



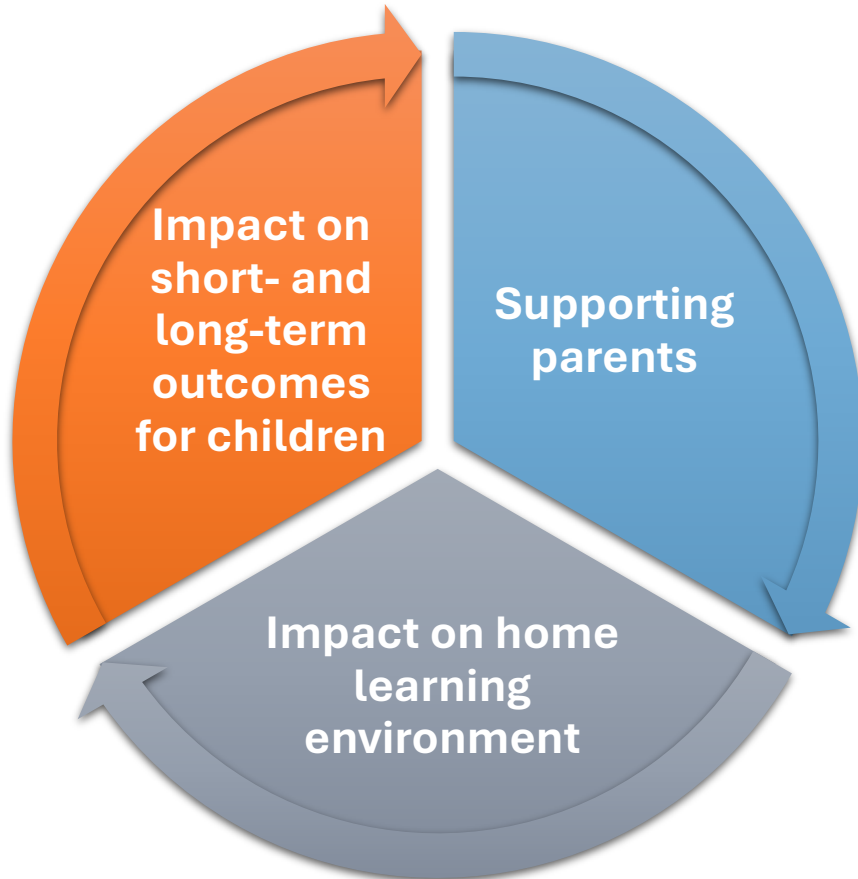
Building bridges

Research into integration of early years education and care with support for families in England and Scotland

Why we undertook this research

The impact of high-quality early education on children's outcomes is well established, as are the benefits of joined-up support for families.

Creating a “virtuous circle”?



Filling the information vacuum

1. Explore existing approaches – at local area and setting levels – that have sought to “integrate” ELC / ECEC with support for families.

2. Consider how to foster greater integration in future, and specifically what role ELC / ECEC settings should play in supporting families.

What we did

The research aimed to explore approaches to integration in local areas and settings across England and Scotland, using both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Calls for evidence



A survey for councils

65 responses

England 33% of LAs | Scotland 41% of LAs



A call for evidence for early years providers

57 responses



Workshops with leaders and practitioners in Scotland and England (respectively)

