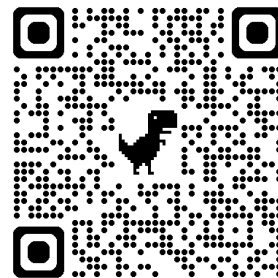




Getting it right for every baby

**nesta** a fairer start



# What we set out to explore

01

What already exists

02

What is working well

03

The role of prevention

04

Gaps in provision

05

Systemic and delivery  
challenges

06

Steps for improvement

# Key strengths to build on

- 01** Cross-sectoral commitment to the principles of prevention, early help, relational practice and putting families at the heart of services
- 02** The third sector as a valuable cornerstone of the current service landscape
- 03** Building trust through 'continuity of carer' as exemplified by the Universal Health Visiting Pathway and Family Nurse Partnership
- 04** Commitment to collaborate and joined up working supporting a collective ambition of 'no wrong door' approaches
- 05** GIRFEC as a key enabler and driver of practice

# Key themes



Strategy, leadership  
and governance



Support available  
to families



Funding,  
accountability and  
improvement



Workforce skills,  
capacity and  
collaboration



Data and  
operational  
infrastructure

# Theme 1: Strategy, leadership and governance



*“The emphasis on free childcare for three-to-five year olds has overshadowed the critical foundations laid in the years before. We need a fundamental rethink of the framework.”*

*area lead interview*

## Baby blind spot

Policies and plans often prioritise all-age approaches or older age groups leaving babies under represented.

## Recommendation

Make early childhood a national priority

## Theme 2: Support available to families



*“There’s definitely a gap in terms of that middle group of families. You’re relying on parents being quite proactive – understanding, noticing what’s happening with their child.”*

*workshop participant*

### Inconsistent services and pathways

The current system prioritises immediate risk over early help meaning many families remain unsupported until they reach a breaking point.

### Recommendation

Ensure a consistent and accessible offer of early help is available to all families

# Offer of support

## Universal

### Foundational Service for every family

The core services that all families are entitled to and are offered during pregnancy and the first years of life.

- Maternity Care
- UHVP
- Oral health
- Vaccinations
- Funded ELC

## Additional

(proportionate universalism)

### Supporting prevention and early help

Available to all but with additional support for families identified at risk or with need.

- Play and stay
- Infant feeding
- Family Nurse Partnership
- Financial inclusion & safe housing
- Infant mental health

## Targeted & Intensive

### Specialist and higher needs

Triggered by specific referral thresholds or significantly higher level of need and risk.

- Intensive Family Support Teams
- Children & Families Social Work
- Specialist peri-natal services

# Theme 3: Funding, accountability and improvement



*“Sustained and long-term funding commitments are essential to embed preventative early childhood support. Short-term funding cycles create uncertainty and limit workforce stability.” survey respondent*

## Funding constraints

Funding is frequently short term, silod and prescriptive in nature. Limited opportunity for pooled and preventative funding

### Recommendation:

Ensure funding and accountability mechanisms drive delivery

# Theme 4: Workforce skills, capacity and collaboration



*“We had better relationships previously. People were more accessible. Covid was a shift, and I don’t think we’re back to where it was in terms of partnership working.”*  
workshop participant

## Workforce capacity

Highly skilled staff are overwhelmed by admin burdens and high caseloads, forcing them to prioritise reactive crisis management over preventative care

### Recommendation:

Develop the sustainability and capability of the workforce

## Theme 5: Data and operational infrastructure



*“Much of what we do is repeating (things) time and time again... if we could resolve them nationally that would be wonderful.”*  
*area lead interview*

### Fragmented data

Unlinked datasets and systems increase admin burdens and limit evidence-based planning.

### Recommendation:

Develop seamless data infrastructure and guidance that enables best practice

# Priority actions for local areas

- Create a singular cross-agency vision for early childhood
- Enhance local governance and accountability
- Review existing supports and establish a shared early childhood improvement plan with defined priorities, time-bound milestones and clear responsibilities

# Keep in touch

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