reach of the online format, coupled with the development costs associated, the decision was made to proceed with online delivery only for the remainder of the project. † Awaiting metrics from consortium partners at the time of publication.

KPI 4.2 - Year on Year increase in number of high streets and town centres to have accessed learning materials and/or training. **N/A.**

KPI 4.3 - Evidence of promoting high street and town centre applications to Great British High Street (GBHS) Awards and other national body awards.

This KPI became obsolete as the Great British High Street awards ceased to run after 2020.

Number of unique users per webinar training type	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Developing Place Analysts	-	57	75	78	20
Understanding Place Data	-	394	454	0	22
Understanding Place Sentiment	-	447	511	0	18
Number of data resource views	-	41,269	59,795	19,909	3,339†

KPI 4.4.1 - Number of Places Using Any Training on Data.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Number of Basic dashboards created	50	392	514	550	850
Number of Advanced dashboards created	6	144	150	150	150
Number of active dashboards per year*	56	542	143	60	373

* Classed as the number of dashboards whose place user(s) logged in at least once during the year. † Reporting from new supplier only includes visits to resource home page

KPI 4.4.2 - Web Analytics on Any Data/Dashboard Provided by the Task Force.

Number of resources per the 4 R's Framework	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
Rebranding	3	10	13	11	14	51
Reinventing	11	57	34	43	17	162
Repositioning	5	26	37	19	24	111
Restructuring	9	27	31	15	14	96
Total	28	120	115	88	69	420

<i>No. of resources per 25 Priorities Framework</i>	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Total
Accessible	18	43	55	40	36	192
Activity	6	31	41	33	13	124
Adaptability	8	31	59	43	24	165
Anchors	3	12	19	30	17	81
Appearance	6	14	41	25	12	98
Attractiveness	5	28	48	46	17	144
Barriers to Entry	3	6	8	31	18	66
Diversity	2	41	54	38	18	153
Experience	12	56	79	62	41	250
Functionality	1	13	52	26	19	111
Innovation	5	31	66	38	21	161
Liveable	7	59	62	72	55	255
Markets	3	19	14	10	0	46
Merchandise	2	10	11	4	1	28
Necessities	5	12	20	16	13	66
Networks and Partnerships with Council	9	57	79	84	45	274
Non-Retail Offer	4	50	57	53	15	179
Place Management	14	71	91	80	84	340
Place Marketing	4	21	26	26	14	91
Recreational Space	15	38	70	29	16	168
Redevelopment Plans	4	17	46	49	38	154
Retail Offer	4	29	63	40	30	166
Safety and Crime	16	22	24	14	10	86
Vision and Strategy	20	67	93	105	64	349
Walking	17	36	38	35	13	139
Total	221	934	1,331	1,117	703	4306

Table xxiv. KPI 4.4.3 – Volume of data published by Task Force.

This KPI was intended to show the proportion of resources in the online resource library whose reading or comprehension level were classified as either basic, intermediate, or expert. The criteria for these levels were not agreed in advance of the HSTF; indeed, there was debate as to whether resources should be classified this way at all. It was not until a year into the Task Force that researchers began classifying resources this way using their own personal decision as to which level a particular resource was classified, by which time hundreds of unclassified resources had already been abstracted. Classifying these unclassified resources retrospectively was deemed an unwise of

use of resource and risk to missing the end of project target of 1,000. Therefore, the KPI tracking year-on-year classifications was removed and the search filter on the resources section of the website was also not incorporated into the user interface. However, the breakdown of classified resources is as follows:

<i>Resource classification</i>	Total
Basic	372
Intermediate	272
Expert	88
Total	732

KPI 4.4.4 - Synthesis of evidence.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Number of Case Studies released	0	0	3	3	15

KPI 4.4.5 - Evidence from authorities that HSTF's work on data has facilitated improvements in their high street.

