DUDLEY UKSPF PROGRAMME EVALUATION

Report Summary

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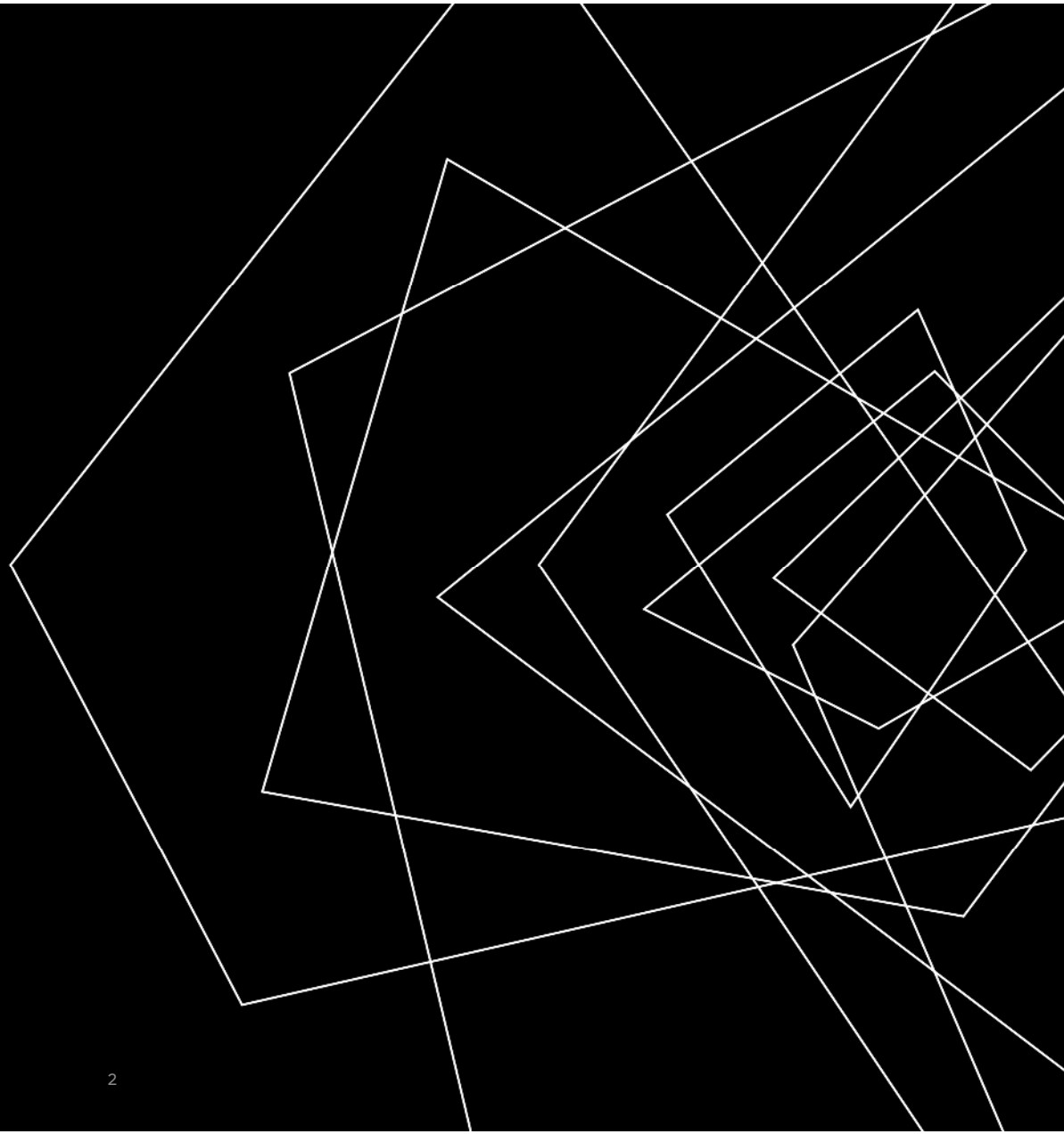


EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

S1. Inception and Scoping

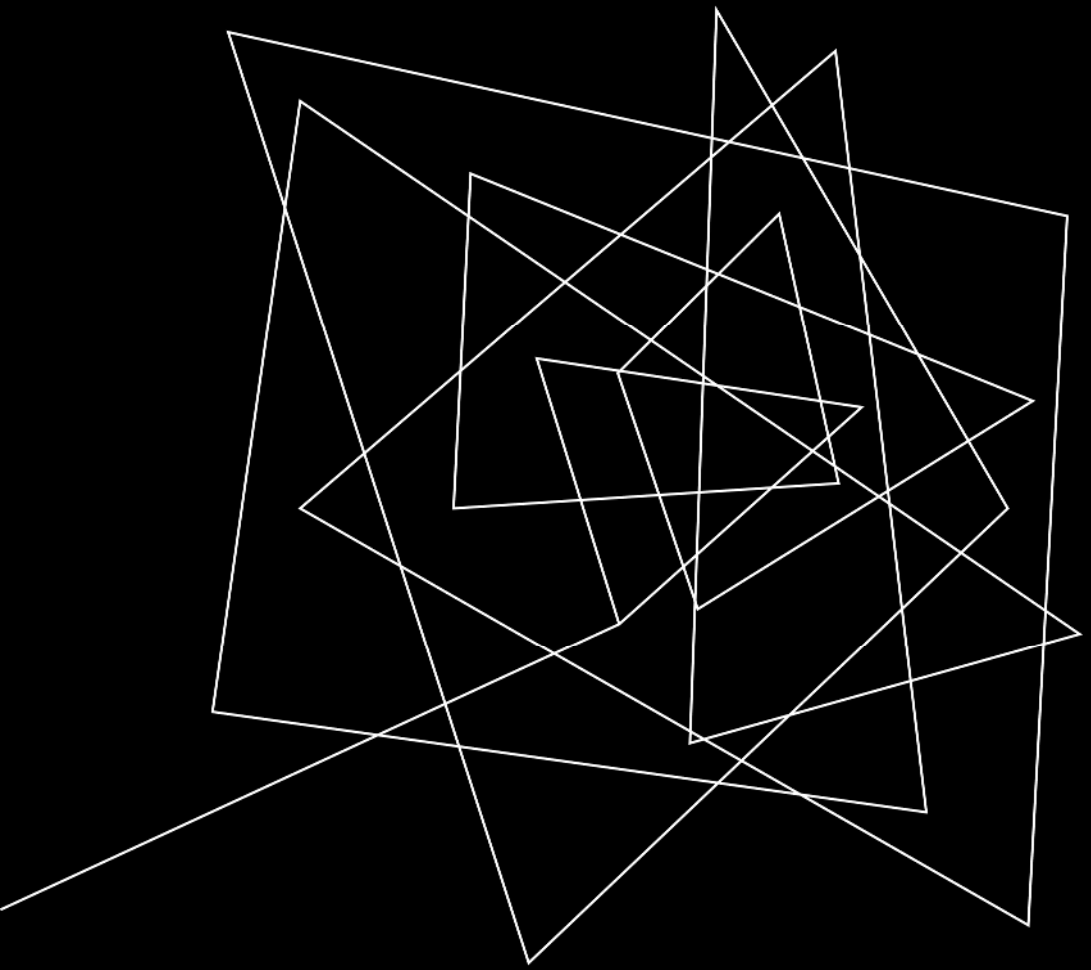
- Inception meeting
- Scoping
- Desk research including:
  - Strategic context review
  - Socio-economic data review
  - Programme review

S2. Fieldwork

- Review of monitoring data
- Consultations
  - Dudley council team
  - Delivery partners
- Beneficiary Surveys
  - People and Skills support recipients
  - Multiply participants
  - Businesses
  - Visitors to parks
  - Crowdfund funding recipients

S3. Analysis and Reporting

- Outcomes and impacts
- Value for money analysis
- Management and delivery
- Lessons learned
- Reporting



