Mapping place-based work across the UK

Observations on the patterns and trends in place-based funding 2024

place matters

Background

In 2023 a group of 17 funders of place-based work across the UK came together to talk about how they were funding this sort of work and the opportunities for improving the funding environment. Funders discussed the need for greater and more deliberate convening and collaboration within the funding sector. This could support the sharing of learning, leverage assets, pooled funding for places or pursuing shared strategic priorities across multiple places and programmes.

It was these explorations that led to the development of a Place-based Interactive Map. It is a first version of a map that Place Matters will produce annually to highlight the opportunities for connection and collaboration across the place-based sector and identify the opportunities for learning.

The aim is to celebrate the 'bright spots' where places are readily engaging with place-based change, and to highlight the areas where funding and opportunities are less. It is a starting point in a much broader journey to build and nurture collaborations across funders and organisations.

Esmée Fairbairn generously offered to fund the design and prototype of the first version. We thank Esmée Fairbairn and all the funders who have generously contributed their time and data and also to the project teams who have helped validate the details.

What has been produced is an interactive map **here** which includes a subset of the overall data collected from funders and this report is an analysis of the data collected.

1. Scope of the map and explanatory notes

1.1 Scope of Q1 2024

Number of funders
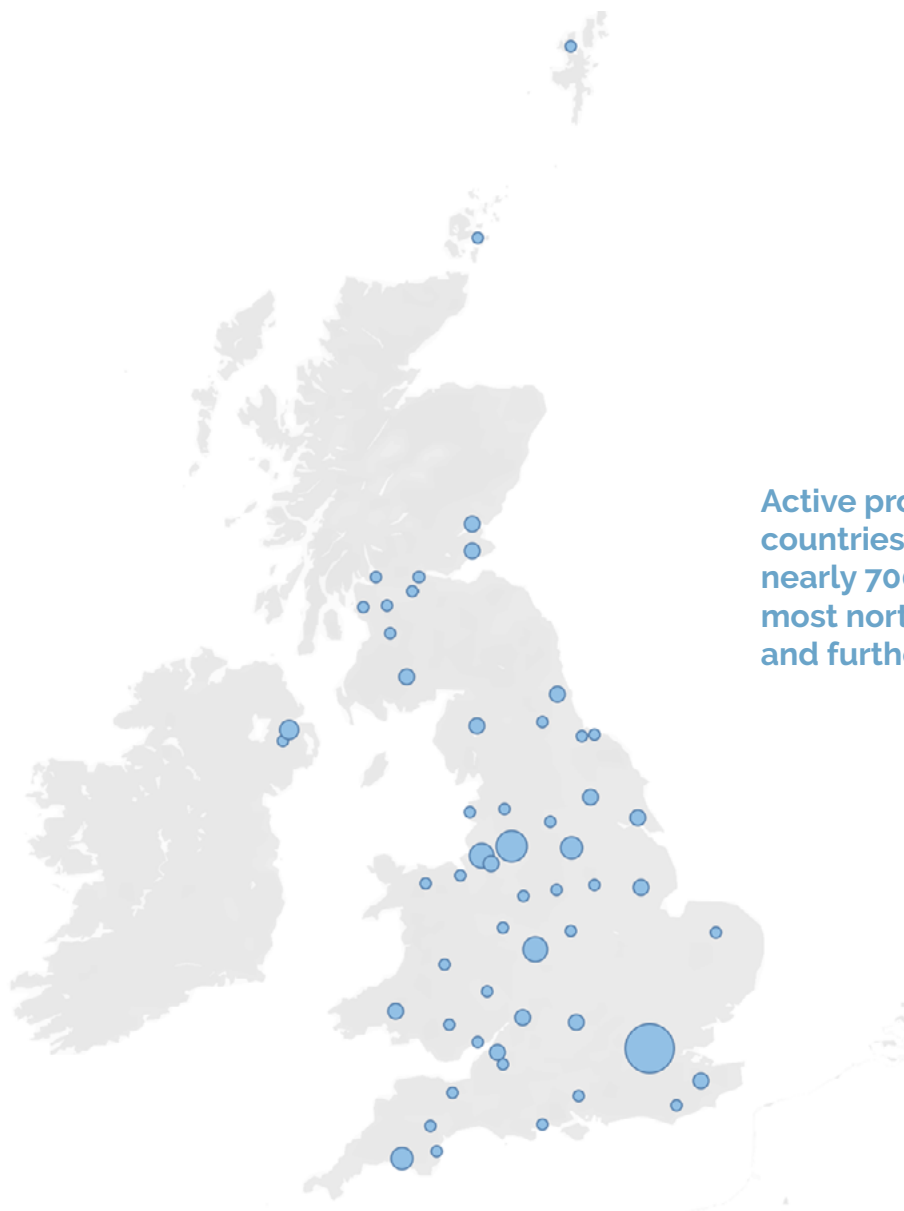
15

Number of projects

114

Coverage

UK Wide

Total value of funding

£62 million

Active projects across all four countries in the UK with nearly 700 miles between the most north (Shetland Islands) and furthest south (Plymouth).

1.2 Definitions

There are many definitions of place-based change, but for clarity, we think of it as working in places that are defined by the people who live there and which have a clear identity. It is also about a way of working that builds new connections and cross-sector collaborations across the people and organisations that live and work there so they can work better together to change the things that don't work.

The sort of changes we are focused on in this discussion are complex social issues that have systemic roots and need the engagement of people and organisations across local government, education, health and voluntary sectors and private organisations - with communities at the centre.

We qualified projects for inclusion in the map according to four criteria:

- *The project is centred on a specific place-based community.*
  That means the scope of the project is defined by a specific geographic boundary.

- *The project addresses significant local social and/ or economic challenges that require wider systemic change.*
  The project tackles cross-cutting issues where no single sector or organisation can bring about the changes alone. Examples include improving educational outcomes, tackling anti-social behaviour, reducing poverty, improving health and wellbeing.

- The project is delivered and or governed via multi-sector collaboration with organisations across local systems, for example, residents, combined authorities, local government, NHS, community and voluntary sector and business..

- *There is meaningful engagement with the community/people with lived experience*
  We are looking for projects that involve members of the community/people with lived experience in a substantive way. This goes beyond simple consultation to involvement in the management and delivery of the project.
  For example, participating in decisions about the allocation of funds, peer research, being part of governance. Recognising that this way of working may evolve, we included projects intending to involve the community if this is not already happening.

We acknowledge this narrowed the scope of projects to a subset of what more broadly defines place-based work. The reason we focused on those tackling a systemic challenge is that we saw these projects as more likely to need longer-term and deeper funding and therefore more likely to benefit from collaboration between funders and the projects themselves. There were projects where these criteria were more difficult to apply and in those cases we took a view with the relevant funder. We are happy to revisit those decisions if you get in touch with us at admin@placematters.co.uk.

1.3 Explanatory Notes

Each of the analyses below shows the percentage completion rate of the data from all funders to indicate the extent to which the data is representative.

It should be noted that the analyses are based on data received by 13 August 2024.

We refer to 15 funders throughout the document. There are 14 grant funders and one provider organisation - Right to Succeed.

For full methodological notes and data caveats please see the final section of the report.

2. Key Insights

2.1 Geographic Spread - How are projects distributed by geographic region / nation?

The question explored here is how funding is distributed across the UK looking both at numbers of projects and amounts of funding by geography and population, and the amount of funding. Although the different analyses show a different order, it appears that regions, such as the Southwest have high levels of funding - primarily due to a cluster of work in Plymouth. Other regions, primarily the East of England and East Midlands appear to have both fewer projects and less funding for place-based working.

