

# FX Alpha

# **Buy GBP/USD**

## Key takeaways

- The trade: Buy a 25D 3m GBP/USD call (1.3074); spot ref: 1.28. Cost = 0.51% GBP. Risks are continuation of US growth momentum
- GBP cyclical support in April: rise in Min Wage & +ve seasonality. Gradual USD depreciation as Fed cuts before BoE
- Bullish cup & handle pattern forming. A breakout above the cup line will confirm and signals upside to 1.30/1.3140

### The Trade

Using spot ref 1.28, we buy a 25D 3m GBP/USD call (1.3074). Vol ref: 5.89%/6.37%. Trade costs 0.51%. Risks to the trade are ongoing US growth outperformance and a dovish tilt from the BoE. For full list of open/closed trades, see: Global FX Weekly: The June target 08 March 2024).

# **Cyclical GBP Outperformance**

We have made the case for GBP cyclical outperformance recently and following the Spring Budget we are now ready to formalize this view. As we discussed in our post Budget write-up (see: <a href="European Rates Watch: UK Budget: Another heavy Gilt supply year">European Rates Watch: UK Budget: Another heavy Gilt supply year</a>
<a href="Maintenanger: 66">March 2024</a>), much of content of the Budget had been well trailed by the media and just as much as there were no "rabbits out of the hat", there were equally no negative surprises that could have destabilized either the Gilt Market or GBP. The Budget is part one of a triumvirate of positive cyclical forces which we think will serve to underpin GBP. The Budget does not materially alter the BoE calculation on rate cut timing but at the margins perhaps inclined to make them more hawkish. Furthermore, with the BoE Decision Maker Panel 1yr inflation expectations rising 3.3%, we remain comfortable with our view that the BoE will cut rates in August at the earliest.

## **Roll on April Seasonality**

So, we move on to the next two positive cyclical factors for GBP: the rise in the National Minimum Wage and April seasonality. With Brexit now out of the way (the reason why GBP underperformed in 2022, 2019, 2018), we would expect corporate repatriation of foreign earnings to pay GBP dividends to dominate through the month once again. Given that a large proportion of UK listed companies (energy and basic materials) are USD functional, we would expect GBP/USD to be the main beneficiary of such flows. Against this backdrop, we expect the BoE to remain resolute in its current stance and reassured by recent consensus upgrades to UK growth. This should provide a strong cyclical basis for GBP outperformance.

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# Dollar to depreciate throughout the year.

We foresee the USD gradually depreciating this year, as an anticipated soft landing in the US should ultimately pave the way for lower US rates and a broader USD move lower towards equilibrium. While near-term USD upside risks can't be overlooked, we still expect the Fed to cut rates starting mid-year, most likely ahead of the BoE. Risks to this USD view center mainly on potential economic reacceleration risks and sticky inflation that would push expected Fed cuts out even further. Time (and data) will tell, but Chair Powell's testimony to Congress this week did not materially change the status quo Fed view, despite some concerns that January's upside inflation readings could be emphasized.

# Cup and handle base plus bullish seasonal period

A bullish cup and handle pattern is forming. A breakout above the cup line at 1.2819-1.2827 will confirm it and signals upside to 1.30/1.3140. Medium term, this pattern can also suggest upside to 1.3315 and possibly 1.3610. Since 1999 when the euro began trading, GBPUSD traded higher in April 79% of the time for an average gain of +1.04% and median of +1.33%. Gains tended to be reversed in May. History suggests on average GBPUSD bottoms in the third week of March and peaks in the first week of May. (Approximately March 19 to May 3).

# GBPUSD: Cup and handle base plus bullish seasonal period

### Exhibit 1: GBPUSD - Daily chart

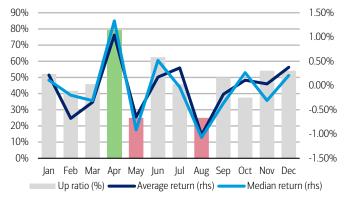
Cup and handle bottom pattern formation has developed. A rally above the cup line at 1.2819-1.2827 will confirm it. First target would be a retest of the 2023 highs near 1.3140. Medium term could see 1.3315 and possibly 1.3610.



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### **Exhibit 2: GBPUSD monthly seasonality**

Since 1999 when the euro began trading, GBPUSD traded higher in April 79% of the time for an average gain +1.04% of and median return of +1.33%. Gains tended to be reversed in May.



Source: BofA Global Research, Bloomberg

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### **Exhibit 3: GBPUSD average trend**

History suggests on average GBPUSD bottoms in the third week of March and peaks in the first week of May. (Approximately March 19 to May 3).



Source: BofA Global Research, Bloomberg

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