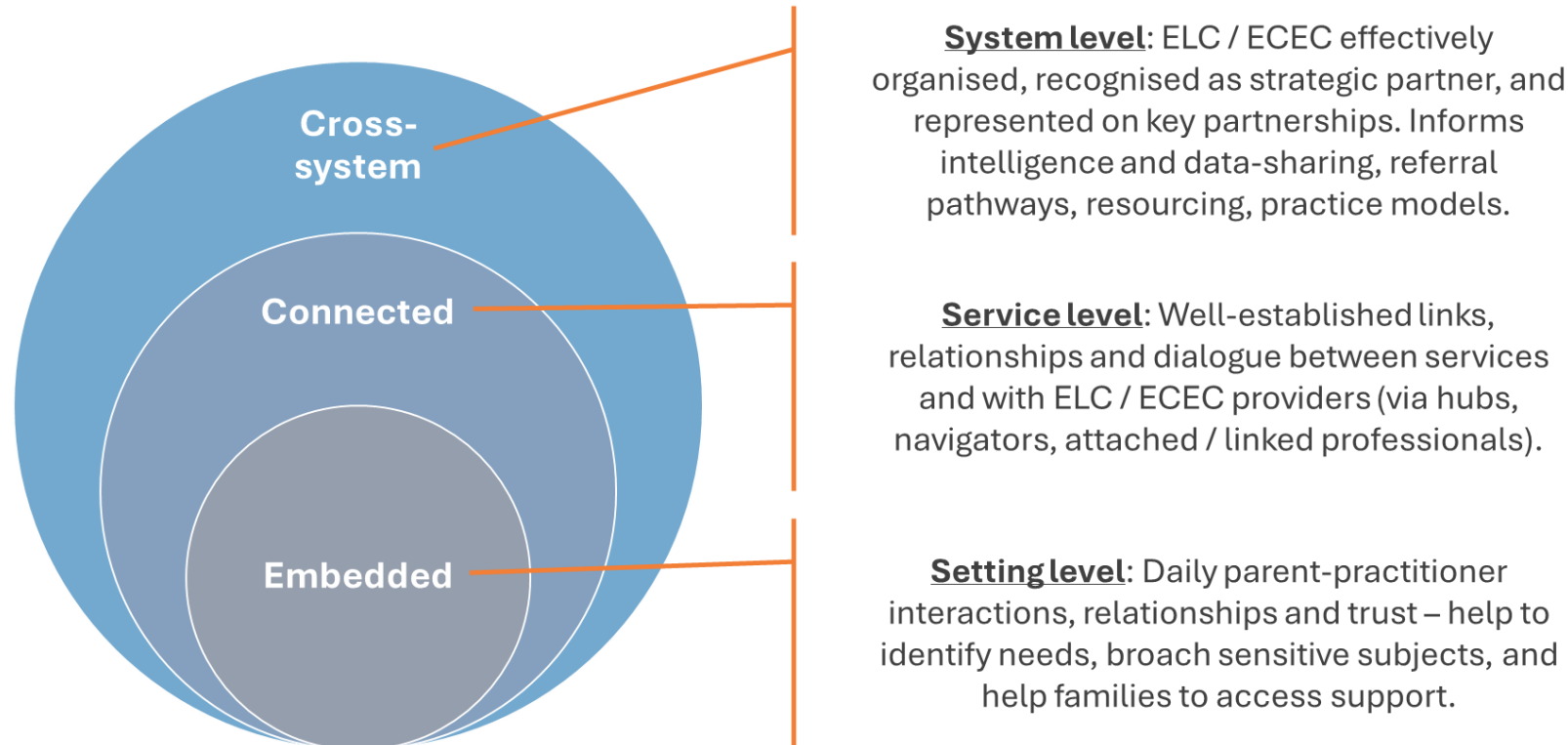
Deep dives into 9 local areas



How we conceptualised “integration”

At the start of the work, we undertook a brief review of existing evidence and developed a conceptual framework to allow us to explore integration on 3 distinct levels.

A conceptual framework for integration between ELC / ECEC and support for families



