Tackling Destitution Together

Evaluation findings report

November 2026

citizens advice

Trussell
Ending hunger together

REVEALING REALITY

Foreword

No one should have to face hunger and hardship because they cannot access the support they need. Yet, for too many people, help comes only when they have reached crisis point. We believe a different approach is possible: one that brings organisations together to identify the risks of destitution earlier, makes support easier to access, and helps people get the right advice.

Tackling Destitution Together (TDT) was established to explore what this could look like in practice. Through a partnership between Trussell and Citizens Advice, five local areas tested approaches to bringing food banks, advice services and wider community partners together to strengthen local support for people experiencing, or at risk of, destitution.

This evaluation highlights promising progress across the five pilot areas, including stronger partnerships, more targeted approaches to advice, new ways of using local data and valuable steps towards involving people with lived experience in shaping services. It also demonstrates the importance of place-based working: while communities face many similar challenges, effective responses must reflect local needs, relationships and opportunities.

TDT has reinforced that preventing destitution takes much more than standalone, short-term interventions. True prevention depends on strong foundations: trusted relationships, local data, rooted community infrastructure, and experienced staff. Crucially, it has laid bare the structural barriers our networks face every day—from fragmented local systems and workforce pressures to short-term funding cycles and wider policy drivers of poverty.

This learning is already shaping our decisions: how we invest in local partnerships, how we equip the advice and community sectors with practical toolkits and resources, and how we use our collective voice to influence national policy and funding systems.

We are grateful to everyone who made this work possible, particularly, the pilot teams, their partners and the people who shared their experiences with us. Tackling Destitution Together was made possible through the generous support of Pears Foundation. We are grateful for the Pears willingness to invest in testing new approaches to preventing destitution and in generating learning that can benefit the wider sector.

As we look ahead, we carry this evidence and momentum into the next phase of our partnership—committed to turning shared learning into lasting systems change.

A future where fewer people face hunger and hardship is possible, but achieving it requires us to act earlier, work together and address the causes of destitution, not only its consequences.

Lisa Jones
Director of Mobilisation and Change, Citizens Advice

Neal Southwick
Director of Advice,
Trussell

In Memory of Tracy Wharvell

We would like to pay a special tribute to Tracy Wharvell, late CEO of Citizens Advice Hull & East Riding who sadly passed away during the course of this evaluation. Tracy was instrumental in supporting and shaping this work. Her unwavering commitment to the local community and her passion for people left a lasting mark on all who worked with her. We are deeply grateful for her support and partnership, and her legacy continues to inspire our work.

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Executive summary

Tackling Destitution Together asked five local Citizens Advice and food bank partnerships to try something new: to design their own ways of reaching people before crisis, and to begin changing how their local systems work together. In a single year, sites made progress, as well as faced challenges. This report sets out what that journey looked like and what it suggests about how local systems change begins.

By systems change, we mean shifting the conditions that keep a problem in place, such as how organisations work together, where resources and decisions sit, whose voices shape services, and the policies and practices that affect people, rather than only adding a new service.

The programme responded to a familiar problem. Across the UK, more people are facing hunger and hardship, and many only reach advice once their situation has become serious. This is not because people do not want help. Advice can be hard to find and hard to navigate, and the systems people are dealing with, particularly benefits, are complex. Other services do not always recognise when advice could help, and often refer people straight to crisis support such as a food bank. At the same time, advice services and food banks are working under sustained pressure, often on short-term funding and frequently separately from one another. As a result, the chance to help people earlier is too often missed.

About Tackling Destitution Together

Tackling Destitution Together was a partnership between Trussell and Citizens Advice commissioned in October 2023. Following a design and mobilisation phase, 12-month pilots were delivered between April 2025 to June 2026, with staggered start and end dates across sites. Pears Foundation funded the Trussell half of the investment, and Citizens Advice funded the other half.

Tackling Destitution Together tested whether local Citizens Advice and food bank partnerships could reach people earlier and begin to change how local support works together, and what it takes for that change to start. The original 2024 commission framed the aims as outcomes for people: to stop people experiencing destitution, help them move out of it swiftly, and stand alongside those in long-term destitution. The reset kept that ambition but recognised that a 12-month pilot could not show those outcomes.

The five pilot areas were Hammersmith and Fulham, Hull and East Riding, North Lancashire, Rotherham, and Ynys Môn (Anglesey). Each pilot was led in partnership between the local Citizens Advice and a Trussell food bank. The areas were chosen to reflect a range of local contexts across England and Wales, including urban, rural and coastal settings, all with high levels of deprivation. Because this report draws out learning across the programme rather than comparing sites, the case studies and examples are not attributed to individual areas. This also protects the candour of the staff who spoke to the evaluators. Each area's own journey is set out in its site insight report.

The programme aimed to help sites engage people at risk of destitution earlier, before a later point where they may experience crisis. It also aimed to strengthen connections between food banks, advice services, statutory partners, and other local organisations, and support organisations to put the experience of people facing hunger and hardship at the centre of decision making.

Each site designed its own approach, drawing on local data and evidence. Funding was provided as a flexible pot. Sites had room to shape their activity around local need, within a nationally agreed framework that included priority groups identified through shared Trussell and Citizens Advice data.

What this evaluation set out to do

This is a learning evaluation. It explored how the programme worked in practice across pilot design and delivery. It looked at what enabled progress, where challenges arose, and how sites and national teams adapted in response. This report outlines these learnings to inform future systems-change work.

Revealing Reality was the independent, external evaluator. The evaluation ran across three stages over the pilot's 12-month delivery period, drawing on interviews with site staff, national teams and some local stakeholders. After the first stage, the approach was adapted. This allowed a more detailed understanding of learnings, and gave more tangible ways to talk about different types of progress with staff at site and national level. It also allowed the evaluation to account for change happening at different paces within a site.

This report draws out learning across the whole programme. It sits alongside five site insight reports, which set out each area's journey in more detail, and a toolkit for organisations wanting to apply a similar approach, which is being developed with the pilot sites.

The Pathways to Systems-Change Framework

As part of this evaluation, Trussell and Citizens Advice developed the Pathways to Systems-Change Framework after the baseline stage, drawing on the baseline findings and existing systems-change approaches. Revealing Reality applied and tested it through the rest of the evaluation, and the findings chapters are structured around its seven domains:

- Upstream prevention of destitution
- Partnerships and collaboration
- Lived experience and representation
- Data, evidence and learning
- Advocacy and influence
- Leadership and shared vision
- Supporting infrastructure and resources

Each domain describes four broad stages of progress: Foundational, Developing, Embedding and Transformative and most observed movement sat within the foundational and developing stages. The framework should be read as a working tool, not a finished model. The evidence is informed by interviews with staff at five sites across the 12-month delivery period, reporting on their experience of designing and delivering systems-change pilots.

Each site began the pilot at a different point across the domains. For example, some already had strong local relationships and experience of the activities the domains describe. Others had less established relationships or were less familiar with some of the domains. The more advanced stages of the framework describe change that may build over a longer time period, so a 12-month pilot was not expected to show movement through all of them. The findings in this report are therefore indicative learning from these earlier phases and point to learnings and implications for future systems-change work.

Progress across domains

- Upstream prevention of destitution. Sites expanded their advice delivery models to reach their target audiences, and some refined their targeting during the pilot, using local data to focus on areas of high need. Sites with existing data and relationships appeared able to move faster.
- Partnerships and collaboration. Sites built relationships with a wider range of partners than expected, particularly where they had existing networks or staff with protected time for relationship building, and some reintroduced local forums to sustain this. Staff turnover and siloed working within partner organisations could slow progress. This suggests the importance of understanding where sites are

starting from, both in their own partnership and in their connections with the wider system of local services and organisations, and adapting onboarding and pilot design phases to account for this.

- Lived experience and representation. Structured lived experience work was less familiar to most sites. Over the pilot, some moved from one-off consultation towards ongoing panels, engaged many people with experience of hardship or destitution, and in some cases supported people to share their experiences directly with decision makers. Staff highlighted an opportunity for training and guidance on delivering this work well and in a targeted way, as routes for insight to change decisions were rarely in place. There is also an opportunity for future work to develop how this insight is used to inform and adapt services.
- Data, evidence and learning. Sites used existing data early on to decide where to focus support, and some adapted their approach as new data and local insight emerged. Some sites also had existing ways of sharing local knowledge and trends with partners. There is an opportunity for future work to support sites to develop more formal data sharing arrangements, and to use these to evidence the impact of their delivery.
- Advocacy and influence. Where sites had research and campaigns capacity, they turned local evidence into briefings and reports that reached decision makers locally and, in some cases, nationally. In one case, a site found a new route to influence after a key partner was not able to engage directly. Staff and national teams suggested this domain may need longer than the 12-month delivery period to show change that can be attributed to the pilot.
- Leadership and shared vision. Many pilots built on existing local goals and strategies for change, turning ideas that had been discussed informally into funded activity. Within sites, individual staff often played a key role in driving this vision forward. In some cases, the vision did not reach all staff members, highlighting an opportunity for future work to support sites to embed this vision more widely across their teams.
- Supporting infrastructure and resources. Pilot funding allowed sites to bring in dedicated staff, and some began planning to retain skills and capacity beyond the funding period. Where new roles were filled by people who already had local relationships, staff described them settling in and getting work moving more quickly. Staff highlighted the opportunity for longer-term funding to support a lasting shift toward preventative, community-based delivery.

Learnings and implications

Progress was made within the 12-month delivery period, across sites and national teams, and varied between sites, between domains and over time. Some sites began delivery quickly and covered all planned activity. Others took longer to get going and did not complete all activities. The evaluation points to four key opportunities for future systems-change programmes.

A clear, shared understanding of goals and objectives: Early in the pilot, national teams and sites described some uncertainty about how far upstream the programme aimed to work, and what systems change meant in practice. Some staff found it difficult to start without clearly defined outcomes, and in some sites parts of the pilot reflected work that was already being delivered. Understanding developed as the pilot progressed, supported by the shared language the framework provided. Future programmes could set out goals and objectives clearly from the outset, with consistent definitions across partners, concrete examples, and clear boundaries on what falls within scope.

Using each site's starting point to shape support: Sites began from different starting points. Where sites had existing relationships, infrastructure or local networks, staff described being able to move more quickly. Where these were not in place, building them took up more of the 12-month delivery period. Future programmes could assess each site's starting point before delivery. This could shape the support each site receives, with more weighted toward the early stages, and inform which sites are taken forward.

Formalised commitment between sites and national teams: The programme purposefully offered an open approach to funding, without fixed targets, giving sites space to learn and adapt. However, roles and expectations were not always set out at the start, and some sites may have benefited from greater accountability. Future programmes could agree a formal commitment between sites and national teams, setting out what sites will deliver, who is responsible and how progress will be tracked. This need not mean fixed output targets, and can sit alongside room to adapt.

Quality standards and planning for sustainability: Some activities were new to sites, particularly lived experience research and collecting data to evidence impact. Data quality varied, and there was limited evidence that lived experience work changed service delivery. Progress often depended on committed individuals and funded roles, and several sites found their stride as funding was ending. Future programmes could agree quality standards for activities such as data collection and lived experience research before delivery, and resource them properly. They could also plan from the start for what will continue once funding ends, so progress does not rest on any one person.

The pilot offers five examples of what locally relevant, systems-change ways of working can look like in the local system of advice, food banks, statutory and community services. A single year cannot show how local systems change fully unfolds. The conclusion sets out open questions a longer programme could test, such as what minimum foundation a pilot needs, and what turns relationships held by individuals into lasting structures. Using the framework over several years could help build understanding of what the more advanced stages of each domain look like in practice.

Introduction

Context and background

Across the UK, demand for advice has been rising while funding for advice services is often short term or insecure. Organisations frequently work separately rather than in a coordinated way. People experiencing hardship can struggle to reach the right support at the right time.

The barriers go beyond whether services exist. Advice can be hard to find and hard to navigate, and the systems people are dealing with, particularly benefits, are complex. Other services do not always recognise when advice could help, and often refer people straight to crisis support. As a result, many people only reach advice once their situation has become much more serious.

Organisations working within communities, alongside people who have experienced hunger and hardship, are well placed to design services that address the causes of hardship, not only its symptoms. They cannot do this alone. They need dedicated support, resourcing, infrastructure and more joined up ways of working across organisations.

About the Tackling Destitution Together pilot programme

Tackling Destitution Together is a joint programme from Trussell and Citizens Advice (England and Wales). It enabled five sites across England and Wales to design and pilot new ways of delivering support and systems-change interventions, with the aim of reducing or preventing destitution.

The primary aim was to contribute to what is known about delivering locally relevant, systems-change ways of working within the advice sector and local systems of support. In practice, this meant:

- reshaping how support works within a community
- building stronger connections between organisations
- designing responses with local partners
- putting the experience of people who have faced hunger and hardship at the centre of decision making

Across the five sites, the programme aimed to help organisations engage people at risk of destitution earlier. It aimed to strengthen connections between food banks, advice services, statutory partners and other local organisations. It also aimed to ground local services in local data and evidence about need, and in the perspectives of people with direct experience of hunger and hardship.

The programme supported sites to design their own pilots rather than deliver a single fixed model. This was intended to make pilots locally relevant, to build local skill and confidence, and to trial less top down ways of working than sites may have experienced through other funding.

Before delivery began, national teams worked with each partnership through a design and mobilisation phase. This included problem analysis using local and national data; setting outcomes; identifying points of leverage and intervention in the local system; stakeholder mapping; service design and blueprinting; and supporting participatory and co-design activities with local partners and people with lived experience. How far sites could do this varied. Timelines were tighter than sites and national teams had anticipated, which limited some sites' capacity to use data and evidence for design before delivery began.

About this report

This report brings together learning from across the five pilot sites and the two national teams. It is organised around the seven domains of the Pathways to Systems-Change Framework.

