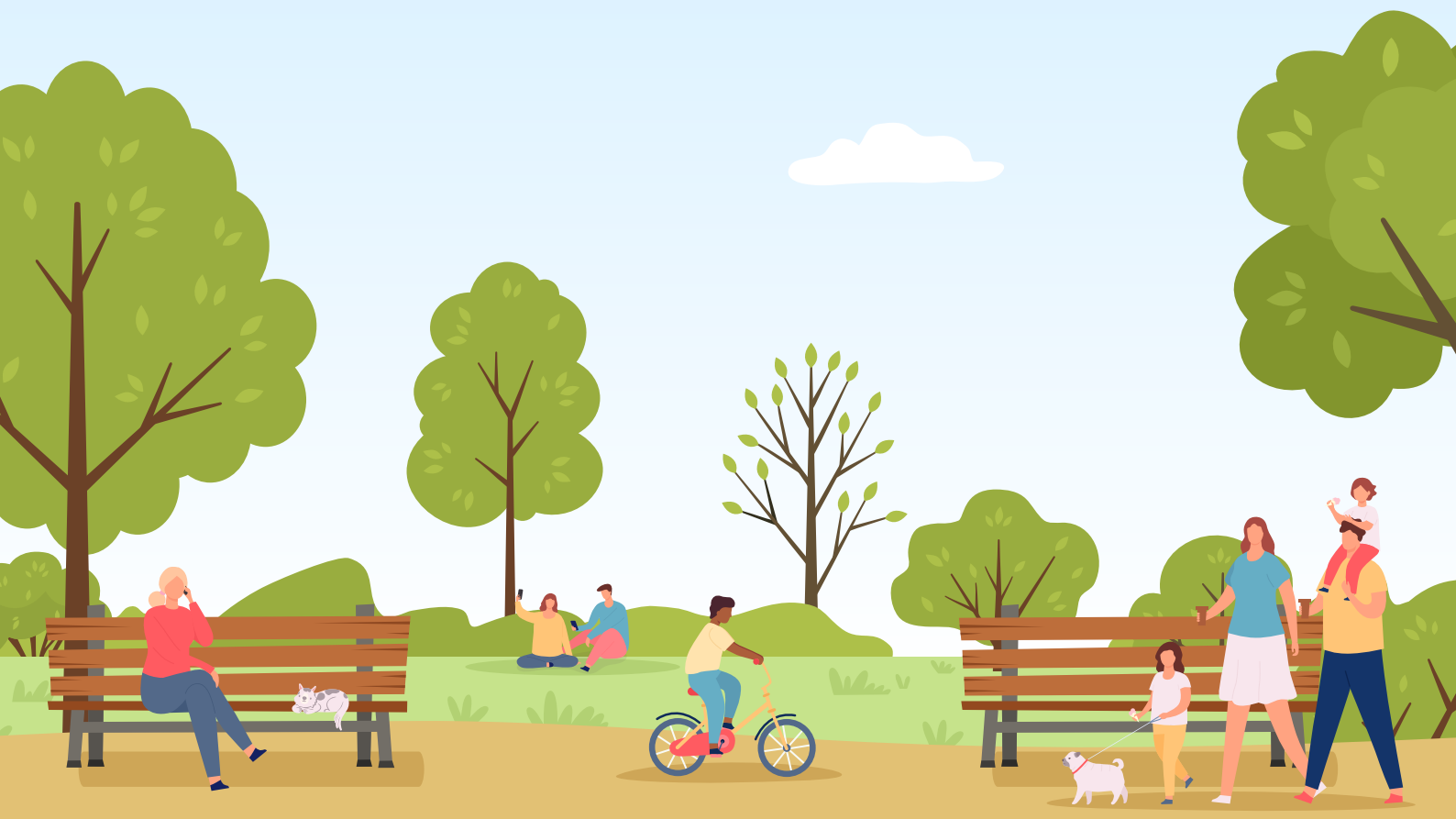


**Community Planning  
Improvement Board**



**Community Planning  
Improvement Board**

# Guidance for Embedding Prevention in Community Planning



# Introduction

Scotland's communities and public services are facing substantial challenges. Our life expectancy is the lowest in Western Europe, and health inequalities are among the highest in the region. Many of our public services remain focused on dealing with the consequences of demand failure and avoidable harm, which leads to considerable human and financial costs.