CONTEXT

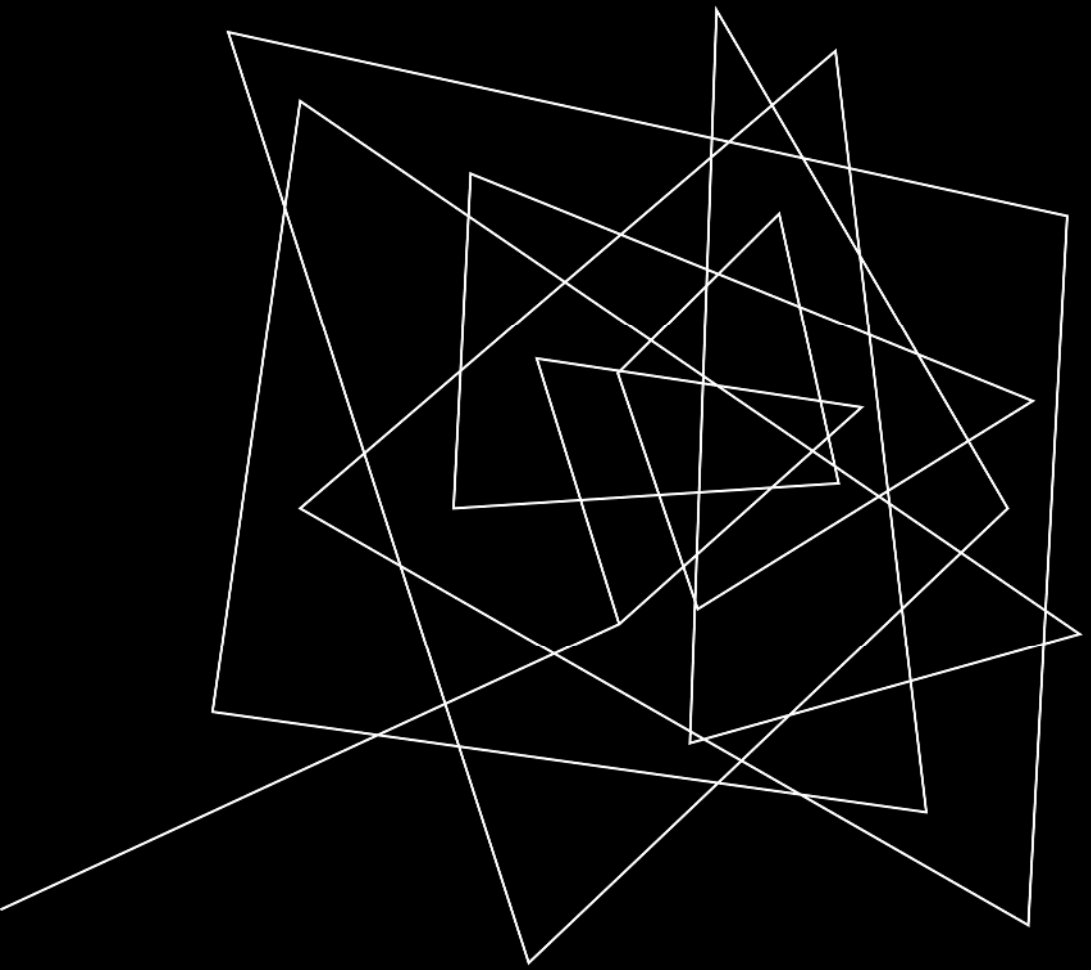
SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT

- Increasing levels of economic inactivity among working age adults
- Low levels of unemployment compared with the national and regional figures
- Lower levels of job growth in recent years
- Low skills levels compared with the national average.
- Relatively strong Gross Value Added (GVA) growth compared with the regional average
- Relatively low GVA per head compared with regional and national averages
- Decline in the number of registered businesses between 2022 and 2024
- Relatively high levels of deprivation. Dudley is the 79th most deprived local authority area in England.

STRATEGIC CONTEXT

Dudley's UKSPF programme aligns with a range of policies and strategies that were in operation at its inception as well as a number which have come into force since. These include:

National	Regional	Local
• "Build Back Better": Our Plan for Growth • Levelling Up Agenda • Net Zero Strategy • National Innovation Strategy • Skills for Jobs White Paper and Skills and Post 16 Education Act	• Local Skills Improvement Plan • Inclusive Growth Framework • Levelling Up West Midlands Plan: Road Map to Community Recovery and Community Prospectus • Net Zero Policies • West Midlands Natural Environment Plan • West Midlands Investment Prospectus	• 2030 Vision for Dudley • Dudley Council Plan • Dudley's Place-Based Strategy • Dudley Economic Regeneration Strategy • Dudley Climate Action Plan • Cultural Strategy and Action Plan

