



EARLY  
INTERVENTION  
FOUNDATION

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Our  
strategy  
**2018–2023**

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## What do we mean by early intervention?

Early intervention means identifying and providing effective early support to children and young people who are at risk of poor outcomes.

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**Since our establishment as an independent charity in 2013, the Early Intervention Foundation has championed and supported the vital role that effective early intervention plays within our public services and society more broadly.**

And as a member of the government's What Works Network, EIF has a key role to play in communicating 'what works' in a way that is robust and transparent in its use of evidence.

Over the past five years, EIF has built the foundations of a well-regarded and reputable independent organisation, undertaken major studies into key areas of early intervention, and established a valuable body of research and resources.

At the same time, a lot has changed in the context in which early intervention is delivered. EIF must continue to learn and adapt, to remain relevant, influential and useful.

Our new strategy, 2018–2023, takes EIF through the second five years of its life. It reflects what we have learned in our own early years, and underlines why so many people continue to work so hard to make effective early intervention a cornerstone of our public services and our society's approach to supporting children and young people.



# What has changed in our environment?

The UK political landscape has witnessed significant changes over EIF's first five years.

**We have seen new majority and minority governments, new leadership in all the main political parties, the decision for the UK to exit from the EU, and the emergence of a more volatile public debate about political priorities. There is a clear opportunity to engage a new generation of national and local decision-makers to become leaders and advocates for early intervention.**

The structure of British politics also continues to change and adapt. We have seen the election of six metro mayors in city-regions, forming a new and potentially powerful tier of government.

At the same time, pressures on local government and services show no signs of abating. Financial pressure on public services, demand on acute services and tightening budgets all mean there is a clear need for new and well-evidenced ways to provide essential support.

Ultimately, there is a large and growing number of children who are at risk of experiencing poor outcomes. At the same time, a whole new set of risks are being identified, such as the impact of social media and online bullying.

# What has changed at EIF?

Our sector continues to develop. In particular, the quantity and quality of research, evidence and promising practice relating to early intervention in the UK continues to grow.

**EIF has undertaken a series of 'what works' evidence reviews on major issues, including early years development, language and communication skills, social and emotional learning, parental relationships, and gang and youth violence. These reviews have helped to inform and shape government policy.**

We have created an online Guidebook of early intervention programmes that have been assessed by EIF and rated according to their strength of evidence.

We now have a much better idea where the gaps in the evidence-base are and the gaps between the evidence and the realities of policy or practice. Understanding where these gaps in evidence are shapes our own work programme, as we highlight these gaps and work with others to fill them.

We have developed tools and approaches for working with specific workforces in local authorities, schools and the police, to help them understand our evidence and respond to the need for early intervention in their areas.

EIF has developed a valuable, important role as a critical friend to policymakers across Whitehall, linking the work of different departments and providing advice on what matters for children's outcomes to inform government policy and investment.

Behind the scenes, EIF has grown into a team of more than 20 staff, with an influential board of trustees, an external evidence panel of academic experts, and a network of associates and supporters across the country.



## What is EIF working to achieve?

Our vision is that all children are able to achieve their full potential.

**We know that not all children are fulfilling their full potential and that gaps in children's development open up early.**

These gaps matter for children's outcomes such as educational attainment, employment prospects and physical or mental health. This has long-term consequences for both the individual child and for society as a whole.

Our mission is to ensure that effective early intervention is available and is used to improve the lives of children and young people at risk of poor outcomes.

**Early intervention is effective when it shows evidence of improving outcomes for children and young people.**

Of course, evidence is only one consideration in deciding what to deliver. We know that national and local decision-makers need to take other factors into account, such as cost and local context. But, on balance, children and young people who receive early intervention that has been shown through robust methods to improve outcomes are more likely to benefit, and to a greater degree, than those who receive other support.

Effective early intervention works by identifying children who need help and providing effective early support to reduce the risk of problems occurring and to tackle them head-on when they do. It also helps to foster a whole set of personal strengths and skills that prepare a child for adult life.

## Where will we focus our energy?

As a small organisation we will focus our energies where we think we can make the biggest difference.

The areas we work on at EIF will be led by the need to fill gaps in the evidence-base, to ensure evidence of what works is used to change policy and practice, and to explore promising policies, programmes and practices that could make a real difference.

## Who are we trying to reach?

EIF's audiences are those who have the ability to prioritise and invest in effective early intervention.