Chart 1 shows a simple count of the projects, split by region. The analysis shows a bias towards London and the Northwest. This reflects the geographic focus of some funders, notably Impact on Urban Health in London and the Right to Succeed/Steve Morgan Foundation Cradle to Career work in Liverpool. It also highlights the regions with the least projects.

Projects by region (Chart 1)

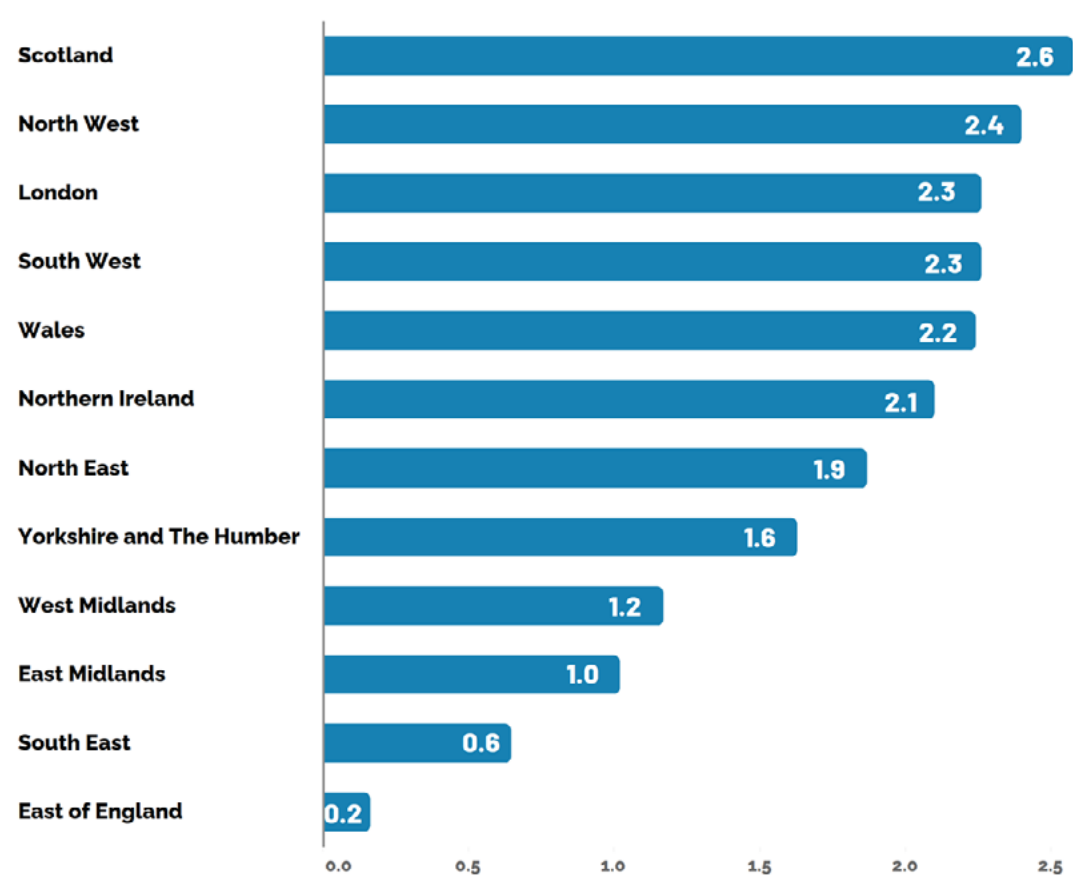Count of projects within each region. 97% completion.
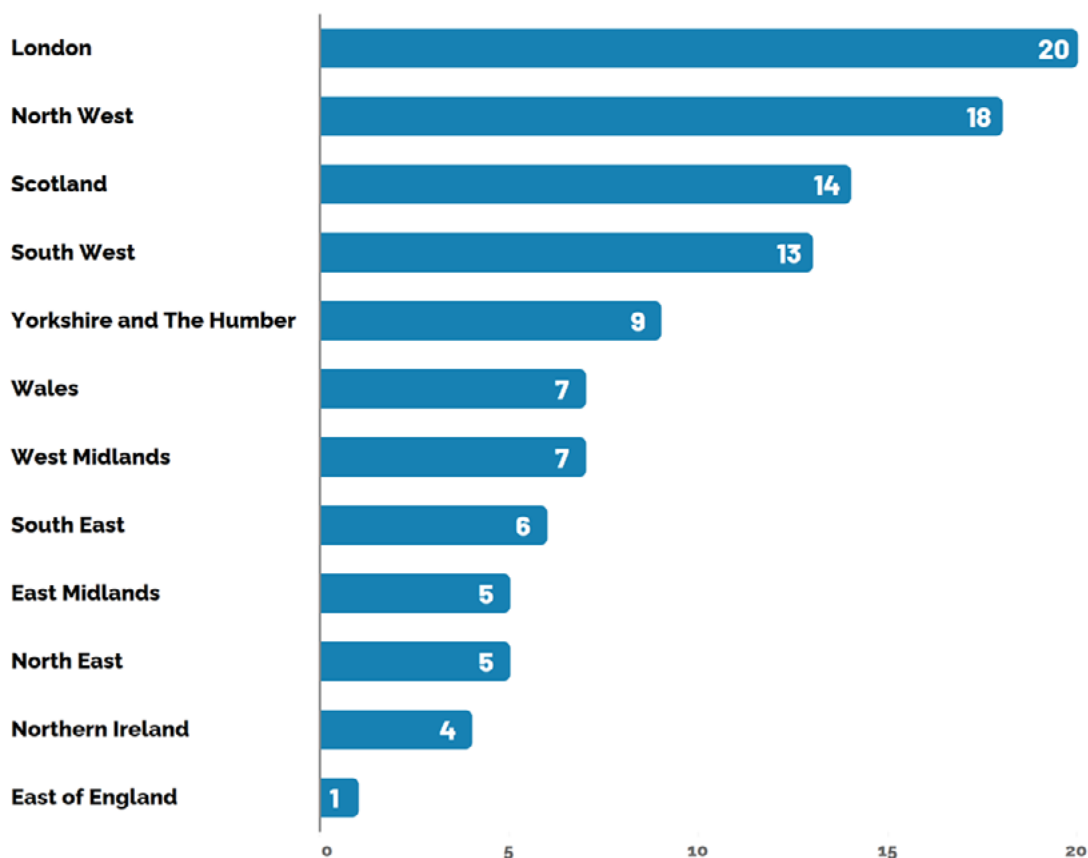
This simple approach does not account for the fact that the areas differ by population, and that projects also differ in funding levels. On the first point we looked at the analysis as projects per million of residents in the region (Chart 2). From this perspective Scotland has the highest level of projects and Northern Ireland joins Wales in the middle of the table. The East Midlands, East of England and the Southeast remain the least funded populations.

Projects per million population by region (Chart 2)

Projects divided by population (x1,000,000) within each region. 97% completion.

