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Mapping Support and Services in Pregnancy in Scotland

Webinar
8 October 2026

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First, a big thank you...

Mapping Support and Services in Pregnancy in Scotland



OCTOBER 2026

Linda Davidson
Laura Quinn
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- Our study aimed to increase understanding of the support and services in place across Scotland during pregnancy and in the first few weeks and months of a child's life.
- We worked alongside NESTA which was exploring the change and conditions required to strengthen childhood development.
- What we did:
 - focused review of key literature, including all available Scottish research
 - analysed 25 survey responses from CSPPs exploring universal, additional and targeted services in place from pregnancy and into childhood
 - participated in 13 workshops led by NESTA with 6 local authorities



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- Strong commitment from the workforce for developing and sharing practice
- Lots of areas working creatively to meet the needs of local communities
- Many examples of innovative and effective practice
- Strong local partnership working with significant involvement of the third sector

And this is what you (and the evidence!) have told us....

Provision of support and services

GIRFEC is being adapted for use during pregnancy, reflecting relevance of the framework but perceptions that it does not explicitly address the pre-birth period

Support is delivered through complex local funding and governance arrangements highlighting the highly collaborative but locally diverse arrangements for delivery and funding of services.

Midwifery support and Health Visiting highlighted as critical component of the early help agenda, but needs further investment.

Further development and standardisation of the Safeguarding Midwife role

Early help provision characterised by inconsistency rather than a lack of services highlighting a need for stronger local strategic coordination.

Additional support and services in pregnancy included a focus on health and wellbeing, pregnancy support, parenting support, parenting programmes and financial support

Target and intensive support included social work, targeted family support, support with addictions and domestic abuse, perinatal mental health and infant mental health

Multi-agency pathways and processes

Clear multi-agency pathways are not in place consistently across Scotland across universal, additional, and targeted support, with local support and services available to families before situations escalate.

Assessment approaches varied across Scotland, with local areas developing their own models rather than using a standardised framework.

Early help provision is characterised by inconsistency rather than a lack of services highlighting a need for stronger local strategic coordination.

What is working well

Effective support which is underpinned by strong professional relationships, co-location, informal communication and shared responsibility enabled better coordination of support for families.

Locality based multi-agency arrangements are effective in identifying concerns early, improving information sharing, and coordinating support, with collaboration strongest when services were organised around communities.

Challenges in service delivery

Sustaining preventative work challenging when faced with financial insecurity.

Workforce constraints pushing practice towards brief contacts, referrals and crisis response, rather than sustained relationship-building and prevention.

Strengthening practice

Coordinated, proportionate and outcomes-focused local planning that keeps the needs of babies and infants at the centre and supports parents.

Preventative, whole-family approaches, including a strengthened universal offer in early pregnancy, improved access to flexible community-based support, and clear visibility of services so families receive timely help close to home.

Multi-agency structures or teams across Scotland to strengthen the early identification of risk, early engagement and provide preventative support for pregnant women and their families

Strengthen targeted and intensive support for families in pregnancy through dedicated pre-birth teams and integrated pathways to simplify routes into services, reduce unnecessary referrals, and provide timely support during pregnancy and after the baby's birth.

What Scotland needs to deliver effective services

Nationally, babies should be recognised as a distinct group.

Sustained national commitment to prevention, whole-family and trauma-informed early help and intervention.

Identifiable local strategic leaders with responsibility for early help within current planning structures

Local leaders, who are visible, approachable and supportive of innovation, helped create cultures of trust, collaboration and shared ownership.

Investment in the workforce with greater focus on retention and staff wellbeing, increased capacity, and a stable and supported workforce are critical for the delivery of effective services

Develop national expectations for data-sharing systems across maternity, health visiting, education, social work and third sector services

9 key insights



Renewed cross-government focus on pregnancy and young babies

Build on foundations already in place

Align strategic oversight between national priorities and local strategic coordination with GIRFEC the overarching framework

Develop a consistent and accessible offer of support

Identify clear coordinated pathways

More consistent approach to assessments

Consider multi-agency or co-located services

Address fragility of funding and workforce

Improve data sharing



National commitment to prioritise pre-post birth support and a commitment to sustaining support over time.

Build on the existing GIRFEC practice model; reframing where necessary to prioritise pre-post birth support for infants and families.



Develop a core early help offer, ensuring consistency of support for families across universal, additional and targeted services.