The report is structured as follows:

- **Method and evaluation approach** sets out how the evaluation was carried out, and how it changed after its first stage.
- **The Pathways to Systems-Change Framework** introduces the framework, how it was used and how to read the findings.
- **Site case studies** describe each pilot, what it set out to do and how it developed.
- **Domain chapters** take each domain in turn. Each covers why the domain matters for systems change, where sites started, what they tried and how they responded, and what this may mean for future work.
- **National level learnings** cover how the programme was designed, mobilised and supported nationally.
- **Learnings and implications for future systems-change programmes** draws together the learning across domains and from the national level.

The report sits alongside site insight reports, covering detail specific to each pilot, and a toolkit with practical guidance for organisations wanting to apply a similar approach.

Method and evaluation approach

Evaluation design

This is a learning evaluation of the 12-month delivery phase of a pilot programme. It ran across three stages, a baseline, a midline and an endline, each exploring what sites had been doing, what had changed, and what had helped or got in the way.

At each stage, researchers interviewed staff from the local Citizens Advice and food bank teams delivering the pilots, with the focus depending on staff who were delivering aspects of the site's programme or closer to the work, and from the Trussell and Citizens Advice national teams. At midline, researchers also spoke to professionals working in the wider local system.

Across the three phases, interview numbers were as follows. Please see Annex 2 for a detailed breakdown across sites and organisations.

- **Baseline** (Following pilot design, July-October 2025): 26 interviewees: 15 from sites (~3 per site) and 11 from national teams
- **Midline** (Halfway through delivery, January-February 2026): 29 interviewees: 25 from sites (~5 per site) and 4 from national teams
- **Endline** (Following staggered final dates for different sites, Phase 1: May-June 2026, Phase 2: August-September 2026): 24 interviewees: 17 from sites (~3 per site) and 7 from national teams

Interviews were carried out remotely. They covered what sites had done since the previous stage, along with progress, enablers, challenges and how sites had responded. At midline and endline, interviews were structured around the domains of the Pathways to Systems-Change Framework.

Management information from Citizens Advice's Casebook system was made available at each stage, which local Citizens Advice use to record the advice they give. This gave researchers some visibility of data such as the number of clients seen. National teams also ran quarterly reporting and reflection meetings with sites throughout the programme.

How the evaluation approach changed

The programme was designed to encourage a new way of working. Sites were testing an evolving model at pace, from different starting points in experience, relationships, skills, and familiarity with systems-change ways of working.

After the baseline stage, the evaluation approach was adapted. The evaluation was originally designed as a process evaluation. It would look at how the pilots were set up and delivered at baseline, midline and endline. Baseline interviews showed that sites were moving at different paces across different areas of their work, some had not yet put shared systems, journey maps, or data collection plans in place, and that partners were still building a shared understanding of some programme goals and stages.

The adapted approach focused on what enables or limits locally designed systems-change work. It allowed a more detailed understanding of learning, and gave more tangible ways to talk about different types of progress with staff at site and national level. It also accounted for change happening at different paces within a site. The aim was to record learning, and what it means for future programmes as well as this one, highlighting implications, opportunities and open questions for future systems-change work.

The Pathways to Systems-Change Framework was developed at this point and introduced from the midline phase onwards, building on existing knowledge of systems-change working, what the baseline interviews surfaced, and national teams' expertise. The framework, described in more detail below, broke systems-change

work down into different areas of progress, with example skills and activities, to enable a more detailed and varied understanding of progress. It was mainly for analytical purposes and not something every member of staff needed to place themselves on, although it also gave sites and national teams a shared language for reflecting on progress. It is described in the next chapter.

Limitations of the evidence

This evaluation draws on insights from a small sample of five sites, and relies substantially on self-reported evidence from those delivering the pilots. Findings and learnings are based on interviews with staff at the pilot sites, alongside management information and quarterly review data made available by the national teams. In the midline and endline phases, interviews were structured by the seven domains, with staff reflecting on those most relevant to their work on the pilot.

The evidence covers a short period. Much of the change the programme sought builds over years, and endline interviews took place soon after delivery ended for most sites. Change is also hard to attribute to the pilots. They ran alongside other local work, so changes in services or practice cannot be linked to them alone. People with lived experience were not interviewed, so their reflections did not feed into the evaluation. Finally, sites' own sense of their progress may sometimes run ahead of practice. For example, training may have been delivered without yet changing how partners refer people. This has been accounted for in analysis and reporting.

The learnings and implications in this report offer detail on the progress made within the pilot's 12-month delivery period. They describe what appeared to help or limit progress, and what this highlights for future systems-change work.

The Pathways to Systems-Change Framework

The Pathways to Systems-Change Framework organises the broad ambition of systems change into seven domains. Each domain is a distinct skill or capability that enables locally led, upstream work that aims to take a systems-change approach. Rather than asking whether a site achieved systems change as a single outcome, the framework allows progress to be considered across a range of different areas providing more precise learnings and insights into delivering this work in the future. Given the limited time and resources of the pilot, sites were not expected to make progress in all seven domains.

The framework is based on the premise that systems change depends on a combination of capabilities rather than any single intervention. Progress in one domain alone is unlikely to produce lasting change. Instead, change emerges through the interaction of partnerships, leadership, lived experience, learning, influence and infrastructure over time.

Upstream prevention of destitution	How local services identify and act on the causes of destitution
Partnerships and collaboration	How well partners work together and remove structural barriers
Lived experience and representation	How far people with direct experience shape and influence services
Data, evidence and learning	How well areas use data and insight to test ideas and drive change
Advocacy and influence	How local learning shapes commissioning, policy and funding
Leadership and shared vision	How well leaders and staff champion a shared vision for systems change
Supporting infrastructure and resources	How well frontline delivery is supported and resourced locally

Overview of the Pathways to Systems-Change Framework (2026)

Within each domain, the framework describes four broad stages: Foundational, Developing, Embedding and Transformative. As well as recognising progress at each step, the stages help show how systems change evolves, in terms of the conditions that need to be in place. The framework also gives sites a shared picture of what further development in each area could look like. National teams at Trussell and Citizens Advice worked to develop the framework and outline what progress might look like at later stages, drawing on how staged frameworks are used in other sectors. The full framework is set out in Annex 1.

Why it was developed

The framework was developed after the baseline stage, building on existing knowledge of systems-change working. Baseline interviews pointed to a need for a common structure, giving sites and national teams a shared language for progress, and giving the evaluation a way to capture the different paths sites were taking.

The four-stage structure reflects what the baseline interviews showed: progress in this kind of work is uneven. A site can move forward in one area while staying at an earlier stage in another, and there are ongoing factors and changes to pilot delivery that can impact what this progress looks like over time. This structure allows progress and learnings across different areas of a site's work to be captured. It recognises movement in each area on its own terms, and shows where a site is building capability and adapting as well as where it has further to go.

How the framework was used

From midline onward, interviews with sites and national teams were organised domain by domain. Researchers asked what had changed, what had helped, what had got in the way, and how sites had responded. Some of the framework's concepts and terminology were less familiar to sites. Researchers used stimulus material, with worked examples of what each domain might look like at different stages.

Sites' positions across the domains at the start of delivery were assessed retrospectively. Researchers analysed baseline interview data against the framework, although the baseline interviews had not been designed around it. This means start and end points were not captured in the same way.

The domain chapters in this report focus on the activities sites carried out, the learning and adaptations that followed, and the opportunities these present to build on in future systems-change work.

Each case study includes an illustrative map showing where the site was across the seven domains at different points in the evaluation. These maps are drawn from reflections in interviews, as well as quarterly reports.

Because each site's journey was different, a position on the map at one stage of the evaluation does not mean two sites were at the same point. The maps should therefore be read site by site, rather than used to compare sites with one another.

The domain chapters describe, for each domain, where sites started, the activities they carried out, how they adapted, an initial sense of what enabled progress, and the learnings this offers. They draw out patterns across sites, rather than tracking any one site's movement by stage.

How to read the findings

- **The framework is a working tool.** It is expected to keep developing as it is used, particularly for longer-term or more established systems-change programmes. Findings in this report focus on the earlier stages, reflecting a 12-month pilot.
- **Examples are kept general.** To protect the sites and reflect the size of the sample, the domain chapters group sites by their circumstances and give examples without naming sites.
- **Learnings follow the pilot's journey.** For each domain, the report sets out what sites tried, what happened, how they adapted, and what this highlights for future work. The aim is to show why each learning matters, and what it could mean for those designing, funding or supporting similar systems-change programmes.

Site case studies

Each case study describes what the pilot set out to do, how it developed over the 12-month delivery period, and where it reached by the end.

The five sites are spread across England and Wales, and include a rural area. All serve communities with high levels of deprivation and poverty, with some neighbourhoods among the most deprived in their country.

Site 1: Taking advice into the communities where need was highest

Priority group

Initially framed around people with long-term health conditions and disabilities, reached mainly through the choice of partner organisations rather than eligibility criteria. Advice was open to anyone throughout.

Starting point

The food bank and Citizens Advice had worked together for several years, with Citizens Advice advisers already based in food bank centres, although the food bank's limited capacity meant Citizens Advice led the pilot. Citizens Advice brought existing links with the local authority, health services and local food poverty networks, and both organisations held substantial referral data, though the food bank had had little capacity to analyse its own.

The local challenge

People in the area often reached advice only once they were already in crisis, and frontline services frequently referred them straight to the food bank as the quickest option. Local data showed that over 70% of people using its services had a disability or long-term health condition, a group recognised nationally as being at heightened risk of destitution, so the site initially framed its work around them.

What the pilot set out to do

Strand	What it aimed to change
Lived experience workshops	Understand how people seek help and what leads them to food banks, and use this to help shape the pilot's development
Advice First Aid training for referral partners (statutory, health and community organisations)	Help frontline staff spot early warning signs, give basic information, and refer people to advice earlier rather than defaulting to the food bank
Digital triage app	Help frontline workers identify need and make appropriate referrals
Community advice sessions in accessible local venues	Bring advice into the places people already go for help, before crisis

How it developed

Designing the pilot, recruiting a community adviser and trainer, and changes in the team meant delivery took time to build in the first months, with Advice First Aid training for referral partners beginning in October 2025, through in-person sessions and, later, online materials.

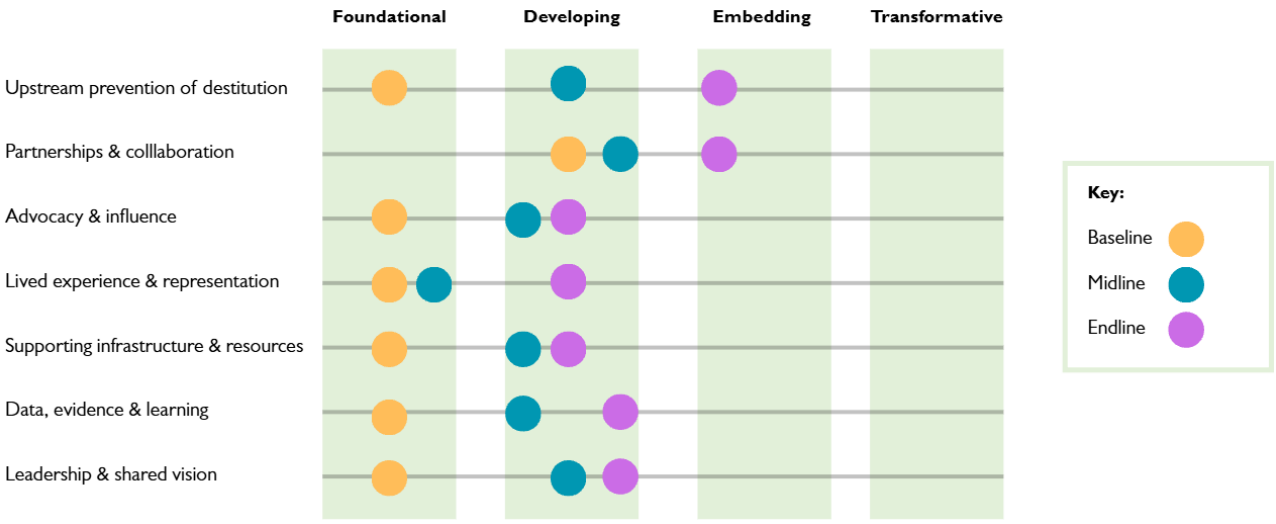
Community advice was first placed with key referring organisations, but footfall was low. In early 2026, following changes in the project team, the site moved to offering community advice to residents of the postcode areas with the highest need, which staff saw as a better use of a single adviser's time. It also began piloting advice with a local health partner for people who would otherwise find advice hard to reach.

Lived experience workshops were planned early and began in January 2026, when capacity became available. Once under way, they reached people using different kinds of food support (a food bank, a food pantry and a social supermarket) at different points in their crisis journey, giving the team a fuller picture of how people look for help.

Where things stood at the end

Partnerships moved furthest and staff reflected on how much work this had taken. Relationships that had depended on individuals became more consistent, with a key statutory partner, the local university and local health services all working with the pilot by the end. Data was used early on to decide where to direct support, and analysis was shared back with the food bank.

Lived experience work remained at an early stage, in line with the wider programme. The team spoke to 51 people across three venues, most through short conversations, and nine took part in longer workshops. Their input informed the move to a community-based approach and a report of recommendations, though this happened towards the end of the pilot.



What continues, and what ended

Advice First Aid training is now part of a key statutory partner's staff development programme, so new recruits will continue to receive it. Staff also described work to include learning from the project in the first-year curriculum for public health nursing students at a local university. It is hoped that the triage app will keep running, although with the trainer role ending, training new partners to use it will be limited, and staff are unsure if those already trained will continue to use it in the long-term.

The lived experience work produced a report of recommendations for policymakers, funders and local providers, which the site plans to publish. The recommendations were mostly broad, such as improving benefit income and raising awareness of support, rather than tied to specific local actions. The report was completed at the end of the pilot in July 2026, leaving little time to act on it. Learning from the pilot is also feeding into

local crisis support funding. Staff noted that frontline funding has not risen in a decade, and that continued partnership working depends on funding not yet confirmed.