We recognise that making lasting change is difficult. For over a decade, efforts have been centred on shifting public services decisively towards prevention, yet this has not consistently resulted in better outcomes. Nevertheless, there is renewed momentum for the 'prevention agenda', focusing on helping public services to address issues before they arise.

To achieve this, we need to rethink how we plan, fund, and hold our public services accountable for improving outcomes, with a stronger emphasis on prevention. By tackling the root causes of inequality, we can help reduce disparities and promote the long-term sustainability of public services.

Local partnerships—particularly Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs)—are central to Scotland's ambition to shift resources upstream and tackle the root causes, including action to tackle child poverty and delivery of the Scottish Governments [Child Poverty Delivery Plan](#).

Prevention is not an add-on; it must be hardwired into governance, budgets, and delivery systems across the range of community planning partners including health, local government, and the third sector.

A collective commitment to prevention can drive closer collaboration among community planning partners, national and local government, and communities, helping to build flourishing, thriving communities.

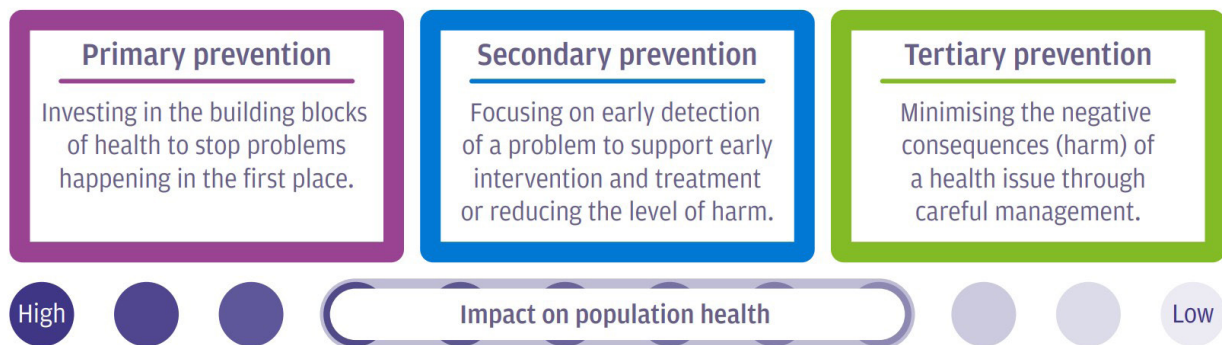
This briefing supports Community Planning Partnerships in prioritising prevention by:

- Providing a clear definition of prevention to help partnerships reshape their approach to planning and redesigning services for better outcomes.
- Reinforcing the vital role of community planning partnerships in reforming public services.
- Identifying opportunities to enhance the approach to prevention within local partnerships.
- Offering examples from Scotland and beyond where partners are rethinking how they work together and focus on prevention.

# What is Prevention

Prevention is about intervening early to make long-term, population level change to improve lives. It means stopping (preventing) the establishment, or escalation, of problems that lead to negative outcomes for people. We know there is commitment to a preventative approach, and many examples of success, but we have not made sufficient change across our services and systems to ensure we prioritise prevention. When people and organisations talk about prevention, they often use the same language to talk about different things. The Population Health Framework sets out a definition of prevention across different levels - primary, secondary and tertiary. This definition is supported by [partners](#) and can be adapted to reflect the contribution of the wider system to improve outcomes and addressing inequalities.

Money spent on prevention helps to free up resources



Source: [Population Health Framework](#)

[Prevention is one of the most cost-effective interventions](#) the public sector can make in relation to improving population health and reducing inequalities. A collective focus on prevention, particularly primary prevention, is important to reduce demand on our public services, putting them on a more sustainable long term footing.

Primary prevention - stopping problems happening in the first place - is the most effective intervention. From a population health perspective it [can be 3-4 times more cost-effective than investing in treatment](#). delivering savings across health, social care, housing, and welfare systems.

