

Total Place Handbook

A practical guide
produced for the LGA by
Total Place Associates

Foreword

Working closely with our partners, we are facing a period of profound challenge. Every day, we see demand for public services rising, resources stretched, and expectations rightly high. Residents want services that feel joined up, responsive and rooted in the places they call home – and they are right to expect nothing less. Across the country, we are already rethinking how we design and deliver services, and how we can work better together to meet increasingly complex needs.

But we also know that too often, the way we have done things in the past makes this harder than it should be. Systems built around organisational boundaries, individual services and separate budgets do not always reflect the reality of people's lives. The challenges our communities face do not fall neatly into those structures – and neither should our response. That is why there is a growing determination to take a more joined-up, place-based approach, working hand in hand with communities as well as with each other.

For me, Total Place is part of that shift. It is not new for many of us – it builds on what councils and partners are already doing – but it brings a clearer, shared focus. It asks us to look at the whole picture in a place, to act together across organisational lines, and to genuinely involve local people in shaping the solutions. Crucially, it is not about imposing a single model, but about enabling local areas to do what works best for them.

This handbook, developed by the Local Government Association (LGA) with Total Place Associates, draws on real experience and emerging practice from across the sector.

I hope it provides a useful, practical guide – something that helps us reflect honestly on where we are now, and where working in a more integrated, place-based way could make the biggest difference.

As Chair of the LGA's Public Service Reform and Innovation Committee, I see every day the commitment across local government to collaborate, to learn from each other, and to keep improving. My hope is that this handbook helps us build on that – strengthening what already works, using our shared resources more effectively, and deepening the trust between public services and the communities we serve.

There is a real opportunity here – not just to do things differently, but to do them better. I encourage all of us, with our partners, to take these principles and turn them into practical action that makes a tangible difference to people's lives.

Cllr Richard Clewer

Chair of the LGA's Public Service Reform and Innovation Committee



Acknowledgements

The LGA would like to recognise the significant contribution of Stephen Taylor of Total Place Associates. His energy, commitment, and ability to bring people together across boundaries has been instrumental in shaping this handbook. Just as importantly, he has created the kind of open, constructive spaces where honest conversations – and better ideas – can emerge.

Stephen has worked with colleagues and partners from across the public sector and beyond, all of whom gave their time generously. Their collective insight, experience and shared commitment to improving outcomes for people and communities through stronger, more joined-up working have been invaluable in developing this work.

We have done our best to reflect the richness of those contributions throughout the handbook. However, any gaps or shortcomings in how they are represented remain the responsibility of the authors.

The LGA would also like to thank colleagues from the Cabinet Office, MHCLG, and all listed below who contributed their time, experience and perspectives to support the development of this handbook.

Ruwani Abeyratne, NHS Leicester

Damian Allen, Doncaster Council

Helen Bailey, Sutton Council

Alex Bax, Pathway

Meena Bharadwa, Access SI

Lord Bichard, former Permanent Secretary

Les Billingham, Doncaster Council

James Binks, formerly Rochdale Council

Tony Blake, Shared Intelligence

Jo Blundell, Place Matters

Sophie Broadfield, Bath & NES Council

Lisa McCance, Shared Intelligence

Ann McGauran, Municipal Journal

Sarah McGill, Cardiff Council

Ali Mills, South Yorks Combined Authority

Louisa Mitchell, AllChild

Richard Mitchell, NHS Leicester

Denise Moore, Total Place Associates

Chris Naylor, Inner Circle Consulting

Margaret Ndlovu, Wiltshire Council

Gareth Newell, Cardiff Council

Frances Northrop, New Economics Foundation

Ben Cartledge, AllChild

Chris Caulton, Doncaster Council

John Copps, Mutual Ventures

Dan Corry, Future Governance Forum

Hilary Cottam, author and
social entrepreneur

Rachel Crossley, Brent Council

Polly Curtis, Demos

Rebecca Davis, Total Place Associates

Wayne DeLeeuw, Dorothy
House Hospice Care

Prof John Denham, former Secretary of State

Claire Dhami, West Midlands
Combined Authority

Sara Dixon, Bath & NES Council

Leanne Dower, Phoenix Community Centre

Graeme Duncan, Place Matters

Sarah Eaton, West Yorks Combined Authority

Seb Elworth, Access SI

Prof Chris Fox, Manchester Met University

Darryl Freeman, Bath & NES Council

Anna Garrod, Demos

Sarah Gillinson, Innovation Unit

Tessa Godley, Better Society Capital

Ellie Haisel, North East Combined Authority

Andrew O'Brien, Independent
Commission on Neighbourhoods

Paul Orders, Cardiff Council

Gillian Ormston, Office of the Police and
Crime Commissioner Thames Valley

Simon Parker, Bath & NES Council

Dawn Plimmer, Collaborate

Robert Pollock, Cambridge City Council

Barry Quirk, formerly Kensington
& Chelsea Council

Anna Randle, New Local

Martin Reeves, Oxfordshire County Council

Trevor Rodenhurst, Bedfordshire Police

Mark Rogers, Sussex & Brighton
Strategic Authority

Martin Routledge, Social Care Future

Dr Ellie Roy, CIPFA

Ellen Rule, Hereford & Worcestershire NHS

Helen Sanderson, Helen
Sanderson Associates

Zach Scott, CIPFA

Gillie Severin, Edinburgh Council

Becky Shaw, East Sussex Council

Dan Sherlock, Brent Council

Merron Simpson, Health Creation Alliance

Steve Skelton, Question Factory

Mark Smith, formerly Gateshead Council

Andrew Haldenby, Effective
Governance Forum

Darin Halifax, NHS Devon

Donna Hall, former CEO Wigan Council

Cllr Andrea Harrington, Swansea Council

Mike Hawking, West Yorkshire CA

Rob Tabb, Liverpool City Region
Combined Authority

Warren Heppolette, Greater
Manchester Combined Authority

Prof Hannah Hesselgreaves,
Manchester Metropolitan University

Kelly Hicks, People Focused Group

Cllr Julia Hillton, Hastings Borough Council

Stuart Hoddinott, Institute for Government

Joseph Holmes, West Berkshire Council

Prof Dan Honig, UCL

Jill Hopkinson, NAVCA

Catherine Howe, Dorset Council

Heather Jameson, Municipal Journal

Thomas Johnson, Greater
Manchester Combined Authority

Hana Loftus, HAT Projects

Sarah Longlands, CLES

Prof Toby Lowe, Manchester
Metropolitan University

Ben Lucas, Metro Dynamics

Benjamin Snuggs, Thames Valley Police

Emily Sun, Place Matters

Jessica Studdert, No10 Policy Unit

Phil Swann, INLOGOV

Peter Thomas, Civil Service Reform UK

Lee Tillman, Doncaster Council

John Tizard, Police and Crime
Commissioner Bedfordshire

Kristian Tomblin, Devon County Council

Robin Tuddenham, Calderdale Council

Tom Underwood, NHS England

Ian Wake, Norfolk County Council

Helen Wake, Office of the Police and
Crime Commissioner Thames Valley

Gary Wallace, Plymouth City Council

Lynne Wardle, Thrive

Bridget Warr, Dorothy House Hospice Care

Chris Welling, Thrive at Five

Max Wide, Leadership Centre

Nick Wilkie, Jimmy Dixon Charitable Trust

Kim Wright, Brent Council

Ness Young, Swansea Council

Su Maddock, Be Buckfastleigh

Contents

1. Introduction.....	8
2. Setting the scene	10
3. How to do it.....	18
4. Understanding the system.....	30
5. Designing and delivering change.....	40
6. People, leadership, and community	46
7. Strategic partners and collaboration.....	52
8. Beyond Total Place.....	64
9. Annexes.....	68
Annex A: Glossary	68
Annex B: Examples	70
Annex C: Project on a page.....	72
Annex D: Falling in Chigley	74
Annex E: Collaboration questionnaire	78

1. Introduction

What is this Total Place handbook?

- 1.1.** This handbook is designed to help local authorities put Total Place principles into practice. It is aimed particularly at those involved in shaping decisions and allocating resources – and will also be useful for partners working alongside local government, including government departments and organisations across the public, private, voluntary and community sector (VCS).
- 1.2.** Public services are under sustained pressure. The rising cost of delivery is becoming harder to manage, productivity has declined, and public satisfaction is low. Current approaches will not be enough to meet future need. While progress is being made, change needs to happen faster.
- 1.3.** Total Place is part of a wider set of related ideas and programmes (outlined at Annex A) that shift the focus of local public services away from organisations and individual services, and towards people and places. At its core, it is about working differently across organisational boundaries – focusing on what matters most to people, strengthening our understanding of how resources are used across a place, and aligning effort to achieve better outcomes.
- 1.4.** It is not a single programme or model, but a way of thinking and working that supports local areas to respond to complex challenges in a more joined-up, effective and sustainable way.

How has it been developed?

- 1.5.** This handbook builds on the LGA's long-standing role in supporting Total Place approaches. The LGA played a central role in the original Total Place pilots in 2009, bringing together central and local partners to map public spending and explore how better alignment of resources, culture and service design could improve outcomes. It supported pilot areas, coordinated political oversight and shared learning across the sector – helping to shape wider thinking on public service reform.
- 1.6.** Although the original Total Place programme concluded in 2010, its ideas have continued to shape later work including approaches focused on whole families and better joint working across organisations. Recent work, including the two LGA-commissioned reports [Learning from 20 years of Place Pilots](#) and [Trusting Place](#) highlights how important it is to work together, agree shared priorities, and give areas the flexibility to shape solutions that work for them. This work has also pointed to ongoing challenges. These include unclear accountability, a lack of incentives for organisations to work together and the risk that too much focus on process can distract from making real improvements.
- 1.7.** In January 2026, following the [government's announcement of place-based budget pilots](#), the LGA and Total Place Associates brought together around sixty people from the public, private and voluntary sectors to discuss how Total Place could be taken forward. There was clear agreement on the need for a practical guide to help build a shared understanding of place-based working, strengthen how local areas review spending and outcomes, and better explain the benefits of more joined-up working with partners and communities.
- 1.8.** This handbook has been developed and tested with those participants, alongside a wider group from across and beyond the public sector. It brings together established learning and new ideas, reflecting a range of perspectives and experience. It is designed to be practical and accessible, recognising that places are starting from different points. Some of the content will be familiar, while other parts are new. The handbook will continue to evolve as more is learnt.

2. Setting the scene

- 2.1.** This section sets out why Total Place matters for local government now. It outlines its origins and principles, reflects on how place-based approaches have been applied in practice, and identifies the system conditions that have limited their impact. It situates Total Place in the wider context of public service reform, fiscal pressures and devolution, and emphasises the leadership role of councils in convening partners and shaping places. It also makes clear that working closely and consistently with partners and communities should be central to how local government operates.

What is Total Place?

- 2.2.** Total Place is a place-based approach to public service reform that starts from a simple proposition: the people who know a place best and care about it most are the people who live there.
- 2.3.** First developed in 2008, Total Place aims to understand and make better use of all public spending within a locality. It focuses on what matters most to local people, rather than organisational boundaries or individual services. At its heart is a straightforward idea: if all public spending in a place is considered collectively and aligned with local priorities, it should lead to better decisions and improved outcomes.
- 2.4.** At its core, Total Place recognises people and communities should be treated as whole, rather than a collection of separate needs or interventions. This requires a shift in approach – involving residents directly in shaping priorities and decisions, rather than expecting them to navigate complex systems and institutional boundaries.
- 2.5.** Related concepts such as relational public services and human learning systems similarly emphasise agency of individuals, particularly those with complex needs. Approaches like The Liberated Method provide a tested framework to help frontline practitioners apply these principles in practice.



2.6. The benefits of this approach include:

- Placing people and communities at the centre of designing their future, and enabling them to play an active role in creating it
- Shifting resources from treatment to prevention, improving outcomes for residents while reducing long-term demand and cost
- Stopping, reshaping or joining-up activity that is ineffective, duplicative, low value or no longer relevant, and removing the associated costs and overheads.

2.7. Under Total Place, all local public spending is potentially in scope. Priorities are determined locally and may include supporting a group or neighbourhood facing challenges; addressing areas of rising cost; improving transport and the public realm; expanding recreational and cultural opportunities; supporting key life transitions; or strengthening the local economy to create jobs and reduce pressure on public services.

2.8. Local priorities will inevitably be debated – which is why democratic leadership matters. Through elections, residents choose who runs their council and provide a mandate to set priorities within the framework of national law and policy.

2.9. It follows that the local authority acts as the system steward of Total Place, providing the platform through which local partners come together. This includes organisations across the public, private, and voluntary and community sectors, working together to shape the future of the place. While councils continue to deliver essential services, their wider role is to convene, coordinate and lead local effort.

2.10. This coordinating role reframes how success is judged across the system. The key civic question becomes: “Do our collective efforts add up to what most matters for this place and its people? If not, what should change? And if they do, could we increase impact or reduce cost by better connecting what we do?” Total Place shifts the day-to-day focus of the local public sector away from managing transactions and towards building relationships that deliver meaningful outcomes.

2.11. The individual elements of Total Place are not new. What is new is the expectation that they are applied consistently and at scale: making all public money visible at place level and enabling it to be shaped collaboratively by those who have a stake in its outcomes. The 2009-10 pilots showed the opportunity to improve wellbeing, generate significant financial savings, create more rewarding public sector work, and strengthen public trust in local government.

Where are we now?

