

The Early Years Taskforce

Shared Vision and Priorities



March 2012



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1. INTRODUCTION

The Early Years Framework¹ published in December 2008, signified an important milestone in encouraging partnership working to deliver a shared commitment to giving children the best start in life and to improving the life chances of children, young people and families at risk. The Early Years Taskforce shares this commitment.

The purpose of this paper is to set out the shared priorities of the Early Years Taskforce in taking forward the Early Years Preventative Spend agenda. In November 2011, The Early Years Taskforce was established, alongside the Early Years Change Fund, by the Scottish Government, in partnership with Local Government, the NHS, the Police and the Third Sector. It will take forward a significant change programme to help deliver the joint commitment to prioritising the early years of children's lives and to early intervention, originally set out in the Early Years Framework.

The objective of this early years change programme is to accelerate the conversion of the high level principles set out in the Early Years Framework into practical action. This must:

- Deliver tangible improvement in outcomes and reduce inequalities for Scotland's vulnerable children.
- Put Scotland squarely on course to shifting the balance of public services towards early intervention and prevention by 2016.
- Sustain this change to 2018 and beyond.

The Early Years Taskforce

The Early Years Taskforce was established to develop the strategic direction for the early years change programme and co-ordinate policy across Government and the wider public sector to ensure that early years spending is prioritised by the whole public sector. The Taskforce is jointly chaired by Scottish Government, Health and Local Government. It involves elected politicians, practitioners and experts from the statutory and voluntary sectors. Full membership of the Early Years Taskforce is provided at Annex A.

The Early Years Change Fund

The establishment of the Early Years Change Fund signifies a significant shift to preventative spend over the current Parliamentary term. The Change Fund represents the Scottish Government, Local Government and NHS Scotland's intention to shift resource to where it makes the most difference, by supporting prevention and early intervention. The Early Years Change Fund is a combination of existing funds currently committed and new funds yet to be allocated. The minimum Early Years Change Fund contributions from Scottish Government, Local Government and NHS Scotland are outlined in the following table:

¹ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/01/13095148/2>

	2012/13 £m	2013/14 £m	2014/15 £m	2015/16 £m	Total £m
Scottish Government	10.5	14.5	16.5	8.5	50
Health	36	39	42	-	117
Local Government	20	35	50	-	105
Total					272

The Change Fund is the first time we have collectively discussed a financial mechanism for delivering on the aspirations of the Early Years Framework. The total amount of resource in the change fund is relatively modest compared with the £2.7 billion spent by the public sector each year on children, but it presents a huge opportunity and a good starting point for all partners to consider how we can begin to direct more of this overall resource away from treating our problems to funding the solutions. The expectation is that all partners will:

- Consider how they can support universal services to deliver better for children in their early years and their families.
- Raise public awareness of the significance of the early years to children's healthy development, and consider how they can build the capacity of families and communities to secure better outcomes for themselves.
- Bring the totality of their resources (including those supporting current service delivery, both in children's and adult services) to discussions on how we can best deliver the aspirations of the Early Years Framework.

2. THE CONTEXT

The Early Years Framework provides the context for this change programme. The Early Years Framework highlights the importance of all national and local agencies, the third sector and independent sector working together to deliver improved outcomes for children. The Framework identifies the 10 key elements of transformational change in the early years – these are:

- A coherent approach.
- Helping children, families and communities to secure outcomes for themselves.
- Breaking cycles of poverty, inequality and poor outcomes in and through early years.
- A focus on engagement and empowerment of children, families and communities.
- Using the strength of universal services to deliver prevention and early intervention.
- Putting quality at the heart of service delivery.
- Services that meet the needs of children and families.
- Improving outcomes and children's quality of life through play.
- Simplifying and streamlining delivery.
- More effective collaboration.

The Early Years Framework is particularly relevant, but not limited to, the delivery of three of the National Outcomes:

- Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed.
- We have improved the life chances for children, young people and families at risk.
- Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens.

The early years agenda is underpinned by Getting it right for every child, which is founded on the principles of early intervention, through appropriate, proportionate and timely intervention, and ensures that all Scotland's children, young people and their families have consistent, co-ordinated support, when they need it.

3. PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

As the Early Years Taskforce, we have developed this paper to set out our vision – to our communities, our young people and their families, and the people that work with and for them – of what needs to be done to ensure the best possible outcomes for our children, the ways families and communities can help improve these outcomes and how services can best be targeted to support them.