# Prevention and Reform

[Audit Scotland](#) have been consistent in outlining the need to accelerate the pace and scale of reform across the public sector. While local systems must continue to react to immediate events and financial pressures, this must not distract from the need for broader reform of public services.

Prevention is central to the reform and sustainability of public services, improving population health and creating thriving communities. The [Public Service Reform Strategy](#) recognises that reactive spending will become unsustainable as pressures grow. It commits to preventative budgeting, redesigning accountability around shared outcomes and embedding prevention into how resources are allocated.

The [Population Health Framework](#) sets out the need to establish a prevention focused system and redesign our approach to the funding, planning, governance and accountability, of services and how we work with communities to improve outcomes.

This is consistent with the [Verity House Agreement](#) where Community Planning Partnerships are recognised as a critical mechanism for the alignment of resource locally, focussed on prevention and early intervention, and delivering shared priorities.

There is a growing [body of economic evidence](#) that supports the case for investing in prevention. Reforming public services – including how national and local government, the NHS, businesses, communities, and individuals work together – is dependent on thinking differently to achieve a shift to prevention.

Together they provide a clear policy focus for prioritising prevention and set out the importance of collective leadership and shared accountability with a refreshed focus on the role of Community Planning Partnerships who are best placed to:

- Deliver upstream, place-based action focused on early years, housing, income security, and healthy environments to reduce inequalities and improve long-term outcomes.
- Reduce demand through prevention and early intervention across health, social care and justice by shifting investment from reactive services to community-led supports.
- Design and implement whole system approaches to improving outcomes that join public health, NHS, local authority services and the third sector around shared population outcomes.
- Implement Data-driven, evidence-based planning and evaluation to target interventions where they will most reduce inequality and future cost pressures.

Prevention is a strategic priority for improved outcomes. It is not about preventing harm but as a key element in establishing, thriving, flourishing communities. The Community Planning Improvement Board has an important role in supporting that shift and working with partners to address the drivers of demand on public services and support closer integration of services to improve local outcomes and address inequalities.

# Prevention Works

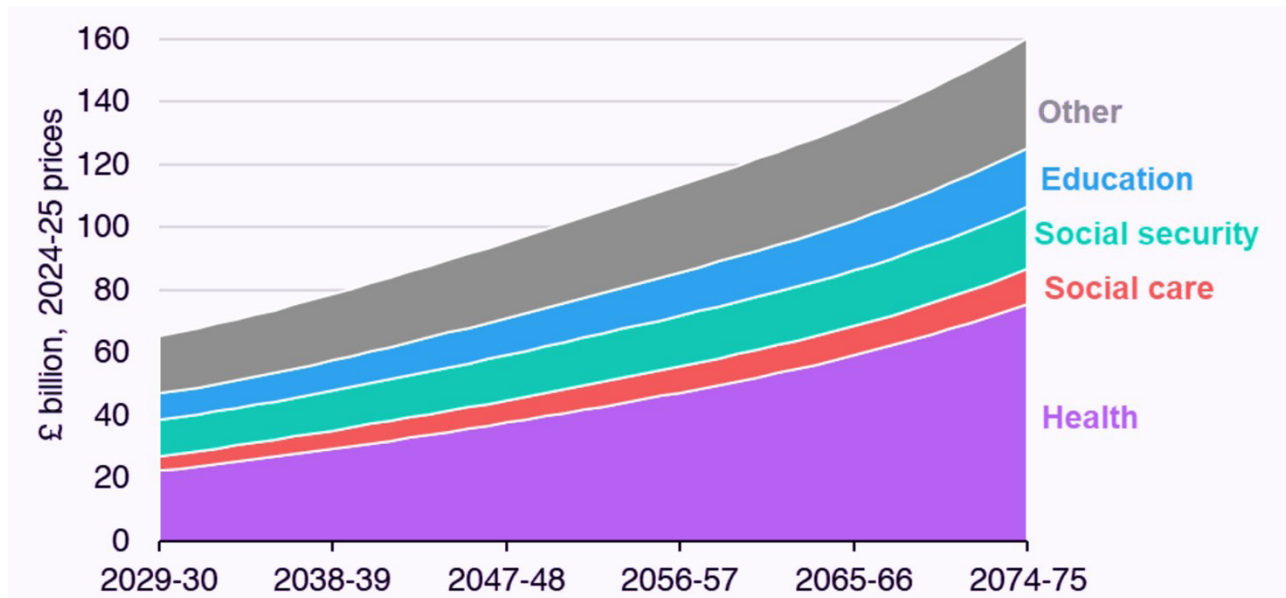
The Scottish Burden of Disease study has estimated that 35% of years lost to ill-health and premature mortality are preventable. Shifting investment to primary prevention is necessary if we are to reverse poor health trends, improve population health outcomes and deliver sustainable public services. This includes poor mental health which costs Scotland – on a conservative estimate – £8.8 billion in additional expenditure every year. That figure could be dramatically reduced by implementing cost-effective, evidence-based mental health prevention initiatives. Even though we know prevention can be the most cost-effective way to maintain the health of the population and tackle inequalities, concerns about upfront costs all too frequently lead more reactive, short-term responses, with resources being targeted towards immediate problems. This can result in the exclusion of longer-term initiatives and a failure to focus on beneficial, preventative investment. For example,:

- Investing in prevention can be significantly more cost-effective than in treatment, with an extra year of good health costing an estimated £3,800 via means of prevention, compared to £13,500 via treatment
- Reductions in preventable ill health could increase tax receipts, reduce welfare payments, and generate efficiencies. For example, a reduction of 10% in obesity prevalence could reduce annual spending on unemployment benefits by £400 million.
- The cost of lost productivity to the UK economy due to preventable ill health has been estimated to be nearly £70 billion per year.



# Return on Investment

The Scottish Fiscal Commission has described how challenges in funding healthcare will become more acute over the next twenty-five years.



Source: [Scottish Fiscal Commission](#)

If current trends in population health aren't reversed, then demand for services will increase and healthcare funding will continue to increase as a proportion of the total Scottish budget. This will lead to significant pressures on Scotland's public sector. Without a shift toward prevention, public services will become increasingly unsustainable and leading to deteriorating outcomes and widening inequalities. Prevention is a strategic priority.

We know prevention works in reducing demand and delivering a return on investment. There is good evidence that investment in primary prevention delivers substantial economic and social returns with case studies showing returns from £6.60 to £46 per £1 invested across housing, education, and community interventions.

For example:

Intervention	Description	ROI (£ per £1 spent)	Key Benefits
<a href="#">Adapting Homes to Prevent Falls</a>	Modifying homes to prevent serious falls	£34.80	Prevents injuries, reduces hospital admissions, saves social care costs
<a href="#">Cold Home Adaptations</a>	Improving insulation and heating	£17.10	Reduces respiratory illness and winter mortality, lowers NHS and social care expenditure
<a href="#">Training Professionals to Give Physical Activity Advice</a>	Brief interventions by trained staff	£23.70	Increases activity, lowers chronic disease risk and future healthcare costs
<a href="#">Free Leisure Services</a>	Community-based physical activity schemes	£20.70	Improves health outcomes, reduces long-term demand on health and social care services
<a href="#">Early Years and Education Interventions</a>	Programmes for child development and school readiness	£6.60 (median)	Reduces future costs in health, justice, and welfare systems
<a href="#">Co-location of Advice Workers in Medical Practices</a>	Co-location of advice workers in medical practices	£39.00 (social and economic impacts)	Improved health and wellbeing, less stigmatisation better and earlier access to services

Change is possible, but we need to work differently to deliver improvement at pace and scale to support the long-term sustainability of public services into the future, Community Planning Partnerships are central to that ambition. Examples of prevention focused collaborations from Scotland and across the UK are summarised in **Appendix A**.



# Creating the conditions for prevention

It can be hard to adopt a more preventative approach. Community Planning Partnerships need to work together to create the conditions for local systems to focus on prevention. Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs) play a pivotal role in translating national priorities into locally tailored prevention actions.