- 2.12.** Total Place principles have been applied in response to crisis (such as Covid, flooding and civil disorder), through time-limited central government initiatives (such as Troubled Families, Shared Outcomes Fund, UK Shared Prosperity Fund, Changing Futures, and Pride in Place), or where a strong local leadership has mobilised partners and communities around a shared priority. In these circumstances, some of the implicit rules which reinforce established ways of working are relaxed, creating space for innovation. However, when the crisis passes, funding ends or leadership changes, the system often reverts to business as usual.
- 2.13.** The default system remains one of separation. Local public expenditure is planned, allocated and managed around individual organisations and the services they are mandated or empowered to provide, rather than around places and the people who live in them. As a result, multiple services often engage with the same individuals, families or neighbourhoods to address, in essence, the same underlying issues. Residents may be asked how specific services could be improved but are less often asked what would make the greatest difference to their lives overall or enabled to play a meaningful role in shaping solutions.
- 2.14.** A wide range of publicly funded bodies spend money within a locality: councils, the NHS, police, fire and rescue services, schools and colleges, housing associations, and local arms of government departments such as HMRC, JobCentre Plus, HM Courts and Tribunals Service, and the Environment Agency. Patterns of spending rightly vary between places. For example, the NHS will spend more on cancer treatment in areas with older populations. But each organisation's remit is necessarily bound. The NHS is not responsible for a cancer patient's housing insecurity or family circumstances; the police are not accountable for a young offender's education or parenting support. Yet these wider factors are often critical to long-term outcomes and the overall value delivered by public spending.
- 2.15.** Local public sector organisations – and the services within them – operate to their own objectives and performance frameworks, many of which are set nationally. In the absence of a shared understanding of what matters most for the place, it is unlikely that the combined effect of this activity will deliver it. Collaboration tends to emerge where there is clear mutual benefit; elsewhere, organisational priorities dominate and budgets are closely guarded, particularly at a time of acute financial pressure.

- 2.16.** Despite these barriers, local public sector leaders increasingly recognise that their own organisational success depends on the health of the wider system in which they operate. Systems leadership is no longer an additional skill or discretionary activity, but a core part of their role. As a result, a growing number of places are making determined efforts to work differently, applying Total Place principles to align resources, activity and decision-making around shared priorities. Three such experiences are set out in Annex B. The sixty Marmot Places, committed to reducing local health inequalities, are similarly providing valuable insights about what is possible through whole system collaboration.
- 2.17.** Progress will accelerate when deep collaboration between organisations and communities – focused on shared priorities – becomes the norm rather than the exception. None of the components of Total Place are entirely new. What is new is the ambition to apply them consistently, in combination, and ultimately across all public activity within a place. The prize is not to tweak the existing system, but to achieve fundamental system change.
- 2.18.** Collaboration has been a recurring theme in public policy for over four decades. Successive initiatives – including local strategic partnerships, public service boards, community budgets, local area agreements, local enterprise partnerships and more – have often struggled to endure. The reasons are well understood: the structural, financial and cultural forces that pull organisations back towards established ways of working remain powerful.
- 2.19.** For example, a King’s Fund report, [Place-Based Partnerships: Challenges and Opportunities](#) reviewed collaboration between the local NHS, local government and other health care providers. It found that progress had been limited because “[...] partners described themselves as being accountable to their own organisations, and there were no mechanisms for them to hold each other to account for work that would benefit places as opposed to individual organisations”. This insight goes to the heart of the challenge that Total Place seeks to address.

What's new?

2.20. In June 2025, the [Chancellor set out three principles to underpin public sector reform](#):

- **Integration:** Designing and joining up services around people's lives and needs, rather than operating in departmental silos
- **Prevention:** Shifting investment and focus upstream to address problems before they escalate into crises
- **Devolution:** Empowering local areas to tailor decision-making and delivery to the needs of their communities.

2.21. A central element of this agenda is a shift away from highly centralised control towards greater local autonomy. Government has begun reforming the framework within which English local government operates, including a move towards a single-tier model of unitary authorities responsible for all local services in their area. In some places, these authorities will form combined authorities – statutory partnerships between councils typically led by an elected mayor.

2.22. Over time, mayoral combined authorities – described as strategic authorities – are expected to be established more widely across England. These bodies will take on devolved responsibilities in areas such as transport and housing. Competitive bidding is intended to give way to longer-term funding arrangements, enabling mayors to allocate resources more flexibly through integrated settlements. This approach is designed to support sustained investment in programmes that take time to deliver impact. In due course, settlements may extend to include significant elements of health and education funding, alongside limited local revenue-raising powers.

2.23. How this shift will reshape accountability arrangements remains uncertain. Proposals such as local public accounts committees have yet to be legislated. However, where collaboration deepens and budgets are aligned around shared outcomes, new forms of joint accountability are likely to emerge. For example, where local authorities and the NHS pool social care budgets, oversight could be shared between council scrutiny members and NHS non-executive directors.

2.24. These reforms are intended to reduce the administrative burden associated with negotiation with, and reporting to, central government. In doing so, they should enable local leaders to focus more on long-term priorities and adopt a more integrated approach to improving outcomes. In parallel, there are plans to strengthen coordination at neighbourhood level and improve access to service, for example, through neighbourhood health centres that support preventative, community-based care and reduce demand on hospitals.



- 2.25.** In November 2025, the government launched place-based budgeting pilots in five mayoral combined authorities, alongside a prevention demonstrator in Greater Manchester. These initiatives reflect many features of Total Place, bringing together funding and support around the needs of a defined group or community. They form part of the Cabinet Office’s Test, Learn and Grow (TLG) programme, which aims to bring policy, delivery and service users closer together, accelerating innovation and learning. Through locally led test and learn approaches, the programme is seeking to create the conditions for more iterative, user-centred, and place-based approach to public services. The pilots will run over two years, with further guidance expected from the Cabinet Office.
- 2.26.** In May 2026, the government announced 25 place-based community power pilots. These are designed to enable councils, community groups, residents and the private sector, to co-design services such as early years provision, youth services and community safety. The stated aim is to give local communities a stronger voice in shaping what happens in their area, including a greater influence over how public money is used.

What's critical?

- 2.27.** Establishing a national framework that better enables local collaboration is an important step, but it is not sufficient on its own. Removing formal barriers does not automatically lead to widespread or sustained collaboration between councils, partners and communities. Effective partnership working depends on time, trust and sustained effort.
- 2.28.** Alongside structural, legislative and financial constraints sit less visible but equally significant challenges. These include professional identity, perceived roles, informal power dynamics, organisational culture, and approaches to risk. These factors are often more difficult to address than changes to policy or funding, yet they have a profound influence on behaviour. They do not reflect a lack of commitment of professionalism, but rather established ways of working that prioritise organisational accountability over shared system outcomes. These tensions are often most acute in the middle tiers of organisations, where competing pressures intersect.
- 2.29.** There is also a wider perception that parts of the public sector tend to prioritise process and defensibility over innovation and outcomes. This is sometimes described as a culture of compliance, where minimising risk and maintaining assurance can feel like the safest course of action. While understandable, this can limit the ability of organisations to work differently and respond creatively to complex challenges.
- 2.30.** Any meaningful move towards Total Place therefore requires deliberate attention to these cultural and behavioural barriers, alongside technical and structural reform. Fundamentally, this is a leadership challenge rather than a technical one. It involves setting clear expectations for collaborative working, modelling behaviours that support system thinking, and constructively challenging practices that undermine shared objectives.
- 2.31.** It also requires a stronger emphasis on learning – systematically capturing what works, sharing it across organisations, and embedding it into everyday practice. Collaboration should be driven by the outcomes it delivers for people and places, not simply by programme requirements or short-term funding opportunities.
- 2.32.** Total Place also brings practical challenges relating to data, measurement, skills, resources and delivery models. However, where organisations create enabling conditions, these challenges can be addressed. For many people drawn to public service, working this way – focused on outcomes, collaboration and prevention – offers a more meaningful and motivating alternative to operating within fragmented systems.

3. How to do it

3.1. This section sets out the key elements and stages involved in applying Total Place in practice. It is not a prescriptive model, but a practical framework drawn from the experience of places that have sought to align resources around shared priorities. The steps are iterative rather than linear and will vary between places. They illustrate how councils can use their democratic mandate and convening role to bring partners and communities together, and translate collaboration into improved outcomes, better value and increased trust.

What makes Total Place work?

3.2. Total Place works when councils, partners and communities come together around a shared challenge and treat it as a collective responsibility, rather than a single-organisation problem. In practice, this involves:

- Opening the problem so it can be explored broadly, free from organisational constraints, allowing new options to emerge
- Being clear about ambition, scale and what is realistically achievable
- Working collaboratively across council services and with local partners to develop a shared plan
- Engaging people early and meaningfully, placing residents and communities at the centre of design and delivery
- Building a clear understanding of the baseline, including current cost and outcomes
- Co-designing change, testing ideas, modelling options and agreeing a better way forward
- Following through on delivery, embedding new ways of working, not just new pilots
- Capturing and sharing learning so approaches can be refined, adapted and extended elsewhere.

3.3. None of these elements is new in isolation. What distinguishes Total Place is bringing them together as a single, integrated approach. The stages are iterative and will differ between places. Annex C summarises the steps while Annex D illustrates how they come together in practice through an example.



Applying Total Place in practice

- 3.4.** The steps set out below provide a practical framework to help local areas move from initial conversations through to delivery and sustained change.

1. Start the conversation within

Total Place should begin with a shared conversation between political and officer leadership. This early dialogue should explore how the approach aligns with existing priorities, pressures and ambitions for the place; the scale of the opportunity; what success might look like, and who would need to be involved to make progress. Where councils already have a strong understanding of local priorities, this can provide a starting point.

The focus may well be on a current, high-profile challenge such as mental health, homelessness or special educational needs and disabilities (SEND). In some cases, it may centre on a relatively small number of residents who are in frequent contact with multiple services, where better coordination could improve outcomes while making more effective use of resources.

At this stage, the key question is whether there is merit in taking the idea further. Is the primary aim to improve outcomes within existing resources, release cost for reinvestment, or achieve both? As the conversation develops, additional voices can be brought in. Some councils find it valuable to use external facilitation to support open, exploratory discussion and ensure all perspectives are heard.

2. Hold up the mirror

Take a step back and assess your current position on collaboration, engagement and delivery. Consider whether there is alignment – political and managerial – on the outcomes you are trying to achieve and the approach needed to get there. Reflect on how effectively services work together, what skills and insight exist across the organisation, and where gaps remain.

Review existing arrangements for collaboration. What structures, forums and ways of working are in place? What has been learned from experience? How strong are relationships with key partners – including the NHS, police, anchor organisations, private sector, voluntary and community sector and local communities – not only at senior level, but at the frontline where delivery happens day-to-day?

The collaboration questionnaire in Annex E can help you test your position and identify areas for improvement. It supports a realistic assessment of whether you are at the starting gate, building on progress, or ready to move quickly towards more embedded change.

Councils already further along this journey should start at a later stage and move through the steps at pace.

3. Test the waters

Expand the conversation beyond the council to include partners across the public, voluntary and community sector and – where relevant – private sectors. Use existing networks where possible; where these are insufficient, create new spaces for dialogue.

Early discussion should be exploratory rather than fixed. Listening is as important as speaking. Useful prompts include:

- This is on our mind, what is on yours?
- What challenges are you grappling with?
- Where do our priorities and interests overlap?
- What can we achieve together that we can't do alone?
- What are we already doing, and how is it working?
- What have we learned from previous collaborations?
- What would accelerate progress?
- What is driving the need for change in this place or for this group (for example, fairness, dissatisfaction with current arrangements, improved outcomes, or value for money)?

How these conversations are held matters. Informal, open, dialogue tends to build trust and shared understanding more effectively than formal meetings with agendas, papers and presentations. The aim is collective ownership, with all participants engaging as equal partners.

Allow time for relationships and confidence to develop so there is both a shared appetite and a credible opportunity to do something meaningful together. Early involvement of the right people increases commitment and ownership – people are more likely to support what they help to create.

At this stage, avoid discussion about pooling budgets. It is too early to know what resources might be involved or what mechanisms would be appropriate. Those questions can be addressed later, once the purpose, scope and collective ambition are clearer.

4. Set a tentative ambition

Avoid trying to tackle everything at once. Mapping all public money across an entire local authority area is rarely manageable or productive. Instead, focus on a defined and coherent area where change feels achievable and worthwhile.

This might involve concentrating on a specific cohort - a group of people where there is a realistic prospect of improving outcomes while reducing costs, ideally with the active involvement.

The government's place-based budgeting pilots provide useful examples: young people at risk of offending, adolescents with mental health needs, children with special educational needs, adults experiencing multiple disadvantage, and young people who are not in education, employment or in training.

Alternatively, you may wish to take a life-course perspective, focusing on key transition points such as the move from education to work, or from independence into older age. Another approach is to focus on a specific neighbourhood facing long-standing challenges, treating it as a whole system rather than as a set of separate issues, as illustrated in the Ely case study at Annex B.

Some councils may instead identify an opportunity linked to economic development or growth. For example, the Citylabs campus in Manchester brings together the council, university, and the NHS to generate both economic and social value. Others may focus on linking local economic renewal directly to improved wellbeing, as in the Jaywick Sands example at Annex B.

Whatever route is chosen, the ambition should be realistic and proportionate. It should be significant enough to matter, but not so broad or complex that progress becomes slow or uncertain. This is a 'Goldilocks' challenge: not so narrow that the impact feels marginal, but not so ambitious that it is unattainable any time soon. Depending on local circumstances, the objective may be to reduce costs, improve outcomes or to achieve both together.