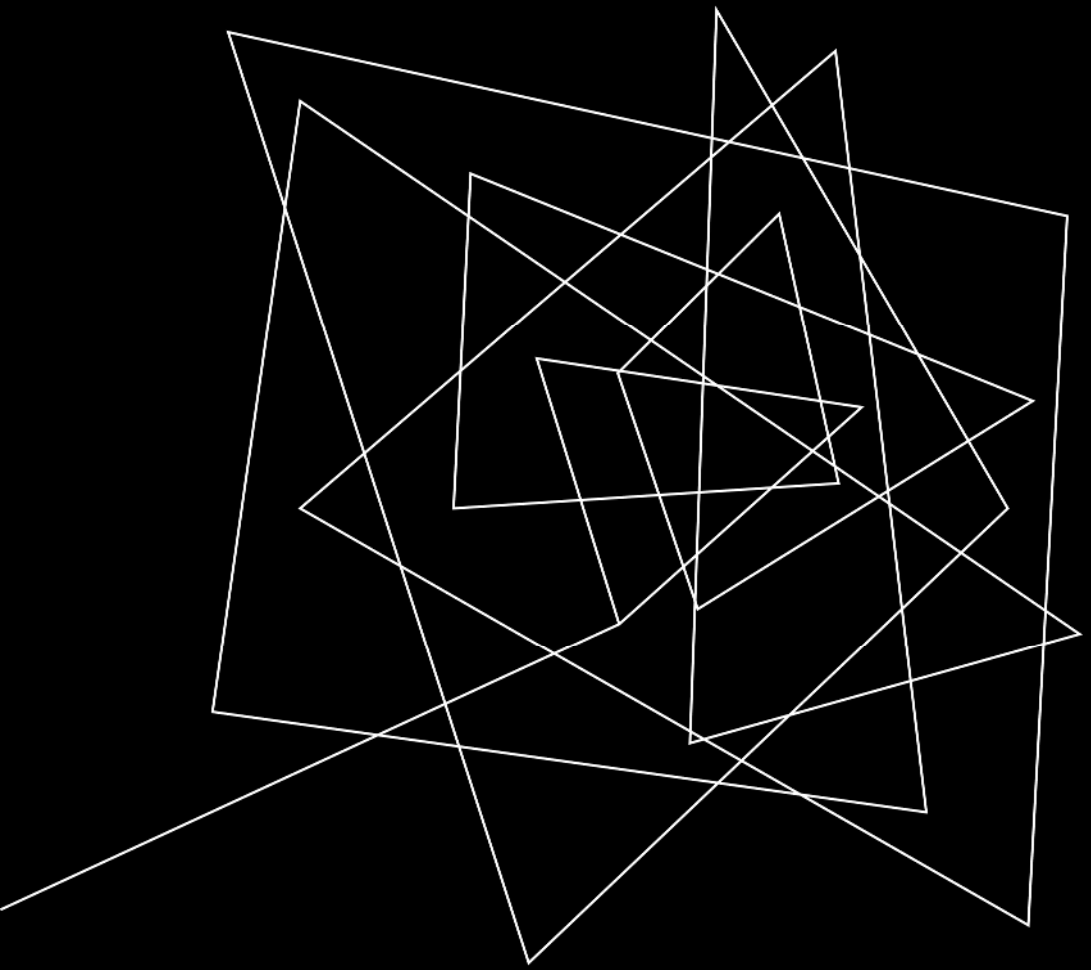


PROGRAMME PROGRESS

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE & OUTPUTS

As of the end of February 2025, all financial targets and outputs from the programme are set for satisfactory completion.

Regarding specific delivery against targets, outputs are on target within the business and skills areas of activity and significantly exceeded in the programme's ‘Communities and Place’ pillar.