Site 2: Supporting single-income households at key moments of change

Priority group

Single-income households at key transition points, later widened to include disabled people and schools and colleges (staff and parents)

Starting point

The food bank and local Citizens Advice had previously worked together on other, similar projects and were familiar with how each other worked. A history of shared meetings (including steering groups) between organisations in the area meant there was already a strong foundation for working together before the pilot began.

The local challenge

The partnership focused on single-income households at key transition points, such as people who had experienced job loss, were working on low or zero-hour contracts, or had experienced family changes or moving onto Universal Credit, where finances can change quickly. It chose "single-income households" rather than "single-parent families" so that the pilot could also reach single adults and couples where only one person works.

What the pilot set out to do

Strand	What it aimed to change
Advice First Aid training for referral partners	Help partner staff recognise early signs of hardship and refer to advice sooner
Referral pathway into dedicated local Citizens Advice advisers	Give partners a clear, quick route to specialist advice
Short topic sessions for partners and clients	Build knowledge on common issues, such as Personal Independence Payment (PIP) forms
Lived experience programme (led by the food bank)	Understand people's experiences and use them to shape services

How it developed

Advice First Aid training began in May 2025. Staff described partner organisations as stretched, with other training that carried CPD points competing for their time, which they felt may have affected uptake. In response, the course was accredited for CPD and, by the end of the pilot, was being developed into a longer Partnership Programme, which runs over a few days rather than a single session, with content tailored to each

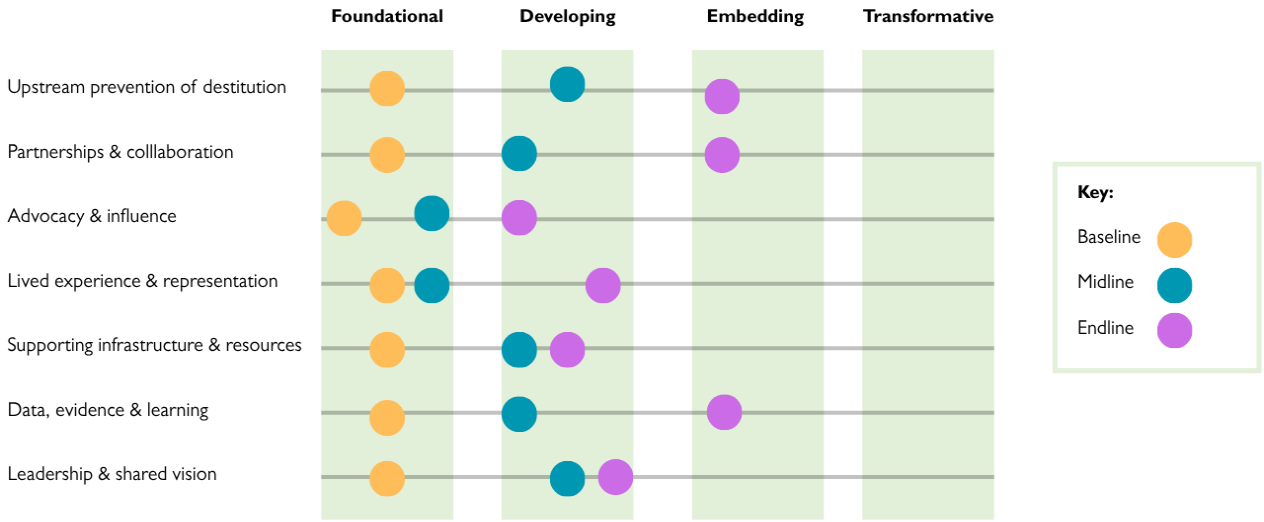
partner organisation's client base. Some short topic sessions, for example on PIP forms, saw low uptake and will not continue. The referral pathway went live, and partners were onboarded onto the local Citizens Advice referral system.

As the pilot progressed, the site widened its focus to include disabled people, and then schools and colleges, working with staff and parents, after identifying unmet demand. Engagement from schools and colleges was higher than from other partners. Partway through, based on what it was seeing, the site also changed the data it asked of partners trained in Advice First Aid, to improve returns. In hindsight, both organisations wished they had made these changes earlier, as momentum picked up once they were in place.

The food bank led the lived experience work, through client surveys, interviews, consultation groups and producing a short film. The site reported that this led to changes within the food bank, including noise-reducing screens, offering a choice of refreshments, and a new role providing a first conversation before referral to the local Citizens Advice. People did not describe earlier routes to support directly. What came through, as reported by the food bank, were barriers to reaching advice: phone lines that were hard to get through on, limited opening hours for people in work.

Where things stood at the end

Staff described most progress in data and learning, and in lived experience. The local Citizens Advice pointed to how directly pilot data shaped its new Partnership Programme and its decision to move towards sessions tailored to individual organisations. The pilot also encouraged the site to think further upstream and unlock new partnerships with schools. Working together on this pilot also strengthened their relationship. However, both organisations felt partnerships progressed less than hoped, citing the difficulty of securing formal agreements and shared governance. Risks identified at the design stage, including freeing up partner staff time and staff turnover in referral organisations, did become real barriers.



What continues, and what ended

The accredited Advice First Aid training, the local Citizens Advice's digital partner handbook and the food bank's twice-yearly lived experience workshops are expected to continue. The relationship with schools will also continue.

Site 3: Testing ways to reach people in a rural area

Priority group

People with long term health conditions and complex needs, as well as single adults.

Starting point

The food bank operated a delivery-only model, a model it moved to after Covid-19, with no drop-in hub or adviser on site. The local Citizens Advice and local partners had existing relationships through a local advice forum, though this had lapsed by the start of the pilot.

The local challenge

Because the area is rural, the food bank delivered food parcels rather than running a drop-in hub, so there was no natural point for people to meet an adviser face to face.

What the pilot set out to do

Strand	What it aimed to change
Pop-up outreach advice locations	Bring advice into communities without a permanent base
Physical digital information kiosks (originally planned for the Job Centre)	Give people a way to find information and support at the point they need it
New referral route into local Citizens Advice	Make it easier for partners to refer people to advice
Relaunched local advice network (LAN)	Bring local advice providers and partners together to share knowledge and refer between services
Food bank survey programme	Understand people's routes into destitution, to inform earlier support

How it developed

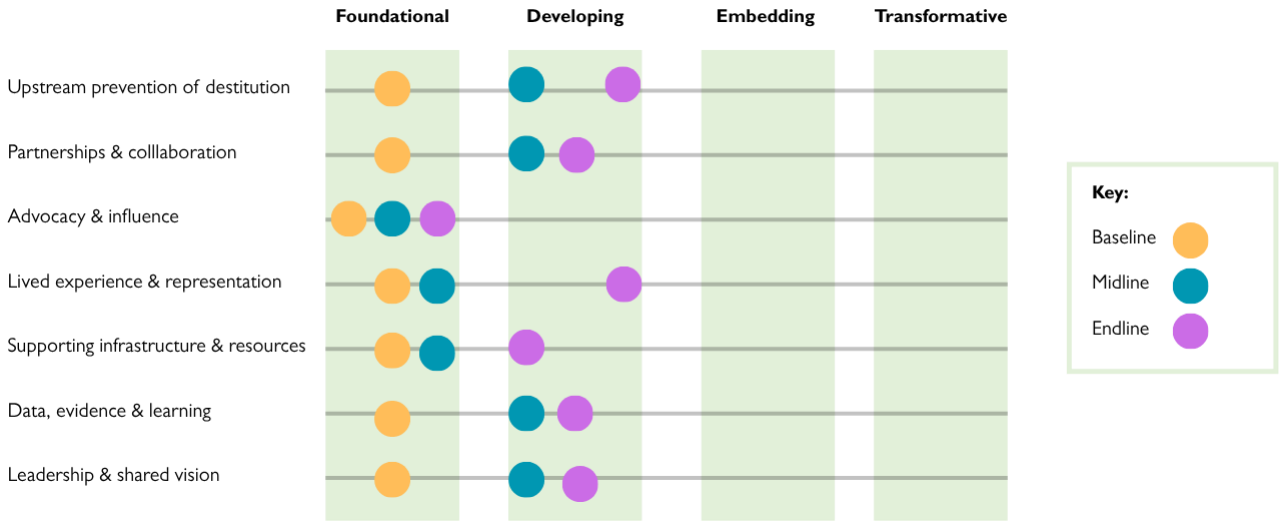
Delivery began in April 2025. Due to delays in hiring a coordinator, some activities started later. While the advice network and training sessions started earlier, the physical kiosks and advice pop-up hubs were not installed until spring 2026. Pop-up sessions saw lower attendance than hoped, and the team reflected on why. Having first thought stigma might be the reason, they concluded that the format was less suited to a rural area and identified home visits as an approach that might work better.

Setting up the physical kiosks took longer than expected because of practical and technical issues, so the team built a simpler digital alternative, though physical kiosks were eventually installed in local Citizens Advice offices close to the end of the pilot. Separately, the food bank began surveying the people it supports directly, which was a new activity for the organisation. By the end, survey data covered the majority of people using the food bank and showed most facing several overlapping pressures. For many people, rising energy costs and fuel poverty were among the pressures that came before needing food support.

The site found that existing referral routes into the local Citizens Advice already met most needs, so the new route saw less use. The local advice network grew in reach, building on existing partner relationships. A data sharing agreement for partner organisations was introduced in autumn 2025 but set aside, as there was limited time left to put it into practice.

Where things stood at the end

The local Citizens Advice described good progress on advice giving, outreach and the local advice network. Staff noted that the number of referrals received by the food bank had not fallen over the pilot, and recognised that referral numbers are shaped by many factors beyond a single year of activity. The food bank saw having a role ring-fenced to the pilot, rather than layered onto existing duties, as key to getting value from the work, and valued an outside perspective for prompting reflection on existing practice.



What continues, and what ended

The pilot's advice provision ended in March 2026, while the food bank's engagement and survey work continued until June 2026. The digital kiosk will continue sharing data for at least six months beyond that. The local advice network is expected to continue, meeting every two to three months, with the aim of rotating the host among partners. The paid Welsh to English translation during the pilot will not continue, but meetings will keep working in both languages.

Site 4: Working with local partners to identify needs upstream

Priority group

Disabled people, who were over-represented among the people both organisations support; later broadened to people facing debt, housing problems and social isolation

Starting point

The two organisations had a well-established working relationship. A local Citizens Advice adviser already attended all food bank sessions.

The local challenge

Both organisations' data showed disabled people were over-represented among the people they supported. The partnership also wanted to change how other local services responded to people in hardship, reducing reliance on the food bank to provide support that others in the system should be providing.

What the pilot set out to do

Strand	What it aimed to change
Video-based training for partner organisations	Help partners respond to people's needs themselves, rather than referring straight to the food bank
Partnership agreements and a Client Support Worker	After training, partners signed an agreement that allowed them to refer people to a Client Support Worker for early intervention casework
Lived experience panel	Bring people's experiences into the design of training and services, and to decision makers

How it developed

Training first focused on disability-related queries, such as disability benefits, then broadened to cover debt, housing and social isolation as these topics were raised by staff working on the pilot and people in the lived experience group as being issues that people coming to the food bank faced. It was delivered as professionally produced videos, hosted online so that partners could complete the training at any time. The local referral platform could not host videos, so videos were hosted on YouTube and view counts and a Google form were used to track engagement. Partners later asked for face-to-face delivery, which was not put in place as the site had already developed the videos, but was something the team reflected they would try in the future.

The local authority's cost of living helpline was one of the food bank's main sources of referrals, and a target audience for the training. However, securing buy-in across senior management, middle management, and frontline staff proved difficult. The team described instead addressing issues with inappropriate referrals from this route by writing a briefing paper as a new local crisis fund was being designed. They reported that the research conducted during the pilot contributed to the paper.

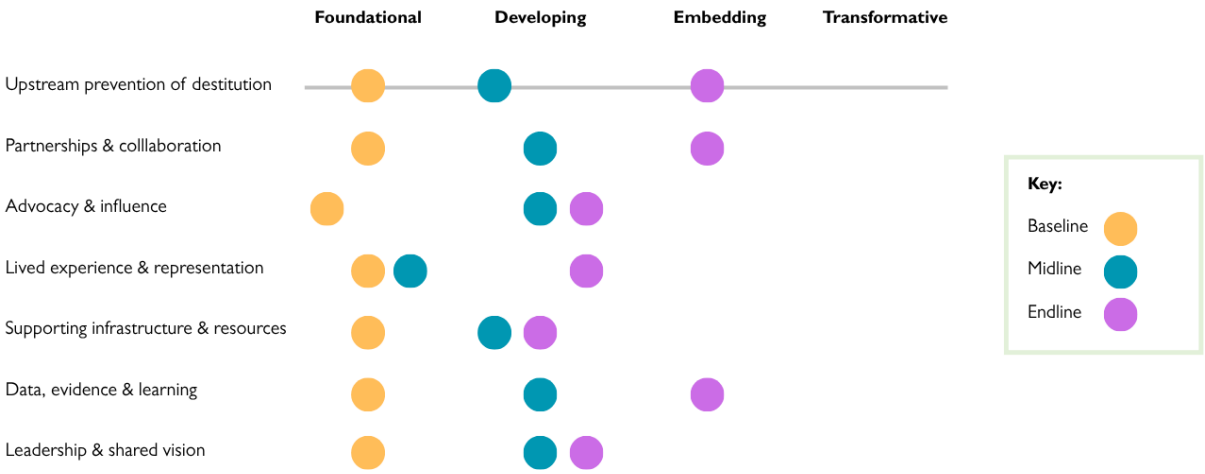
Referrals to the Client Support Worker were lower than expected. Several reasons were identified. Slow progress in preparing training materials slowed efforts to engage partner organisations. Reaching and engaging

statutory organisations was also difficult because of lengthy approval processes, while smaller charities reportedly struggled to find time to engage.

The lived experience panel of around seven people who attended the food bank or community centre met every other month on average, and staff reported that it fed into the training topics. Panel members shared their experiences of accessing local services directly with a referral agency forum and attended an All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) launch event. By the end of the pilot, the group was scripting and filming a video on what good and bad support looks like.