At this stage, undertake some deskwork. Bring together existing data and insight on the chosen cohort, place or opportunity, and draw on learning from elsewhere. Be clear about the boundaries: what defines the cohort or place? Who is included, and on what basis? What, provisionally, sits outside the scope of this work? It is neither feasible nor helpful to attempt to address every aspect of a place or every dimension of people's lives.

Finally, agree a shared, high-level view of what success looks like. At this point, avoid overly detailed performance frameworks. A broad sense of direction, supported by a practical understanding of what improvement would look like, is sufficient to move into the next stage of work.

5. Shape the architecture

From the outset, be clear that a Total Place project has a dual purpose: to deliver a meaningful outcome in relation to the issue being addressed, and to generate learning that can inform future work elsewhere.

The programme architecture has two parts:

- A steering group or programme board, responsible for overall direction, sponsorship and ensuring learning is captured from the start
- A project delivery team, with a small core membership supported by others as required, responsible for day-to-day delivery.

Given the potential for Total Place approaches to drive fundamental changes in how a local authority works, visible senior leadership is essential. The steering group should include:

- A senior councillor (ideally the leader or mayor)
- The chief executive
- Senior leaders from the key partner organisations.

Where appropriate, representation may also include voluntary, community or charitable sector organisations. Shared or rotating chairing arrangements can help reinforce parity between partners.

The steering group should appoint a project manager drawn from the council, a partner organisation or externally who will be responsible for developing a clear set of proposals that:

- **Define** the initial core membership of the project team and expected levels of commitment (e.g. part time or full time, whether co-located)
- **Identify** wider contributors who will be involved at key points, including partners whose input is required (e.g. individuals who will fulfil a specific role or provide expertise)
- **Set out** how and when people from the relevant place or cohort will be involved
- **Confirm** any external support required (e.g. to advise on methodology, data, engagement, communications or building a team)
- **Agree** an outline plan, approach and timetable for the project
- **Establish** clear arrangements for capturing learning from the outset.

These arrangements should be expected to evolve as the project develops. As roles become clearer and needs change, the composition of the core team may shift over time, potentially including people with lived experience of the place or issue being addressed.

The primary role of the steering group is to enable progress, not to add layers of control. In practice, this means:

- **Ensuring** the project team has the right members, skills and resources
- **Supporting** the project leader in working through challenges as they arise
- **Removing** high level barriers to maintain momentum
- **Championing** the project across organisations and beyond, reinforcing its purpose and alignment with wider activity
- **Setting** clear parameters while enabling appropriate experimentation and risk-taking, recognising that innovation can involve iteration and setbacks.

The test of effectiveness is whether the project team experiences the steering group as a source of support, challenge and mentorship, rather than as an additional layer of bureaucracy.

6. Map the landscape

If the project focuses on a cohort, start by developing a clear understanding of the current position. This should include:

- **Defining the cohort:** Identify the shared characteristics that determine who is in scope and clearly set the boundaries for inclusion
- **Size and trends:** Estimate the size of the cohort, how stable or fluid membership is, and whether numbers are increasing, decreasing or remaining stable, and outline the key drivers behind any change
- **System mapping:** Set out who is currently involved in supporting this cohort; including public services, private sector organisations, and VCS partners. Clarify roles, responsibilities and accountabilities, and identify any overlaps or gaps in provision
- **Public sector costs:** Estimate the total public sector spend associated with the cohort. Indicate whether costs are rising, falling or static, and analyse the balance between prevention and crisis-driven expenditure
- **Available data and evidence:** Identify existing data and evidence across three levels: inputs (resources and activity), outputs (services delivered) and outcomes (impact on people and communities).

Summarise what this evidence suggests about effectiveness, outcomes and value for money.

Alongside building a picture of the current state, it is important to consider the wider system in which support is delivered:

- **Past and current changes:** Identify significant changes to how this cohort or place has been supported over time, the outcomes of those changes, and any reforms currently underway, including their intended impact
- **Policy and legislative context:** Summarise the key legislation, statutory duties, and national or local policy frameworks that shape how this cohort is supported
- **Practice elsewhere:** Look at how other areas, both within the UK and internationally, approach support for similar cohorts. Highlight models or approaches that demonstrate strong outcomes or show promise.

If the project focuses on a locality rather than a defined cohort, apply the same approach by identifying key assets within the place. This should include people, services, infrastructure, networks, community groups. Consider how these existing strengths could be better connected, expanded, or mobilised to improve outcomes, ensuring that the approach builds from what is already working rather than starting from scratch.

7. Connect

Engage directly with the cohort or locality to build a shared understanding and a foundation for joint action. This goes beyond formal consultation or survey with known stakeholder organisations – while these still have a role, the emphasis should be on working **with** people, not doing things to them.

Local government holds significant relational capital that can support this work. Councillors provide valuable access and understanding into local communities. Likewise, council staff who have long-standing relationships within a place or with a cohort bring important perspectives on how systems are experienced on the ground. Conversations in everyday settings – pubs, community centres, schools, sports clubs, shops, places of worship and online community spaces – can provide a rich understanding of what matters to people and why.

To genuinely understand lived experience, engagement must feel personal, local and trusted. Traditional consultation methods – large venues, formal presentations and microphones – can unintentionally reinforce distance and power imbalance, limiting the depth and honesty of contributions.

Richer insight is more often achieved through relationship based approaches. This may involve working with trusted local figures, community connectors or peers, supported by the council to facilitate purposeful conversations in familiar settings. Doorstep conversations, small group discussions, and targeted outreach can create the conditions for people to speak openly about their everyday experiences, priorities and aspirations for their community.

This approach to engagement is not only about listening; it is also about building agency and shared ownership. When people feel heard and can see their perspectives shaping what emerges, they are more likely to stay involved in implementation and help sustain change over time. In this way, engagement becomes a core part of delivery itself, not a precursor to it.

8. Picture the future

Begin by identifying credible and achievable ways of improving outcomes for the cohort or locality, including the role that individuals and communities will play to enable that change. The methods set out in *Designing and Delivering Change* can help structure this work. Use them to develop an initial, high-level picture of what a better future could look like.

From there, iteratively model, test, cost, refine the emerging picture, involving people from the cohort or place throughout. Ground the work in lived experience: “This is the experience this group of people will have in the future,” or “This is how this place will look and feel to live in.”

Once a future state has been described, work backwards from it rather than forward from the present. Treat this as a ‘blank sheet’ exercise: set aside existing arrangements and ask what would need to be designed from first principles to create and sustain that future. This reflects core elements of many theories of change, which recognise that how change is achieved matters as much as the change itself for sustainable success.

Step by step, set out:

- The processes required to deliver the future state
- The roles of different organisations – across the public, private and VCS sectors – including how they contribute and at what cost
- The role, influence and agency of the people most affected.

Where the full ambition is not immediately achievable, be explicit about the extent to which it can be realised and the reasons why. Identify and record the constraints – whether structural, financial, legislative, cultural or political – that limit progress. Retain these as part of the evidence base for future work. Adjust the proposed future state where necessary and test whether it still represents meaningful progress.

Finally, confirm that there is sufficient commitment – ideally active and enthusiastic – from those whose approval and leadership are essential. Only at this stage should attention turn to the practical question of shifting, pooling or better aligning existing resources and budgets to support delivery.

9. Do it

Implement the new arrangements, maintaining continuity in leadership and sufficient team capacity to preserve organisational knowledge and sustain momentum. Use the same disciplined project management approaches used for other major structural, procedural, financial and technical change.

Workforce implications are likely to be a central consideration, given that staffing typically accounts for about half of local authority operational spending. Implementation may involve changes to working patterns, alongside reskilling, redeployment and, where necessary, relocation.

Opportunities for savings may arise through a range of approaches including:

- Shifting from reactive services to prevention
- Stopping activities which do not add adequate value
- Merging services within and across organisations
- Transferring appropriate provision to communities or social enterprises
- Streamlining management structures
- Redesigning processes and pathways
- Making better use of relevant technology
- Deploying workforce skills more effectively
- Rationalising the use of office space.

However, savings are only on paper until realised in practice. A good test is whether any future pooled budget is lower than the combined total of the individual organisational and service budgets it replaces.

10. Expand

Review the learning generated from the project and identify what has wider relevance. This should include across areas such as structures, roles, skills, financial savings, prevention, relationships, behaviours, communications, processes and risk management. Capture what the work has shown about how best to connect with and involve the people and places the system is seeking to support.

Reflect on how ways of working have evolved across professions, services and organisations. Assess the extent to which these changes have become embedded and consider whether they are likely to endure without continued intervention or support.

Consider the structural constraints highlighted by the project, including policy, legislation, data sharing arrangements, inspection regimes and performance metrics. Distinguish between constraints that can be accommodated within the current system and those that could be mitigated or removed over time.

Examine the implications for leadership at senior and middle management levels. This includes how managers understand their roles, support their teams, exercise authority, collaborate with partners, and build relationships beyond the organisation. Be explicit about what most enabled progress, and how conditions for replicating this can be intentionally created.

Use this learning to inform decisions about how best to spread and apply the approach. Determine where to go next. This may involve working with additional cohorts within the same place, working with the same cohort in other locations, or expanding across several places simultaneously. Test whether there is readiness in the system to move forward with greater pace or ambition.

Finally, prioritise opportunities for authentic peer learning over reliance on polished case studies or standardised 'best practice' models. Enable those closest to the work to share their lived experience – including tensions, compromises and setbacks as well as successes. Focus on real-world decision-making and problem-solving, supporting others to adapt the approach thoughtfully to their own context.

4. Understanding the system

- 4.1.** This section sets out how to understand the system within which Total Place operates. It introduces systems thinking as an approach to addressing complex, cross-cutting challenges, and explores how demand arises and can be managed more effectively over time. It also considers the importance of prevention, long-term value and the use of data and insight to inform decision-making. Taken together, these elements provide a framework for understanding need, identifying opportunities for change and making better use of public resources.

Systems thinking

- 4.2.** There has been a longstanding assumption that complex problems can be solved primarily through organisational restructuring – that creating the ‘right’ set of structures or governance arrangements will deliver better outcomes. In practice, experience shows that complex challenges rarely fit neatly with organisational boundaries. Instead, they cut across services, sectors and institutional arrangements, requiring a more joined-up and systemic approach.
- 4.3.** Without this system-wide perspective, well-intentioned interventions can produce unintended consequences. A well-known example involves attempts to reduce rat populations in French colonial Vietnam by offering a bounty for each rat tail submitted. While initially appearing effective, the policy led to people breeding rats to increase income. This illustrates how systems respond dynamically to incentives in ways that are not always predictable, reinforcing the need to design interventions with the wider system in mind.
- 4.4.** A system can be understood as a set of interdependent elements that together form a unified whole. The human body is one example. Systems can fail when individual parts optimise their own performance without regard for the overall effect. In well-functioning systems, individual and collective interests are aligned. This alignment makes underlying causes more visible and creates the conditions to shift from reactive responses to preventative approaches.
- 4.5.** Applying a systems approach involves recognising that the actions of one organisation can have significant implications for others across a locality. The aim is to align the activities of local public services around shared, long-term outcomes and the collective public interest.



- 4.6.** For example, a council may raise eligibility thresholds for social care to manage short-term financial pressures. While this may help address immediate budget constraints, it can displace demand and cost elsewhere in the system, including to families, health services, policing or future generations.
- 4.7.** Responding effectively requires a long-term, whole-system view of public spending, rather than a focus on individual organisational budgets. While difficult to achieve in practice, an important first step is ensuring that the objectives of one organisation do not unintentionally undermine those of another. This can be supported through open discussion of shared priorities, pressures and intended outcomes, alongside realistic expectations for managers. Performance frameworks should avoid incentivising narrow, short-term gains at the expense of wider system outcomes.

Measuring value

- 4.8.** The principle that “what gets measured gets managed” underscores the need for clearly linking inputs, outputs and outcomes in public services.
- Inputs are the resources invested (e.g. staff time and resources)
 - Outputs are what is delivered (e.g. maintaining a park to a set standard)
 - Outcomes reflect the impact on people and communities (e.g. users’ experience).

While inputs and outputs are easier to measure, outcomes are more complex but ultimately more important for assessing overall effectiveness.

- 4.9.** Productivity describes how effectively resources are used to deliver outputs. It improves where better tools, processes or skill enable more to be delivered from the same level of input. For example, when maintaining a local park, productivity may increase through a more efficient lawnmower or the expertise of a more skilled grounds worker, enabling higher standards or greater coverage without additional cost.
- 4.10.** Assessing outcomes is more challenging. Approaches associated with New Public Management (NPM) have introduced business-style performance measures, such as key performance indicators (KPIs), into public services. These can be useful in tracking activity and service performance. For example, tracking visitor numbers and satisfaction levels for a local park.

- 4.11.** However, NPM frameworks can implicitly frame the public as customers rather than citizens. In a commercial context, success is often measured by output – for example how much bread a bakery sells – without regard for the broader circumstances of customers’ lives. A local authority cannot be considered effective solely because it meets its service-level KPIs. It reflects wider outcomes and lived experience, shaped by complex interactions across services and ultimately expressed through democratic accountability.
- 4.12.** For this reason, Total Place starts by focusing on what matters most to people. This involves asking not only what the immediate issue is, but what outcomes residents want to see, and how services and communities can work together to achieve them. It also requires a whole-system perspective – considering whether resources across organisations are collectively aligned and used as effectively as possible to support those outcomes.
- 4.13.** Analysis should be proportionate and decision focused. The aim is not to collect all available data, but to identify the information needed to support sound judgement. In many cases, indicative or ‘good enough’ estimates are sufficient to support action. Where the potential benefits of change are likely to outweigh the costs of implementation, it will often be appropriate to proceed without waiting for the perfect data.
- 4.14.** One useful approach to assessing value is persona mapping, which traces the experience and cost of support for an individual over time. For example, an individual might be out of work because they are unable to access training due to a lack of reliable transport. Their interaction with public services – for example, welfare, housing, or health – creates measurable costs. Targeted interventions, such as better transport and access to training, may initially increase public spending. However, over time, these interventions can reduce reliance on benefits and generate wider value through employment and tax contributions. Mapping this journey helps demonstrate how costs and outcomes shift over time. This analysis can then be scaled from individuals to cohorts or whole places, providing a more complete picture of long-term value.