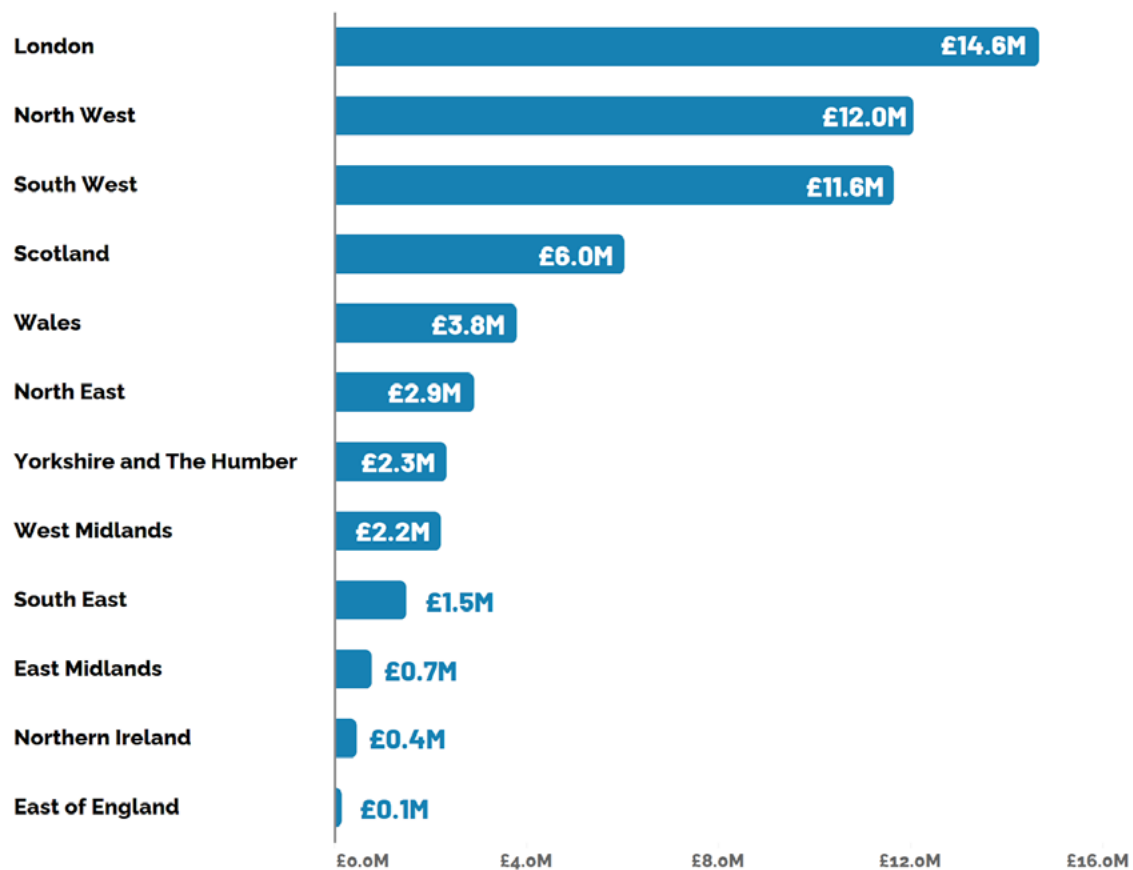| Region	Value
Scotland	2.6
North West	2.4
London	2.3
South West	2.3
Wales	2.2
Northern Ireland	2.1
North East	1.9
Yorkshire and The Humber	1.6
West Midlands	1.2
East Midlands	1.0
South East	0.6
East of England	0.2

As mentioned previously the projects vary significantly in terms of funding. Charts 3 and 4 explore region splits by funding amount. Chart 3 is the total and Chart 4 is the spend per capita for the region.

The distribution broadly follows the number of projects per Region/Nation, but the extent to which London and the Northwest are funded relative to other areas is more marked. Scotland also moved down due to having more projects which are very localised.

Total funding by region (Chart 3)

Total funding within each region. 90% completion.

Region	Funding
London	£14.6M
North West	£12.0M
South West	£11.6M
Scotland	£6.0M
Wales	£3.8M
North East	£2.9M
Yorkshire and The Humber	£2.3M
West Midlands	£2.2M
South East	£1.5M
East Midlands	£0.7M
Northern Ireland	£0.4M
East of England	£0.1M

£0.0M   £4.0M   £8.0M   £12.0M   £16.0M

Funding per capita (Chart 4)

Total funding divided by population within each region. 90% completion.

Region	Funding per capita
South West	£2.02
London	£1.65
North West	£1.60
Wales	£1.21
Scotland	£1.10
North East	£1.07
Yorkshire and The Humber	£0.42
West Midlands	£0.36
Northern Ireland	£0.22
South East	£0.16
East Midlands	£0.15
East of England	£0.01

£0.00   £0.50   £1.00   £1.50   £2.00   £2.50
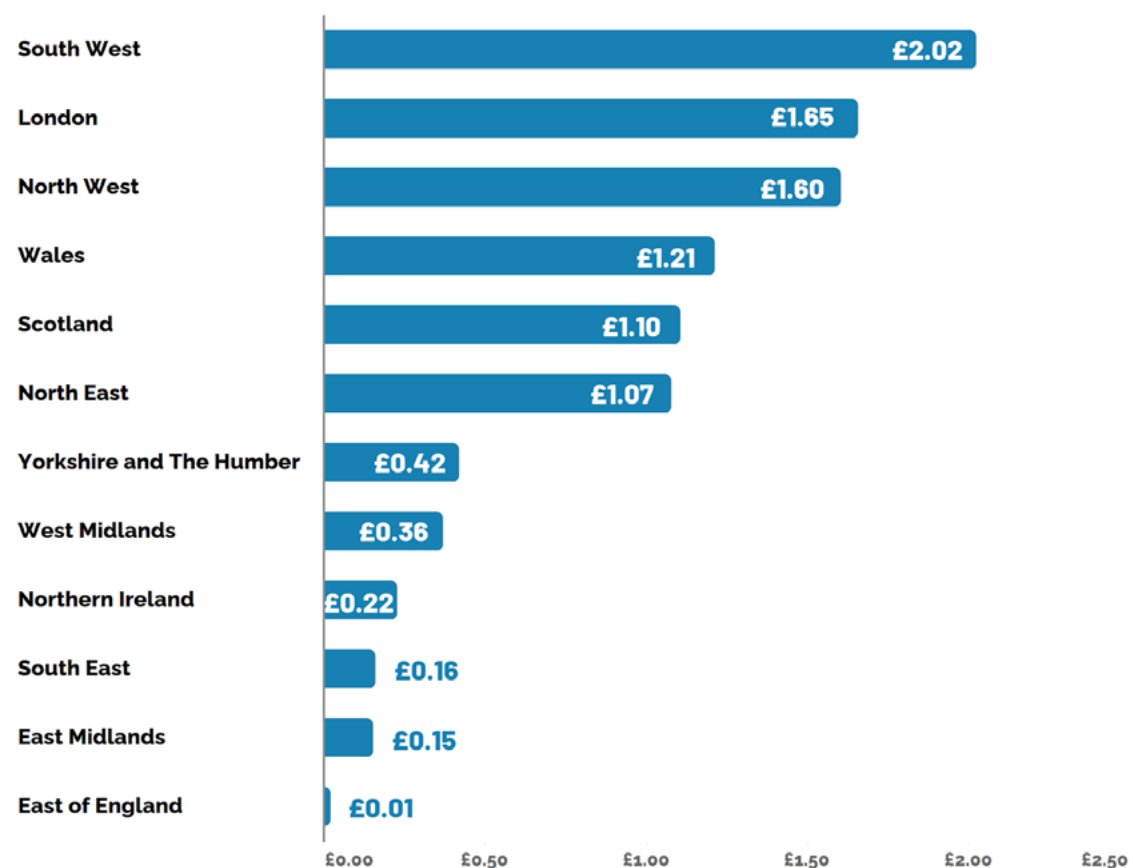
As a follow up to this we wanted to do initial exploration into how this distribution compares to disadvantage. For the reasons mentioned in section 3.0 this is quite challenging. This is a methodology we hope to develop in the next phase of data collection.