Where things stood at the end

Both organisations felt positive about what the pilot had achieved overall, though it was raised that the progress to develop and share training resources was slower than initially planned, which had a knock-on effect in their ability to engage partner organisations. Both named engagement with the local council as the main gap: restructuring and turnover limited the council's involvement, even though both saw it as one of the best placed partners to prevent crisis. The local Citizens Advice described partnerships and shared vision as working well, crediting the long-standing relationship. The food bank described its research role as "transformational" in helping it understand the people it supports. Although it felt this might have been possible without the pilot, it believed that access to a researcher enabled it to use clearer evidence in its advocacy work.



What continues, and what ended

The video training resources, the lived experience panel and the changes to the council's helpline are expected to continue. Both organisations flagged sustainability risks: the training will go out of date without further investment, given how often disability benefit rules have changed; the food bank's research role depends on a pending funding bid, which suggests more could have been done to set up data systems to enable ongoing analysis and research without a dedicated role; and local authority funding for the community hub where the early intervention work is based is at risk.

Site 5: Building on a long-standing partnership to reach families earlier

Priority group

Families with children, adding a new 0 to 4s cohort to an existing schools-based focus

Starting point

The two organisations had a long-standing relationship and had worked together closely for many years, particularly at leadership level. Both leads described themselves as "ready to go from day one". They had a clear plan for delivery prior to the design phase.

The local challenge

The partnership had worked closely together for many years and already had an established schools-based advice model for parents with children at school, which it wanted to extend to reach families with younger children earlier.

What the pilot set out to do

Strand	What it aimed to change
Extended advice model, adding a 0 to 4s cohort to the existing schools-based focus	The pilot extended their existing model, in which Citizens Advice caseworkers work with people using the food bank on their wider problems, focusing on families with children aged 0-4. The goal was to reach families with young children before crisis, largely focusing on debt advice and income maximisation support.
Community training for frontline professionals	Help partner staff understand when an advice referral is urgent, and build basic benefits knowledge to improve the referrals both organisations received and advice that families may receive before being referred to either.
Child poverty research and advocacy	Build a local evidence base and use it to influence decision makers

How it developed

The local Citizens Advice asked to begin delivery on 1 April 2025, before the mobilisation phase was complete, so it could keep an experienced adviser whose funding on another project was ending. The national partners agreed. This early start is itself an example of a system issue the report describes elsewhere: short-term funding makes it hard to retain trained staff.

As the pilot became established, the site built new relationships with early years providers. It also used the extra resource to begin building trust with the local Traveller community, a group the team described as historically hard to reach. This work had only just begun to show results when funding ended. As the time needed to talk to parents to provide advice could prove challenging if families had to attend appointments together, the site set up a play room with activities to keep children occupied and improve the environment for families seeking advice.

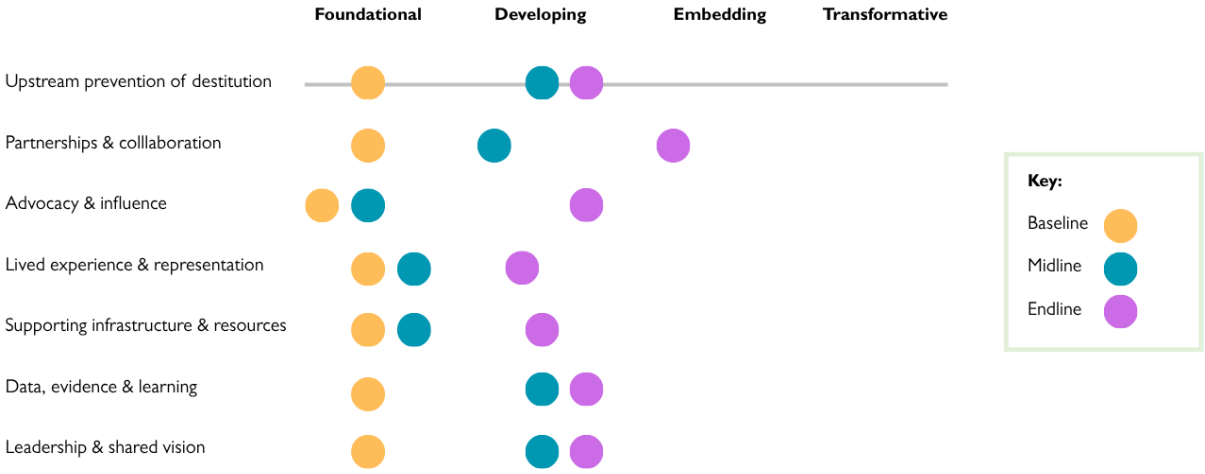
Community training was designed around gaps the team had observed. For example, some partner staff referred to the food bank by default rather than understanding when an advice referral was urgent, or lacked basic benefits knowledge. The team also asked referral partners to tour the food bank before being accepted as a referral route, to show the scale of food provision and help partners understand that food banks cannot become a long-term part of the system.

The pilot funded research that led to a child poverty report for the local area. It was presented to policymakers, including national policymakers, and covered by regional media, and it brought elected members to engage with the service for the first time. The site lead described this as the first time research and campaigns work had been properly funded as part of a project. Towards the end, experienced advisers were deliberately redeployed within the organisation, to avoid losing skilled staff once funding ended.

Where things stood at the end

The clearest further movement was in advocacy, driven by the reach of the child poverty report. Lived experience also developed, with client voice being used in case studies, outcome tracking and service design, although routes for this insight to reach wider organisational decisions were less developed.

Both organisations felt a single year was not enough to embed the changes. Reflecting on this, the local Citizens Advice lead suggested a part-time adviser funded for five years would have achieved more than a larger sum for one, because relationships and trust, particularly with harder-to-reach groups, take longer than a year to build.



What continues, and what ended

Activities expected to continue include the play room in the local Citizens Advice office for clients with young children, the redeployed adviser capacity, and research and evaluation funding written into future bids as standard. Community training, and early years and Traveller outreach, are not expected to continue at the same intensity without further funding.

Learnings from across the domains

Each chapter covers why the domain matters for systems change, where sites started, their activities and adaptations, and learnings for future work. Examples are grouped and kept general. Where sites adapted in response to what they learned, these adaptations are reported. Some challenges did not lead to a change within the pilot year, and these are noted as part of an ongoing journey for sites. Each chapter ends with the learning and opportunities these experiences present for future systems-change work.

Upstream prevention of destitution

This domain is central to the programme's ambition. It covers how local services identify who may be at risk, and reach people before crisis point, rather than responding only once they arrive at a food bank. Shifting the point at which people receive help is one of the clearest ways a local system can change.

Where sites started

Sites began from different positions. Some had already run an upstream model, including working with referral partners for different target audiences, or had close working relationships between the local Citizens Advice and the food bank. Others were designing an upstream approach for the first time.

Most sites had some existing data on who was reaching the food bank or advice service, and some had staff with direct frontline food bank experience. With design happening at pace, how far sites could use this information to feed into the detail of their design varied, although some used this data to adapt their approach during the pilot.

Activities and adaptations

Early in the pilot, most sites expanded their advice delivery models to reach their target audiences. Approaches included training referral partners to spot early signs of hardship, community advice sessions, and tools to help non-specialist staff make better referrals.

Where sites had existing relationships and ways of working, staff described being able to move faster.

> *"We have a very close relationship, so I don't have to influence very hard for them to understand what we need to do in terms of advice and advice services, how systems advice works."*
> *(Local Citizens Advice)*

Staff with frontline experience combined this with internal data to decide where to focus.

> *"Because I was working at the food bank before and I was frontline staff, I know the topics that lead people to come to the food bank and CA at crisis point (...) and then we also have internal data, so I mixed and matched that."*
> *(Local Citizens Advice)*

Once delivery was underway, some sites found that working through individual referring organisations was slower than expected. In response, some sites shifted toward targeting areas of high need directly, using postcode and referral data from the food bank.

> *"They provided us quite a lot of data on geographical locations, so the postcode locations of where people were coming from. So we pivoted and started actually looking at the postcodes, the geographical areas."*
> *(Local Citizens Advice)*

> *"We can analyse and see where it is that the most referrals and the most food bank users are coming from, so that we could target our adviser and community trainer into those different groups or postcode areas to best try and reduce the destitution."*
> *(Local Citizens Advice)*

One site tested community need directly before going into an area.

> *"We did door to door in the local areas to confirm whether or not they wanted us in the community. We got quite good data from that, and it's definitely something we will do again."*
> *(Local Citizens Advice)*

As the pilot became more established, some sites redirected their focus further upstream. In one case, a food bank moved toward training in colleges, reaching students before they entered work.

> *"We're looking at the social care students who are just going now to get their jobs in July, so I'm thinking even more preventative, before they go into the social care arena or healthcare arena."*
> *(Local food bank)*

Where sites were extending an established model, the pilot confirmed and extended what they had begun to learn before. In one case, this was a view that concentrated support for fewer people with overlapping problems may have more impact than lighter touch support for more people.

> *"What we've learned from our previous projects and from this one is that people, by and large, living in poverty have multiple problems (...) We ended up seeing far fewer people but actually having much more of an impact, because each client didn't have one problem, each client had four or five overlapping problems."*
> *(Local food bank)*

Some assumptions did not hold. Some pilots were designed around the expectation that training referral partners would reduce food bank referrals. Staff in some sites reported that this did not happen within the 12-month delivery period, and attributed this to factors outside what training could address. The fact that increased training of referral partners may uncover previously 'hidden need' may also be a factor here.

> *"I think with this project, we thought that when we trained lots of people, referrals from the food bank would go down. But actually, that's not true, because there's so many other things affecting why people put a referral in."*
> *(Local Citizens Advice)*

In another case, staff had assumed low turnout at a fixed outreach location was due to stigma. They concluded afterwards that the channel itself was not the right fit for a rural area, and that home visits might work better.

Reaching the right decision makers in larger statutory organisations was a recurring difficulty. Practical barriers, such as security clearance, took longer than the pilot allowed. In some cases, a key partner engaged only as the pilot timeline was drawing to a close.

> *"If I'd had more time, I reckon we could have got an adviser into the probation centres all across the region (...) but the security clearance takes eight months at a good time."*
> *(Local Citizens Advice)*

> *"When we finally got to the right person, they said, this is great, but I don't think we've got enough time left now within [the] terms of the funding to be able to do this."*
> *(Local Citizens Advice)*

Elsewhere, organisations that seemed a natural fit did not engage, because they were stretched or because agreement from frontline contacts did not lead to approval higher up. There were also examples of the inverse, where approval from senior teams in organisations had not translated into frontline practice.

Staff were also clear about the limits of what this domain can achieve, given how much of destitution's cause sits outside any single service. Examples of this highlighted by staff included limitations around benefits, delays to receiving benefits, and digital exclusion.

> *"We cannot prevent it [destitution] where policy is the problem. I think it's just important that's held onto very firmly by this evaluation - there's only so much we can do."*
> *(Local Citizens Advice)*

> *"I think destitution is so massive, and there's so many facets to it. It's really hard to cover everything in one training session."*
> *(External stakeholder)*

Across sites, the length of the pilot was seen as a constraint on upstream prevention work. Staff reflected that people were reluctant to engage with something they expected to end soon.

> *"People don't want to engage in something that isn't going to be long term. Why do we want to have something that by the time we've got it set up, you're going to clear off again?"*
> *(Local Citizens Advice)*

Learnings and what this may mean for future work

- **Using existing data to target support.** Where sites used food bank and referral data to focus on areas of high need, staff described this as an effective way to reach people earlier. Moving forwards, this could mean sites identifying their most effective local routes earlier in delivery, helping them reach people sooner.
- **Food bank use is shaped by wider factors.** Staff described improved confidence and practice among those trained. Food bank use is influenced by many factors beyond any single pilot, so it is unlikely to be a useful sign of progress within a 12-month delivery period. This could mean agreeing early on which signs of progress are realistic to look for, giving a fairer picture of what the work achieves.
- **Planning for institutional processes.** Security clearance and sign-off within statutory partners took time. Looking ahead, allowing for these lead times in pilot plans could help work with statutory services get underway sooner.
- **Upstream advice within a wider system.** Staff were clear that advice and training work alongside, rather than in place of, action on structural and policy drivers of destitution. This could mean framing success in a way that reflects what local advice work is able to influence.
- **Deepening as well as innovating.** Sites extending a proven model described a clear basis for progress. This suggests there may be value in some sites deepening an existing approach, alongside others testing new ones.

Partnerships and collaboration

People at risk of destitution often need help from several organisations. This domain looks at how well local advice services, food banks and wider partners worked together, built trust, aligned practice, and worked to enable people to get the right advice at the right time. Without this, upstream work tends to stay within a single service.

Where sites started

All sites were led by a partnership between a local Citizens Advice and food bank, but the depth of these partnerships varied. Some had worked together for many years, with shared trustees or staff who had moved between the two organisations. Others had worked together through a single earlier project.

Wider networks also varied. Some sites had established referral networks or local advice networks already in place. Others were building relationships with wider partners as delivery began.

> *"Our partnership network was already really strong. I can't help but feel that it gave us a springboard. Anecdotally, just hearing what some of the other people were saying from different pilot projects, maybe they didn't have as well-established a referral network."*
> *(Local Citizens Advice)*

Activities and adaptations

Early in the pilot, sites used training, local networks and direct outreach to bring in partners. Where sites had dedicated capacity to build relationships, staff described attracting a broader range of partners than expected, including housing associations, domestic violence services and advice providers across several sectors.

> *"We've managed to attract a real variety of partners into the project, probably broader than we'd thought initially. Having that dedicated resource to go out and make those relationships was what created all of that."*
> *(Local Citizens Advice)*

Joint training also became a way to build relationships. Sites reached organisations they had not worked with before, including faith groups, medical groups, sports charities, probation services and schools and colleges.

> *"We've started to engage with cohorts that we have not previously engaged with, in particular the training that we have given to the faith community. We've done groups with vicars now, and they are not a group previously who would traditionally come to our stuff."*
> *(Local Citizens Advice)*

> *"I can have a look and go, oh great, we've not worked with them, we can approach them, we can send people their way."*
> *(External stakeholder)*

The relationship between the local Citizens Advice and the food bank also strengthened in some sites.