Data and insight

4.15. Decisions about reshaping local public spending around people and places should be supported by data sufficient to make a credible case for change. Local authorities vary significantly in the availability, quality and usability of their data. A robust Total Place approach should draw on evidence that covers:

- The number and characteristics of people within a cohort or place
- The full public sector cost associated with those individuals or groups
- The balance between preventative and reactive spend
- The effectiveness of current provision
- The potential cost and impact of alternative approaches.

4.16. Data availability and quality are key enablers. Public bodies may operate different systems, apply different definitions or face constraints around data sharing. This can limit insight across a place. However, progress is being made through initiatives such as local data hubs and observatories which aim to bring data together more effectively. New technologies are also helping to bridge previously disconnected data sources. Over time, this is likely to support the development of shared local dashboards, enabling partners to track progress against common outcomes.

- 4.17.** Many councils use cost-benefit analysis to calculate the overall benefits and costs of proposals across partners involved. This typically draws on agreed unit costs for inputs and agreed unit benefits for outputs and outcomes. This approach has proved particularly powerful in showing the financial value of preventive activity – including costs avoided and cashable savings.
- 4.18.** A key part of any Total Place project is to map and count current public spending for a cohort or place. This may include spending from central government, non-departmental bodies or local government. Frameworks such as the [UN's Classification of Functions of Government](#) can provide a useful checklist of spending categories. For example, spending on recreation services may be highly relevant for a cohort experiencing mental health challenges.
- 4.19.** CIPFA's [Understanding Preventative Investment](#) provides a methodology for quantifying preventative spend. This can help identify which organisations are involved, the scale of their overall investment, and the balance between prevention and reactive services. This analysis is a good starting place for exploring opportunities to reduce duplication, address siloed delivery, and improve outcomes through collaborative approaches.
- 4.20.** HM Treasury's [Magenta Book](#) provides a useful framework for assessing the effectiveness of public expenditure, including questions about what measurable outcomes have been achieved. It was updated in May 2026 to include how test and learn methods can be built into policy and spending decisions.
- 4.21.** While anecdotal evidence alone is rarely sufficient to justify change, it plays an important role in illustrating the human impact behind the data. Quantitative evidence helps establish the analytical case for change, while lived experience brings clarity and meaning to that case. The most compelling evidence combines robust baseline data and measurable progress over time with clear narratives showing how outcomes for individuals and communities have improved.
- 4.22.** Members of a cohort, residents within a place and frontline service providers are critical sources of insight into how systems operate in practice. They see and feel what happens. Their experience often reveals a gap between policy intent and lived reality. Narratives such as the 'Falling in Chigley' example in Annex D shows how these perspectives can be used to understand system behaviour and identify opportunities for improvement.

4.23. The table below sets out common questions which may arise in relation to data, alongside possible sources of answers. These are grouped under three broad headings: data quality, data sharing, and service delivery (see Table 1).

Table 1: Questions and answers that may arise about data

Theme	Questions	Answers
Data quality	How robust and usable is the data?	Data quality assessments, metadata, partner discussions, and validation exercises.
	What data standards do we need?	Engage with scalable existing standardisation projects (e.g. iStand and OpenReferral UK)
Data sharing	Who is using services, and how often?	Caseload data, service user records, and administrative datasets across agencies.
	How do people move through services over time?	Linked datasets, case management systems, and cross-agency user journey analysis.
	How do we bring together the necessary data?	Data and service maps, legislation mapping, statutory returns, linked datasets, shared care records, single view records
	Where does spend accumulate across the system?	Integrated financial and activity data, cohort analysis, and multi-agency spend mapping.
	Why is money being spent in this way?	Combined financial, operational, and outcomes data, alongside practitioner and service-user insight.
Service delivery	What are we spending, and on which people or places?	Financial systems, budget reports, and programme-level spend data across partner organisations.
	What services and activities sit behind this spend?	Operational data, service activity records, performance dashboards, commissioning information.
	What is driving demand and cost?	Referral data, needs assessments, population statistics, and trend analysis.
	Where is there duplication in services?	Service maps, commissioning inventories, and cross-agency reviews of provision.
	Where are the gaps in provision?	Waiting lists, unmet need indicators, outcomes data, and stakeholder feedback.



Prevention

- 4.24.** Prevention is a central principle in public service reform. A significant proportion of public spending remains concentrated on responding to problems once they arise, rather than preventing them from occurring in the first place. For example, the Milburn interim report [Young People and Work](#) highlights that 25 times more is spent on benefits for young people not in education, employment or training (NEETs) than on employment support.
- 4.25.** There is a strong and growing body of evidence demonstrating the value of preventative approaches across areas such as education, public health, mental health, addiction and rehabilitation. An LGA study, [The Case for Prevention in Adult Social Care](#), identified average savings of around £3 for every £1 invested across a range of health and social care interventions.
- 4.26.** Further evidence from practice reinforces this case. Better Care Together Thurrock's [The Case for Further Change \(2022-26\)](#) showed that reshaping support for a relatively small number of people with complex needs delivered savings of approximately £1 million over two years. Similarly, research by Manchester Metropolitan University on relational public services highlights significant reductions in demand for public services – and associated costs – when support is designed around people, rather than addressing issues in isolation.

4.27. Despite the strength of the evidence, delivering prevention in practice remains challenging. Four common barriers are set out below (see Table 2).

Table 2: Four barriers to delivering prevention

Issue	Challenge
<p>Alignment of costs and benefits ('wrong pocket')</p>	<p>Preventative investment often creates benefits that accrue to organisations other than those making the initial investment. This misalignment weakens incentives to act, as one part of the system bears the cost while another realises the savings. Without mechanisms such as pooled budgets, aligned incentives, or shared accountability, this can act as a structural barrier to system-wide change.</p>
<p>Affordability constraints ('no money')</p>	<p>Despite the long term value of prevention, most funding is already committed to meeting acute and statutory demand. This creates the challenge of 'double running' when investment in prevention appears to come at the expense of existing services. However, there may also be hidden inefficiencies within the system. As highlighted in the Institute for Government's report The Case for Total Place 2.0, duplication can occur when multiple services assess or respond to the same issue independently. Removing this overlap can release resources that can be redirected towards preventive activity.</p>
<p>Challenges in quantifying return on investment (ROI)</p>	<p>Demonstrating the value of prevention is complex and often contested. It can be difficult to define and track preventative spend, attribute outcomes over extended timeframes, and to capture wider social and economic benefits that do not appear in organisational accounts. Although established frameworks, such as CIPFA and HM Treasury guidance, offer structured approaches, they do not fully resolve issues of attribution, consistency or confidence in decision-making.</p>
<p>Timing of benefits and accountability ('getting the credit')</p>	<p>The benefits of prevention typically emerge over the medium to long term, while financial, political and performance pressures are more immediate. This creates a mismatch between when investments are made and when benefits are realised. As a result, incentives to prioritise prevention can be weakened – particularly where benefits fall outside current spending cycles, organisational boundaries or electoral timeframes.</p>



- 4.28.** Some areas are addressing these challenges through system-wide approaches that better align incentives, resources and accountability across organisations. Greater Manchester’s Prevention Demonstrator, for example, is designed to embed prevention within core public services rather than treating it as an additional or separate activity. Its Live Well programme provides neighbourhood-based support, bringing services together around people and communities. This helps to mitigate the ‘wrong pocket’ challenge by aligning partners around shared outcomes, while also creating more sustainable delivery models that reduce the need for ‘double running’. By embedding prevention within mainstream services, the approach also enables more consistent data collection and strengthens the evidence base for long-term investment.
- 4.29.** Economic development provides a further example of prevention in practice, particularly in addressing demand at source. By supporting employment, strengthening local economies, and increasing income and tax revenue, it can reduce demand for a wide range of public services over time. This approach helps to address some of the limitations associated with measuring return on investment, as outcomes are reflected in both increased economic activity and reduced service demand. It also aligns more closely with longer-term time horizons, helping to address the challenge of delayed benefits. Place-based initiatives, such as the work at Jaywick Sands (see Annex B), demonstrate how targeted interventions can improve outcomes while shifting demand away from more acute and reactive services.

5. Designing and delivering change

- 5.1.** This section sets out how Total Place can be designed and implemented in practice, bringing together the key elements of methodology, testing and learning, governance, capacity and communication.

Methodology

- 5.2.** The core stages of a Total Place project should be clearly defined and supported by an overarching methodology. This provides structure and clarity about how the work will be taken forward. At the outset, it is important to be clear about what is fixed and what is open to change, and whether the approach will build incrementally on existing arrangements or pursue more fundamental redesign. Total Place represents systemic change and should not be viewed solely as an exercise in pooling budgets.
- 5.3.** A range of well-established approaches can support large-scale change. These include methods focused on service redesign, strengthening community capacity, and enabling organisational change. Examples include asset-based community development, business process redesign, and appreciative enquiry, alongside widely recognised change frameworks such as those developed by Kotter, McKinsey, Lewin and others. Each provides distinct perspectives and tools and can be adapted to local circumstances.
- 5.4.** The Beckhard-Harris Change Model (represented as $C = D \times V \times F > R$) offers a useful lens for understanding the conditions required for successful change. It suggests that change (C) occurs when dissatisfaction with the current situation (D), a compelling vision for the future (V), and clear first steps (F) are collectively strong enough to overcome resistance (R). In practice, this emphasises the importance of clearly articulating the case for change, helping people see what the future will look like, taking early and visible actions, and addressing concerns that might hold people back.
- 5.5.** No single methodology will be appropriate in all circumstances. The most effective approach will depend on the nature of the challenge, local conditions and the experience and capability of those involved. In practice, successful programmes often draw on multiple methodologies, combining and adapting them to reflect local priorities and achieve the greatest impact.



Testing and modelling

- 5.6.** Before implementing Total Place, it is important to test whether proposed approaches are likely to work in practice. This helps to reduce risk, improve design and build confidence. A range of methods can be used, such as prototyping ideas, modelling different scenarios, or running small-scale trials to explore how approaches might work in real-world conditions.
- 5.7.** Given that Total Place focuses heavily on people, relationships and behaviour, it is important to consider how individuals and communities may respond to change. One practical approach is to test ideas informally before wider engagement. For example, where changes to a community hub are being considered, staff can use role play or workshop settings to explore potential reactions and identify issues. This enables proposals to be refined before they are shared more broadly with residents and service users.
- 5.8.** For projects focused on delivering more integrated support for people with complex needs, testing can help to understand how new approaches might work in practice. This involves setting out the intended experience from the individual's perspective, mapping how services would respond, and estimating how demand for public services may change as a result.
- 5.9.** Where services are commissioned to deliver outcomes rather than activities, it is important to agree how success will be measured from the outset. For example, an organisation might be commissioned to improve a child's confidence and behaviour at school (the outcome), rather than to deliver a set number of consultations (the output). In this case, success measures could draw on feedback from parents, teachers and the child to assess progress over time. As these outcomes may take time to emerge, early indicators such as school attendance, participation or behavioural incidents can provide useful signs of progress. Scenario planning can also help manage risk, for example by agreeing how partners will respond if progress is slower than expected or concern is raised. This helps maintain a focus on outcomes while allowing flexibility in delivery.

Governance, risks and constraints

- 5.10.** Governance arrangements for major change programmes can sometimes become overly formal and process-driven, relying on lengthy papers and detailed presentations which add limited practical value. Approaches focused primarily on scrutiny or compliance may discourage openness and limit opportunities for learning and continuous improvement.
- 5.11.** More effective governance arrangements are those that enable delivery and supporting progress. Value is added where project teams are clear in advance about where input, challenge or decisions are required, and meetings are used to explore options, test assumptions and identify opportunities to strengthen the approach.
- 5.12.** Common risks in Total Place projects may include:
- Unrealistic expectations on timescales, savings or outcomes
 - Competing priorities limiting the capacity of project team members
 - Limited councillor engagement or support
 - Insufficient collaboration within the council or with partners
 - Limited engagement from communities or service users
 - Constraints on the availability, quality or use of data
 - Difficulty in establishing a clear baseline of costs and benefits.
- 5.13.** Risk management can sometimes become a tick box exercise. A more effective approach is to identify the most significant risks early and agree how they will be actively managed, mitigated or reduced throughout the project.
- 5.14.** A range of practical constraints can affect the delivery of Total Place. These may include ring-fenced funding, short-term financial pressures, reporting requirements, data sharing restrictions, non-aligned geographies, unhelpful metrics, and limitations in workforce capacity or capability. While these challenges are real, they do not necessarily prevent progress. In many cases, they can be managed, adapted to, or worked around over time.
- 5.15.** In practice, the most significant barriers are often behavioural rather than structural. Effective collaboration depends on individuals and organisations working together in practice, not just in principle. Where this is limited, progress can be difficult to sustain. Building trust, developing shared understanding and fostering strong working relationships is therefore a critical foundation for successful place-based change.