The default measure of disadvantage we use on the map is Indices of Multiple Deprivation. Due to data availability we can currently only do this analysis for regions within England. The data is published at the LSOA level, of which there are approximately 33,000 in England. We took the LSOAs which are in the most disadvantaged 20% nationally and divided these by region. As anticipated there is a large range, with the North West having around 1,500 of these LSOAs, compared to around 400 is areas such as the South West and South East.

We then divided the total funding in the region by the number of these most disadvantaged LSOAs to give a measure of spend per LSOA. This data is shown on Chart 5. We can see that with this limited form of controlling for disadvantage, there is a wide range. The outlier is the Southwest, which has the most funding per LSOA in the lowest 20%. This is primarily due to significant activity in the Plymouth area which we will mention later. As suggested by previous analysis, there appears to be a lower level of funding for place-based work in the East of England in areas of more significant disadvantage.

Funding per LSOA in the most disadvantaged 20% nationally (Chart 5)

Total funding divided by LSOAs within each region. 90% completion.
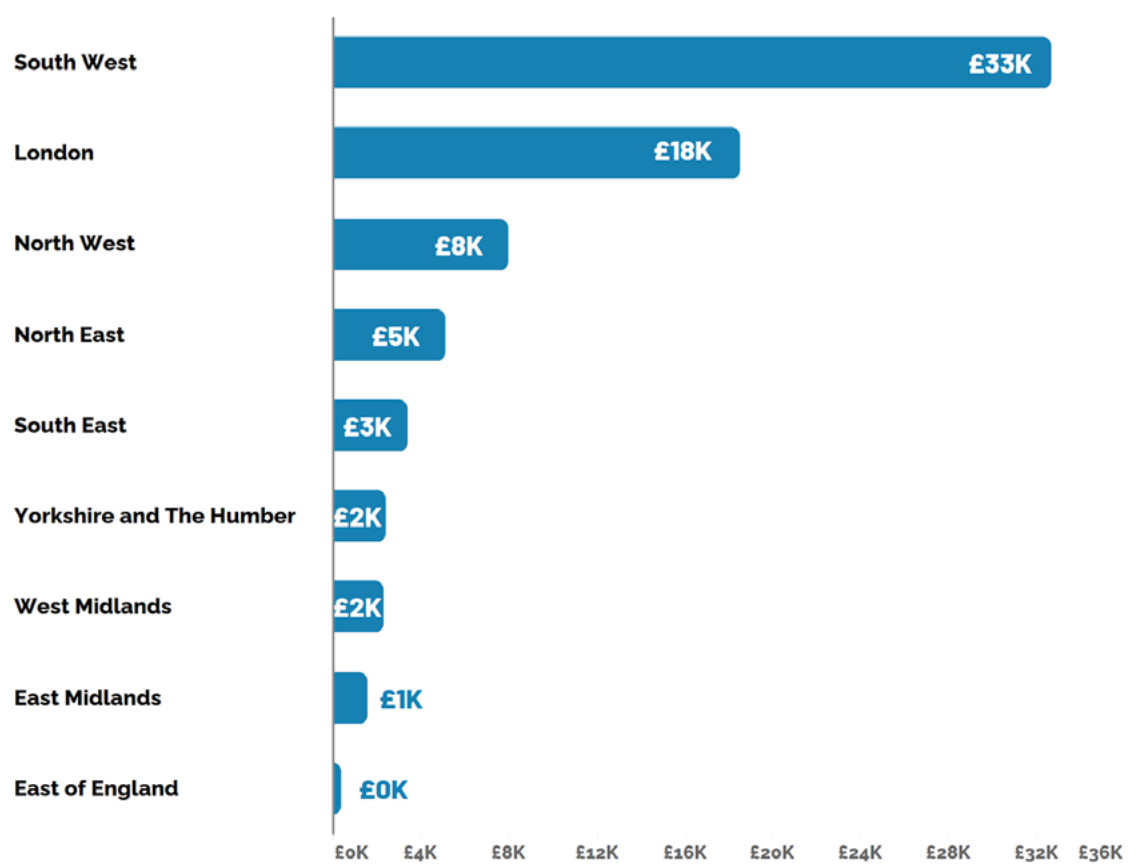
To investigate this discrepancy further we did some analysis using the map at the town level. As mentioned previously, one interesting finding here is that Plymouth has approximately £7.7m across 4 projects.

We conducted a similar analysis to the regional approach to assess what percentage of LSOAs within each town are in the most disadvantaged 20% nationally. This was for the largest 109 towns and cities in England, so does not cover every area in which place-based work could be done as there

are many smaller towns and rural areas that are not covered by this methodology.

By this measure though Plymouth is very close to average for all 109 towns/cities (28% of its 163 LSOAs are in the most disadvantaged 20%). There are many ways that disadvantage can be measured, so this should be regarded as one perspective.

We looked at all areas with over 40% of their LSOAs in this category (36 areas) to see if we had active projects in those areas. The picture is quite mixed and requires further study - but some interesting patterns emerge.

One is that the towns near larger metropolitan areas often didn't have dedicated projects and were only covered by those with a wide geographical remit in the larger city. For example, West Bromwich, Dudley and Walsall are all in the top 10 for highest disadvantage but most projects in this area have a Birmingham focus. Similarly, Salford and Rochdale

are only covered by the projects with a Greater Manchester remit.

Overall, 58% (21 of 36) of the towns/cities which are most deprived, by this one way of analysing disadvantage, do not have clear dedicated place-based projects ongoing funded by this group of funders. This is not unexpected given the number of projects in the scope of the analysis but it raises some further questions to explore as to what work is ongoing in these places, and why it is more limited than other areas.

We want to dig deeper into this question of why particular regions and areas within regions are better funded looking at data on the capacity of civil society in areas and the alignment of political leadership where regional and local governments are co-funding and collaborating. Also by looking at what factors funders take into consideration in making funding decisions.

2.2 Levels of funding and duration of projects

There is a total £62m deployed by these 15 funders to support place-based change. This represents 0.07% of £88.87bn of charitable funding recorded by the Charity Commission in 2023 in the UK. We believe this reflects the relatively emergent nature of this type of work and the concern expressed by some funders around the lack of evidence for place-based projects demonstrating clear value and impact.

It also reflects that we only included some data from the National Lottery Community Fund, for example, Big Local projects are wholly funded through this fund. We would expect that the full dataset would have a significant impact on the overall picture. Also, Impact on Urban Health, a major funder in London, provided data on projects where funding was initiated in 2023/2024 rather than all grants live in Q1 2024.

Projects split by their level of funding (Chart 6)

Data is from 90% of projects with complete data.