By adopting a prevention-focused approach, CPPs can drive improvements in outcomes, reduce inequalities and support resilient communities, while ensuring resources are used efficiently and sustainably. Key enablers for Community Planning Partnerships to prioritise are summarised below:

Integrating  
Prevention into  
Local Outcome  
Improvement Plans

Stengthening  
Accountability  
and Reporting  
Frameworks

Embedding  
Prevention in  
Funding and  
Spending Plans

Enhancing  
Governance and  
Performance  
Monitoring

Fostering Learning  
and  
Innovation

Developing  
Collaborative  
Leadership and  
Culture

Adopting  
Prevention-  
Focused Funding  
Models

Investing in Shared  
Data Platforms for  
Improved Decision-  
Making and Tracking  
Progress

The Community Planning Improvement Board will work with partnerships to strengthen its leadership and improvement support across these enablers, working with Scottish Government and national partners to provide support. Further information on these enablers is summarised in **Appendix B**.

# Collaboration for prevention

Fundamental to prevention is collaboration but we know that collaboration and system change are challenging and complex. Working with others and creating the right conditions for prevention is difficult but Community Planning Partnerships are key to delivering the necessary shift. The [Edinburgh Futures Initiative](#) has described seven collaboration challenges that are important if we are create the systems change to deliver on prevention.

## The Challenge of Collaboration



Source: Docherty, K. (2024) Working Together: A Framework for Collaborating in Complexity.

As part of this approach, work being led through [the Scottish Prevention Hub](#) looks to address these challenges by applying a framework for collaboration based on a [four-principle approach](#). Only by looking to alternative and more effective way of working together can we strengthen collaboration and create the conditions for prevention in Scotland.

The Scottish Prevention Hub is a national partnership between Public Health Scotland, Police Scotland, and the Edinburgh Futures Institute at Edinburgh University. The Hub takes a whole-system public health approach to prevention, with a focus on the use of data and capacity building.

For further information visit: [the Scottish Prevention Hub](#)

## Find Out More

Public Health Scotland is the lead national body for improving and protecting the health and wellbeing of all of Scotland's people. Directors of Public Health provide public health leadership in local systems, including Community Planning. Focusing on prevention and early intervention, we aim to work together as a public health system - nationally and locally - to increase healthy life expectancy and reduce inequalities by responding to the wider determinants that impact on people's health and wellbeing and an increased focus on prevention.

For further information and to view our strategy visit [Public health Scotland](#)



## Appendix A: Delivering Prevention

Scotland and the UK has firm foundations to build from, with work underway to strengthen collaboration and support local systems deliver a prevention focus. This includes innovative programmes to address challenges to prevention, focus on innovation or focus on collaboration. Examples of preventative programmes from across Scotland and the UK are summarised below:

Initiative	Purpose	Key Features / Focus	Participating Councils / Areas	Further Information
Planet Youth - Scottish Prevention Model	Reduce youth substance use and improve wellbeing through environmental change	Data-led collaboration, Community coalitions, Upstream thinking, Protective factors	Highland, Angus, Clackmannanshire, Argyll & Bute, Dundee, West Dunbartonshire	<a href="https://www.winningscotland.org/planet-youth">https://www.winningscotland.org/planet-youth</a>
Whole Family Approach	Integrate services around families to improve outcomes and reduce poverty	Community-based approach, Service integration, Toolkit for planning	Implemented across Scotland via Community Planning Partnerships	<a href="https://thepromise.scot/">https://thepromise.scot/</a>
Gateshead Council - The Liberated Method	Bespoke support for individuals through relational casework	Individual empowerment, Caseworker-led, Focus on long-term goals	Gateshead Council	<a href="https://www.gateshead.gov.uk/article/14166/Liberated">https://www.gateshead.gov.uk/article/14166/Liberated</a>