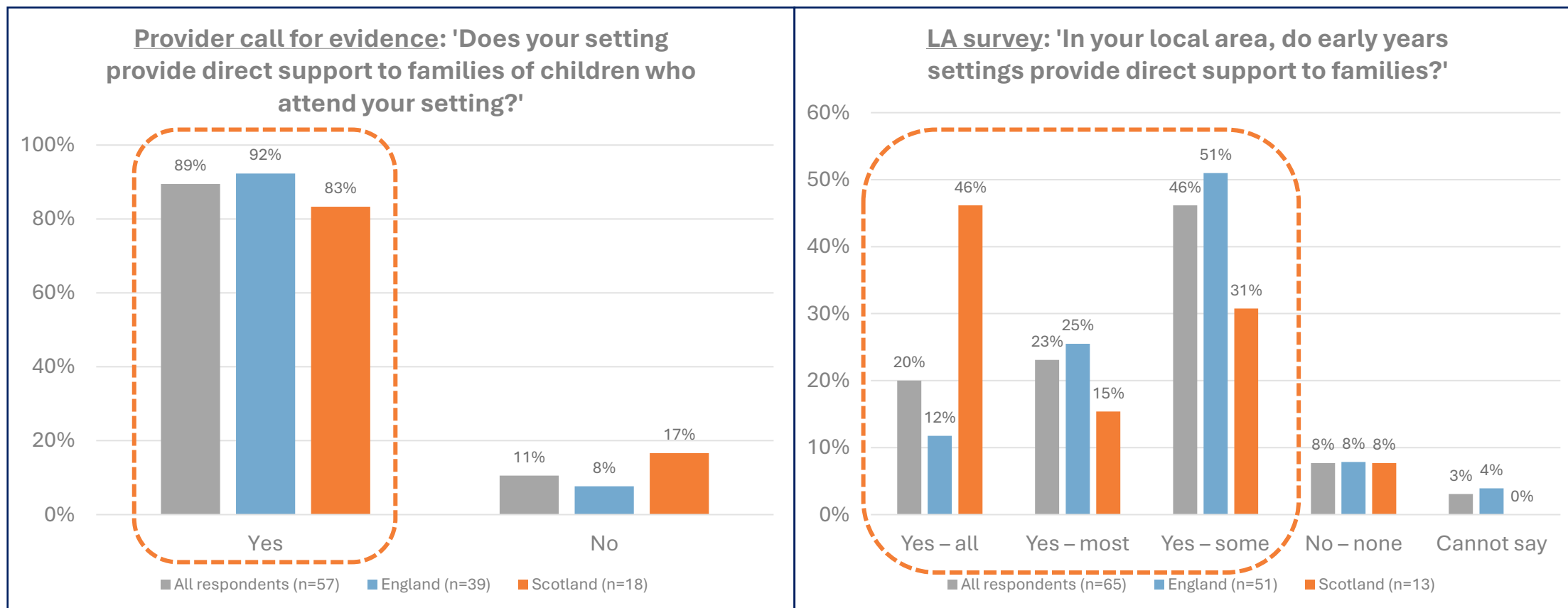


Findings





9 in 10 ELC / ECEC providers reported that they were providing support to families. A similar proportion of LAs reported this was the case for some / most / all local providers.