Resources, capacity and enablers

- 5.16.** A common response to the need for change is to seek additional funding or external support. While specialist expertise and facilitation can add value, organisations should not assume that improvement must be outsourced. Senior and middle managers play a central role not only in maintaining day-to-day operations, but also in creating the conditions for improvement. Leading this work internally helps to build and retain organisational capability, learning and experience.
- 5.17.** In practice, capacity for improvement is often constrained. Senior leaders and managers frequently spend much of their time responding to operational pressures and managing internal processes. Meetings, reporting requirements and administrative tasks can absorb considerable time without always delivering equivalent value.
- 5.18.** Creating space for change therefore requires deliberate action. Organisations may need to prioritise, reduce or stop lower-value activity so that time and attention can be redirected towards improvement work. This includes supporting teams to focus on work that is purposeful, collaborative and aligned to agreed outcomes.
- 5.19.** Digital tools, including artificial intelligence (AI), offer growing opportunities to support this shift. They can improve productivity, reduce administrative burden, and strengthen access to information. For example, AI can enable rapid research and analysis, support the use of data across systems, and assist frontline staff by planning activities, summarising interactions, and drafting routine communications. However, realising these benefits depends on practitioners having a clear and confident understanding of the legal and regulatory frameworks governing data use and sharing, including data protection legislation, information governance standards, and professional duties. Without this clarity, uncertainty and risk aversion can limit effective collaboration and innovation.

Communication and language

- 5.20.** Effective communication is determined not by what is said, but what is understood. People interpret messages based on their existing perceptions and the way they first encounter a project or proposal. Therefore, it is important that early communication sets the right tone. This should reflect a collaborative approach, emphasising partnership with communities and stakeholders, openness to learning, and a shared commitment to achieving better outcomes.
- 5.21.** In practice, this means communicating in ways that reinforce these principles. For example, making clear that change will be developed with people rather than done to them; that the council is working in partnership rather than acting alone; that not all the answers are known at the outset; and that learning and adaptation are expected. It can also be helpful to signal that while ambitions may be significant, delivery will be practical and iterative, and that the work is intended to support longer-term change rather than a one-off initiative.
- 5.22.** First impressions are particularly important. Early communication helps to establish expectations, build trust, and shape how a project is perceived. For this reason, the tone and content of communication should be carefully considered and planned from the outset.
- 5.23.** Communication should be tailored to different audiences. Language that is familiar in professional, policy or organisational contexts may not be easily understood by residents and communities. Terms that are familiar in one setting may appear unclear or overly technical in another. Effective communication therefore requires a clear understanding of audience, context and purpose.
- 5.24.** Clarity is essential. Broad or abstract language can obscure meaning and make it harder for people to engage. Using specific examples and clearly defined outcomes help to make proposals more accessible, relevant and meaningful.
- 5.25.** Public sector organisations are often criticised for relying on complex or overly technical language and producing large volumes of documentation. In many cases, concise and purposeful communication is more effective. Clear, straightforward messages are more likely to support understanding, engagement and action.
- 5.26.** It is widely recognised that communicating clearly often requires more effort than communicating at length. As an ambassador once observed, “I am sorry to have written such a long despatch; I did not have time to write a short one.” The implication is that clarity and brevity require discipline but are more effective in enabling understanding and action.

6. People, leadership, and community

- 6.1.** This section sets out the people, cultural and relational foundations that underpin effective Total Place working. It explores how leadership shapes organisational behaviour and culture, and highlights the importance of trust, collaboration, and shared purpose across local systems. It also emphasises the role of councillors and communities in supporting improved outcomes.

Building trust

- 6.2.** When councils, partners and communities come together to address a complex or unfamiliar challenge, the quality of their relationships becomes critical. Delivering change in these conditions depends on trust, shared understanding and mutual respect. While these take time and sustained effort to build, they create the confidence, openness and resilience needed to navigate uncertainty and reach better outcomes.
- 6.3.** All innovation carries an element of risk. This risk is reduced when organisations and people understand one another's priorities, pressures and perspectives. Effective collaboration requires time to listen, reflect and see issues through others' eyes. This enables partners to learn together, find common ground, and achieve things that would not be possible alone.
- 6.4.** Councils, the NHS, policing and other public sector organisations may find local partnership working challenged by central requirements about priorities and how money is spent. While devolution may help to reduce this tension over time, reconciling 'vertical' demands and 'horizontal' place-based needs remains an ongoing challenge that requires careful navigation.
- 6.5.** The strength of personal relationships across local organisations is a critical factor in shaping the future of a place. As a result, turnover in leadership roles can carry a hidden cost. When people move on through promotion, retirement or reorganisational change, established relationships are disrupted and must be rebuilt. Supporting continuity and investing in strong relationships is therefore a core part of effective Total Place working.



Setting direction

- 6.6.** A substantial body of research shows that leadership is a primary determinant of organisational behaviour and, over time, organisational culture. Management and public policy literature consistently points to three main ways in which leaders exert influence: what they consistently say; what they prioritise, measure, control and reward; and how they act, particularly in critical situations.
- 6.7.** People in any organisation take their cues – consciously or not – from the signals leaders send about purpose, priorities, pace, openness to change, autonomy, accountability, internal collaboration and external relationships. Leadership is not limited to the most senior roles; it is exercised at all levels wherever individuals influence the actions and decisions of others. Where leadership is risk-averse, overly cautious or resistant to new ideas, these behaviours are likely to be reflected across the organisation and reinforced over time, particularly as those with different expectations or ambitions choose to leave.
- 6.8.** When organisations face challenges that extend beyond business as usual, leadership must create and sustain the conditions in which people are able – and motivated – to act differently. This requires the deliberate cultivation of an enabling climate. A key starting point is the development of what management writer John Kotter described as a ‘guiding coalition’: a group brought together by shared intent and common purpose. Building this shared commitment takes time and may involve difficult choices about who is willing to support the direction of travel, but it provides a stronger foundation for sustained, long-term success.
- 6.9.** The culture of a local authority is often shaped by the interplay between its political and managerial leadership, with significant implications for openness to collaboration. Authorities with outward looking leadership are generally more inclined to work across organisational boundaries and explore shared solutions. Conversely, where leadership attention is focused primarily on maintaining control or responding to financial pressures, collaborative approaches are less likely to be prioritised or sustained.
- 6.10.** In broad terms the General Power of Competence (GPC), introduced by the Localism Act 2011, enables local authorities to undertake any activity not expressly prohibited by law. Where this flexibility is clearly understood and communicated, professionals can feel empowered to act without waiting for formal approval or instruction. This creates the conditions for bottom-up improvement, reducing reliance on top-down system change.
- 6.11.** A useful starting point can be to create dedicated space for collective reflection on purpose, ambition and readiness for change – asking, openly and honestly, why the organisation exists, what it is seeking to achieve, and what it is prepared to do differently, together, to achieve better outcomes.

Supporting people

- 6.12.** A model based on sustained relationships with other organisations, people and places differs significantly from one primarily focused on transactional activity. Total Place therefore has deep implications for how work is organised and delivered in a local authority, including job design, skills, recruitment, training, development and performance management.
- 6.13.** For example, a social worker's use of time is shaped by a range of factors including caseload levels, statutory timescales, administrative requirements, the design of front door pathways, workforce capacity, budget structures and alignment with partner agencies. Local interpretations of concepts such as 'duty', 'risk' and 'eligibility' also have a material impact on day to day practice.
- 6.14.** As roles evolve towards supporting people and places with interconnected needs in a more holistic way, these patterns of work begin to change. The modelling described at Step 8 includes consideration of future job roles, while Step 9 focuses on how the organisation might move from the current position to the desired state. Some of these changes are complex and require sustained effort over time.
- 6.15.** Experience from councils adopting this approach suggests that staff respond differently to less prescribed ways of working. Some staff adapt readily, while others prefer more familiar structures. One approach has been to trial staff within the new teams, enabling individuals to experience the new ways of working before making longer-term decisions. Depending on their response and preference, staff were then either confirmed in the new roles or supported to continue in more familiar roles.
- 6.16.** An organisation's culture is reflected in the behaviours it recognises and rewards. Matching these behaviours with what matters most to the organisation's success is critical. In successful organisations, those who thrive are typically those who continue to learn, embrace new ideas, work collaboratively across organisational and professional boundaries, and take proportionate, well judged risks to get better results.
- 6.17.** As Total Place places greater emphasis on the agency of people and communities, it also requires local authority managers to provide greater autonomy to their staff in how they respond. While processes and KPIs can specify inputs and outputs, outcomes are less easily prescribed. This shifts the managerial role away from direction and control towards coaching, support and development.

Working locally

- 6.18.** Councillors bring a distinctive strength to local leadership through their deep understanding of the places and communities they represent. Their work often focuses on practical, locally visible issues raised by residents – such as removing graffiti or improving road safety – rather than abstract policy concerns. This positions councillors as a link between council services and ward level priorities, and between officers and local people, groups and organisations.
- 6.19.** Councillors are also well placed to work across organisational boundaries. Where they identify shared challenges – for example, addressing antisocial behaviour – they can help bring together the council, the police and other partners to coordinate a more effective, joined-up response.
- 6.20.** Within a Total Place approach, councillors can play a key role by supporting collaboration between the council and community groups, advising on how best to engage with local people, and contributing their knowledge of what is likely to work in practice. Through scrutiny and challenge, they can also help ensure that projects are delivering as intended and remain grounded in local realities.
- 6.21.** There may be a disconnect between where the council's money is spent and the issues most frequently raised by residents. For example, while social care accounts for most local government expenditure, residents are often more aware of visible issues such as potholes and litter. Councillors can play an important role in explaining how reducing avoidable demand in high-cost services can release resources to address the more visible, everyday concerns.

Acting together

- 6.22.** Experienced gardeners often say the secret to good asparagus is to ‘dig the trench three years ago’. The same lesson applies to meaningful community engagement. Building strong relationships with communities takes time, persistence and consistency. Councils that have invested in this approach over the long term – including places such as Doncaster, Lambeth, Wigan, Test Valley and Plymouth – demonstrate the significant benefits this can deliver.
- 6.23.** The foundation of effective engagement is mutual understanding and trust. These cannot be achieved quickly, but where they exist, they fundamentally change what councils and communities can achieve together. Strong, trusting relationships create three significant opportunities:
- **Better outcomes through co-creation.** When councils work alongside local people to design solutions, services are more responsive and effective. This may include co-designing public spaces such as parks and museums, supporting young people into employment, or enabling older people to reshape the support they receive. Local insight strengthens decision-making and leads to services that better reflect real needs
 - **Greater participation and shared responsibility.** People are more likely to support decisions they have helped to make. This often leads to individuals and communities contributing time, skills and local knowledge
 - **A shift from commissioning outputs to commissioning outcomes.** Traditional models tend to focus on delivering a specified level of activity. A more relational approach starts with the outcomes that matter most. Instead of commissioning predefined services, the council works with providers and service users to agree what would most improve quality of life and then provides flexibility in how resources are used to achieve those outcomes. This encourages innovation and ensures services remain centred on people.
- 6.24.** In this context, approaches such as deliberative democracy and participatory budgeting can play a valuable role. They provide structured ways for residents to engage with complex decisions, build shared understanding and strengthen trust between councils and the communities they serve.

7. Strategic partners and collaboration

7.1. Total Place depends on the active involvement of partners beyond the local authority, recognising that each brings distinct capabilities, responsibilities and insights. How these organisations collaborate, align priorities and act collectively is central to success. This section explores how to work effectively with strategic partners and highlights how stronger collaboration can support better outcomes for communities.

Central government

7.2. Total Place sits within a long-standing and dynamic relationship between central and local government. The balance between central direction and local autonomy has shifted over time. At times, concerns about financial sustainability or consistency have led to stronger central oversight, while at others there has been greater emphasis on local flexibility and innovation. Similar dynamics can also be seen locally, for example between different tiers of government, and community-level organisations.

7.3. All levels of government have a clear and legitimate role. Local government brings a detailed understanding of communities and a direct democratic mandate, while central government is responsible for national priorities and outcomes. The key challenge is to align these roles in a way that enables national ambition to be realised through local insight, flexibility and delivery.

7.4. In practice, central government can support Total Place by:

- Simplifying or removing national requirements that restrict local collaboration
- Aligning funding, performance and reporting expectations across departments
- Enabling local flexibility in the design and delivery of national programmes
- Supporting national agencies and institutions to work as part of local systems and alongside local partners
- Embedding continuous learning within policy development, using real-time insight from places to adapt programmes and inform future initiatives.



- 7.5.** However, system design alone is not sufficient. The effectiveness of Total Place depends as much on relationships as it does structures. Strong, trusted connections between the civil service and local government are essential to translating shared ambitions into practice. Deepening these relationships through sustained engagement, shared learning and mutual understanding remains a critical enabler of effective public service reform.
- 7.6.** While individual lobbying efforts may place additional demands on the capacity of councils and can be difficult to sustain, councils are encouraged to raise any blockers with the LGA. The LGA can consolidate these issues and advocate on behalf of the sector, strengthening the case presented to central government.