Funding level	Projects
<£100k	20
£100k-£300k	41
£300k-£1m	14
£1m-£3m	16
£3m+	5
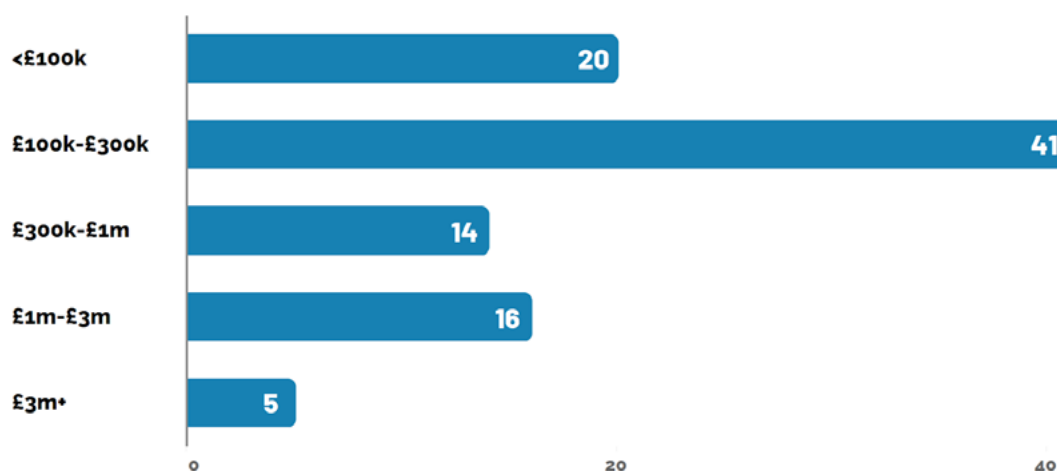
Level of funding

Another angle we explored on funding was the per project funding. The mean average grant value (for the 90% of projects with funding data) is approximately £600,000. The median is much lower at around £200,000 though as the average is increased by some very high outliers at the top end.

Chart 6 shows the count of projects in different funding bands. Only 18 are over £1m. Whilst this is a significant amount in philanthropy, this may not be sufficient for the ambitious goals set by this type of work.

Duration of projects

A similar analysis was conducted on project length. The average length is 5.3 years. This excludes some projects with an undefined end date that are likely to be higher than this number.
Again, the median is lower, at 4 years. Chart 7 shows the banded lengths. There is a relatively even distribution across a range of lengths. However, there are 39 which are three years or less. This is a typical

grant period but raises interesting questions about whether systems change is feasible in these time frames.
We noted that some funders extend grants rather than commit to long-term funding and we were only counting committed funds, so the duration may be understated.

Projects split by duration (Chart 7)

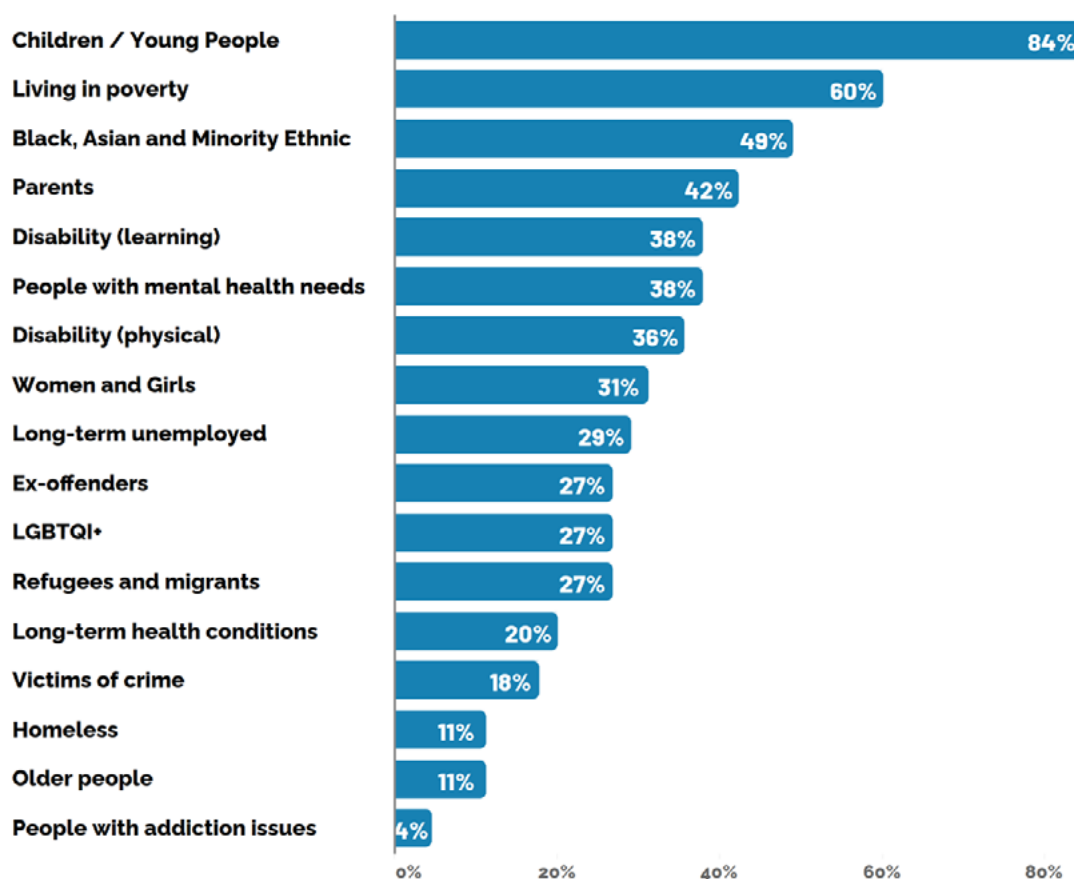Years have been approximated and rounded in some cases. 85% completion.
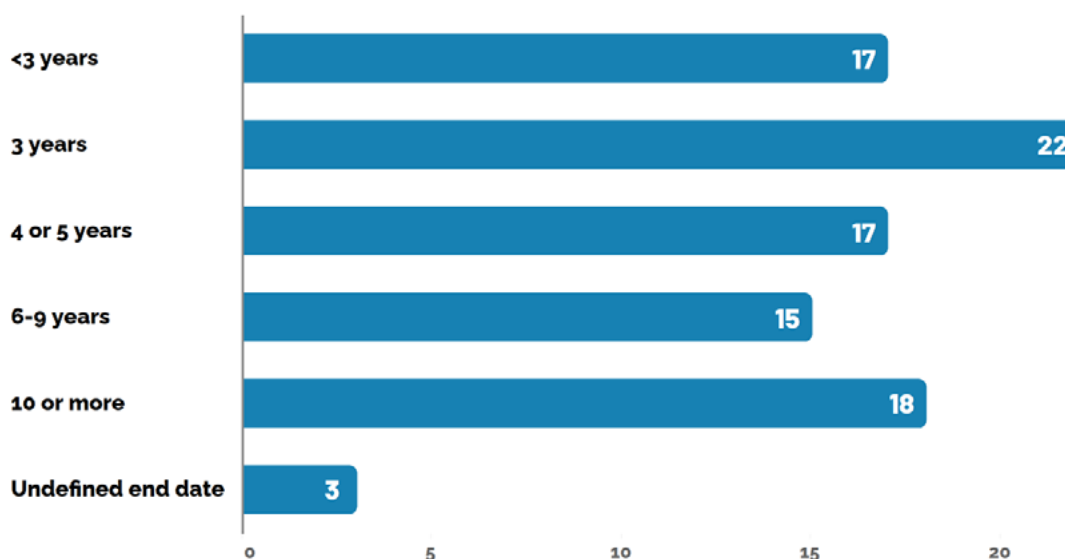
2.3 Beneficiaries

The data below shows all the beneficiary groups identified by the data and most projects identified more than one and quite often numerous beneficiaries. We found that 59% of projects identified 'All Residents' as beneficiaries. Often, projects with smaller areas were most likely to work with 'All Residents'. For example, all 8 Corra projects are very localised and working with all residents. However, there were also large geographical areas with this broad focus, and some smaller areas with more defined beneficiaries.