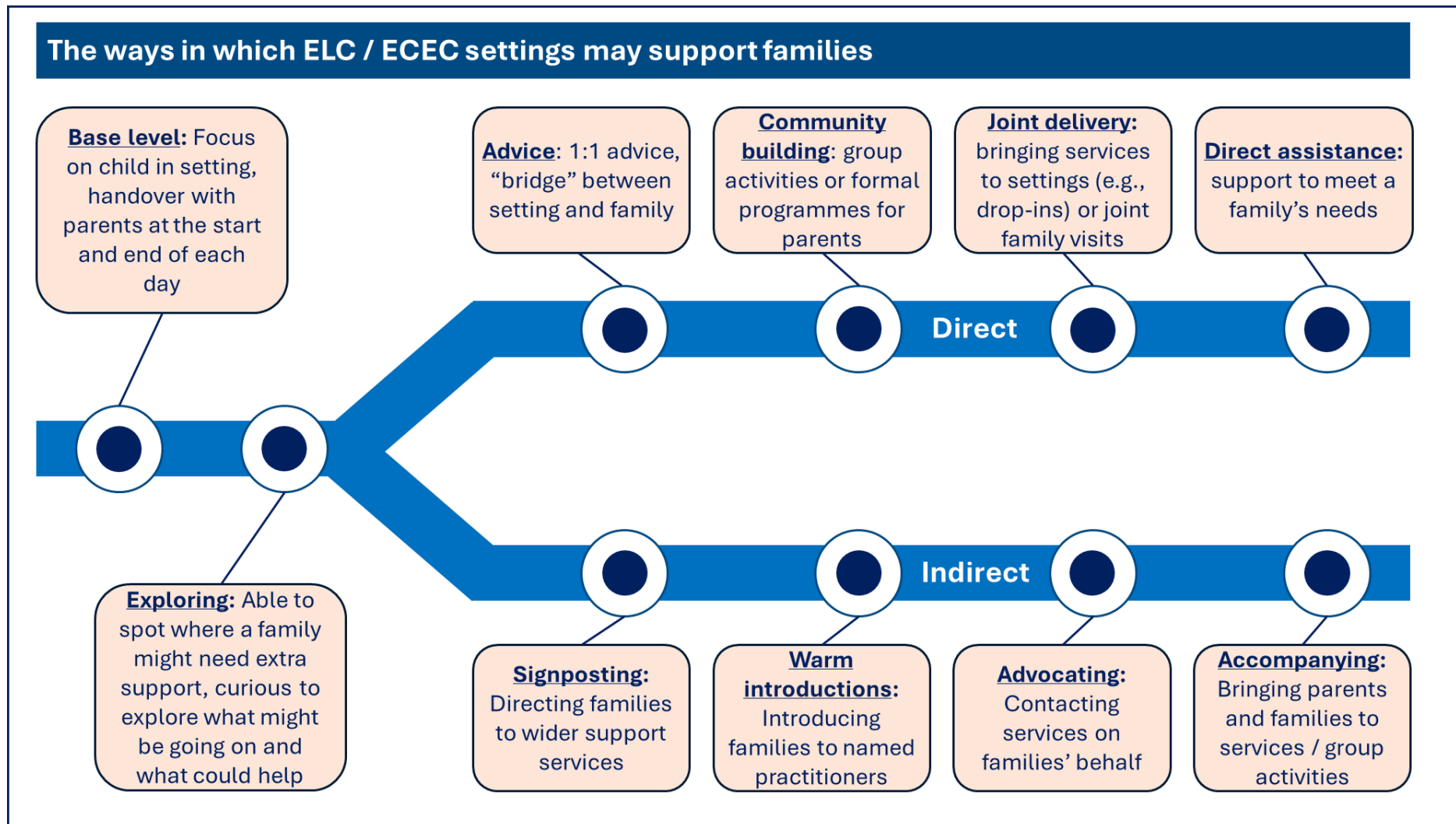


9 in 10 ELC / ECEC providers and 8 in 10 LAs reported that ELC / ECEC settings providing support to families enabled swifter identification and more joined-up support.



Setting level: The evolving role of ELC / ECEC

ELC / ECEC settings reported providing a broad range of both “direct” (delivered by the setting) and “indirect” support (where the settings connects a family to external support).





The role of ELC / ECEC settings in supporting families differs depending on the areas in which a family needs support

The role settings are playing differs depending on the domain of support for children and families		
Domain of support	Direct role	Indirect role
1. Child development and home learning	Settings often play a direct role – 1:1 advice to parents; community building through family groups / parenting programmes.	Signposting and introducing – especially where local services are strong.
2. Inclusion and additional support needs	Settings often play a direct role – inclusive practice, advice and community building for parents of children with ASN / SEND, and joint delivery of support with specialist teachers, EPs, SALT.	Alongside direct support, signposting parents to support and advocating for them.
3. Family wellbeing	Some settings play a direct role as a lead professional , or due to gaps in support from external services.	Settings' role often indirect – signposting and introducing families to wider services, and working as part of multi-agency teams around families.
4. Cost-of-living and financial hardship	Some settings offer direct assistance (food, clothing, books). Some offer “ advice ” (e.g. budgeting).	Often an indirect role – signposting or introducing families to services (e.g., welfare rights, food banks, housing). Some accompanying (helping with forms, assessments) and advocating .



The role of ELC / ECEC does not exist in isolation – instead, it is part of a wider “ecosystem” of support for families.

3 ways in which ELC / ECEC connect to this “ecosystem”

1 **Hub- or centre-based models** – “one-stop-shops” to which ELC / ECEC settings can signpost.

2 **Multi-agency locality teams** – wrapping around families and settings.

3 **Setting-led models** – where settings have built their own multi-disciplinary capacity.