PROCESS EVALUATION

GOVERNANCE, MANAGEMENT AND DELIVERY STRUCTURE

Key groups and individual roles within the programme included:

Group/Individual	Role
Operational Group	• Delivery related issues. • Ensuring activities addressed the needs of residents, businesses and the local area. • Ensure compliance with UKSPF regulation, contracted expenditure and output targets. • Implementing recommendations made by the Technical Support Group.
Technical Support Group	• A strategic DMBC group made up of cross-department senior staff. • Focused on addressing technical challenges. • Supporting each delivery area to meet its strategic and operational objectives.
Head of Services for Economic Growth and Skills	• Oversight of the UKSPF programme working with project team and project leads. • Responsibilities included pulling together cabinet reports and attending regional groups.
Programme Manager	• Managed a team of seven. • Financial, output and outcomes audits. • Upward reporting to the WMCA. • Procurement.

STRENGTHS OF THE PROGRAMME

Flexibility

- Allowed innovation and experimentation in the delivery of projects.
- Projects could evolve in response to emerging needs.

Management

- Weekly meeting of the delivery group - strong collaboration and resolutions to challenges.
- Frequent and responsive communication and resolving of queries with delivery partners.
- A cohesive team and effective governance structure.

Dynamic Purchasing System

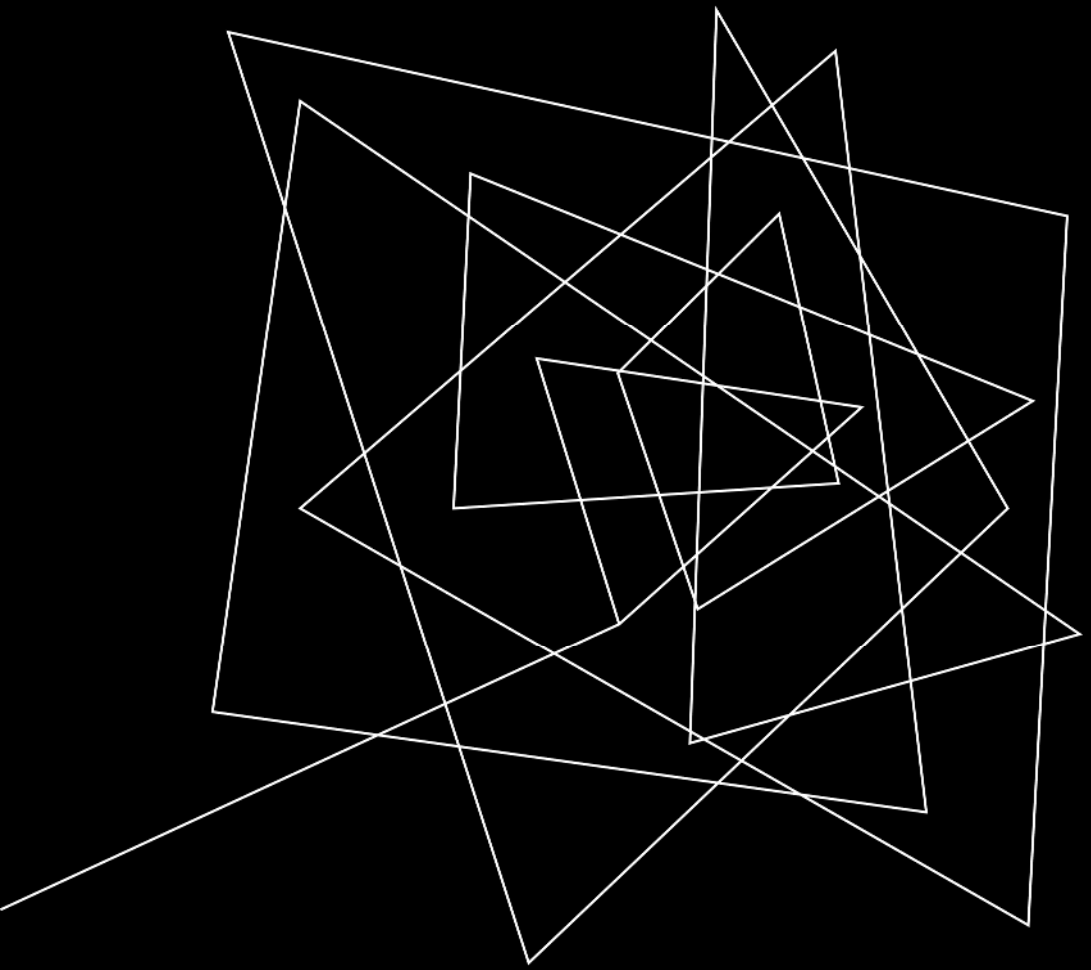
- Slow initial registration and onboarding, with a particular challenge for community organisations.
- However, DMBC was supportive in aiding and guiding, and once providers were approved, the system proved highly beneficial and efficient.