Where there are primary beneficiaries, the two groups that dominate are children and young people and people living in poverty. Chart 8 gives the percentage of projects (excluding the 'all residents' ones) which selected each type. When we looked at impact goals through the lens of SDG's we found similarly that tackling inequality was the top-ranking priority for all SDG goals.

Projects split by their level of funding (Chart 8)

Data is for 45 projects. Projects could select multiple groups.

Group	Percentage
Children / Young People	84%
Living in poverty	60%
Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic	49%
Parents	42%
Disability (learning)	38%
People with mental health needs	38%
Disability (physical)	36%
Women and Girls	31%
Long-term unemployed	29%
Ex-offenders	27%
LGBTQI+	27%
Refugees and migrants	27%
Long-term health conditions	20%
Victims of crime	18%
Homeless	11%
Older people	11%
People with addiction issues	4%

The opportunity that arises from this clear correlation is to connect projects that are working with similar groups and with similar goals. Place Matters have initiated a Community of Practice (COP) for teams focused on pre-school age children and we will explore the potential for other COP's or other means for connecting and sharing learning through this information in collaboration with funders.

The data also highlights the groups that are not being supported by place-based funding, for example, people with long-term health conditions. We want to explore the reasons in more detail in the next stages of our work.

2.4 Impact Goals

Because we found that funders framed impact differently, we adopted SDG's as a common framework. It was an imperfect proxy being designed for the widest definition of impact in all sectors and lacked the focus and nuance for place-based working. In the next iteration of the Map, we will explore different methods of capturing how projects and funders articulate their ambitions and re-visit how we formulate the groupings.

We asked two questions. First, projects were asked to identify their primary area of impact and second to identify all areas of impact.

Chart 9 weighs the 'primary' goal. We sense that projects interpreted sustainable cities and communities and reducing inequality in a broadly similar way because they are the goals best aligned to the language used around community-centred change.

Chart 10 weighs multiple goals. The patterns are relatively similar, although Health and Well-being features more significantly as an additional goal.
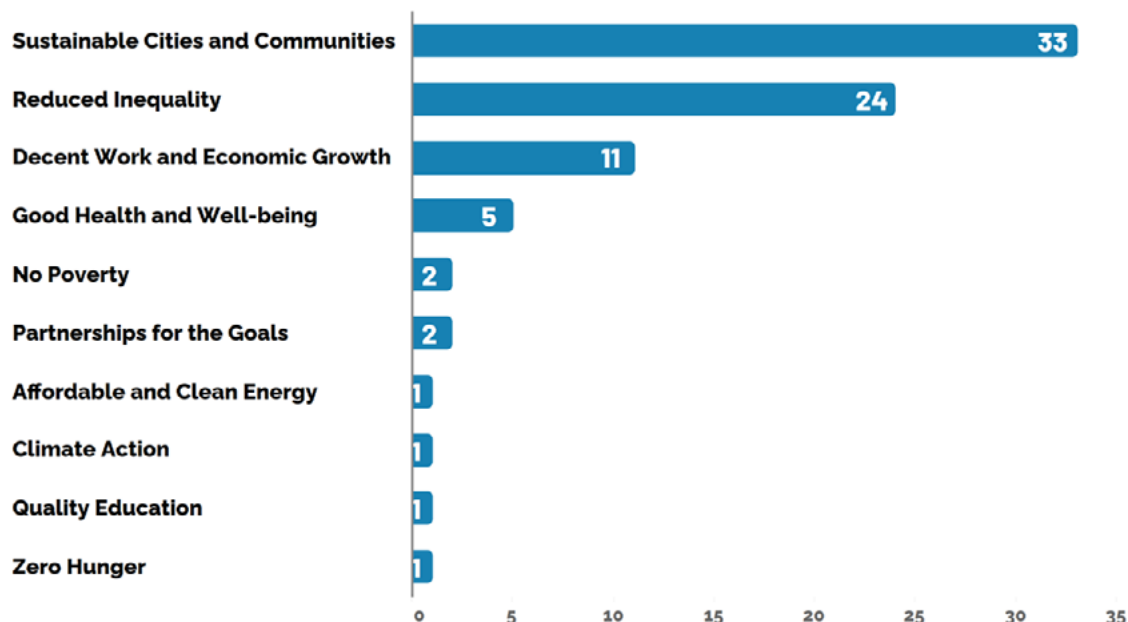
Notable in both analyses is the extent to which environmental goals feature less, although the SDG

definition of Sustainable Cities includes creating green living conditions in our cities and those selecting this may have alluded to this part of the definition. We will explore how environmental ambitions feature in impact goals as part of the next phase of work.
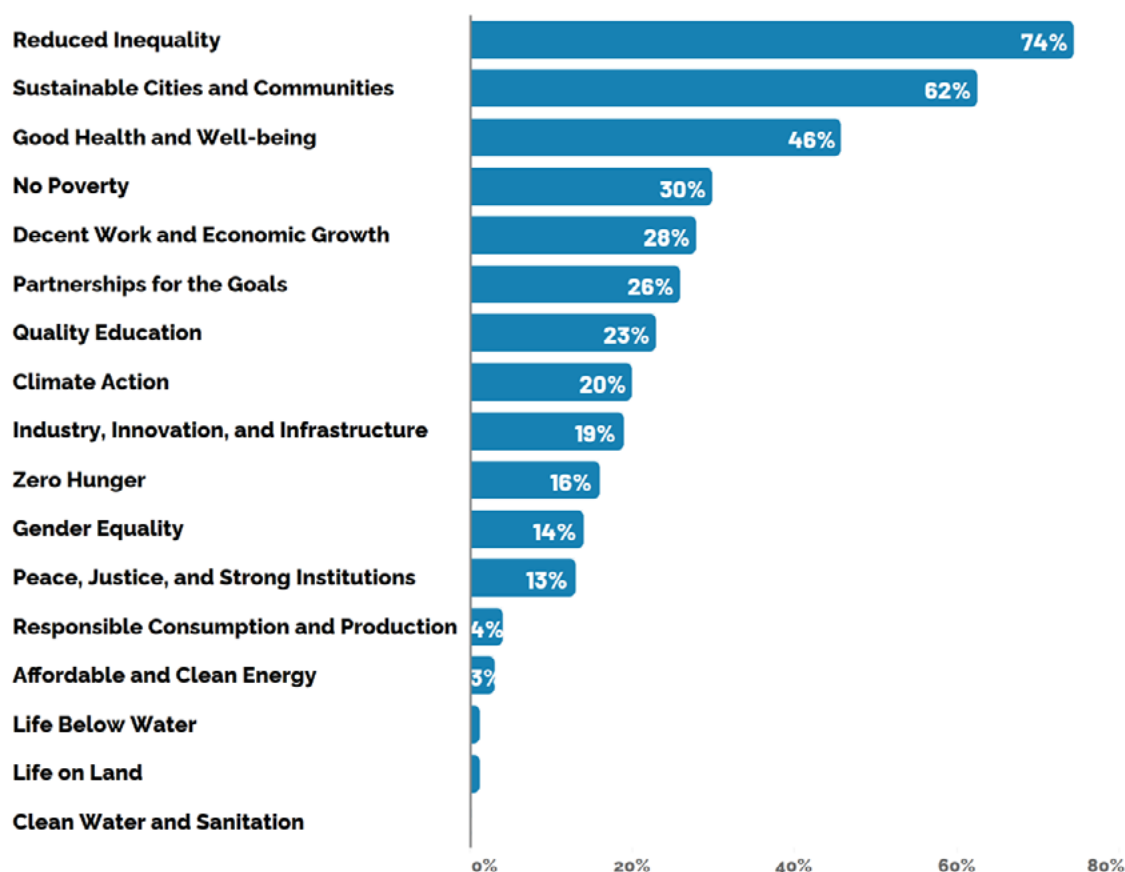
Projects by their 'primary' goal (Chart 9)

Goals use the SDG framework. 81% completion.