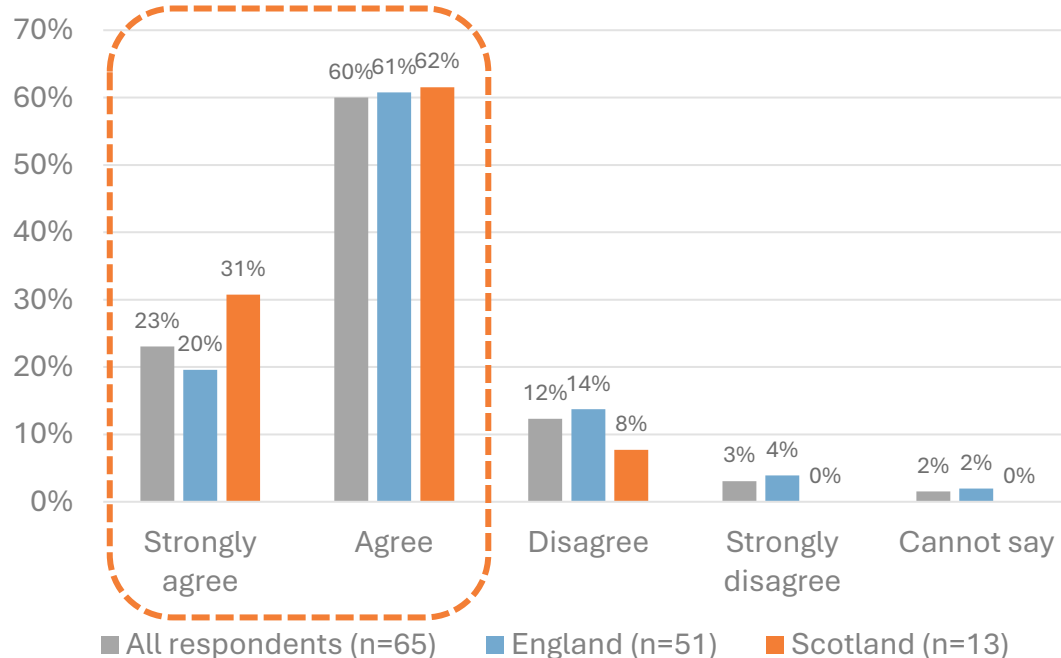


The “optimum” model of integration is one that is calibrated to local context.

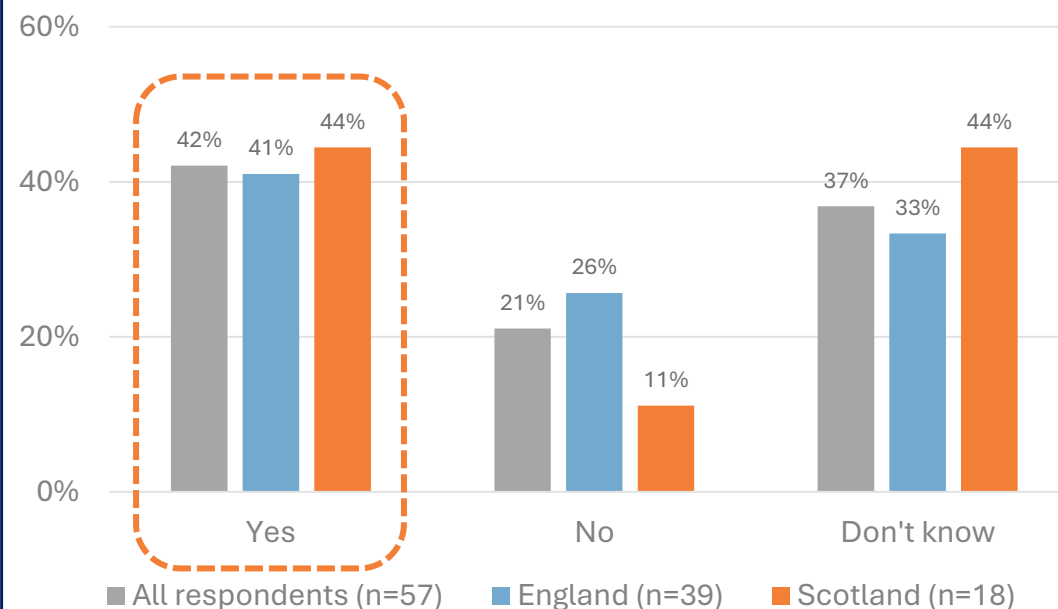


8 in 10 LAs – but only 4 in 10 ELC / ECEC providers – reported that ELC / ECEC settings were represented on local strategic partnerships.

LA survey: 'In my local area, early years settings are represented on multi-agency strategic partnerships concerning support for children and families.'



Provider call for evidence: 'In your local area, are there any local strategic partnership arrangements that bring together services for children and families on which early years providers are represented?'



Our research suggests that this may reflect a lack of formal partnership structures that bring together ELC / ECEC providers and enable them to act as a local strategic partner.