NHS

- 7.7.** Closer integration across organisational, administrative, service, and clinical areas of health and social care would, in many cases, deliver clear improvements in outcomes, user experience, and the efficient use of resources. Delayed discharge provides a clear illustration of these challenges. Individuals are often unable to leave hospital for a range of reasons, including awaiting consultant sign-off, outstanding test results, or delays to arranging appropriate support in the community. Strengthening integration – particularly between hospital and community-based services – could help address the latter and enable more timely, effective discharges.
- 7.8.** The NHS operates within a prominent national framework, including performance standards, regulatory oversight and financial constraints. At the same time, improving population health and wellbeing requires responsiveness to local needs and circumstances. This can create tensions in prioritisation, resource allocation and the balance between prevention and acute demand. Striking the right balance between national direction and local flexibility presents both a challenge and an opportunity for innovation.
- 7.9.** The NHS and local government have distinct and complementary roles. The NHS brings clinical and managerial expertise, national infrastructure and a focus on health outcomes, while local government contributes democratic accountability, place-based leadership, and a broader role in addressing the wider determinants of health, such as housing, education and transport. Effective partnership is essential to bring these contributions together around shared outcomes for residents.

7.10. In practice, the NHS can support Total Place by:

- Working with local authorities, partners and people with lived experience to agree shared place-based priorities and outcomes
- Aligning planning, funding and delivery mechanisms with local systems
- Enabling services to be designed and delivered at neighbourhood and community level
- Supporting NHS leaders to act as place-based leaders alongside local government and other partners
- Embedding prevention and early intervention into service models, in partnership with local systems
- Strengthening the use of shared data and insight to support coordinated action.

7.11. There is increasing progress in this direction, including greater integration of hospital and community services and the development of integrated neighbourhood teams. Integrated Care Systems, the [NHS Ten Year Plan](#), and devolution and local government reorganisation in England are all reinforcing the importance of place. Devolution, particularly through Mayoral Strategic Authorities, is helping to strengthen alignment between national priorities and local delivery.

7.12. As part of this shift, NHS leaders are increasingly operating within devolved and place-based arrangements, including through Integrated Care Boards, and working across both national and local accountabilities. This dual role provides greater scope to respond to local circumstances while contributing to national objectives, although it continues to require careful navigation of funding and performance frameworks.

7.13. Devolution also supports a stronger focus on the wider determinants of health – such as housing, education and transport – by creating greater opportunities to align health services with wider local priorities. However, structures and governance alone are not sufficient. As with other sectors, the quality of relationships, shared understanding between organisations, and clear plans for delivery remain fundamental.

7.14. Where these relationships are strong, collaboration between the NHS, local government and wider partners is more effective, including in the development of integrated neighbourhood approaches to health and care. Taken together, the current direction of travel – towards devolution, local flexibility and community involvement – creates a stronger foundation for delivering Total Place.

Police

- 7.15.** Policing interacts with local government across a wide range of issues, including community safety, mental health and child protection. This is particularly evident in efforts to support individuals at risk of reoffending. In these contexts, local government, the police, the probation and prison service, the VCS, and other partners often deliver complementary support, working together to achieve more positive outcomes.
- 7.16.** Statutory Community Safety Partnerships bring together councils, police, health, fire and rescue, and probation services, with a legal responsibility to develop and implement strategies addressing crime, disorder, antisocial behaviour and substance misuse. These partnerships provide an established foundation for place-based collaboration. Programmes such as the Home Office's Clear, Hold, Build initiative demonstrate how coordinated action between police, councils and communities can reduce crime and strengthen resilience in neighbourhoods.
- 7.17.** The Ministry of Justice has previously promoted this type of collaboration through the Local Justice Reinvestment pilot (2011-2013), which reflected many principles of Total Place. This pilot aimed to better align local and national incentives within the criminal justice system, recognising that while local agencies often bear the costs of offending, many of the financial benefits of reducing crime accrue to central government.
- 7.18.** To address this imbalance, the pilot introduced a payment-by-results model. Participating areas could receive financial rewards if they reduced demand on the criminal justice system – by at least five percent for adults and 10 percent for young people – relative to a baseline. These payments were intended to reflect the savings generated such as reduced court activity or lower use of custody, and to enable reinvestment in prevention and frontline services.
- 7.19.** The model helped to strengthen multi-agency collaboration and encouraged a shift toward a more system-wide approach, particularly in areas such as Greater Manchester, where there was a focus on integrated offender management and service redesign. However, its overall impact was constrained by relatively weak financial incentives, challenges in measuring and attributing savings, and incomplete alignment across agencies.

- 7.20.** Overall, the pilot demonstrated the potential of justice reinvestment to support place-based approaches, while it highlighted the need for larger pooled budgets, clearer fiscal flows, and longer time horizons to fully realise the benefits of reinvesting savings from reduced offending into local services.
- 7.21.** Policing is also undergoing wider reform. Proposals outlined in [A New Model for Policing](#) include the development of a more structured national and regional model. While boundaries may not always align with local government or mayoral geographies these reforms highlight the importance of maintaining strong local alignment within an evolving national framework. Forthcoming legislation is expected to significantly reshape police governance, creating both opportunities and challenges for place-based approaches such as Total Place.
- 7.22.** In practice, policing can support Total Place by:
- Working with local authorities and partners to agree shared priorities for communities
 - Contributing to and strengthening partnership arrangements such as Community Safety Partnerships
 - Aligning operational activity with wider local system priorities
 - Supporting the use of shared data and insight to better understand need and target interventions
 - Working at neighbourhood level to build relationships with communities and partners
 - Contributing to prevention and early intervention, particularly for those with complex or repeat needs.
- 7.23.** The balance between protective and investigative activity varies between forces, but there is a broader trend towards more community-focused and data-driven approaches to policing. This shift creates opportunities to align policing more closely with wider local prevention agendas and contribute more effectively to place-based outcomes.

Voluntary and community sector (VCS)

- 7.24.** The VCS works alongside local government across a wide range of areas, including public health, social care, community development and prevention. It comprises faith groups, charities, voluntary and community organisations, together with cooperatives and social enterprises. These organisations operate independently of government and reinvest any surplus to deliver social or environmental benefit.
- 7.25.** There are over 200,000 VCS organisations in the UK, ranging from small neighbourhood groups to large national bodies, collectively employing more than one million people. Total sector income exceeds £100 billion annually, with around a quarter derived from public funding. The VCS operates at both national and local levels. While many organisations are deeply rooted in place, national charities and funders also play an important role. This combination enables the sector to combine local insight with wider expertise, supporting delivery that is both responsive to place and informed by broader experience.
- 7.26.** Local infrastructure organisations (LIOs) support the development and sustainability of the VCS at a local level. There are approximately 200 across the UK, with the National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA) acting as their membership body. LIOs play a key role in connecting local authorities with the wider sector, supporting coordination, representation and capacity-building. Their effectiveness depends heavily on strong, trust-based relationships, often including close working with public health and other senior local authority leaders.
- 7.27.** In practice, the VCS is an essential partner in the delivery of public services. Its close connection with communities provides valuable insight into local needs, particularly in engaging groups that statutory services find harder to reach. The sector also contributes specialist expertise across a range of fields, complementing the role of local authorities and other partners. As statutory services can often be perceived as intimidating and hard to navigate, VCS organisations frequently act as a more accessible ‘front door’, supporting residents to access and engage with services.
- 7.28.** Prevention is often described as a ‘superpower’ by the VCS. These organisations are rooted in their communities and a deep understanding of local people and places, enabling them to work upstream and reduce demand on statutory services. For example, in Sandwell, a programme delivered by a partnership of sixteen local charities and coordinated by local VCS bodies has supported 4,500 young people experiencing anxiety and low confidence. Specialist organisations are also often able to engage individuals and communities less visible to statutory services.

- 7.29.** Given their close links to communities, VCS organisations are well placed to identify emerging needs and respond quickly. This makes them key partners in prevention and early intervention, although their contribution is not always fully utilised within local systems.
- 7.30.** The VCS can support Total Place by:
- Working with local authorities and partners to shape shared priorities for communities
 - Contributing to and strengthening local partnership arrangements
 - Co-designing services and activities to meet identified needs
 - Contributing local insight and data to understand demand
 - Building trust and relationships at neighbourhood level
 - Contributing to prevention and early intervention, particularly for those with complex or unmet needs.
- 7.31.** While formal structures are important, they are not sufficient on their own. Effective collaboration between the VCS and local government relies on relationships, mutual understanding and continuity over time. LIOs are often well placed to support councils in identifying how and when to engage the sector, particularly during the early stages of policy and service development.
- 7.32.** Partnerships are most effective when councils engage with the VCS at multiple levels, reducing reliance on individual relationships and increasing resilience to staff turnover. Early engagement, particularly at the initiation stage, allows VCS insight to shape service design from the outset. This strengthens collaboration and increases the likelihood that commissioning focused on outcomes rather than outputs.
- 7.33.** However, councils can sometimes adopt cautious or overly prescriptive approaches to working with the VCS, for example through tightly specified delivery requirements. For smaller organisations, the burden of competitive bidding and ongoing monitoring can be disproportionate, diverting capacity away from frontline activity and affecting morale. While accountability remains essential, requirements should be proportionate to scale and risk. In some cases, grant funding rather than contracts may provide greater flexibility and better reflect the nature of the relationship.

- 7.34.** People volunteer for a range of reasons, but the benefits are consistently significant. Volunteering provides opportunities to contribute meaningfully, feel valued, build social connections, and develop a sense of purpose and belonging. It also takes diverse forms. For example, the Wiltshire Centre for Independent Living was established by disabled people to support one another. Many participants both give and receive support in a peer-to-peer model that also helps reduce pressure on public services.
- 7.35.** There is growing interest in creating more flexible roles across paid staff and volunteers. Some organisations are identifying roles that can be undertaken by either group. For example, one hospice with 300 staff and 1,400 volunteers has identified over 40 such roles and is developing a single workforce policy to support this approach.
- 7.36.** Like other sectors, the VCS can be competitive as organisations seek funding, recognition, and support. Philanthropists and social impact investors can play an important role by funding innovation and covering core costs. They can help align organisations around shared priorities and often provide longer-term funding, which can be more effective than short-term public sector cycles, as well as offering funding models that may not be available through local authorities.

Business

- 7.37.** Local businesses are an integral part of place-based systems, with a direct stake in local economic prosperity and the strength of their customer base. They often work alongside local authorities on shared priorities such as high street regeneration and economic development. Anchor institutions – organisations that are rooted in place and unlikely to relocate, such as universities, airports and utilities – have a particularly significant role. Their long-term presence gives them a strong interest in local success and positions them to help shape local growth and investment.
- 7.38.** For example, the Leeds Business Anchors partnership brings together major locally rooted organisations to support inclusive growth across the city. By aligning their approaches to employment, procurement and community investment, these institutions use their collective influence to create opportunities for residents, strengthen supply chains and reduce inequalities, demonstrating how coordinated local leadership can deliver wider social and economic benefits.

- 7.39.** Business representative organisations also play an important role within local and national systems. Bodies such as the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) and the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) represent firms across different sizes and sectors, providing structured routes for engagement with government. They support policy development by articulating employer perspectives, facilitate collaboration between the public and private sectors, and contribute to local priorities such as skills, productivity and growth. Through their networks and convening power, they help ensure business insight is reflected in place-based decision-making and service design.
- 7.40.** There has been a growing emphasis on corporate social responsibility (CSR), with many businesses recognising their role in supporting the social and economic wellbeing of the communities in which they operate. This can include employee volunteering, creating employment opportunities for disadvantaged groups, and strengthening local supply chains. Such activity complements public and voluntary sector efforts, contributing to more resilient and inclusive local economies.
- 7.41.** While the role of business in economic development is well established, there are further opportunities to involve businesses in wider place-based initiatives. For example, projects focused on specific cohorts – such as young people NEET – can benefit from early and active engagement with local employers and anchor institutions.
- 7.42.** In these contexts, businesses can provide practical support and expertise that complements public and voluntary sector partners. This may include providing work experience and employment pathways, sharing operational or technical knowledge, supporting skills development, or contributing to the evaluation of impact and value. Such contributions broaden opportunities and support more effective, real-world solutions.
- 7.43.** Businesses can support Total Place by:
- Working with local authorities and partners to shape shared economic and social priorities
 - Contributing to partnerships and initiatives beyond traditional economic development roles
 - Offering employment, training and work experience opportunities, particularly for targeted groups
 - Sharing expertise, data and resources to support innovation and service improvement
 - Acting as anchor institutions to support local resilience and long-term development
- 7.44.** As with other sectors, effective collaboration depends not only on formal arrangements but also on relationships, trust and shared purpose. Outward-facing leadership within local authorities and partner organisations is key to building connections with businesses and creating meaningful engagement.

Cultural and sporting institutions

- 7.45.** Cultural and sporting institutions and groups deliver significant public value beyond their core activities. They are integral partners in place-based systems, with a direct stake in the wellbeing, identity, and vibrancy of their communities. They often work alongside local authority services – such as libraries, parks and leisure centres – to extend their reach and impact. For instance, three-quarters of grassroots sport clubs rely on public facilities, while creative freelancers often move between public and private commissions to sustain their practice.
- 7.46.** Collectively, these organisations support shared priorities including health improvement, community cohesion, regeneration, and inclusive growth. Many act as anchor institutions, with a long-term interest in the success and resilience of their place.
- 7.47.** Cultural and sporting institutions often play a strong convening role within local systems, bringing together communities, partners, and stakeholders through shared experiences and activities. By encouraging participation across diverse groups, they help strengthen social connections, build trust and foster a sense of belonging and pride in place. Their position within communities enables them to engage people who may be less likely to access more formal public services.
- 7.48.** They also contribute through education, skills development, and personal enrichment. Working with schools, colleges and community organisations, as well as through outreach and volunteering programmes, they help develop transferable skills such as teamwork, creativity, leadership and resilience. These activities can create pathways into further education, training and employment, particularly for young people and underrepresented groups.
- 7.49.** Their economic contribution to place is significant. By attracting visitors, events, and investment, they increase footfall and support local supply chains, including hospitality, retail and transport. They also play a key role in place-making and regeneration, enhancing the attractiveness of areas as places to live, work, and invest, and contributing to overall economic competitiveness.