Initiative	Purpose	Key Features / Focus	Participating Councils / Areas	Further Information
Collaboration for Health Equity in Scotland	Reduce health inequalities through local partnerships and shared learning	Local plans, Overcoming barriers, Dedicated learning system	Aberdeen City, North Ayrshire, South Lanarkshire	<a href="https://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/">https://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/</a>
Changing Futures Programme	Improve outcomes for adults facing multiple disadvantages	Whole person approach, Partnership working, Data-driven policy	15 local partnerships across England (not Scotland-specific)	<a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/changing-futures">https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/changing-futures</a>
Fairer Futures Partnerships	Support families in poverty through collaborative local initiatives	Child poverty reduction, Service reform, Expansion to multiple councils	Inverclyde, Clackmannanshire, Dundee, Glasgow; expanding to Aberdeen City, East Ayrshire, North Ayrshire, Perth & Kinross	<a href="https://www.gov.scot/policies/poverty-and-social-justice/">https://www.gov.scot/policies/poverty-and-social-justice/</a>
Clackmannanshire Voice Led Transformation Space	Drive system reform and prevention to reduce failure demand	Prevention focus, leveraging funds, Aligning local resources	Clackmannanshire	<a href="https://www.clacks.gov.uk/">https://www.clacks.gov.uk/</a>

Initiative	Purpose	Key Features / Focus	Participating Councils / Areas	Further Information
VOW Project	Address drivers of violent offending behaviour	Peer mentors working with young people who are either involved in criminal behaviour or the criminal justice system	Edinburgh	<a href="#">VOW Project - Police Scotland - Community Justice Scotland</a>
Greater Manchester Model	Shift from reactive to relational public services with integrated place-based teams	Geographic alignment, Leadership, Shared resources, Tackling barriers	Greater Manchester	<a href="https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/">https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/</a>
Community mental health and wellbeing support	Community-based mental health and wellbeing support for children, young people and their families.	Whole system support and services focused on prevention and early intervention	Scotland	<a href="#">Wellbeing and prevention - Mental health - gov.scot</a>

# Appendix B: Prevention and Community Planning Enablers

<p><b>Integrating Prevention into Local Outcome Improvement Plans</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Position prevention as a central pillar in Local Outcome Improvement Plans (LOIPs), with explicit prevention indicators and measurable targets related to population health and inequality reduction.</li> <li>• Ensure LOIPs clearly demonstrate investment in early intervention and upstream supports, enabling systematic tracking and monitoring of prevention efforts and their impact over time.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strengthening Accountability and Reporting Frameworks</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop streamlined assurance and reporting frameworks that prioritise outcomes and improvements, rather than excessive input or process reporting.</li> <li>• Introduce shared accountability mechanisms, including joint reporting and independent evaluation, to monitor prevention progress and drive continuous improvement across partners.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Embedding Prevention in Funding and Spending Plans</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reprofile and consolidate funding arrangements to enable local flexibility, allowing partners to deploy resources for prevention rather than managing fragmented, ring-fenced budgets.</li> <li>• Establish pooled, multi-year prevention budgets across health, social care and community services, offering the certainty needed to fund programmes that reduce demand and address inequalities</li> <li>• over the longer term.</li> <li>• Protect and prioritise prevention spending, with robust evidence of long-term savings and positive outcomes from the shift to prevention-focused investment</li> </ul>
<p><b>Enhancing Governance and Performance Monitoring</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embed prevention priorities within performance frameworks, using interim metrics to track progress and inform decision-making.</li> <li>• Simplify governance structures to focus on delivery and results, supporting agile response to local needs and enabling effective partnership working.</li> </ul>

### **Fostering Learning and Innovation**

- Promote a culture of learning by facilitating information sharing and collaborative piloting of innovative prevention models.
- Encourage the evaluation and scaling of successful interventions, supporting the adoption of best practice across all CPP partners.

### **Developing Collaborative Leadership and Culture**

- Strengthen joint leadership across councils, NHS, police, third sector and communities, fostering a shared commitment to prevention and systems thinking.
- Support workforce development and place-based capacity building to sustain prevention activity and respond effectively to local challenges.

### **Adopting Prevention-Focused Funding Models**

- Implement commissioning approaches that incentivise preventative outcomes, with a clear role for voluntary and community organisations in delivering early help and resilience-building activities.
- Ensure funding models empower grassroots organisations and embed lived experience into the design and delivery of interventions.

### **Investing in Shared Data Platforms for Improved Decision-Making**

- Develop shared data infrastructure and analytics platforms across CPP partners, enabling the identification of high-impact interventions and tracking of population trends.
- Establish common evaluation frameworks to strengthen the fiscal case for prevention and redirect spending to interventions with proven effectiveness in reducing inequalities.