Goal	Value
Sustainable Cities and Communities	33
Reduced Inequality	24
Decent Work and Economic Growth	11
Good Health and Well-being	5
No Poverty	2
Partnerships for the Goals	2
Affordable and Clean Energy	1
Climate Action	1
Quality Education	1
Zero Hunger	1

Percentage of projects working towards goal (Chart 10)

Goals use the SDG framework. Projects could select multiple. 89% completion.

Goal	Percentage
Reduced Inequality	74%
Sustainable Cities and Communities	62%
Good Health and Well-being	46%
No Poverty	30%
Decent Work and Economic Growth	28%
Partnerships for the Goals	26%
Quality Education	23%
Climate Action	20%
Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure	19%
Zero Hunger	16%
Gender Equality	14%
Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions	13%
Responsible Consumption and Production	4%
Affordable and Clean Energy	3%
Life Below Water	
Life on Land	
Clean Water and Sanitation	

2.5 Multi-sector collaborations

We asked for data about the relationships between the projects and other local organisations. A key premise being that if the work is genuinely systemic in ambition, it would involve significant cross-sector collaboration.

Chart 11 gives the breakdown for each type of organisation, with 'not involved' on the left and more significant forms of collaboration on the right.

Level of collaboration with different local groups (Chart 11)

Data is from 81% of projects with complete data.

Legend:
- Not involved
- They were consulted before the project started
- They are provided with regular information about the work
- They are consulted on options before key decisions are made
- They are involved in shaping the work and creating new ideas
- They share responsibility equally with other partners
- They are empowered and enabled to lead the work

The data shows that collaboration between the voluntary and community sectors is most significant. The data suggests that grant recipients are re-granting funding to other local organisations and some acting as intermediaries for the work.

Again, another key premise of the projects in scope is that they engage residents and beneficiaries in the work. We expected that for some projects engagement was a work in progress and that is reflected in the 20% (19 projects) who indicated they were not engaging residents at this time. However, about 70% are involving residents and beneficiaries extensively, of which many are empowering residents and beneficiaries to lead.

Local government was the third most significant co-collaborator and the education sector the fourth. The lack of significant engagement with Combined Authorities is probably due to the maturity of devolved authorities at this point and we expect to see this increase as devolution rolls out.

We will explore how place-based projects are working with local people and forming effective collaborations with other agencies. We would like to understand how those relationships are constituted and the barriers to engagement for some local organisations and agencies like the Police, Housing and Social Care.

2.6 Role of the funder

We asked about the resources and capabilities funders were bringing to local projects and how they are working with organisations, places and the wider system. The data reflected discussions with funders around taking a more substantive role beyond funding.

Chart 12 gives the percentage of projects where different roles were selected. Multiple options could be selected for each project.

Percentage where the funder is playing wider roles (Chart 12)

Multiple options could be selected. 89% completion.
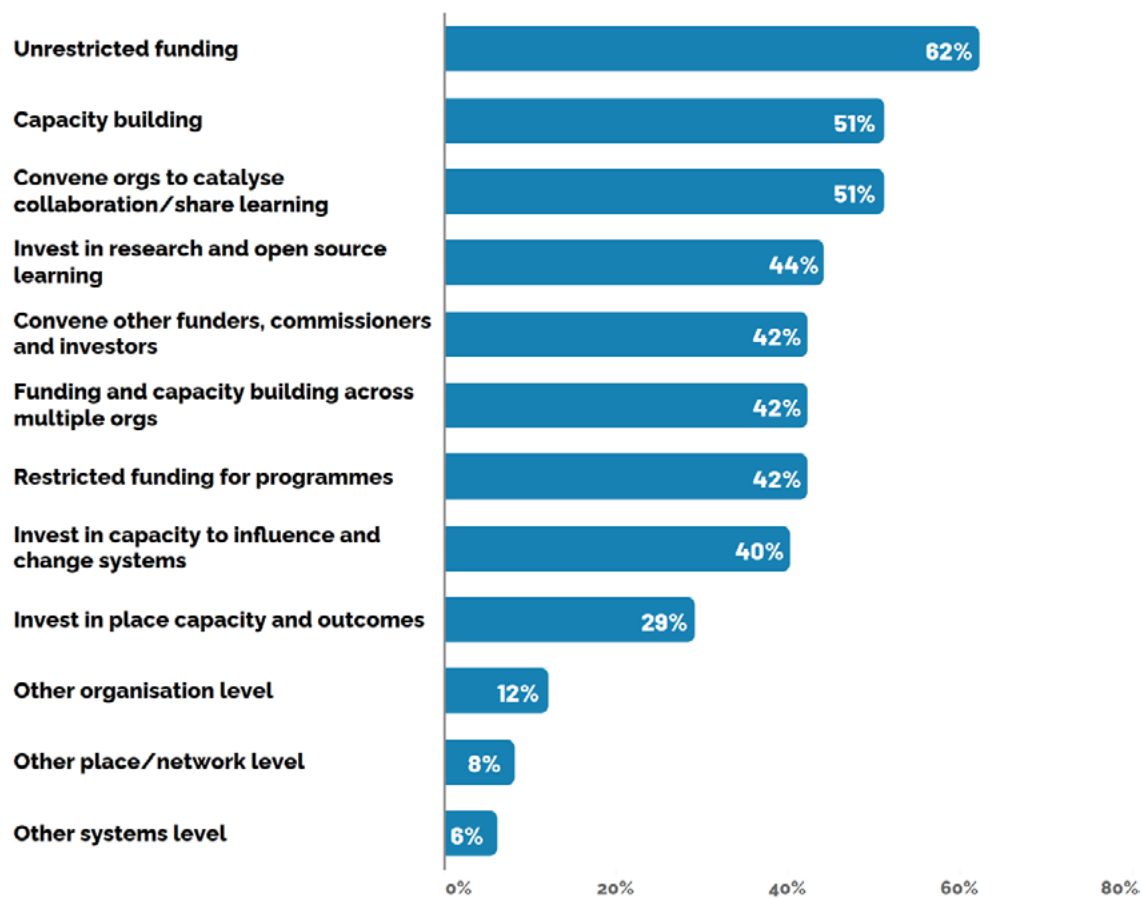
Of note is that in 51% of projects funders were investing in building capacity. We didn't ask questions about what capacity, but in our wider discussions we understand that funders invest principally in building the skills of project teams. In 42% of projects funders are extending investment to a wider local ecosystem and funding the development of networks as well as skills. Where we have seen this working well, funders have helped build relationships and catalyse a collaborative network that sustains beyond the grant period.

The extent to which many funders are working at a systems level including 40% investing in capacity to influence systems change suggesting a growing ambition for funders to leveraging change of which provision of grants is one part of a broader strategy. This is consistent with the move towards a field building approach in North America where funders are investing in catalyst capability to orchestrate a connected and collaborative approach across places and organisations.