> *"We are a lot closer to Citizens Advice as a result of the project, because we've had a lot of meetings with them."*
> *(Local food bank)*

Once delivery was underway, engaging larger statutory organisations proved slow. Where staff had time to persist, this sometimes paid off. One adviser described becoming a "polite nuisance" with probation services after weeks of unanswered emails.

> *"Every two days a week for about two months, I would show up just after their lunch to try and have a chat. Because I did that, that's made a huge impact."*
> *(Local Citizens Advice)*

Persistence did not always lead to a working partnership, and staff described this as time-consuming and, at times, disheartening.

> *"You can feel like a bit of a cold caller or a salesman. It can be very easy to become jaded or disheartened. The ability of people to look at emails and just ignore them, that's what makes it hardest."*
> *(Local Citizens Advice)*

Staff turnover within partner organisations could stall relationships that had looked secure. In one case, a key statutory service declined to engage, despite being a major source of referrals.

> *"The key one that we wanted to bring in refused to engage with us (...) So it's been incredibly frustrating."*
> *(Local food bank)*

> *"There are lots and lots of staff changes, people's roles change, their remits change, and they become quite, oh, that's not my department, that's someone else's department, but I'm not going to forward your email on."*
> *(Local Citizens Advice)*

Staff at local and national level described siloed working within individual partner organisations as a further barrier, even where the motivation to collaborate existed.

> *"There often are organisational silos just in individual organisations, aren't there? It's difficult when people are just trying to manage their own kind of part of a silo."*
> *(National team)*

> *"We've all got our different aims and values and our missions, and sometimes they don't always align, which sometimes puts barriers in place."*
> *(Local Citizens Advice)*

Trust also mattered to people using services. One food bank noted that some people avoided venues because of who they associated them with.

> *"Sometimes people think the food bank's, you know, a council thing, and it's like, oh, I can't be dealing with a council."*
> *(Local food bank)*

As the pilot became more established, some sites responded by creating ongoing structures for partnership, rather than relying on one-off contact. In one case, a local advice network was reintroduced because of the project, and will continue beyond it.

> *"We reintroduced it [the Local Advice Network] because of the project, and we are continuing with it."*
> *(Local Citizens Advice)*

As interest from partners grew, capacity to sustain it did not always keep pace. In some cases, the work rested on a single person.

> *"It's literally just me on this project right now. We need more of us, to be honest. More frontline staff means more co-working with other organisations."*
> *(Local Citizens Advice)*

> *"The start is slow because of new relationships, new referral pathways. It just takes time to crank the handle."*
> *(Local Citizens Advice)*

Learnings and what this may mean for future work

- **Dedicated time for relationship building.** The broadest partnership gains came where someone had protected time to build relationships. This suggests relationship building works best when it is resourced as a distinct part of delivery.
- **Persistence with statutory partners.** Persistence over months was often what led to engagement. Moving forwards, this could mean recognising the timelines required to engage statutory partners.
- **Continuity in partnerships.** Momentum was sometimes linked to particular individuals, inside or outside the site. Looking ahead, building relationships with more than one contact in key partners could help momentum continue when people move on.
- **Depth as well as breadth.** More partners did not always mean a more joined-up system. Sites with wide networks could still be working with partners who were siloed internally. The depth of partnerships and their own internal cultures and structures may matter as much as their number.
- **Time to build relationships before delivery.** Sites with fewer existing connections were building relationships while delivering. This could mean allowing time for relationship building before delivery begins, and continuing to resource it as interest grows.

Lived experience and representation

Systems change aims to shift who shapes services, not only how services are delivered. This domain looks at how far people with direct experience of destitution were engaged as active contributors, shaping how services work and speaking directly to decision makers and the public, rather than only as recipients, and how this information fed into service design and adaptation.

Where sites started

For most sites, structured lived experience work was less familiar to their way of working. Some had gathered feedback from people using the food banks before, but few had ongoing mechanisms for people with lived experience to shape decisions. Staff experience of this kind of work also varied.

> *"That lived experience stuff is something really valuable that we've been able to do as an organisation through this pilot, because it's not something that we've done before."*
> *(Local food bank)*

Activities and adaptations

Sites took different approaches, including workshops, surveys, interviews, consultation groups, filmed stories and ongoing panels. Some planned to use lived experience early to shape their pilot's design. In some cases, staffing delays meant this work began later than intended.

> *"Doing surveys with service users and understanding that journey gave us an awful lot of narrative that we would never have had."*
> *(Local food bank)*

Once delivery was underway, conversations with people with lived experience surfaced topics staff had not previously identified, and these were used to adjust training content.

> *"In my experience I hadn't found social isolation as an important topic, but that's something that really came up for people with health conditions... they're another resource to adjust the training, a helpful resource."*
> *(Local Citizens Advice)*

In some cases, what staff heard led directly to small, low-cost changes to services. Direct conversations also surfaced specific gaps in understanding.

> *"Overwhelmingly they were like, well, we don't know, because if we'd have thought we might have been able to get help somewhere, then we might have gone somewhere."*
> *(Local Citizens Advice)*

As the pilot became more established, some sites began to build lived experience work into ongoing structures, such as a regular panel. Staff described why participation itself was significant for the people involved. In one case, panel members went on to share their own experiences directly with decision makers and the public, rather than staff passing on their stories for them.

> *"We hosted a recent All-Party Parliamentary Group Launch, our clients came along and were able to speak to other agencies about their experience."*
> *(Local Citizens Advice)*

> *"A lot of our clients are very scarred by agencies and by organisations, so to give information publicly (...) it's quite a big achievement for them."*
> *(Local food bank)*

National leads described this as the hardest domain to deliver well, and linked this to how the pilot was set up rather than to local effort.

> *"The lived experience bit was quite hard to do well. There wasn't enough time to do the lived experience well, in terms of how it actually panned out."*
> *(National team)*

Staff capacity shaped how far this work could go. In some sites, lived experience work sat with a dedicated role, while in others it fell to staff already doing another job. Like other parts of the pilot, it was also affected by staff turnover, with some lived experience activity starting later than planned when roles changed or took time to fill.

> *"I think it is capacity, and it's hard to be able to do some of this stuff and this analysis when it's only one adviser, one community trainer, you know, it's such a smaller pool [of staff]."*
> *(Local Citizens Advice)*

Client transience made sustained engagement difficult, even where initial participation was strong.

Where useful insights did emerge late in the pilot, there was not always time to act on them. In one case, staff identified digital exclusion in a local community but could not build a response within the 12-month delivery period.

> *"If I'd had five years, we probably could have got much more innovative, but we didn't have time. It does take time, and it takes time to make relationships."*
> *(Local Citizens Advice)*

More broadly, there was a gap between collecting lived experience insight and using it and applying it to adapt service design. Engagement was not always planned with a clear purpose, and some material went unanalysed. Some support and advice for this work was available to sites, and building on it is an opportunity for future programmes.

> *"I have a notebook, it goes everywhere with me. I haven't actually got around to typing up my notes yet, so they are all still hard copies."*
> *(Local Citizens Advice)*

Learnings and what this may mean for future work

- **Dedicated capacity for ongoing engagement.** Ongoing panels were possible where a named member of staff had protected time to run them. Moving forwards, this could mean resourcing lived experience work as its own strand, rather than adding it to existing roles.
- **Turning insight into change.** Some of the clearest examples of influence were small, low-cost service changes made in response to what staff heard. A clear route from insight to decision may matter as much as the method of engagement.
- **Planning how insight will be used.** Lived experience work may be most useful at two points, early to inform design and later to inform evaluation. There is an opportunity to plan from the start how insight will be collected, analysed and used to inform and adapt services.
- **Planning for changing circumstances.** Many participants were managing unstable circumstances. Contact methods and session plans that reflect this could help sustain engagement.
- **Building trust.** Staff described trust building as central to participation. Ensuring there is time to build trust in project design could help other sites replicate what worked.
- **Training and support.** Sites were keen to do this work well, and coaching was available. There is an opportunity for training and guidance on delivering lived experience work well and in a targeted, high quality way, offered in ways that fit sites' capacity.

Data, evidence and learning

Locally led work depends on understanding local need, and on noticing what is and is not working. This domain looks at how sites used data and evidence to inform their approach, adapt what they were doing, and build a picture of need in their area. It also underpins the ability to begin to understand where progress is made and how impact may be measured in the long term.

Where sites started

Both local Citizens Advice units and food banks generally had existing data to draw on, such as Casebook records and food bank referral data. How developed and usable these systems were varied. Some sites had strong internal data systems and existing research capacity. Others relied more on staff knowledge. More formalised data sharing between organisations was limited across most sites at the start.

Activities and adaptations

Early in the pilot, sites used existing data to decide where and how to work, with support from national teams.

> *"We looked at data from the food bank, and we can pull up reports and see where the deprived pockets are, so we use that. We also surveyed the areas as well, so we didn't go there unless the community needed us."*
> *(Local Citizens Advice)*

Where internal systems were strong, staff described putting new data to work quickly, in some cases feeding into policy work.

> *"Casebook [information] is already powerful and useful. I think we've said a lot through our policy work and also through the statistics that we've provided by Casebook."*
> *(Local Citizens Advice)*

National teams also helped fill local gaps, for example supporting sites to pull together data it could not easily extract itself.

Once delivery was underway, cross-organisational data sharing proved difficult across sites. National teams described this as driven by mutual caution, rather than any one site's failure.

> *"Data sharing is probably something that they've all struggled with. I think it's something that people are just very afraid about, and also their partners are equally afraid."*
> *(National team)*

Some of the challenges were practical. Organisations held data on different systems, recorded different types of information, and stored it in different ways, for example by ward rather than by postcode. Where data was shared, bringing it together created further work.

> *"It was a lot of work. The data on the system isn't by postcode, it's by ward of the city. So we just had to do a little fiddling around with formulas to extract some of the data."*
> *(Local food bank)*

> *"None of us are on the same platform, we don't share systems. There is resistance to use different kinds of platforms or whatnot."*
> *(Local Citizens Advice)*

In response, some sites found informal ways to share insight within data protection rules, by discussing trends rather than individual cases.

> *"Without breaking any GDPR, we discuss any trends that we're seeing at either end. This is all fed back to our research and campaigns team, and now we're taking on board the data that we're getting*

from these meetings and really focusing on that."
(Local Citizens Advice)

"We call it our spidey senses, because sometimes things come up. It might be cold weather, it might be an issue with a rogue landlord, stuff that's going on, because it pops up in the reasons why people are coming to us."
(Local Citizens Advice)

Separately, internal reporting was inconsistent in places, which national teams linked to a wider data culture within the advice network.

Some sites were not fully clear on the purpose of the data they were asked to collect. Some standard questions were felt to be unsuitable for people in crisis. In one case, a team declined to use a set of wellbeing questions for this reason, and recorded household composition on a separate spreadsheet because Casebook had no field for it.

"I think one of the driving forces behind it was having less people come to a food bank. So it's difficult, how you would measure something that doesn't happen."
(Local food bank)

"I've got someone with a screaming baby who's in distress, and you're asking me to ask them when they last felt useful? We just refused to do it, and we haven't done it, because it wasn't appropriate."
(Local Citizens Advice)

New reporting requirements, and a data sharing agreement, were introduced as the pilot developed. Some sites felt there was limited time left to put these into practice, and in one case the agreement was set aside. Setting up data collection tools also took longer than planned in some cases. This suggests that agreeing data requirements and tools early, before delivery begins, is an opportunity for future programmes, giving sites more time to collect and use data over the life of the pilot.

Learnings and what this may mean for future work

- **Building on existing systems.** Sites with established data systems and research capacity used data early to focus support. Sites with less developed systems may benefit from early data support.
- **Agreeing data requirements early.** Requirements introduced partway through were harder to act on. Agreeing a shared minimum data set before delivery, and testing client-facing questions with frontline staff, could make collection easier to act on.
- **Sharing data across organisations.** Some sites already shared trends with partners through regular meetings. There is an opportunity to support sites to develop more formal data sharing arrangements with key partners from the outset.
- **Strengthening data culture.** Inconsistent internal reporting is a different challenge from sharing data between organisations. Looking ahead, this could mean supporting consistent internal recording alongside work to share data between organisations, as each may need a different approach.
- **Resourcing data collection.** Data collection often sat alongside frontline advice work, competing for staff time. Moving forwards, this could mean treating data collection as a distinct, costed part of delivery, with tools and infrastructure in place early.
- **Balancing local design with shared measures.** Local design supported relevance, and a coordinated data approach could support comparison across sites. A shared approach agreed before delivery could help sites evidence the impact of their delivery.

Advocacy and influence

Local services see the effects of policy, funding and practice decisions first hand. This domain covers how sites used what they learned locally, through data, client stories and direct experience, to influence policy, funding and practice beyond their own service. It is one of the key ways local learning can change the wider system.

Where sites started

Capacity for advocacy varied widely. Some sites had research and campaigns staff and existing relationships with local decision makers. For others, advocacy was occasional and not resourced, and staff were less confident it was something they could take on within the pilot.

> *"Citizens Advice is really good at researching campaigns, but we usually don't have any resource to do it, so it's always the poor cousin."*
> *(Local Citizens Advice)*

Activities and adaptations

Sites were broadly optimistic about this area, though how far they progressed varied. Some engaged directly with local councils and local authority colleagues. Others felt less confident they had made progress here.

In one case, a key local authority service declined to engage with the pilot. The site responded by using pilot research capacity to write a briefing paper on the local system, submitted as a new local crisis fund was being designed. Staff described this as leading to engagement with senior officers and elected members, and contributing to changes to the service.

> *"When [the] Crisis and Resilience Fund[1] came along, I did a briefing paper on what was wrong with the local system and what needed to change, and that's led to a lot of influence and advocacy directly with senior officers in that area and with some of the cabinet members."*
> *(Local food bank)*

The same evidence base was also described as helping to get early intervention commitments into a local financial inclusion strategy.