Recommendations

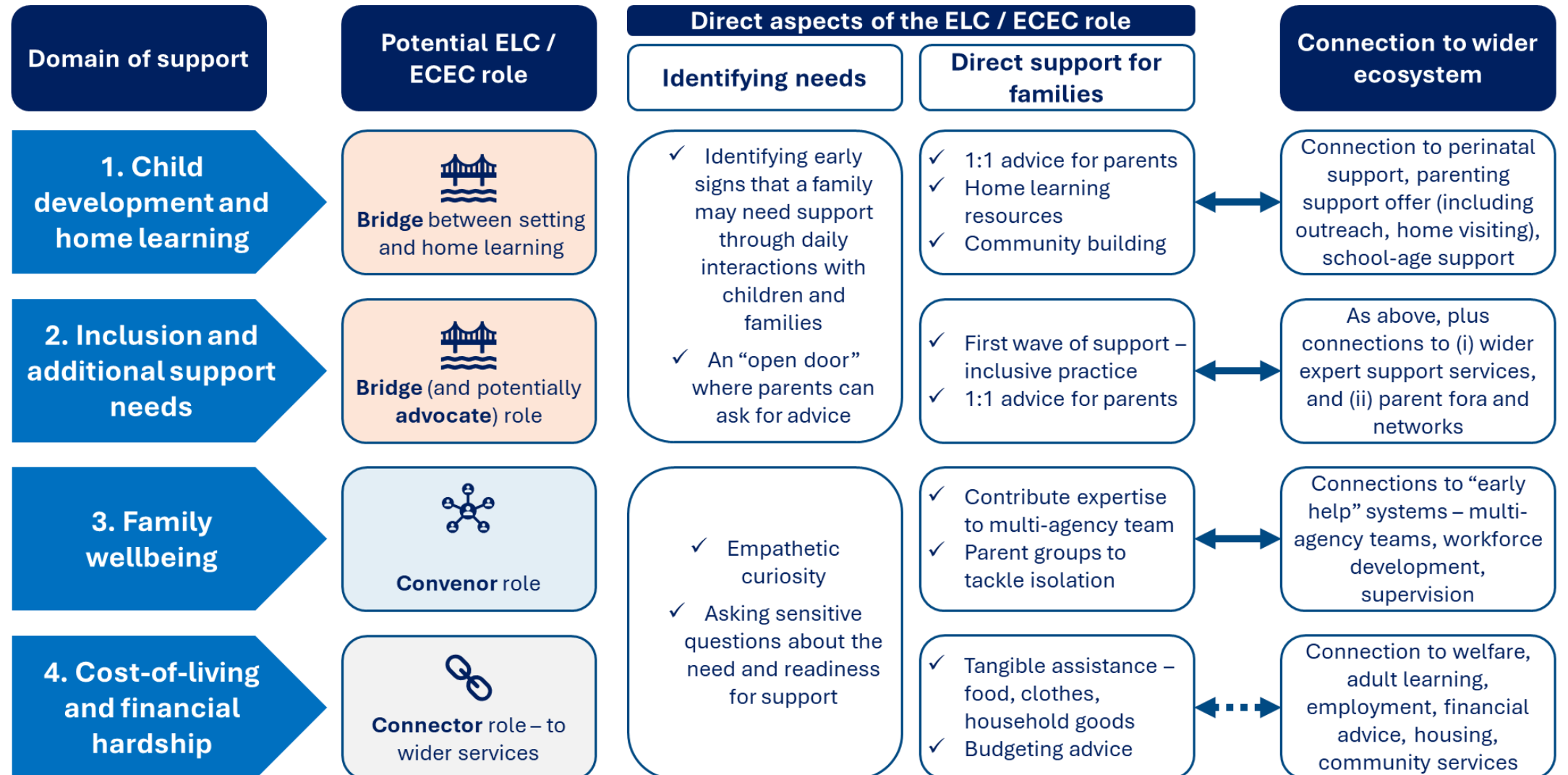


98% of ELC / ECEC providers and 95% of LAs agreed that greater integration would improve outcomes for children and families.