Building Connections

- Through the UKSPF Programme, the council has strengthened its relationship with key stakeholders including business and community organisations.
- Positive engagement with community and third sector organisations.

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Timelines	• Delays in funding created significant challenges, compressing the delivery timeframe for projects. • Short delivery timeframe was often challenging, particularly for projects supporting hard-to-reach individuals who require long-term support.
Clarity on rules, definitions and measures	• Establishing clearer guidelines, standardised output definitions and evidence requirements from the outset would improve consistency, making it easier to track progress and measure impact effectively. • Clarity needed from the CA on outcome definitions and reporting standards.
Internal DMBC Resources	• Programme team was low on staff at the outset. • No established grants team. Establishing a dedicated grants team from the outset would streamline future programme delivery and improve efficiency • For the 'Communities and Place' strand, which spans different departments across the Council, there has been a lack of coherency guiding some funding decisions.
Opportunity for cross-collaboration	• Increasing partnership meetings with providers to share best practices and overall programme effectiveness. • Improved centrally-coordinated opportunities for partners to learn from one another.



OUTCOMES AND IMPACTS – SUMMARY OF SURVEY RESULTS

PEOPLE AND SKILLS

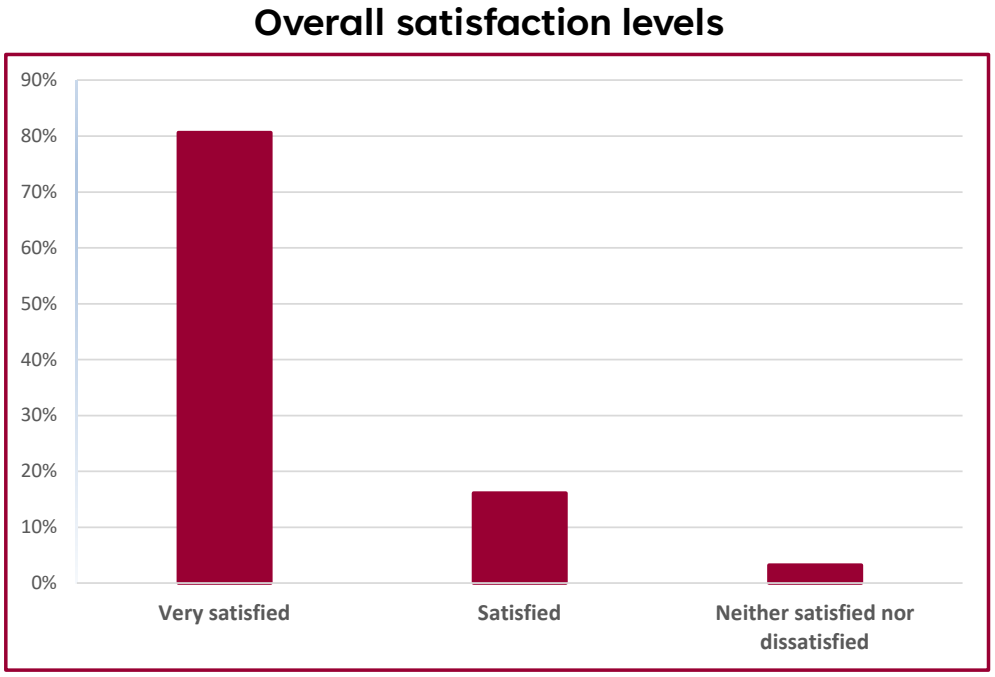
Key insights derived from 50 survey responses include:

- **Satisfaction:** The overall satisfaction levels were predominantly high, reflecting an **overall satisfaction rate of 76%.**
- **Suitability:** Beneficiaries deemed the support well-suited to their needs, achieving an **overall suitability rate of 76%.**
- **Strengths:** The primary strengths of the support recognised were the general assistance and encouragement offered, along with help crafting job applications and CVs.
- **Confidence gained through support:** 54% of respondents reported that their assistance has boosted their confidence in securing employment or pursuing additional training or education.
- **Areas for consideration**: enhancing advisor availability, increasing response times, and expanding direct and practical employment support services.