What we will explore through this data are examples of how different funders are exercising this broader role so we can share learning and inspire funders to use their broader capabilities and influence to create more impact.

3. Methodology and data definitions

Data capture method

Data was requested directly from funders using a google form and offering the option for funders to download a report directly from their grant management system. We worked with funders to find a method that best aligned to their own systems.

Following the initial data collection we put the data per project into a form and this was sent via funders to project teams to validate the data before it went live on the map.

Data capture method

Data was requested directly from funders using a Google form and offering the option for funders to download a report directly from their grant management system. We worked with funders to find a method that best aligned to their own systems.

Following the initial data collection we put the data per project into a form and this was sent via funders to project teams to validate the data before it went live on the map.

Key caveats and learnings around data collection

Due to this area of work being highly varied, and having emerging best practices, there were some general challenges with standardising the data enough to make any early insights. Many of these were useful learnings which can be improved for future work, and others may be more fundamental. These are mentioned at various points in the body of the report and later in the data definitions - but a short list of key points is given below.

1. The map captures some but not all place-based projects nationally, so these insights should be regarded as a partial view of the broader picture of place-based working. For example, key funders like the National Lottery Community Fund could not be included in this version. We hope to capture data on a more comprehensive range of projects in subsequent versions of the map so the findings are more broadly representative.
2. Areas of benefit – Several projects were working in areas that did not clearly align to defined administrative boundaries and therefore the area is quite hard to define. We used a composite method including drawing boundaries on a map to provide maximum flexibility. The analysis of population served by geography and funding amount assumes the total local population were beneficiaries. In practice, many projects were working with specific beneficiary groups within a given population so the analyses of population data are an approximation.
3. Deprivation - There are many ways of measuring disadvantage/deprivation and even the most affluent areas tend to have small areas where support may be valuable. The IMD data was the most obvious metric, but it analyses administrative areas and is not sensitive to small areas of disadvantage in an otherwise affluent area. Therefore, we want to be careful when assessing whether resources are being well allocated without further investigation.
4. Funding – For most projects this represents the value of the grant live in Q1 2024. In a

small number of cases we were provided with data on the annual grant amount or for grants starting in 2023/2024 rather than live in Q1 2024, meaning that the analysis of the total level of funding is understated. Equally, we are aware that funders renew some grant agreements and data on previous funding commitments is not included so the duration and amount of funding committed to a particular organisation or programme may be understated. What the data does indicate is the level of funding certainty from each funder. Where there were several funders in the contributing cohort of 15 contributing to the same project, the data was amalgamated to avoid double counting the number of place-based projects.

5. Flexible / Unknown end dates - Projects in this area often get extended, or do not set a fixed end date. We were only capturing data on live awards. This means the analysis on duration of funding is likely to understate the average length of commitment where grants are renewed.

6. Beneficiary groups - i.e. groups within the community benefitting from the project - This was a description of any specific groups within the community that were seen as primary beneficiaries of the project. In response to feedback we included All Residents as an additional group. Those responding before we made this change used the Other category and these are grouped together in the analysis.

7. Impact Goals. We found that funders and projects did not have a common approach to defining impact goals and in a number of cases funders and projects argued against pre-defined impact goals, seeking to empower communities to define their own priorities. We did not apply the designation of a goal as a qualifying criteria for inclusion of the data, but did look for a shared ambition for systemic change to be articulated in the free text section of the capture document. We used the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG's) as a common framework for defining impact goals.

8. Role of the funder in the project including and in addition to the provision of funding

9. We asked funder partners to describe the role they played according to a range of options around their role in supporting organisations, places and enabling wider systems change.

☑ Restricted funding for programmes		
☐ Unrestricted funding	*Organisation level*	
☑ Capacity building		
☐ Other organisation level		
☐ Funding and capacity building across multiple orgs		
☐ Convene orgs to catalyse collaboration/share learning	*Place/Network level*	
☐ Invest in place capacity and outcomes		
☐ Other place/network level		
☐ Invest in research and open source learning		
☐ Convene other funders, commissioners and investors	*Systems level*	
☐ Invest in capacity to influence and change systems		
☐ Other systems level		

Excerpt from one of the completed forms
We will re-visit these criteria with funders to try and better align these to the way funders articulate their broader function and role in the next version of the map and report.

Engagement with other local organisations by type of relationship and role

Understanding that the projects in scope are those tackling a systemic challenge, we wanted to better understand how organisations across different sectors were working together. We provided a drop-down menu of relationship types. We received some feedback that these criteria did not align to the way some relationships were formed.. Also, because our initial means of data capture was via funders, this data was not readily available to some of those completing the form. We sought the data from project teams directly through the validation process but had a low response rate.

Engagement with residents by type of relationship and role

It was a qualifying criteria that residents, people with lived experience and other beneficiaries are significantly involved or that the intent is to involve them in a meaningful way in the project i.e. in governance or participating in re-granting decisions. We provided a Dropbox of options on the way in which they are involved. Again, many funders capturing the data did not have that detailed level of understanding about the projects and we had a low response rate from local teams.

We will be re-visiting our methods for collecting the data in these last 2 data sets in the next version of the map.

Multiple frameworks and definitions

We have looked to use established frameworks and definitions where possible, for example in defining impact, but there is little standardisation of definitions used in grant data across place-based funders.

As we develop the map we will re-visit the data definitions and frameworks so our work is as closely tied as possible to others used in the social impact/ philanthropic sector.

Funder

The data was originated from the 15 contributing data to the map. This data identifies the name of each funder and additionally Right to Succeed who contributed their data directly.

Note: in a small number of instances, the same project was funded multiple times by the same funder. These were combined into one project.

The organisations contributing to the Map are:

Civic Power Fund
Corra
Esmee Fairbairn
Footwork
Impact on Urban Health
Lankelly Chase
Lloyds Bank Foundation
Local Motion
Local Trust
Rank Foundation
Right to Succeed
Save the Children
Steve Morgan Foundation
Youth Endowment Fund
Youth Futures Foundation

Each funder is unique and we aimed to be flexible for this initial data collection to learn about the best ways to incorporate the collective group. Notes are given below for any key points specific to individual funders.

Impact on Urban Health
- Spend is at programme level covering all projects funded for that programme from April 2023 to March 2024
- The data is for all projects where the funding started in 23-24 (and doesn't include live grants started in prior years)
- Programme summaries are for the period up to Dec 2023 (the strategies have been updated since)
- Spend includes research and national routes to impact (to achieve local change), and hence a proportion will have involved spend outside of Lambeth & Southwark

Rank Foundation
- The work in Plymouth and Dundee are programmes where funding is re-granted to multiple organisations. The value and duration reflects the whole programme rather than individual grants.

Save the Children
- No financial data is available on Save the Children projects.

Esmée Fairbairn
- Some projects had 2 live grants in Q1 2024 from Esmée. We have combined the 2 grants in the project descriptions including the duration and amount of funding.

Right to Succeed
- Although Right to Succeed is not a funder, we have included places within the Cradle to Career project in Liverpool funded by multiple funders, including Steve Morgan Foundation and the National Lottery Community Fund, Liverpool Combined Authority and others. We have attributed it to Right to Succeed rather than any individual funder to reflect the partnership between multiple funders.

Place Matters works in partnership with organisations and communities to create community-centred place-based change.

Our work involves facilitating and supporting the learning of cross-sector, collaborative initiatives working to address the barriers faced by those dealing with poverty, exclusion and disadvantage. Our aim is to enable progress, support learning, and influence change.

Read more at https://placematters.org.uk/