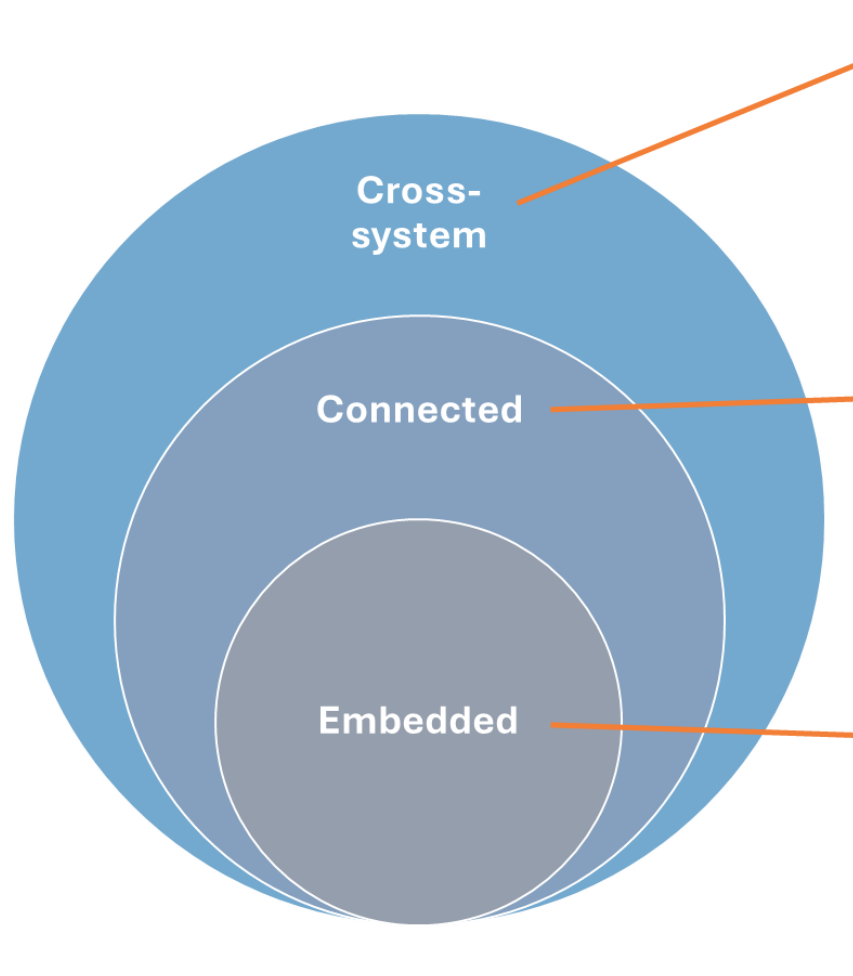
- 1** **National governments should formally recognise and define the broader role of ELC / ECEC settings** – the role should be shaped by 3 principles – relationships (who knows the family best?), expertise (who understand what support is needed?), and agency (who can effect change?).
- 2** **National governments should provide sustainable resourcing to build long-term capacity for ELC / ECEC settings to play a broader role in supporting families** – sustainable, consistent practice requires sustainable, consistent funding.
- 3** **Skills related to supporting families should be incorporated into national and local ELC / ECEC workforce development** – (i) core component for all practitioners; (ii) advanced practitioner role.
- 4** **National and local governments should support the ELC / ECEC sector to act as a strategic partner in local multi-agency partnership working and in developing local integrated plans.**
- 5** **National policymakers should develop consistent guidelines and templates for multi-agency data-sharing agreements** – especially between settings, education, health and family services.

What would this mean in practice?

The role ELC / ECEC settings could play in supporting families in a future integrated system and how this could connect to a wider ecosystem of support for families ...



A vision of an integrated early years system



System level

- ELC / ECEC as a **strategic partner** in broader “EY system”
- ELC / ECEC involved in **integrated delivery planning**
- **Enablers of joint working** – e.g., data-sharing, joint workforce development, physical spaces for joint work

Service level

- Core principles → **locally-determined models** of integration
- **“Early years ecosystem”** – strong links between settings and services
- **Capacity** for ECEC / ELC to engage in multi-agency work + connect families to support – within settings / attached

Setting level

Build on expertise, daily interactions with families. Capacity and workforce development to enable –

- **direct** role in supporting **home learning / parenting**
- **convenor** role in supporting **family wellbeing**
- **connector** role in supporting **family hardship**

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