The Early Years Framework encourages new ways of working that aim to ensure that all relevant agencies can deliver improved outcomes for our children. We already know what needs to be done – a wealth of evidence exists, the Early Years Framework set out the case for action and Susan Deacon's report, *Joining the Dots* reaffirmed that we know what to do.

We know that spending £1 in the early years will save £9 in the future². We know that supporting parents to build strong attachments with babies and young children builds resilience and behaviours that will help that child do better in later life. We know that play is vital to physical, emotional, social and cognitive development. We know that multi-agency working and information sharing can be improved and that it is crucial to good service delivery. We know that while procedures are needed, there can be excessive bureaucracy and duplication in the system. We now need to get on with doing the right things.

Moving Forward

The Early Years Framework acknowledges that to deliver transformational change we will require an increase in resource to help make the shift from crisis driven, curative care to preventative and anticipatory care. The challenge we have faced – even before the economic downturn – is making this happen in the face of demographic change and rising demand for care. Prioritisation of services by providers can be a difficult task, particularly when statutory obligations overshadow other work. Difficult decisions will need to be made, at a national and local level, about where investment should be prioritised.

² <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Research/by-topic/children-and-young-people>

Given the importance of identifying and dealing with risks to children and families at the earliest possible stage, to prevent these risks from becoming long-term problems, we have identified the following priority areas for action, which build on the priorities identified in the Early Years Framework.

Using the strength of universal services to deliver prevention and early intervention

Our ambitions are the same as for the Early Years Framework and the Equally Well report into health inequalities. We want to do everything at our collective disposal within the public and voluntary sectors to reduce inequalities in our society and ensure there is equality of outcomes and opportunities for all. The Early Years Framework acknowledges that the power of universal services in securing better outcomes for children is key. However, there is a need to strike the right balance between universal and targeted services. The Taskforce recognises the importance of both universal and targeted services at supporting vulnerable children and their families. While we need to focus provision on where it is needed most, we must also ensure that universal services can deliver effectively for the more vulnerable. This is about moving from intervening when a crisis happens towards prevention and early intervention, building resilience and providing the right level of support before problems worsen. Universal services, which cater for all children, must have the capacity and skills to engage all children and families throughout the early years of a child's life – even those who may be challenging and reject first offers of help.

What we will do:

- We know that local areas have different demographics, socioeconomic conditions and needs, and variable infrastructure to support that. Together we will provide support for local partners on how best to plan to use their resources in a way that will maximise impact for children and families. We need to establish what support is needed to help local partners prioritise their resources, maximise impact and achieve the shift to prevention.
- We are strongly committed to evidence based practice. Therefore, we will provide guidance for Community Planning Partnerships on those interventions that should be prioritised along the pathway of care for all families, and those that should be de-prioritised, based on sound evidence of effectiveness in promoting positive outcomes and reducing the risk of negative outcomes. There is already a wealth of good practice across Scotland in a range of areas: nurture and attachment, parenting, family support early development and learning and play. The challenge is to embed this as standard practice and consistently to drive up our aspirations and performance.
- We will establish a Practice Development Team to support local areas in implementing this change programme. There is a strong argument that this work should build on, and be closely aligned with, existing work by local partners to deliver improved services for children and young people, including how services are strategically commissioned by Community Planning Partnerships. Therefore, this team will complement existing support structures and provide a resource of

expertise for local areas to draw on when developing and implementing their plans.

- We will consult on proposed legislation which, when implemented, could provide a further opportunity to embed the Early Years Framework, with the potential of giving some, or all, elements legal status.
- We are committed to developing the early years workforce and will publish *The Common Core of skills, knowledge & understanding and values*, which will describe the essential skills, knowledge and values that are valid for every employee and volunteer working with any child, young person or family in Scotland. We will support implementation of this framework across the early years workforce. Together, we will also consider if additional support, learning or development is required to support the early years workforce to deliver better for children and their families.

Helping children, families and communities to secure outcomes for themselves

A key part of any early intervention policy is building the capacity of individuals, families and communities to secure the best outcomes for themselves. Families, including kinship, foster and adoptive families, have the biggest impact – positive or negative – on children’s early experience and resilience. We need to shift the focus from service provision as the main vehicle for delivery of outcomes to building the capacity of individuals, families and communities, and addressing the external barriers which they may face in seeking to maximise their life chances.