- 7.50.** Different types of organisations can access funding, sources not always available to the public sector and align these with local priorities. Cultural and sporting organisations can attract philanthropic investment or lottery funding, for example through Arts Council England or Sport England. More commercially focused parts of the creative industries can also access innovation funding, growth finance and equity investment. Councils can help bring these partners together around a shared cultural strategy or vision – through approaches such as cultural compacts – enabling each organisation to contribute its strengths towards common goals.
- 7.51.** Many cultural and sporting organisations deliver targeted social impact through charitable foundations, community trusts and outreach programmes. These initiatives often focus on addressing inequalities, supporting vulnerable groups, improving health and wellbeing, and promoting inclusion. In doing so, they complement public and voluntary sector provision, adding capacity and specialist expertise to local systems.
- 7.52.** Well-known cultural and sporting institutions often benefit from strong public recognition and trusted brands, enabling them to reach and influence large and diverse audiences. This can support behaviour change, encourage participation and raise awareness of key issues. Their visibility can also amplify local initiatives, mobilise volunteers and support community-led action. In addition, they play an important role in preserving and celebrating local identity, heritage, and shared history, contributing to collective memory and sustaining the cultural fabric of places over time.
- 7.53.** Cultural and sporting institutions can support Total Place by:
- Working with local authorities and partners to shape shared social, economic, and health priorities
 - Accessing and aligning diverse funding sources, including philanthropic and commercial
 - Contributing to partnerships and initiatives beyond their core functions
 - Providing inclusive opportunities for participation, skills development and volunteering
 - Supporting targeted interventions for groups such as young people and vulnerable communities
 - Using their reach, assets and trusted status to engage communities and promote positive outcomes
 - Acting as civic anchors to support local identity, resilience and long-term development.

8. Beyond Total Place

- 8.1.** The development of this handbook on Total Place has prompted reflection on how public services might evolve over the longer term as place-based collaboration becomes more embedded. The ideas below reflect emerging thinking from across the system and are intended to inform further discussion rather than prescribe specific approaches.
- 8.2.** Language plays an important role in shaping how systems are understood and organised. The term ‘public services’ can reinforce institutional boundaries, whereas alternative framings – such as ‘social good’ – may better capture the collective effort of public, voluntary and private sectors working together to improve outcomes for communities.
- 8.3.** There may be value in rethinking approaches to performance and accountability. In other sectors, senior leaders are accountable for organisational success, not solely their individual functions. Applied to place-based systems, this could mean greater shared accountability among senior leaders for outcomes across a locality, strengthening collective ownership and reinforcing the role of partnership forums as drivers of sustained change.
- 8.4.** Organisational design is continuing to evolve in response to complexity and pace of change. Traditional hierarchical structures – focused on direction and control – may be less suited to these conditions. There is increasing interest in flatter, more agile approaches, with empowered teams operating within clear shared values and collaborative cultures. Elements of this shift are already visible across parts of both the public and private sectors.
- 8.5.** Building on the government’s move towards a more mission-driven and joined-up state, there is an opportunity to create a Public Service Leaders’ Network. This could bring together senior leaders from across the system, with membership grounded in frontline experience and operational experience across different parts of the public sector. As a shared leadership community, it could support greater mobility between roles, strengthen collaboration, reduce silos and embed a genuinely whole-system approach to improving outcomes.
- 8.6.** Finally, there is growing recognition of the need to complement traditional economic measures with broader indicators of wellbeing. While metrics such as GDP remain important, they do not fully capture what matters to communities. Further development and application of measures such as social return on investment could help public services decide with more confidence how best to spend public money in the pursuit of long-term social value.



Afterword

This handbook has brought together experience, insight and emerging practice from across local government and its partners to inform thinking on Total Place. It highlights both the progress already being made in different areas and the scope to develop place-based approaches further where they can add greatest value.

As set out throughout, the effective application of Total Place principles depends not only on structures and processes, but on the strength of relationships – within councils, across organisations and with communities. Where these are built on trust, openness and shared understanding, they enable more effective collaboration, collective insight, and more confident, joined-up decision-making.

Continued progress will depend on maintaining this focus – learning from practice, strengthening partnerships over time, and applying these principles consistently to deliver better outcomes for communities.



9. Annexes

Annex A: Glossary

This annex provides brief definitions of ideas, methods and programmes you may encounter in pursuing a Total Place initiative:

Test, Learn and Grow is a £100 million UK government programme to improve public services by piloting innovative solutions in local communities before scaling them up. The aim is to move away from top-down policies to continuing user-centred data-driven improvement.

Relational Public Services replace transactions with relationships, prioritising trust with service users to understand and help them as a whole person and give them agency in decisions about their lives. Better outcomes and very large savings have been shown.

Human Learning Systems replace narrow public service targets with bespoke support to individuals sustained over time, recognising that people's lives evolve within complex systems, that learning is continuous, and that experimentation is essential.

The Liberated Method puts relational public services and human learning systems into practice by providing a framework to guide caseworkers.

Place-based Budgeting pools local funding between public sector agencies to improve specific outcomes for a group or place, emphasising prevention and reducing duplication. It places more weight on local circumstances as opposed to centralised uniformity.

Accountable Care is a framework within which councils, NHS bodies, and social care providers collaborate to manage health and care services within a set budget for a defined local population.

The Greater Manchester Prevention Demonstrator aims to move from sickness-based services to proactive earlier care at neighbourhood level. Health, housing, employment and other support are integrated for individuals within their communities.

Changing Futures is a UK government programme to improve outcomes for adults facing multiple disadvantage. Its second three-year phase began in April 2026 and will operate in eighteen localities.

Community Power Pilots announced in May 2026 involve local people in working alongside councils to find solutions to problems that have held their neighbourhoods back.

Annex B: Examples

Below are three short accounts of local authorities applying Total Place ideas to particular circumstances.

Revitalising The Seaside

Built in the 1930s as a holiday resort on the Essex coast near Clacton, Jaywick Sands was severely flooded in 1953. Thirty-five people died and hundreds lost their homes. Determined residents stayed on, but Jaywick has since been consistently ranked as the most deprived place in the UK. Nearly half of its 5,000 residents have relied on benefits, five times the national average. Isolation, few jobs, poor shops and low-quality housing have contributed to continuing poor physical and mental health.

Over the years since the flood, very large sums – relative to the size of the population – have been spent (attempts to calculate the total were abandoned) on social support, housing, flood defences and roads. Nonetheless, local people often felt looked down upon and neglected, coping thanks to mutual support and a strong community spirit.

In 2020, the district council (Tendring) and county council (Essex) conceived a collaborative project, the Jaywick Sands Place Plan, to break away from long-standing dependency. Its core was a step change in flood defences, gradual improvement in housing, better everyday amenities and rapid economic development.

Resident participation was central to the plan from the outset. [As Tendring District Council's Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Growth, Regeneration, and Tourism said:](#) "Nobody knows Jaywick Sands better than the people who live there, so it's right that they co-design these projects and see them come to life." Council officers knocked on doors to ask residents what most mattered to them and discuss ideas about what might be done, followed by a series of engagement events.

Sunspot, a purpose-built business and community centre providing a focal point for the community, opened in 2023. It is now fully occupied, providing a market hall, cafe and shops including a gym, hairdresser, dog groomer and bakery. Nearby are a seafront footway, new public toilets, bus waiting facilities and a community garden. A council team is working with residents to improve rented housing.

The overall benefit-to-cost ratio of the plan is 4:1, with around 40 new jobs created.

Joining The Dots

During 2024, as part of the [Brent 2023-27 plan](#), Brent Council became increasingly aware that some residents sought its help only in extremity, if ever. Through discussions with council service leaders, the NHS, the homelessness charity Crisis and voluntary and community groups, Brent Working in Neighbourhoods (WiN) was created. It aims to develop joined-up, relational ways of working to reach people where they live. This will shift the focus from crisis response towards addressing underlying causes, supporting genuine prevention.

In July 2025, a pilot neighbourhood team was launched in Harlesden, an area of high deprivation and homelessness. Staff from across the council, NHS and VCS come together once a week at Brent's Crisis Skylight in Harlesden alongside a team of full-time neighbourhood-based lead workers. The VCS is key in connecting with residents and shaping the best support for them, and there are now good examples of this working.

In expanding WiN to other neighbourhoods across the borough four lessons from the pilot will be taken on board. First, building strong relationships, though time and effort intensive, is crucial. The local voluntary sector must be, and feel itself to be, an equal partner, and be enabled through funding to play an active role in both governance and teams.

Second, data – for example, about the identity and circumstances of vulnerable households – is inadequate to effectively target prevention work well. It sits across a range of service and organisational boundaries, so there is no overall picture of households across the borough. Progress in integrating data across public services will be necessary.

Third, demonstrating the impact of preventative work is difficult. Quantitative measures – such as admissions, social care and temporary accommodation volumes – are useful but take time to feed through, so over-focussing on them can stall momentum. Stories of real human experience are compelling but, to build a full case for neighbourhood working, better metrics are needed, including measures of financial impact on public services.

Fourth, while some council staff adapted readily to 'swimming outside their lane' others were disoriented by the need to work across services, particularly if necessary information from elsewhere was not readily to hand. So, neighbourhood working exposes ways in which the wider system needs to adapt. As Brent's Corporate Director for Service Reform and Strategy explained when providing this example: "We see some successful outcomes – but in spite of the predominant system we work in, not because of it."

Pulling Us Together

Ely is one of the lowest income areas of Cardiff. In May 2023, two boys travelling on electric bikes were involved in a fatal collision following an interaction with a police vehicle. A riot broke out shortly afterwards. After legal action against those involved in violence, the council initiated a listening exercise involving over 1,200 local people in open meetings, one-to-one conversations and surveys.

Working with Action in Caerau and Ely (ACE), a community group formed in 2011, the council explored emerging themes through seven community workshops. One hundred residents and 50 public sector professionals including youth workers, GPs, headteachers and police took part. This identified six main areas for attention: children and young people; community safety; spaces and the environment; mental health and wellbeing; employment; and community building. Public sector professionals, working alongside a community steering group, were asked to develop these into a plan.

The plan included 40 actions launched as part of a [Community Plan for Caerau and Ely](#) in May 2024. Examples of the actions include support to families whose children were not attending school regularly, 'putting the brakes' on nuisance vehicles, a new outdoor play space, community festivals, and targeted employment support for those furthest from a job.

Key to the plan was co-production. In *The Craft of Co-Production (2025)*, a subsequent study by Cardiff Business School identified six elements essential to making that work: building and maintaining trust between all parties, setting time and resource boundaries, making sure that complex information was presented in a simple way, managing difficult conversations, seeing others' point of view, and equipping participants to see practical ways forward.

The 2025 ACE (Action in Caerau and Ely) Annual Report demonstrates substantial progress across the actions, including for example a Bronze Age dig involving 1,400 people and the opening of a new youth space at the community high school. In February 2026, Caerau and Ely was selected for the UK government Pride in Place programme, which will bring regeneration investment of up to £20 million over ten years.

Annex C: Project on a page

Action Steps

1. Start the conversation within
2. Hold up the mirror
3. Test the waters
4. Set a tentative ambition
5. Shape the architecture
6. Map the landscape
7. Connect
8. Picture the future
9. Do it
10. Expand

Project Elements

Scoping and setup

- Define, identify and quantify the cohort/place
- Understand the context (e.g. history, legislation, policy, economy)
- Select underlying project methodology
- Set up project evaluation criteria and process
- Set up learning capture for both this project and wider implications.

Evidence and insight gathering

- Collect existing relevant data
- Map and cost who does what, why and how in relation to the cohort/place
- Establish and measure, as far as possible, the outcomes of current activity
- Review and digest relevant experience elsewhere (including international examples).

Engagement

- Engage with cohort/place influencers
- Engage with cohort/place members (e.g. facts, attitudes, preferences, possibilities).

Design and development

- Generate ideas and co-design potential future approaches
- Assess potential digital and AI applications.



Testing and appraisal

- Model, simulate, prototype and cost potential new approaches
- Assess implications for the cohort/place, local public sector, workforce and budgets.

Implementation planning

- Develop an implementation plan and timetable.

Evaluation and learning

- Review and evaluate the project
- Set out wider implications for local authorities, central government and partners
- Show how learning can be applied to other cohorts/places
- Evaluate iteratively, not just at the end (especially when applying TLG principles).

Annex D: Falling in Chigley

The aim of this narrative is to help support conversations in your organisation. The narrative is based on true events; to illustrate how Total Place can work in practice. While approaches will differ dependant on place, this account emphasises how the fundamentals of shared accountability, pooled resource, and collaborative working, can prevent residents reaching the point of crisis.

Falling over can be grim, especially when you're old. The Deputy Leader's 84-year-old dad fell over an orphaned hand basket in the supermarket car park last week. Twisted his ankle badly and broke the fibula. Doctor said he was lucky not to have broken his hip. Even so he's going to be in hospital for six days. Denise will have to take a week off to look after him when he goes back to his flat while carers are sorted out. She's thinking it's probably time for him to come and live with them. That's going to start the care home debate again.

The Chief Exec lives next door but one to Mrs Marshall, who runs a local age charity and they get to talking. That leads to a wider discussion over lunch in City Hall. The Director of Adult Social Services (DASS) says as it happens, they've been talking to the NHS about the pressure on the ambulance service. Apparently falls are now the second biggest reason for a 999 call. Looks like this is an area they should examine more closely. DASS asks her deputy Ray to summarise the position.