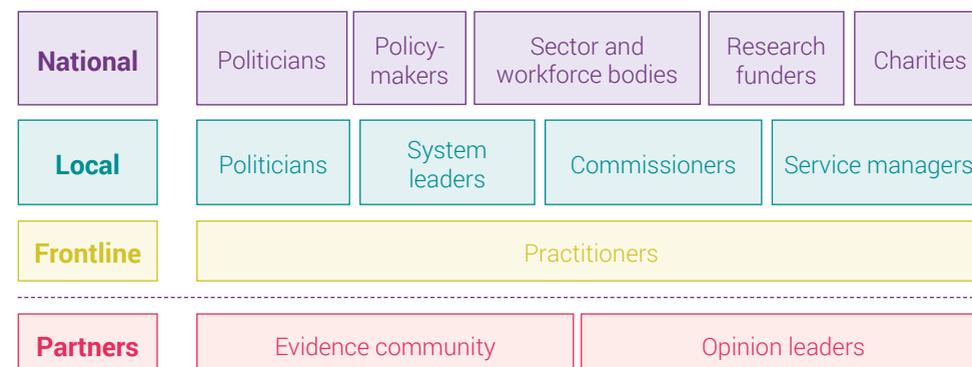
**To reach these groups, EIF must work to be influential at the national and local level, and to ensure our messages are heard at the frontline.**

Political leaders, policy-makers, sector bodies, funders and charities at the national level set the rules of the game – they determine the extent to which early intervention is prioritised and invested in across the country as a whole.

At the local level, politicians and senior leaders can set a vision and strategy which mobilises services and resources around the concept of early intervention, while commissioners and service managers can commission, innovate and evaluate early intervention.

Through influencing national and local audiences, we can shift the actions and decisions of practitioners working at the frontline.

### Our audiences



# What will we do to achieve our objectives?

To achieve our mission, we will undertake work in three main areas, which support and inform each other.

1

## Making the case

### Developing a new narrative on the social and economic case for early intervention

The case and context for early intervention has changed and evolved since EIF was established. We now need a fresh set of evidence-based arguments that make a new case for early intervention that reflects the realities of the current environment, the nature of the evidence and learning from implementation.

### Working with new champions for early intervention to make the case

We will engage and persuade a new generation of politicians, local champions and influencers to be advocates for early intervention, and equip existing champions and supporters with the arguments and evidence they need to make the case.

2

## Generating evidence

### Evidence to change policy and practice:

Our work will focus on five key issues for national and local decision-makers:

- Identifying risk
- How to assess need effectively
- Evidence-based programmes
- Workforce practices
- Local conditions and systems

### Supporting others to build the evidence-base

We want to bring about a step change in the quantity and quality of evaluation of early intervention in the UK. We will develop tools for programme providers just starting their evaluation journey, and for local areas looking to evaluate their early intervention systems.

3

## Using evidence to change policy and practice

### Working with policymakers

To set out how our evidence is relevant to current policy priorities and to influence the development of policy to tackle key issues affecting child outcomes.

### Working with sector and workforce bodies, and charities

To disseminate our evidence via trusted bodies to change the practice of people commissioning and delivering early intervention.

### Running networks and evidence masterclasses

To bring together key audiences such as local leaders, commissioners and service managers to learn about our evidence, share their own experiences, and help EIF to understand the issues facing people working on the ground.

### Working directly with local places

Supporting individual local places, or groups of places, to apply the evidence to develop plans and recommendations for effective early intervention.

# What will we do to support that work?

To ensure we are able to make the case for early intervention, generate evidence, and use that evidence to change policy and practice, we will continue to build a strong, sustainable and effective organisation.

## Two vital organisational functions



### Effective communications

Effective communications means ensuring that as many people as possible are aware of EIF, understand our key messages about the importance and purpose of early intervention, and use our content in their work.

We will work to raise the profile of EIF and its role, create new and receptive audiences for our messages, and produce high-quality outputs that are authoritative, accessible, engaging and useful.



### Sustainable funding

To create a financially sustainable organisation we will grow secure, long-term funding and diversify our funding sources.

Funding from central government will continue to be a key part of our model, underpinning our role as a What Works centre. We will also work to secure funding from outside of central government.

## Two important ways of working



### Excellent partnerships

Where we are better able to achieve our mission by working in partnership we will do so. Working in partnership will enable us to reach new audiences, increase our influence, access expertise that we do not have in-house and will put us in a stronger position to secure external funding.

We will identify partners we want to work with, build strong relationships, and ensure any work we do together maximises our potential to have a positive impact.



### Understanding our impact

To understand our own effectiveness, we will measure the impact of our work on the extent to which our mission is being achieved.

Information about EIF's impact will be published in our annual report.

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EIF is a member of

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