What we will do:

- We will develop a national parenting strategy that encourages agencies to work together to support parents and help them develop their parenting skills. The strategy will include all family members involved in nurturing children, parents, grand parents, step parents, parents living apart and kinship carers. This will also include the corporate parent for those children for whom it is in their best interests to have an alternative to parental care.
- We will continue to support and develop the Bookbug programme and the PlayTalkRead campaign, which aim to encourage parents and carers to play, talk and read more with their babies and young children to help drive home the importance of positive interaction with their children from day one, and offer practical support and ideas on how to create the best foundations for children’s development.
- We will work together to develop a clear understanding of what works best to support families at a local level and establish the key principles that will underpin a new generation of family centres and family support. We will work with local partners to make these principles a reality.
- We want to empower our communities to shape the provision they need in their local area. To help achieve this we will establish a Communities and Families

Fund to support local projects that bring real tangible benefits for children and families such as community playgroups, crèches, wrap around care provision, community outreach, parents' groups and wider family support.

A coherent approach/more effective collaborations

The Health Service, as the universal service at the critical early stages of life (antenatal and early years), has a key role to play in supporting the best possible start in life, and identifying and addressing risks early. A key challenge is ensuring that all services (including adult-focused services) are accessible for all children and their families, and take a holistic approach to providing support.

The key to supporting prevention and early intervention is agencies working together to provide support to those children and families who need extra help. This should focus on helping children and families to access support, where necessary, and engage positively with relevant agencies. This is in line with Getting it right for every child, the principles of which should guide and underpin all our work with children.

What we will do:

- Continue to embed the principles and practice of Getting it right for every child across all agencies through the development of practical guidance on the implementation of Getting it right for every child in an early years setting.
- Ensure that all our systems are more effective in sharing information to support identification and early intervention for children and families at risk.
- Ensure that all partners work together to ensure that maternity and antenatal support is world-class, identifying and addressing concerns at the earliest possible stage, giving parents, families and their children the best start in life.
- Ensure that all partners work together to ensure that vulnerable families are supported in an appropriate, proportionate and timely way, making sure they get the help they need when they need it.
- Ensure that all partners work together to ensure that Looked After Children and their families are supported and prioritised to ensure positive outcomes, whether that is improved circumstances at home, or early permanence elsewhere.

6. GOVERNANCE

The Taskforce will provide strategic leadership for the early years change programme and co-ordinate policy across Government and the wider public sector to ensure that early years spending is prioritised by the whole public sector.

A delivery group will be established to drive, support and monitor delivery of the change programme, as described in this document, on behalf of the Early Years Taskforce. This delivery group will take a programme management approach to overseeing implementation of the programme, developing detailed action plans and

establishing sub-groups or workstreams to support delivery as necessary. The delivery group will report on progress to the Taskforce.

7. GUIDANCE FOR COMMUNITY PLANNING PARTNERSHIPS

We see Community Planning Partnerships as being key to the delivery of the change programme. Each local change programme has to be owned and supported by the whole CPP. We would expect any future guidance issued by the taskforce to reflect the forthcoming review of Community Planning, but we feel that this should not stop CPPs from pushing ahead with their locally agreed plans for change.

Community Planning Partners should use the Early Years Change Fund as a starting point to reconsider the way the total resource – approximately £2.7 billion per year across the NHS and Local Government – for early years services provision is invested. This should be with a view to developing a clear strategy to make the shift to investing more upstream in anticipatory and preventative approaches that we know work and that help to reduce the demand for more formal, higher intensity care in the future. This will require bold decisions around disinvestment at both a local and national level, but it is important that the focus of local activity is on the change that needs to take place in the delivery of services rather than the mechanics around the monetary amounts that are attributed to the change fund.

Long term iterative planning and review between partners for children in their early years and their families is essential to ensure that the quality of early years services continues to improve and better value for money is achieved. At the heart of this planning process will be the continuing development of Integrated Children's Services Plans by Community Planning Partnerships. These plans should cover, at a minimum, the period 2012–2018 and include how the longer term objectives of the partnership are going to be met. Where appropriate we expect plans to make reference to how partnerships are developing and implementing approaches to strategic commissioning and co-production.

We are not looking for a new plan in addition to the Integrated Children's Service Plan, but the expectation is that plans are ambitious and analyse how the use of total resources will change over time to enable resources to be more readily directed towards meeting the needs of vulnerable children and their families through preventative approaches.