The good news is there's a lot being done. The Fire and Rescue Service's home visits look out for trip hazards. They are followed up by a council team providing better lighting and equipment so elderly people are less likely to fall in the shower, slip on a loose rug or tumble down the stairs. At most community centres there's a regular keep fit session which includes balance and strength training. There's a free telephone advice line and there are leaflets at the surgery and pharmacy about bone health, hydration, footwear and mobility aids. The council acts as quickly as it can on broken street paving and grits the busiest sidewalks and crossroads in icy weather. There's been advice to shops about keeping aisles clear and cleaning up spillages quickly.

If elderly or vulnerable people do fall at home, there's a remote monitoring service to alert the problem and provide immediate advice and help. After a fall there's a rehabilitation and reablement service and there may be care in the home for follow-up treatment, meals, bathing and dressing. And because there's some truth in that bleak saying 'three falls and you're gone', psychological support for anxiety about falling again is also possible.

The bad news is that falls are expensive and the number requiring hospitalisation is going up. A night in hospital costs well over £400. Treating a broken hip costs about £15,000 and typically as much again in care at home and GP surgery costs afterwards. There may well be time off work and travel expenses for the family. But, of course, the biggest cost has no pound sign in front of it: the pain and stress for the faller and their nearest and dearest.

Ray's AI research takes just minutes. It says that three out of five falls requiring treatment are in the home and that a third of over 65s have a serious fall each year. It says the most cost-effective ways to prevent falls is to focus on high-risk individuals, make their homes safe and encourage strength exercise.

Ray sets up an informal meeting of half a dozen people from the public health team, a local medical practice, the hospital, a care home, community services and the age charity to explore possibilities. The broad conclusion is that there's a lot being done but it seems disjointed (no pun intended), the overall cost is unknown, there's not much data about the effectiveness of the various activities, and the balance between prevention and cure may be in the wrong place.

The Chief Exec agrees with the Leader that this looks like a good opportunity to use Total Place. Ray is asked to draft a plan for a short project while DASS sets up a suitable steering group. The work is to be done by the people already involved in this area – their job is to improve it, not just run it – so there'll be only a modest budget to allow for a bit of external support or expertise to be brought in. It's agreed that a 10 per cent reduction in overall public sector costs within the next two years – through a combination of fewer people falling and less costly but equally effective treatment when they do – would be well worthwhile.

The project team decide to use a mix of appreciative inquiry and collaborative inquiry: that is, see what seems to be working well and engage the right people in thinking about how to build on that. Rather than cover the whole of Chigley they'll focus on one prosperous area, Arden Grove, and one not, Ramstone. The right people will be people who live there and may be at risk of falling, and people involved in the activities which aim to reduce that risk or deal with the consequences. It is agreed that the team members will co-locate at a council office during the most intense part of the project to enable faster exchange and share ideas.

Two things follow in parallel: a lot of data crunching and a lot of talking. The data crunching tries to track the experience of two groups of twelve elderly people in each locality, people who have and haven't had serious falls. Apart from luck, what was the difference between them? Was it for example that the non-fallers were generally healthier, their homes better equipped, could afford and were more likely to take part in fitness activities, had been taught or learnt how to avoid falls, had better family support?

The data crunching also calculates the cost of all the public sector falls prevention activity using CIPFA's method, and the average all-up cost of treatment for the three most common injuries from falls. Useful information is found online and from conversations with health profession bodies, nurses and doctors at the hospital, paramedics, carers, and the physiotherapy research team at the university.

The first round of talking is with groups of elderly people in their homes, at the community centre and more casually at the hairdresser's and in the pub. What did they know about falls and how did they know it, what was their own experience, if they had fallen what was the follow up, how much did the risk matter to them alongside other concerns, what did they think would be helpful?

The second round is with people who have fallen and gone to hospital. What was their experience in hospital and afterwards and what might have improved it without increasing costs? The third round of talking is with those involved in prevention, treatment or recovery: what seems to be most effective, what evidence for that do they have, what would they like to see done differently?

The team run an event with a group of 25 elderly people from the two areas of the city. They describe what is done by the public sector to prevent and treat falls, what that all costs, and what voluntary and charitable organisations do. They ask the group what they would choose to start doing, stop doing, do more of, do less of or do differently if they ran that pot of money.

Out of all this come five useful answers. First, what should change? Answer: more spent on effective prevention for those most at risk to reduce ambulance calls, hospital stays and after care costs. But less spent on emphasising the danger of falls because it led to anxiety, and less spent on exhortation, which felt patronising. The numbers seem to show the financial return would be well worthwhile.

Second, who is most at risk? Answer: people with dementia and elderly men with limited family and social lives. Third, what prevention works best? Answer: regular low impact exercise, which as well as reducing the likelihood of falling also brings improved overall fitness and social connection.

Fourth, what recovery help at home is most effective? Answer: a combination of injury care, physiotherapy and exercise which, if known earlier to be available, would reduce hospital bed days. Fifth, is there scope for improving the timing and circumstances of discharge from hospital? Answer yes: by better planning with a wider team, including the family, from the point of admission.

The team then work backwards from the knowledge and experience they want vulnerable people to have to design future support. The result is that preventative activities which were little used or have little impact are stopped. Others are merged to reduce overhead and premises costs. This will release more than enough capacity to add an experienced member to a team which will review every step of the admission to discharge process.

The cost of a Tai Chi session at the two community centres in Ramstone is subsidised from these savings and reduced to £3 for over 60s. The sessions are promoted as not just good for your health but sociable and fun, and people who attend get a free pass if they bring a friend next time. The local age charities ask their shop staff to mention these classes to elderly customers.

The council and NHS agree to manage together a single budget subhead for falls. Data about the number of falls requiring treatment and the cost of that will be tracked each year in Arden Grove and Ramstone against the cost of preventative activity. The results will be used to adjust the prevention package. Early signs are that a 15 per cent overall reduction in costs could be achieved in two years.

This develops into an idea to be explored next year. Exercise and social contact have wider health and psychological benefit than preventing falls, so why not develop a wellbeing programme for the most vulnerable thousand people, personalised to their individual circumstances so more likely to be taken up? It is estimated that the cost-benefit ratio of that could be very high.

To help the council think about how to spread the learning from the project the team leader prepares a short presentation on the case for a better local data hub, for redesigning processes back from the intended end result, and for joint training for local public sector middle managers in analysing the cost of activities.

The Deputy Leader's dad makes a good recovery.

Annex E: Collaboration questionnaire

The purpose of this questionnaire is to help local public sector leaders – political and managerial – consider whether their local partnership working overall could be made more effective, and if so how. Partnership means more than consultation, liaison and co-operation: it means collaboration and co-creation between organisations to find better ways forward than could be found separately. It would be natural for this to focus on:



- Problems and opportunities which cut across organisational responsibilities
- Support for particular groups or localities with multiple needs
- Areas of high or fast rising expenditure where there is a shared sense that improvement is necessary and possible.

Depending on the matter at hand, the organisations involved could include the local authority, all health services, police, fire and rescue, natural resources, community groups, charities, community interest companies, the private sector, all aspects of training and education, transport, utilities, cultural and sport bodies, and local presence of government departments and agencies.

Your completed questionnaire will be seen only by the survey administrator. Summary results will be shared with all participants.

Please show how far you agree with the following statements in relation to your organisation by ticking the box closest to your view. If the statement does not apply or you have no opinion, leave blank. Where the picture is mixed depending on which service or organisation is concerned, please say so in the comments box at the end.

1 = Strongly disagree

2 = Tend to disagree

3 = Neither agree nor disagree

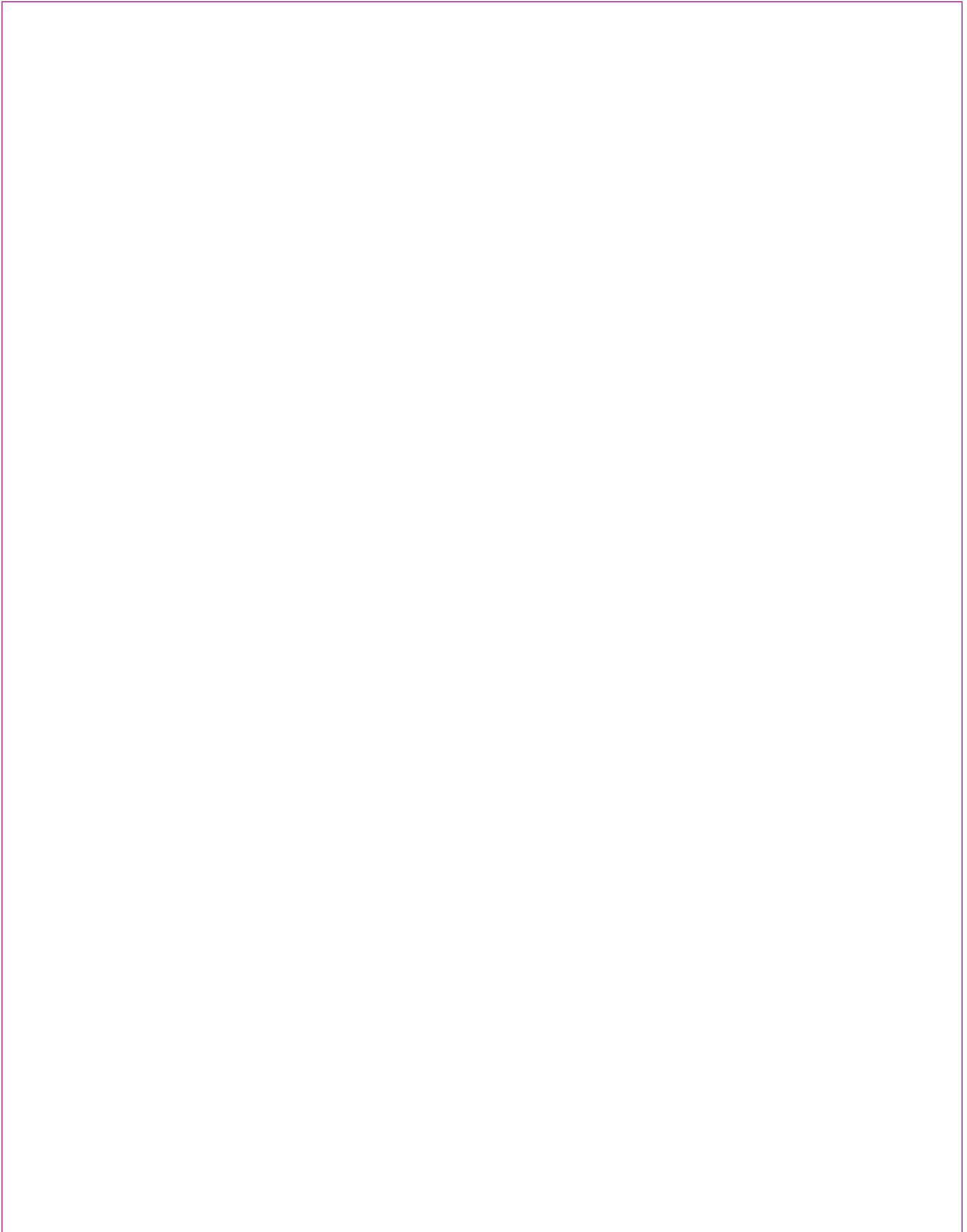
4 = Tend to agree

5 = Strongly agree

		Strongly disagree	Tend to disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to agree	Strongly agree
		1	2	3	4	5
1	Our leadership and senior management have a good understanding of what effective collaborative working involves	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Our leadership and senior management show through their own actions the importance of collaboration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	We have made progress through collaboration and now want to reach to the next level	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Our structure and machinery for collaboration works well	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	We know where the big prizes are to be found through collaboration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	We are pursuing collaborative opportunities despite our budget pressures and priorities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Our collaborative working is unhampered by legislation, conflicting priorities, organisational boundaries or rapid turnover of top staff	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	The various services and functions in my organisation co-operate well on matters which cut across them	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	We have trusting and constructive relationships with other public services here	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	We have trusting and constructive relationships with our neighbourhoods, community groups and the third sector	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	We have trusting and constructive relationships with local businesses and anchor organisations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12	We and relevant organisations here are agreed on local priorities towards which we collectively work	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

		Strongly disagree	Tend to disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to agree	Strongly agree
		1	2	3	4	5
13	We have aligned or pooled budgets internally and with other organisations in pursuit of local outcomes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14	We and other public services here have begun to think in terms of total public expenditure here and how to use it better	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15	We and the other public services here have relevant and reliable data on a common footing in relation to the locality, and share it without difficulty	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16	We can quantify the payback over time from shifting resources from cure to prevention	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17	We know the preventative value of community centres and similar organisations and take account of that in our support to them	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18	We can point to good examples of effective collaboration working	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19	There is a strong focus throughout this organisation on driving out avoidable cost and raising productivity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20	We find time to think together with our partners about the best way to get to grips with major issues and opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21	If a strategy involves several partners a team is pulled together from across them to design and implement the best way forward	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22	We and our partners are good at translating strategies into adequately resourced action plans	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23	Our organisation has strong project management skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Add here examples of local collaboration and any comments you wish to make:



Local Government Association

18 Smith Square
London SW1P 3HZ

Telephone 020 7664 3000

Email info@local.gov.uk

www.local.gov.uk

© Local Government Association, July 2026

We aim to make all of our publications accessible.
If you require this document in a specific format,
please contact us on 020 7664 3000.