Appendix C – New knowledge created

Title of output(s)	New knowledge produced	Example of research dissemination
Research: Business resilience and Covid-19		
<p>Ntounis, N, Parker, C, Skinner, H, Steadman, C, and Warnaby, G. (2021). Tourism and Hospitality industry resilience during the Covid-19 pandemic: Evidence from England. <i>Current Issues in Tourism</i> 25(1): 46–59.</p> <p>Ntounis, N, Parker, C, Sonderland-Saga, R, and Warnaby, G. (2020). High Street Business Resilience Survey. HSTF report.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contrasting perceptions of business resilience of different economic sectors during Covid-19 in the context of English towns. The temporal dimensions impacting different perceptions of business resilience during the pandemic. Provides a novel Business Resilience Composite Score to draw comparisons between tourism and hospitality industry resilience and other economic activity in towns. 	<p>April 2021; Resilient cities, resilient destinations international event; online.</p>
Research: Social distancing in stores		
<p>Ntounis, N, Mumford, C, Lorono-Leturiondo, M, Parker, C, and Still, K. (2020). How safe is it to shop? Estimating the amount of space needed to safely social distance in various retail environments. <i>Safety Science</i>. 132.</p> <p>Mumford, C, Parker, C, Ntounis, N, Lorono-Leturiondo, M, and Still, K. (2020). Proposing the lower bounds of area needed for individuals to social distance across a range of town centre environments. IPM working paper.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How social distancing policies can be safely followed in a range of high street businesses upon re-opening from Covid-19 closures. Introduces a method for calculating the minimum amount of space an individual needs to socially distance in high street shops, larger retailers/commercial space, and outdoor commercial spaces/out-of-town shopping centres). The minimum amount of space required to safely social distance in both static and dynamic spaces. 	<p>June 2020; Guardian articles about the re-opening of shops on the high street; national media.</p>

Research: High street viability		
<p>Ntounis, N, Sonderland-Saga, R, Warnaby, G, Lorono-Leturiondo, M, and Parker, C. (2023). Reframing high street viability: A review and synthesis in the English context. <i>Cities</i>. 134.</p> <p>Lorono-Leturiondo, M, Ntounis, N, Sonderland-Saga, R, Parker, C, and Warnaby, G. (2021). The medium and longer-term viability of the high street (post Covid-19): End of project report. HSTF report.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moves understandings of high street viability beyond economic and property-related indicators. • High street viability relates to the concepts of sustainability, resilience, adaptability, and liveability. • Provides a new conceptual tool of high street viability, which considers economic, social and cultural, governance and policy, environmental, and technological factors. 	<p>October 2022; RTPi Northwest event; Manchester, UK.</p>
Research: Place leadership		
<p>Colledge, M, Kalandides, A, Parker, C, and Sonderland-Saga, R. (2022). Place Leadership in English Local Authorities: A critical success factor for vital and viable high streets. HSTF report.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are a common set of traits and behaviours successful place leaders' evidence (e.g. being driven). • There are six common barriers to effective place leadership: reticence towards role; lazy paternalism; overreliance on masterplans/consultants; lack of capacity and resources; politics; and negativity/apathy. • Provides a new conceptualisation of place leadership through the Collaborative Cycle of Place Leadership model. 	<p>March 2023; Government-invited presentation including DLUHC and members of other governmental departments; online.</p>

Research: Place partnerships		
Sewell, M, Kazakou, A, Ntounis, N, and Parker, C. (2024). Annual research study: Place Partnerships . HSTF report.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The key ‘ingredients’ of an effective place-based partnership: organic development; clear end goals; community involvement; key place ambassadors; trust between partners; and monitoring performance. The internal (e.g. local communication) and external (e.g. national politics) catalysts of place-based partnerships. 	January 2024; BBC Radio 4 You and Yours; national media.
Research: Review of high street footfall		
<p>High Streets Task Force. (2024). 2023 Review of High Street Footfall in England. HSTF report.</p> <p>Mumford, C, Kazakou, A, Parker, C, and Sewell, M. (2023). Jan-Dec 2022: Review of High Street Footfall in England. HSTF report.</p> <p>Mumford, C, Lorono-Leturiondo, M, Ntounis, N, Parker, C, and Sonderland-Saga, R. (2021). 2020-2021: Review of High Street Footfall in England. HSTF report.</p> <p>Mumford, C, Lorono-Leturiondo, M, Ntounis, N, Parker, C, Quin, S, and Sonderland-Saga, R. (2020). Review of High Street Footfall: July 2019-June 2020. HSTF report.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides an overview of footfall patterns on English high streets and how this compares to pre-Covid levels (changes since 2019). Activity patterns on England’s high streets across different months, days of the week, and times of the day. 	September 2020; BBC Breakfast and other news stations; national media.

Research: Engaged scholarship methodology

Millington, S, Steadman, C, and Ntounis, N. (2024). [Reflections from the Business School's margins: On doing engaged scholarship](#). *Dialogues in Urban Research*. 2(1): 46-52.

Steadman, C and Millington, S. (2022). [Researching with places: On doing engaged scholarship in marketing](#). *Qualitative Market Research*. 25(5): 646-661.

- First-hand insights into the realities of doing engaged scholarship research.
- Challenges: time-consuming, research partner tensions, and difficult to publish.
- Opportunities: developing locally tailored solutions, ongoing research partnerships, and real-world research impact.

June 2023; Regional Studies Association Conference; Ljubljana, Slovenia.