The redevelopment of Integrated Children's Services Plans provides an important opportunity for the Third and Independent sectors to become more fully embedded in the planning arrangements established by partnerships and thereby to further strengthen the cross sector arrangements that have been established during the first year of the Change Fund.

Partnerships will be asked to provide details of how well progressed Integrated Children's Services planning is as part of their change fund return. Given the complex nature of this process and the importance in ensuring that this work has clear agreement and governance, partnerships will be given the time and support to develop and agree them.

8. WHAT WILL SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

The aspiration for the Early Years Framework is that the success of our efforts will be shown in positive outcomes of all of our children. In particular, our success will be measured in the achievement of the following outcomes from the National Performance Framework:

- Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed.
- We have improved the life chances for children, young people and families at risk.
- Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens.

To get it right for children at the greatest risk of negative outcomes this means being safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included.

It is essential that the delivery of national and local outcomes under this change programme is recorded and evidenced by Community Planning Partnerships. To assist with this, there is a recognised set of early years indicators which can provide a baseline position, and thereafter signal direction of travel for partnerships. The Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics website provides an easily accessible option to build a baseline and understand where there are particular issues. The SNS website can be found at <http://www.sns.gov.uk/default.aspx>. The core 10 indicators, agreed by a range of partners can be found on the Scottish Government website³ along with a link to the wider 35 original indicators. We don't anticipate that each CPP should aim to demonstrate progress in all 35 at first, however each CPP should consider in which areas they need to maximise impact and progress and how they intend to deliver on that.

There is however, potential for further development. What we will do:

- In the longer term, we will work together to continue to refine and develop the data we collect at a national level to ensure that we are capturing the information that gives a meaningful representation of how we are delivering for children and families.
- There is still a need for robust management information that supports the short term planning, improvement and accountability of services, allowing those on the frontline to respond quickly to client need and to changing circumstances. Therefore, we will work with national and local partners using existing performance assessment frameworks to identify the kind of information that local agencies might want to consider in planning, commissioning and managing their services.

³ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young-People/Early-Years-and-Family/Early-Years-Framework/Implementation/Measuring-Practice>

The success of the Early Years Change Fund and the associated change programme will be defined by:

- Improvements in children's lives, evidenced by established indicators found in the Public Sector Improvement Framework or other performance assessment models.
- Development of services which support children and families to overcome the disadvantages they face and the systems and infrastructure to support them.
- A reduction in inequality which will enable all children to achieve the same outcomes.

In the shorter term the change programme will be considered a success when:

- Parents and carers know how to keep their children safe.
- Health inequalities are reduced.
- Parents, carers and children form strong attachments.
- Parents and carers are attuned to their children's needs.
- Strong foundations for learning are in place.
- Non-stigmatising approaches to service provision are employed to maximise inclusion.
- More streamlined planning, assessment and decision-making processes are in place.

ANNEX A

Membership of the Early Years Taskforce

- Bill Alexander, Director of Social Work, The Highland Council
- Tam Baillie, Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People
- Sir Harry Burns, Chief Medical Officer
- Aileen Campbell MSP, Minister for Children and Young People
- Paul Carberry, Operational Director of Children's Services, Action for Children Scotland
- Detective Chief Supt John Carnochan, Head of Scottish Violence Reduction Unit
- Malcolm Chisholm MSP, Member for Edinburgh North and Leith
- Lesley Gibb, Service Manager-Early Years, Stirling Council, ADES Pre-5
- Anne Houston, Chief Executive, Children 1st
- Cllr Isabel Hutton, COSLA Spokesperson on Education, Children and Young People.
- Sally-Ann Kelly, Acting Director, Barnardo's Scotland
- Brian Livingston, Executive Director of Finance and Resource, Fife Council
- Dr Nancy Loucks, Chief Executive, Families Outside
- Andrew Lowe, Director of Social Work, Scottish Borders Council, ADSW
- David Martin, Chief Executive Renfrewshire Council, SOLACE
- Elaine Mead, Chief Executive, NHS Highland
- Sue Palmer, Chair of the Scottish Play Policy Forum, Play Scotland
- Cllr David Parker, Scottish Borders Council, COSLA
- Caroline Selkirk, Deputy Chief Executive, NHS Tayside HQ
- Chief Constable David Strang, Lothian and Borders Police, ACPOS
- Cllr Pat Watters, President, COSLA
- Julie Wild, Early Years Lead on National Parent Forum of Scotland
- Malcolm Wright, Chief Executive, NHS Education for Scotland