Where sites had dedicated research and campaigns capacity, advocacy reached beyond the local area, including regional media and Parliament. In one case, a piece of research led to engagement from elected members who had not previously engaged with the service.

> *"We did a really, really impactful child poverty report (...) It's gone to all the MPs. Our local MP was certainly waving the report around in the House of Commons, which is great. That's what we want."*
> *(Local Citizens Advice)*

> *"That's the first time we've had elected members (...) wanting to engage with our service, because we had something very specific about child poverty to say."*
> *(Local Citizens Advice)*

Local advice networks also gave some sites a channel to anticipate national policy changes before they reached clients.

> *"I've got my example of the LAN [Local Advice Network], where we've been able to get ahead of benefit reforms, increases in oil, increases in energy prices, which will hopefully get people support*

[1] The Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) is a UK government programme that was introduced on 1 April 2026 to provide grant funding to local authorities in England to provide preventative support to communities and assist people when faced with financial crisis. It was introduced as a three-year settlement to replace the previous Household Support Fund. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/crisis-and-resilience-fund-guidance-for-local-authorities-in-england-1-april-2026-to-31-march-2029

before the change happens, so they're less likely to fall into destitution."
(Local Citizens Advice)

For some sites, advocacy was still ahead of them at the end of the pilot, building on lived experience work completed late in the year.

"I guess the advocacy and influence, it's not one that we've necessarily done yet, but it's what we will be doing, starting from next week, with that final lived experience session, and actually taking those issues and putting them at the forefront and doing that lobbying."
(Local Citizens Advice)

Even where advocacy was strong, staff described it as fragile once funding ended.

"We're already mapping where else that might sit in other people's roles, finding a dedicated research role to go to the depths of what we've had. That's pretty much all our eggs in one basket, unless we can find some other funders."
(Local Citizens Advice)

Staff and national teams described attribution as difficult. The pilot was rarely the only work underway, and changes in local attitudes or policy take time to show.

"This is not a project that's happening in isolation within our organisation. This is working with several other projects within our organisation."
(Local Citizens Advice)

"Referrals went down. I think it's far too early to say what happened, if it was due to our pilot. To embed something well, you're talking at least two years."
(Local food bank)

"We deliberately wanted to take a systems-change approach, but I think we were very ambitious with what we could achieve within a 12-month delivery window. We really needed three years for this kind of project."
(National team)

Where advocacy depended on a relationship with a particular senior figure outside the site, staff described that influence as at risk if the person moved on.

Learnings and what this may mean for future work

- **Research and campaigns capacity.** The clearest examples of advocacy came where someone could turn frontline data into a structured case. Moving forwards, this could mean supporting this capacity where sites do not already have it, which could include national campaigns teams offering a supported route for sites building this capacity.
- **Flexibility to find another route.** In one case, a refusal to engage prompted influencing work through another channel. This suggests flexibility in how advocacy is pursued can open new routes to influence.
- **Time for evidence and relationships to build.** Staff described advocacy as building on evidence and relationships developed over time. Timeframes and expectations for advocacy may need to reflect this.
- **Clear national and local roles.** National teams may be well placed to open pathways and provide a wider narrative, while sites bring local insight. Agreeing this division early could reduce reliance on individual champions.

Leadership and shared vision

Systems change depends on a shared sense of purpose that holds across organisations and over time. This domain looks at how well organisations, at every level, championed and acted on a shared vision for upstream prevention work. It covers how clearly the vision was understood, how far it reached frontline staff, and whether leadership was shared widely or rested with a few people.

Where sites started

Most sites brought strong enthusiasm for the programme's aims, and both national organisations were committed to ambitious, upstream work. Some sites had a long-standing shared vision between the local Citizens Advice and the food bank, with senior management and trustees in both organisations committed to it. Others had less experience leading cross-organisational work, fewer existing relationships, and a less clear sense of how the pilot fitted their wider strategy.

Activities and adaptations

Where partnerships were already strong, the pilot was able to build on an existing shared vision and strengthen it further. Staff described the pilot as turning what had been discussed informally into something practical and funded.

> *"I think collectively, us and the food bank, what this project has really helped us solidify is what can we do to make sure people aren't needing our services (...) I think this project has helped do is actually turn what is just chat and saying an idea, into something practical."*
> *(Local Citizens Advice)*

Individual leaders played a significant role in keeping the work visible, particularly alongside high day-to-day advice demand.

> *"R&C [Research and campaigns] tends to be the poor cousin, and a lot of officers, because people are very busy doing advice, and strategically I keep a huge focus on R&C and I try to keep it at the forefront of advisers' minds because I think it's really important."*
> *(Local Citizens Advice)*

As the pilot progressed, some sites recognised a gap in shared vision at a wider, area level, and used the pilot as a prompt to start building one.

> *"If we've got a steering group and we're pushing forward agendas of what we want to achieve, do we have a shared alignment? Do we have a shared vision? (...) that's the reason why we started the conversation about an anti-poverty strategy."*
> *(Local Citizens Advice)*

Progress often depended on a small number of committed individuals, with more experience in leadership roles. Staff described these individuals as holding the complexity of the work and driving momentum. This also made progress fragile. In some cases, senior sponsors left early in the pilot, at site and national level.

> *"They had a very driven [senior team member] who left pretty much as soon as the project started."*
> *(Local food bank)*

Partway through the pilot, staff also described a gap between senior vision and frontline work. Frontline staff did not always connect their day-to-day tasks to the wider upstream ambition.

> *"How do we translate that spirit, which I believe is there? But the reality of day-to-day work sometimes scuppers that."*
> *(National team)*

Learnings and what this may mean for future work

- **Giving existing vision a practical outlet.** Where a shared vision already existed, the pilot helped turn it into activity. Where a shared vision is not yet in place, supporting sites to build one before delivery may help.
- **Sharing leadership.** Committed individuals drove much of the progress. Investing in shared leadership, such as communities of practice across sites and national teams, could make progress less dependent on individuals.
- **Embedding the vision across teams.** In some cases, the vision did not reach all staff members. There is an opportunity to connect the wider ambition to day-to-day frontline work, so all staff can see their part in it.
- **Planning for continuity.** Where key people moved on, progress was described as being at risk. Looking ahead, this could mean treating succession and continuity as a core part of pilot design.
- **Budgeting senior time.** Some sites had not anticipated how much senior time the programme would involve. Making this visible and costed at the design stage could help organisations plan for it.

Supporting infrastructure and resources

Sustained upstream work depends on stable capacity. This domain looks at how well frontline delivery was resourced, and how flexibly that support could adapt to local need. It covers whether services relied on short-term funding, whether staff could be retained and developed, and whether funding and commissioning structures supported preventative work or worked against it.

Where sites started

All sites worked within an environment of stretched frontline capacity and short-term funding, with challenges with how funding levels had changed over time. Some had established staff with local relationships who could move into pilot roles. Others needed to recruit, which took time.

Activities and adaptations

Early in the pilot, funding allowed several sites to bring in dedicated staff, rather than stretching existing advisers. Where roles were filled by existing staff, sites described them being able to draw on existing skills and relationships, and deliver aspects of the pilot more quickly. Where recruitment was delayed, some sites were several months into delivery before a key role was filled.

> *"The two people that are project-specific have been hired which is great. And one of them was already with Citizens Advice (...) he was already a kind of a close contact with the food bank. So that's been working really well."*
> *(Local Citizens Advice)*

Some sites used the pilot to explore more efficient use of existing resource, for example by moving some delivery online or concentrating adviser time on higher return activity.

> *"It's not a good use of our resource to trundle an adviser on a bus out to the middle of a tiny village, on the off-chance someone might want some advice on a rainy Tuesday. It's not a good deployment of resources."*
> *(Local Citizens Advice)*

As the pilot became more established, some sites began planning for what would happen after funding. In one case, experienced advisers were redeployed within the organisation to avoid losing their skills. Another site was exploring a more sustainable funding model of its own, including charging for some services.

> *"We can't rely on bits of funding, short-term funding. We have to look at becoming more sustainable."*
> *(Local Citizens Advice)*

The short-term nature of the funding was a source of frustration for some sites. Some had expected a successful pilot to lead to further funding, and felt the alternative undermined the trust they had been asked to build with communities.

> *"If we want communities to engage with us, they've got to trust us (...) So my intense frustration is that if that was never going to be the case, why are we here? What are we doing this for?"*
> *(Local Citizens Advice)*

Several sites described work gathering pace only as the funding period came to an end.

> *"The frustration will be that we'll probably just really get into our stride in March [2026], and that's the really sad thing. We'll probably really just get going with it all, and it'll be time to stop."*
> *(Local Citizens Advice)*

Staffing and volunteering pipelines were under separate pressure. Changes such as tighter academic timetables and limits on remote onboarding were described as sharply reducing how many interested volunteers went on to volunteer.

Sites valued the programme's guidance and design flexibility, but were not always able to use it fully without foundational capacity already in place. Flexibility to design locally was constrained in practice by a lack of time and resource for design work separate from delivery.

Learnings and what this may mean for future work

- **Longer-term funding.** Staff linked longer-term funding to their ability to build trust with communities. This points to the opportunity for longer-term funding, and for clarity from the outset about what happens after a pilot.
- **Investing in foundational capacity.** Sites valued guidance and flexibility, and were best able to use them where capacity was already in place. Investing in enabling capacity alongside tools and guidance may help sites make full use of both.
- **Commissioning that supports prevention.** Where local funding rewards output volume, preventative work can be harder to prioritise. There is an opportunity for commissioning that recognises preventative, community-based delivery.
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- **Recruiting with local relationships.** Roles filled by people with existing local relationships settled in quickly. Drawing on local relationships when recruiting could help new roles get started.
- **Retaining skills.** Redeploying experienced staff helped keep capability after funding ended. Planning for retention early may help keep skills within organisations.

National level learnings

This chapter covers how the programme was designed, mobilised and supported by the Trussell and Citizens Advice national teams, and what national team members reflected on. Alongside the domain-level learnings, common themes emerge across interviews with national team members that point to how a programme like this could be designed, mobilised and delivered in future.

Where the programme started

The programme set out to test a new way of working for both national organisations. At baseline, sites described national communication as inconsistent, with many points of contact. Some sites felt they were following instructions, rather than working within a partnership, and data requests felt burdensome and unclear in purpose. After baseline, national teams reflected that they should have given more support during mobilisation. In response, Trussell and Citizens Advice developed the Pathways to Systems Change Framework, which breaks up systems change into seven domains where the sites can reflect and map themselves on. This was applied and tested by Revealing Reality during midline and endline interviews. Quarterly reviews and narrative reports were also introduced, which gave sites regular reflection points to evaluate what was working, and what was not.

> *I think it was always going to be a little bit of an uncertain kind of journey because we were doing something quite different."*
> *(National team)*

The programme purposefully offered a more open approach to funding. Sites were used to output-based funding tied to specific targets. This programme provided funding as a flexible pot, without fixed targets, giving space for learning, adaptation and flexibility.

> *"We weren't being really stringent around what the roles would be or KPIs around volumes. We [gave the funding and said] go and design some interventions that are going to help you do these things."*
> *(National team)*

The thinking behind the programme began well before the pilots went live. But once the programme was confirmed, mobilisation happened quickly.

> *"The lead-in time was enormous, but on the other hand it wasn't (...) the thinking's happened, [and] started to happen a long, long time before the pilots went live. But then there's quite a high degree of uncertainty. Is it going to happen? And then when it's finally greenlit, it was actually, you are doing it in quite a compressed fashion."*
> *(National team)*

Building on this approach for future programmes

Setting a shared vision

Early in the programme, national team members described some uncertainty about its central ideas. This included how far upstream the programme aimed to work, and what systems change meant, including how central it was relative to the programme's other goals.

> *"There was a bit of a funny phase (...) about thinking about the original aims and what stages of destitution or how far upstream."*
> *(National team)*

> *"It feels like we've never, it's never been totally clear to everybody."*
> *(National team)*

National teams linked this partly to the newness of the approach, and partly to changes of personnel in the national teams during the early phases. National teams also reflected that the language of systems change did not land well with sites that had not done this kind of work before or they were less familiar with a systems-change approach.

> *"The jargon we were using around systems change, for example, wasn't helpful. They hadn't done a lot of systems-change work previously, so we were talking about theories and terms that just weren't relatable."*
> *(National team)*

> *"I think [the] first thing is people actually understanding what systems change is. That's probably been a bit of learning for us, is actually it's probably quite jargonistic and people really understanding what that means at a local level."*
> *(National team)*

In response, the evaluation approach was adapted after the baseline stage, and the Pathways to Systems-Change Framework was developed to give sites and national teams a shared language for progress. Researchers also used worked examples to make the framework's concepts more concrete in interviews. Shared understanding developed as the programme progressed, supported by this common language.

Supporting design and delivery

During the design period, national teams provided sites with access to data, guidance on using it, and workshops to bring local partners together. Once delivery began, quarterly review meetings and narrative reports gave sites a regular point to reflect on what was and was not working. National researchers also helped individual sites with data where needed, and coaching support was available for lived experience work.

> *"I think the fact that we had quarterly reviews with them, so met with them every quarter, asked them to provide a narrative report for that every quarter. I think that helped as a reflection point to help them to reflect on what is working and what isn't working."*
> *(National team)*

What happened next depended heavily on each site's position at the start. Sites that had already built local relationships and mapped stakeholders could begin delivering almost immediately. Others were building relationships and designing their intervention while also delivering it. Where staffing was stable, progress was described as faster. Where recruitment was delayed, some sites were months into delivery before key roles were filled.

> *"One site, who had two staff members who were dedicated to it, they really saw a lot of progress because they had the same person who was already up to speed, knew what they needed to do, and they saw a lot of progress in training and local relationships because there was no change in staff."*
> *(National team)*

> *"Where we've also seen some slow progress as well is where we've had staffing issues, so not being able to recruit to the role on time."*
> *(National team)*

Some sites described national reporting and data requirements as a continuing burden that took time away from delivery. Requirements were introduced after delivery had begun, including:

- Outcome and data field requests reaching some sites in the third quarter
- Further client-level data and follow up questions added mid-pilot
- Data sharing agreements introduced mid-delivery

National partners acknowledged that requirements should have been agreed, simplified and clearly set out from the start.