MULTIPLY

Key findings from 31 survey responses include:

- **Satisfaction:** Satisfaction levels among beneficiaries were exceptionally high, with an **overall satisfaction rate of 97%.**
- **Suitability:** Beneficiaries found the support to be suitable for their needs. 90% of respondents felt the support was suitable, with 74% identifying it as ‘very suitable’.
- **Employment confidence:** most identified respondents, 55%, now feel more confident in terms of progressing their careers after receiving the support.
- **Strengths:** The main strengths identified by survey respondents were the programme as a whole and the everyday numeracy skills that they learnt, e.g. money management.
- **Areas for consideration:** The most identified issues among survey respondents were the desire for a longer and/or more intense course and the opportunity for further progression and training, specifically on investing.



BUSINESS SUPPORT

Key findings from 43 survey responses include:

- **Satisfaction:** Satisfaction levels for the support provided were average in the sector, with 33% of survey respondents being either satisfied or very satisfied.
- **Suitability:** Beneficiaries' views regarding the **suitability** of the support provided were higher, with 46% of survey respondents finding the support provided to be either very suitable or suitable to their needs.
- **Strengths:** The programme's main strengths included support from the contractors (Oxford Innovation) staff (32% of respondents), overall quality of advice (32%), and range of support provided (22%).
- **Areas for consideration:** include the complexity of the grant application process (19%), communication from Oxford Innovation (17%), and a too-short delivery period (10%).
- **Recommending the support:** 47% of survey respondents stated they would recommend the programme to other businesses, compared with 24% who held the opposite view.

COMMUNITIES & PLACE (STEVENS PARK)SURVEY

Key findings from 21 survey responses:

- **Awareness of improvements:** 45% of respondents knew of the improvements.
- **Increased visitation:** The improvements have positively impacted residents' propensity to visit Stevens Park, with 20% of survey respondents having increased the frequency of their visits.
- **Community and Wellbeing:** Most survey respondents see the park as important for bringing the community together, enabling people to get out more, being more active, and improving mental health.
- **Improved safety:** 45% of survey respondents feel safer following the improvements.
- **Areas for improvement:** Survey respondents identified a range of other improvements that would enhance Stevens Park as a community asset, with the main issues being lighting, rubbish collection, and biodiversity.

COMMUNITIES & PLACE (PENSNETT COPPICE)SURVEY

Key findings from 21 survey responses:

- **Awareness of improvements:** 38% of survey respondents knew of the improvements.
- **Increased visitation:** 24% of survey respondents have increased their visits' frequency.
- **Community and well-being**: Most survey respondents see the park as important for bringing the community together, enabling people to get out more, being more active, and improving mental health.
- **Areas for improvement:** Survey respondents identified a range of other improvements that would enhance Pensnett Coppice as a community asset, with the main issues being lighting, rubbish collection, and biodiversity.

COMMUNITIES AND PLACE (CROWDFUND DUDLEY) SURVEY

16 recipients of the Crowdfund were contacted and 7 provided survey replies. Key findings include:

Application process and ongoing admin

- Six of the seven respondents thought the application process could have been simplified.
- The all or nothing awarding system put people off applying.
- Need for clarity around timescales
- Positive views for ongoing admin arrangements.

Strengths

- Crowdfund Dudley support has had a positive impact on the deliverability of the projects supported.
- Backing from the council helped leverage other funding.
- Funding helped deliver important projects.
- Use of social media for promotion.

Areas for consideration

- The main concerns around using SpaceHive as a contractor are that it takes too much commission and is a difficult-to-use platform.
- Lack of clarity over what the Crowdfunding could be used for.
- Challenging delivery timeframe for the projects supported.
- Raising funds in advance was difficult for some organisations.

IN CONCLUSION

- The programme has run well over the last three years.
- External funding pressures resulted in some project's late start.
- That said, all projects in the programme have successfully delivered against spend, targets and outputs.
- Local communities, business and individuals across the whole of the Borough have seen great benefits from the programme.
- The lessons learned from this delivery will be taken forward to the 2025 – 2026 UKSPF programme.