Timing, wind down and sustainability

As the pilot drew to a close, national teams and sites both described momentum building just as funding ended.

> *"The timelines need to change. That 12 months wasn't really sufficient for what we were hoping for in this project (...) a lot of pilots were feeling, oh, I've just, we're just taking off and now it's time to end."*
> *(National team)*

> *"Having enough time in the mobilisation phase to be able to bring the right partners around the table, to get shared visions, to understand what data you want to collect and how you share it and how you use it, properly engaging communities and experts by experience."*
> *(National team)*

National teams observed that sites which planned from the outset for what should continue appeared to build something more durable. In one case, training resources were embedded in a partner's own systems, so they no longer depended on the pilot.

> *"In one site, they've really thought from the outset, how do they embed the training that they've developed into a system that will outlast the project. So while they've developed it, it's technically owned by the local council now."*
> *(National team)*

Relationship-based work appeared more fragile, particularly where it rested on a funded role or a single leader.

> *"They're approaching supporting people in the food bank differently, which they will continue to do (...) But that was a funded role, so that role will go because the project has ended."*
> *(National team)*

> *"If you actually have a change of local leader, it can bring it all down"*
> *(National team)*

National team members gave an example where a change of senior leader at one site reduced momentum.

Learnings and what this may mean for future work

- **Concrete examples for less familiar concepts.** Understanding of ideas like systems change developed over the programme. Consistent definitions across partners, tangible examples, and clear boundaries of scope from the outset could support this in future.
- **Supporting the move to open funding.** The open funding model gave space for learning and adaptation, and was a change from what sites were used to. Sites may benefit from support through this shift.
- **Time for design and mobilisation.** Where groundwork was in place before delivery, sites were able to make progress more quickly. Moving forwards, this could mean building collaborative design and mobilisation into the programme timeline.
- **Planning for wind down.** Momentum often built as funding was ending. Dedicated time at the end of a pilot could help sites plan what continues and carry learning forward.
- **Consistent communication with regular reflection points.** Sites reflected early in the pilot that one point of contact in the national teams would have been easier to manage. As the programme delivery window went on, the quarterly reviews helped sites reflect and adjust. This suggests having one clear point of contact from the outset, with regular reflection built into delivery.
- **Agreeing requirements early.** Requirements introduced partway through were harder for sites to act on. Looking ahead, agreeing reporting and data requirements before delivery begins could give sites more time to put them into practice.
- **Planning for sustainability.** Where sites planned from the outset for what should continue, the result appeared more durable. Planning for continuity of both systems and relationships from the start could help work last beyond a pilot.

Conclusion

Learnings and implications for future systems-change programmes

This chapter draws together the learning from the domain chapters and the national level chapter. It is structured around four key opportunities for future systems change programmes that emerged from the evaluation: a clear, shared understanding of goals and objectives; using each site's starting point to shape support and inclusion; formalised commitment between sites and national teams; and quality standards and planning for sustainability. It then sets out what the pilot suggests about how local systems change begins, and reflects on the framework.

Progress was made within the 12-month delivery period, across sites and national teams and, as may be expected, varied between sites, between domains and over time. Some sites began delivery quickly and covered all planned activity. Others took longer to get going and did not complete all activities.

Opportunity 1: A clear, shared understanding of goals and objectives

Early in the pilot, national teams and sites described some uncertainty about how far upstream the programme aimed to work, and what systems change meant in practice. Systems change was a newer concept for some sites, and its language did not always feel relatable at first. Some staff found it difficult to start without clearly defined outcomes. In some sites, parts of the pilot reflected work that was already being delivered, rather than new approaches. This understanding developed as the pilot progressed, supported by the shared language the framework provided.

For future programmes, this points to the value of a clear, shared understanding of goals and objectives from the outset. This includes consistent definitions across partners, concrete examples of what systems-change work looks like in practice, and clear boundaries on what falls within scope.

Opportunity 2: Using each site's starting point to shape support

Sites began the pilot from different starting points. Some had experience of delivering similar programmes or evaluations. Others had less, which made progress more challenging. Where sites had existing relationships, data systems or local networks, staff described being able to move more quickly, across most domains: in reaching people earlier, in bringing in partners, in using data and, in some cases, in advocacy. Where these were not yet in place, sites used the pilot to build them, which took up more of the 12-month delivery period.

At midline, five conditions distinguished faster-moving sites: a strong existing relationship between Citizens Advice and the food bank; existing infrastructure to build on; experienced, locally connected staff from the start; use of local data to target activity; and a clear shared understanding of purpose between the two leads. At endline, existing relationships and infrastructure to build on continued to distinguish faster-moving sites.

For future programmes, this points to the value of assessing each site's starting point before delivery, both within its own partnership and in its connections with the wider local system. This assessment could shape the support each site receives, with more weighted toward the early stages where foundations are still being built. It could also inform which sites are taken forward.

Opportunity 3: Formalised commitment between sites and national teams

The programme purposefully offered a more open approach to funding, without fixed targets, providing space for learning, adaptation and flexibility. This was a change from the output-based funding sites were used to.

This flexibility allowed sites to adapt as they learned. However, roles and expectations were not always set out at the start, and national teams discussed linking funding payments to timely data submission. Some sites may have benefited from greater accountability.

For future programmes, this points to the value of a formalised commitment between sites and national teams, setting out what sites will deliver, who is responsible, and how progress will be tracked. This need not mean fixed output targets. It can sit alongside room to adapt, for example through reflection points agreed at the start.

Opportunity 4: Quality standards and planning for sustainability

Sites approached delivery positively, though some activities were new to them, such as lived experience research and collecting data to evidence delivery and future impact. Some sites struggled to collect and report high quality data, and in some cases data collection started late. Engagement with people with lived experience varied in quality. There was limited evidence that it changed service delivery, and some findings confirmed what sites already knew, such as social isolation. Relationship building, lived experience, data collection, and research and campaigns were each stronger where someone had protected time for them.

For future programmes, this points to the value of clear quality standards for activities such as data collection and lived experience research, agreed before delivery, and of resourcing these activities.

Continuity beyond individuals

Across several domains, particularly leadership, partnerships and advocacy, committed individuals played a central role in driving progress, through the relationships they held and their knowledge of how things work locally. This was seen within sites, within national teams and within partner organisations. Where those people moved on, staff described progress as being at risk.

For future work, this highlights the importance of planning for continuity from the outset, and sharing knowledge and relationships across teams, so progress can last beyond any one person.

Time and planning for winding down activities

Sites and national teams described momentum building over the course of the pilot, with several sites finding their stride as funding was ending. Sites that had time to build relationships before delivery began described a different experience from those doing this alongside delivery. Change in some domains, particularly advocacy and leadership, tends to build over a longer period. Some ways of working slowed progress, as decisions took time. In some cases, approaches developed through the pilot depended on funded roles that ended with the programme.

For future work, this highlights the importance of dedicated time for design, mobilisation and wind down alongside delivery, and of timeframes that match the pace of change being sought. It also points to the value of planning early for how a pilot will close, and which activities, relationships and resources could be sustained once funding ends.

What this suggests about how local systems change begins

A single year cannot show how local systems change fully unfolds. But the pilot points to some patterns that future work could test:

- Early progress often came from extending existing relationships, data and models. Future work could explore what minimum foundation a pilot needs.
- Future work could explore what turns relationships held by individuals into lasting structures, such as forums, agreements and partner-owned training.
- Sites changed targeting and channels, and found other routes when partners did not engage or infrastructure was delayed. Future work could explore whether the ability to notice and change course is a core capability, and how it sits alongside clearer accountability.
- Future work could identify intermediate signs that a local system is shifting before need falls.
- Local work sits within wider funding, commissioning and policy structures. There is an opportunity for longer-term funding, and commissioning that enables preventative, community-based delivery, to support lasting change.

Reflections on the Pathways to Systems-Change Framework

The framework offered a detailed way to understand progress and learning across different areas of systems-change work. It allowed progress to be considered capability by capability, rather than as a single judgement. Sites making progress in some areas were often at an earlier stage in others, which a single rating would have missed. Working domain by domain also prompted balanced reflection, surfacing areas that might otherwise have gone unmentioned.

Some domains are more tangible and familiar than others. Domains closer to everyday practical tasks were easier for staff to recognise and describe in detail. Domains lent themselves to reflection in different ways:

- **Upstream prevention and partnerships** generated concrete, visible activity, such as training delivered and partners engaged, which mapped closely onto what sites already tracked.
- **Lived experience and data** drew out a wide range of activity. The framework helped sites reflect on how this activity could feed into decisions.
- **Advocacy and leadership** describe change that tends to be slow and cumulative. What the evaluation captured here are early signals of change, which longer-term use of the framework could build on.

The framework's stage descriptions largely describe organisational capability. Across several domains, the evaluation observed capability often held by particular people. It may be that the move from capability held by individuals to capability shared across a team is one of the main differences between earlier and later stages. This is a hypothesis the evidence points toward, and could be reflected in future versions of the framework.

Opportunities for future use of the framework

- **Using the framework over a longer period.** There is an opportunity to use the framework with sites over several years, to build understanding of what the more advanced stages of each domain look like in practice.
- **Building evidence of impact.** There is an opportunity to agree shared measures and data sharing arrangements before delivery, so future pilots can evidence the impact of their work.
- **Learning at a larger scale.** The pilot offers five examples of what locally relevant, systems-change ways of working can look like in local advice, food bank and community support. There is an

opportunity to explore how this approach could work across more sites, drawing on the learnings in this report.

Concluding reflections

Tackling Destitution Together supported five local partnerships, and two national organisations, to design and deliver new ways of working within a 12-month delivery period. Sites built on what they already had, adapted as they learned, and in several cases created training, structures and relationships expected to continue beyond the funding. Progress was uneven, and not all planned activity was completed.

The evaluation points to four key opportunities for future programmes: a clear, shared understanding of goals and objectives; using each site's starting point to shape support and inclusion; formalised commitment between sites and national teams; and quality standards and planning for sustainability.

Annex 1: Pathways to Systems-Change Framework

The Pathways to Systems-Change Framework was developed by Trussell and Citizens Advice after the baseline stage, when it became clear that a before-and-after design would miss how differently, and how unevenly, sites were progressing. It drew on three sources: the baseline findings; existing approaches to place-based systems change, in particular Renaisi's framework for funding place-based systems change; and the national teams' experience of what progress looks like in local advice and food bank partnerships.

An early draft set out six areas of practice. This was refined into seven domains, each described across four-stages (Foundational, Developing, Embedding and Transformative), with example activities and signs of progress written in plain English so that sites could recognise their own work in them. Revealing Reality then applied and tested the framework independently at midline and endline, using it to structure interviews and to moderate judgements about progress. The framework is a working tool. It will continue to be refined as part of the Tackling Destitution Together toolkit, drawing on what this evaluation found about how it works in practice.

Domain	Foundational	Developing	Embedding	Transformative
Upstream Prevention of Destitution How local services identify, track, design and act on the root causes of destitution together.	• Focus is mainly on crisis response. • Early warning signs are recognised but not systematically tracked or acted upon. • Prevention is ad hoc and relies on individual champions.	• Early warning mechanisms being tested. • Some joint prevention initiatives in place. • Shared understanding of drivers of destitution emerging across partners.	• Early warning systems routinely shape decisions. • Services coordinate to intervene earlier and reduce crisis demand. • Prevention is a core organising principle.	• Prevention embedded in strategy, commissioning, and governance. • Systems consistently act upstream, addressing structural causes through long-term coordinated action.
Partnerships & Collaboration How well partners work together, remove structural barriers, and align ways of working.	• Partnerships are informal and inconsistent. • Collaboration relies on individuals. • Structural barriers are recognised but not yet addressed.	• Clearer partnership infrastructures emerge in the form of regular touchpoints between roles. • Trust is improving. • Joint initiatives and collective problem-solving take place around specific projects.	• Collaboration is routine with formal agreements, shared governance, aligned or pooled resources, and coordinated planning. • Pathways are being redesigned collectively toward shared goals.	• Local actors operate as an integrated system with shared accountability. • Structural barriers are systematically removed. • Partnerships are sustained through aligned strategy, funding, and leadership.

Domain	Foundational	Developing	Embedding	Transformative
Advocacy & Influence How well local learning shapes commissioning, policy and funding of fair, resilient and supportive communities.	• Local insights rarely influence commissioners or funders. • Advocacy limited.	• Emerging advocacy and engagement with commissioners. • National partners begin to notice and share learning.	• Local evidence shapes commissioning and strategy. • National partners amplify learning and support change.	• Local and national systems adapt based on local evidence. • Policy environments recognise and address underlying causes and removal of barriers and systemic injustices within systems, and prioritisation of most in need.
Lived Experience & Representation How meaningfully people with lived experience shape decisions and hold influence of service models and changes that affect them.	• Engagement is occasional or tokenistic. • Engagement and knowledge of those who are most at risk and their needs are limited.	• Structured consultation begins. • Lived experience informs early design and increasingly shapes planning. • Some knowledge and engagement of those most at risk and more likely to be excluded from services.	• Co-production is integral to design, delivery and evaluation. • Lived experience routinely shapes priorities, system redesign, and prevention work. • Systematic inclusion of groups who tend to be more excluded from services.	• People with lived experience share decision-making power. • Considering those with lived experience embedded in governance, funding and accountability. • Communities recognised as equal partners in driving system change. • Community infrastructure is inclusive of groups with increased risk or need.
Data, Evidence & Learning How well areas use data and insight to guide action, test ideas, and drive improvement and change in services.	• Basic monitoring focused on outputs and delivery. • Data is siloed. • Limited understanding of what works. • Insight into issues and root causes is primarily experiential and observed.	• Insights from advice, charity food providers, and community groups inform planning. • Services begin testing and reflecting on new approaches based on data and evidence.	• Shared data systems create a fuller picture of need and root causes. • Patterns and trends at individual, sector, and community levels are systematically monitored and documented. • Evidence routinely shapes decisions, resource	• A mature learning culture drives continuous improvement. • Data influences commissioning, policy and long-term strategy. • Insight is used proactively to anticipate risk and prevent destitution.

Domain	Foundational	Developing	Embedding	Transformative
		• Early data-sharing agreements in place between key partners. • Data is used to shape decision making and to understand root causes of destitution.	allocation and adaptation across services. • Data is used to understand outcomes across services and inform advocacy.	• Patterns and trends at individual, sector, and community levels are shared and used to track outcomes and impact.
Shared Vision & Whole-Team Alignment How well leaders - and the wider workforce - champion and act on a shared vision for upstream, evidence-led, lived-experience-driven systems change.	• Shared vision emerging but not widely understood. • Commitment varies across organisations. • Staff awareness of programme goals is limited. • Leadership sits with a few individuals; most staff don't yet see their role in system change.	• Leaders articulate a clearer collective ambition and begin aligning governance. • Staff awareness growing; early champions emerging. • Engagement patchy. Occasional opportunities for staff involvement.	• Shared vision widely understood and referenced by leaders and staff. • Teams can describe their role in prevention and systems change. Collaborative behaviours embedded. • Staff regularly contribute to priorities and decisions. • Training and processes align with the vision.	• Leadership is fully distributed across organisations, communities and lived experience. • Staff at all levels empowered to act on the vision and challenge structural barriers. • The vision shapes culture, recruitment, investment and long-term strategy. • Teams take collective accountability for reducing destitution. • The workforce confidently champions prevention and lived experience.
Supporting Infrastructure & Resources How well frontline service delivery is supported and resourced according to local need and can be flexibly sustained and adapted within changing communities.	• Frontline services are stretched. • Funding short-term and project-based with a focus on delivery. • Collaboration infrastructure around shared resources is minimal. • Staff turnover is high.	• Investment in workforce skills and partnership capacity. • Shared resourcing is attempted and incentivised. • Frontline services are supported to retain staff through service changes.	• Frontline service capacity stabilises. • Shared resourcing becomes the norm. • Funding infrastructure supports community-based collaboration and joint delivery. • Funding and commissioning are driven by long-term and system-	• Community leadership structures are sustainable. • Frontline service capacity is modular and adaptive to need. • Funding infrastructures reinforce sustainable upstream, evidence-led,

Domain	Foundational	Developing	Embedding	Transformative
			wide impact in local communities.	lived-experience-driven change.

Annex 2: Evaluation methodology

This annex sets out how the evaluation was carried out and how the evidence was analysed. It includes the number of people interviewed at each stage. The endline topic guides are in Annex 3. The development of the Pathways to Systems-Change Framework is described in Annex 1.

This was a qualitative learning evaluation of the 12-month delivery period. It ran in three stages:

- baseline (July to October 2025);
- midline (January to February 2026);
- endline (May to June 2026 and August to September 2026, following sites' staggered end dates).

Researchers carried out remote, semi-structured interviews with staff from local Citizens Advice and food bank teams and the Trussell and Citizens Advice national teams. At midline, they also interviewed professionals from the wider local system. In total, 79 participants across the three stages took part (26 at baseline, 29 at midline and 24 at endline). Some interviews included more than one person.

Baseline interviews explored how pilots were set up. Midline and endline interviews were structured around the framework's seven domains. Topic guides were used flexibly, with more time on the domains most relevant to each person's role. Before each endline interview, researchers reviewed the site's quarterly report so they could ask about the activities it described. Casebook management information and national quarterly reporting gave further context.

Interview data was analysed thematically using an analysis grid. Evidence was organised by domain, and within each domain by where sites started, activities and adaptations, what helped or got in the way, and learnings. Researchers held analysis sessions to compare and moderate interpretations.

Sites' positions at the start of delivery were assessed retrospectively against the framework, using baseline data as explained in the methodology. The framework was a tool for structuring reflection and analysis, not a scoring system. Analysis looked for patterns across sites and national teams rather than rating individual sites. The illustrative maps in the case studies draw on interviews and quarterly reports and should be read site by site. The limitations of this evidence are set out in the Method chapter.

Participant breakdown across the three phases

Site	Organisation	Baseline	Midline	Endline
North Lancashire	Local Citizens Advice	2	3	3
	Food bank	1	1	1
	Local system organisation	0	2	0
	Total	*3*	*6*	*4*
Hammersmith and Fulham	Local Citizens Advice	2	3	2

	Food bank	1	2	1
	Total	*3*	*5*	*3*
Rotherham	Local Citizens Advice	2	3	2
	Food bank	1	2	1
	Total	*3*	*5*	*3*
Hull and East Riding	Local Citizens Advice	2	2	3
	Food bank	1	1	1
	Local system organisation	0	1	0
	Total	*3*	*4*	*4*
Ynys Môn (Anglesey)	Local Citizens Advice	1	3	2
	Food bank	2	2	1
	Total	*3*	*5*	*3*
National teams	Citizens Advice	6	3	5
	Trussell	5	1	2
	Total	*11*	*4*	*7*
All	**Total**	**26**	**29**	**24**

Annex 3: Endline topic guides

Endline research materials: Sites

About the endline phase and this document

The endline process evaluation builds on the baseline and midline fieldwork and marks the final phase of data collection. A progression framework has been developed in previous phases to describe how learning and change may develop across the programme.

Endline interviews will continue to focus on understanding the journey sites feel they have been on while taking part in the project – both specifically in the final few months as well as at a more zoomed-out reflective level. This includes capturing progress retrospectively from their perspective and exploring how learning and ways of working have developed over time.

Research materials for sites

Researchers will prepare in advance by drawing on Q4 reporting made available by Trussell on the shared Google drive. They will prepare the upfront table in advance to guide and inform the interview.

The topic guide will be used flexibly, with greater emphasis placed on the domains most relevant to each participant's role and experience.

Pre-interview quarterly report review - TEMPLATE

Site & interviewee	
Key activities *What they actually did over the pilot and in Q4 specifically*	
Key achievements / successes / enablers	
Key challenges	
Key reflections on learning *What they say they've learned or would do differently*	
Key reflections on data / evaluation	

What have they said about data quality / evaluation / data collection	
Key reflections on sustainability *What continues after the pilot, what's at risk*	
Any gaps, unclear claims, or additional things to probe around	
Review where the site currently sits on the Domains framework	• *Upstream Prevention of Destitution* • *Data, Evidence & Learning* • *Partnerships & Collaboration* • *Lived Experience & Representation* • *Advocacy & Influence* • *Shared Vision & Whole-Team Alignment* • *Supporting Infrastructure & Resources*

Interview topic guide (1 hr)

Section	Questions and researcher notes
Interview opening *2-3 mins*	• *Talk through consent form, collect verbal based on same anonymity principles as previous phases.* • *Note that researchers at RR have reviewed quarterly reports ahead of the interview so there may be elements we draw on / probe around from those reports.* • *Record interview if interviewee consents*

Overview of activities / progress since midline phase
10 mins
	• What changes or developments have stood out to you since we last spoke in January?
	• And taking a step back across the whole project – from when you first got involved to now – what feels most different about how your site works as a result of taking part in the pilot?
	  ○ Probe: Internally, externally
	  ○ What about for the local system your service works within?

Exploring areas of the progression framework
For each area, the aim is to explore progress towards the overall goal / transformative level, while unpicking progress, challenges, and enabling factors.
35 mins
	Explainer to sites
	We're using the same progression framework as in the midline phase [researcher to show stimulus]. We'll explore progress, what's enabled or prevented this, and your perspective on where your site sits. Where possible, we'll focus on specific examples and activities.
	
	For each domain area
	Stimulus: Top level summary of domain area
	• Overall, how do you feel about progress in this area over the course of the project as a whole?
	• When thinking about X, can you talk me through the specific activities you have taken forward in this area over the course of the pilot?
	  ○ When did these begin?
	  ○ Any changes since January?
	• What's helped and what's made it harder?
	  ○ PROBE: Capacity, resources, relationships, confidence,
	
	Stimulus: Detailed domain row in the Pathway to Systems Change framework
	• Looking at this domain, where do you feel your site has made progress compared to the start of the pilot?
	• What are you doing that is new or different compared with before the pilot?
	  ○ Researcher to probe for specific examples
	  ○ What prompted those changes? When?
	• How have you found working in this way?
	• What impact, if any, has this had overall?

	○ What's been the effect on people, services, or ways of working? ○ What have you learned from the activities you have undertaken in this area? ● What new skills, confidence or ways of working have you or your team developed? ● Thinking about the progress you've described – to what degree, if at all, would this have happened without the pilot? Why? ● How likely is it that these changes will be sustained over time? ○ What, if anything, is already embedded enough to continue without the pilot – and what feels more fragile or at risk once the project ends? ○ What would need to happen – and from whom – for this to be sustained or taken further? ● What would enable further progress within this domain area? ○ What currently holds – or might hold – this back? ● How well does this framework describe the kinds of progress that matters in this area for your site?
Reflections *10 mins*	● Looking back on the different areas, we have discussed [X domain] less. Why is that? ○ PROBE: Progress feels more difficult, less relevant ○ Are there activities in these areas that feel relevant to discuss? ● To what extent do you feel you've ended up where you hoped you would be by the end of the pilot? ○ Where did you get further than expected, and where did you fall short? ● Looking back across the whole pilot, what stands out as your most important learning – about preventing destitution, about working as a system, or about your own organisation? ● If you were advising another area starting out on a similar pilot programme run with Trussell and CA, what would you tell them to do differently or do again? ● Is there anything the pilot enabled you to do, or learn, that wouldn't have happened otherwise?
Close *2-3 mins*	● Researcher to collect written consent, and include principle of sharing findings at a named-site level.

Endline research materials: National teams

About this document

This guide is for endline interviews with national Trussell and Citizens Advice teams, now that the pilot has come to an end. It follows the baseline and midline conversations already held with individuals from this audience.

Total interview length is approximately 1 hour.

Introduction (5 mins)

- Introduce RR, recap purpose of the endline phase
- Confirm anonymity and confidentiality
- Obtain informed consent, confirm recording
- Any questions before we start

Overall reflections (20 mins)

- We spoke to you at this point / haven't before – what has your role been since the project's inception?
- The focus today is on organisational learnings, how to apply this for the future, what the organisation has taken from the project. Before we begin, are there any areas you feel more or less able to speak to?

Overall reflections about TDT

- Broadly, how has TDT fit with other work that you do? And more broadly at your organisations?
    - What is known about it by wider teams within the organisation? How would you describe its status?
    - What could it help towards in terms of your work / organisation's strategy?
- Thinking back to when this started, how well do you feel the project and its outcomes have aligned with what you originally hoped for it?

  Where has it aligned well?
  Where hasn't it aligned? Why do you think that happened?
- Now that the project has come to an end, what are your overall reflections on how it has gone?

  Anything that surprised you, positively or negatively, looking back over the whole project?

Site progress reflections

- Overall, how do you feel the pilots have delivered against the original goals?
    - Upstream prevention
    - Systems change
    - Sustainable change, change that continues beyond the funding
- How did sites deliver against goals as they evolved over the course of the programme? Did that evolution help or hinder delivery?

- Where do you feel sites have best delivered against these goals? Why?
- Where do you feel there have been challenges? Why?
- Does this differ by site? Which sites went furthest, and why?

Enablers and barriers across sites, and the national role (20 mins)

- Looking back across all five sites, what conditions made the biggest difference to how far a site got?
- What consistently got in the way, across sites?
    - By the local teams?
    - By the national teams?
    - By external / local stakeholders?
- Were there things the national team did, or could have done, that would have helped more sites progress further?

Prompts, if not already covered

- Pre-existing relationships between local Citizens Advice and food bank teams
- Engaging statutory services (probation, NHS, council teams)
- Sharing data across organisations, and using it to target activity
- Moving from collecting lived experience insight to actually using it
- Reliance on a small number of committed individuals to drive things forward
- The length of the funding window

Working with national team

- What was challenging at an organisational level about this pilot that doesn't also apply to pilot projects in general?
    - Time and resource across the teams? Expected vs. reality?
- What role do you think funders should play in shaping and supporting projects like this?
    - What's the right balance between giving sites design freedom and providing more structure or scaffolding?
- Reflecting across the whole project, how would you describe the way Trussell and Citizens Advice worked together at a national level?
    - What worked well about that partnership? What was harder?
    - Has this project changed how the two organisations plan to work together going forward?

With sites

- What are your reflections on working with the sites?
    - What worked well in terms of engaging them? What worked less well?
    - How would you change ways of working with the sites in future projects?
    - Were there any challenges that persisted? Why do you think this was?

With RR / evaluators

- How have you found the evaluation?
- How has the shift to a learning-focused evaluation worked from your perspective?

- What do you feel confident you'll be able to say about TDT's learning and impact, and to whom?

Sustainability, scaling, and what you'd do differently (15 mins)

Sustained and scaled

- Which of the changes you saw at site level do you think will be sustained now the funding has ended?
    - What makes you confident, or not confident, about that?
- Do you think what worked in these sites could be scaled to other areas? What would that need?
- Beyond the sites themselves, could this model of working be replicated by your organisation and [Trussell / CA]? What would that take?
- What's most at risk of being lost now the project has finished?
    - How do you feel about the toolkit and the planned February co-design event as a way to sustain what's worked?

Learnings and changes to ways of working

- If you were starting this whole thing differently – what would you do differently?
    - What would you put in place?
    - How would you set up with sites? (e.g., training, tools, inclusion criteria)
- Would you do it again?
- Probe if not covered: knowledge of sites before the project began, funding length, national support offered to sites, leadership development, time allowed for relationship building before delivery, how lived experience work fit into the project

Final reflections (5 mins)

- After everything we have covered today, what would you say to other organisations that have similar set ups if they were embarking on a similar project? What learnings would you share?

Close

- Anything we haven't covered that feels important to say?
- Researcher to complete consent form during call with interviewee.