The Early Intervention Guidebook

What is it?

The Guidebook

- An **online platform** that provides information about effective Early Intervention methods in order to improve children's wellbeing and save money. (You can find more information on our definition of Early Intervention on the 'What is Early Intervention?' website page).

- It will continually **evolve and expand** as new reviews are undertaken and new information is added.

- It will include **tools and resources** for improving Early Intervention in a local area.

- It will include information about **programmes, systems and practice** primarily aimed at commissioners.

- **The information will come from:**
  - What Works Reviews: systematic reviews of evidence in published sources using rigorous standards for assessing whether an approach achieves its intended impact; 'deep dives' – quick and intensive reviews of research and practice on the ground; case studies; and data analysis.
  - Ongoing information gathering from programme providers
  - Crowd sourced information

What are Programmes and Systems?

PROGRAMMES

A programme is a self-contained "package" of activities and interventions – often with a trademark name and manual for use – to help a specific group of people.

e.g. A parenting programme, A Cognitive Behavioural Therapy intervention

SYSTEMS

A system refers to how an organisation operates, and might include.

For example:

- How teams of practitioners are organised and trained;

- The way children are referred through services;

- The process used for commissioning services;

- The way in which services are targeted at groups of the population.

A note on practice: Sometimes, it is difficult to distinguish between programmes and practice or between systems and practice. Practice is always important to outcomes. (see over)

PRACTICE

We hope that the information in this first iteration of the Guidebook will be of interest to practitioners. It has so far been developed primarily to meet the information needs of commissioners of services and policy-makers. In future we hope to include information and tools particularly relevant to frontline practitioners.

Important useful resources for practitioners can be found at:

The Education Endowment Foundation - educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk

What Works Centre for Crime Reduction- www.college.police.uk/en/20399.htm

Research into Practice - www.rip.org.uk

The Institute of Health Visiting - www.ihv.org.uk

The College of Social Work - www.tcsw.org.uk/home

What information have we already collected about programmes?

To start things off, we have reviewed the contents of a number of key, authoritative bodies of evidence and summarised their findings about which programmes work, using a single set of standards of evidence.

Why? In order to create a single overview in an accessible form of the programmes that are available or have been extensively tested. We have not attempted to revalidate existing reviews, but rather to summarise across these bodies of evidence to create a single searchable archive.

Timeline: We are planning to have the Guidebook go live with information about programmes for one outcome (Abuse and Neglect) on the website later this Spring (2014) with other outcomes added at regular intervals.

The EIF Standards of Evidence

- **We grade programmes on a scale from negative to Level 5**. The scale is broadly based on the NESTA evidence standards with the addition of "unfounded" (EIF level 1) and "ineffective/harmful." (EIF level -)

- We have also included a **'To Be Developed' (TBD) category** that is a holding area for programmes not yet classified that will be assessed by future reviews.

Why have we done this?

- The point of the exercise has been to **reduce complexity** by providing a common language that works across clearinghouses and other bodies of evidence to summarise the assessed evidence in a single framework.

- We are now discussing with other What Works centres how to ensure **a single language** that is used by all.

The EIF Standards of Evidence

- Although we recognise the particular value of randomised control trials (RCTs) where they are feasible and relevant, **we also recognise the diversity of rigorous methodological approaches relevant to early intervention evidence**, and that an RCT approach will not naturalistically fit all social research questions.

- For example, **longitudinal studies have added considerably to the evidence base on child development**, even without randomising allocation to treatment and control groups.

- However, where the question of assessing impact is paramount we do emphasise **the importance of a relevant comparison group and good pre and post measurement**. This might be through a quasi-experimental design (QED) rather than a randomised control trial.

- Thus we do not to say that the RCT is the only form of evaluation that is relevant or that if there has not been an RCT an approach should be decommissioned. **It is important to take a balanced approach to the use of the evidence.** We work with a continuum of evidence. But we do see the value of RCTs where they are feasible.

# Dimensions of High Quality Commissioning

The EIF Standards of Evidence are concerned with one dimension of the evaluation of programmes: the **quality of the evidence** that an approach has worked.

There are two other dimensions that are crucial for commissioning:

- **Quality of implementation**

- **Cost Benefit Analysis**

We will include tools for assessing these other dimensions in future iterations of the Guidebook.

Information on how to improve cost benefit analysis is currently available on the *Publications page* of the website.

Quality of the evidence

Cost Benefit Analysis

Implementation
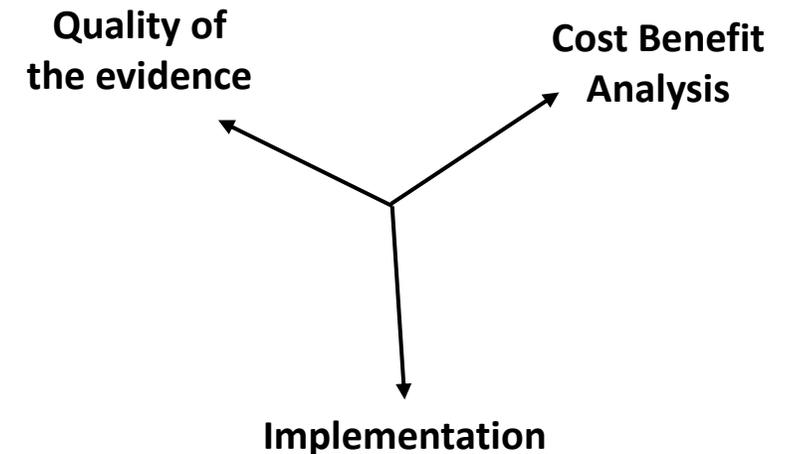
We rated the evidence on what works using the EIF Standards of Evidence:

Evidence or rationale for programme	Description of evidence	Description of programme	Evidence strength rating	Recommendation for commissioner or provider
Multiple well-designed, well-implemented RCT/QED* evaluations with consistently positive impact across populations and environments	Consistently Positive	Consistently Effective	5	Take to scale (subject to local feasibility and appraisal)
Single well-designed, well-implemented RCT/QED* evaluation with positive impact	Positive	Effective	4	Commission and evaluate
Lower-quality evaluation (not RCT or QED*) showing better outcomes for programme participants	Tentative	Potentially Effective	3	Pilot and evaluate rigorously
Logic model and testable features, but not current evidence of outcomes or impact	Non-existent	Theory based	2	Track performance and outcome measures
No logic model, testable features, or current evidence of outcomes or impact		Unfounded	1	Develop logic/measurement model
Evidence from at least one high-quality evaluation (RCT/QED) indicating null or negative impact	Negative	Ineffective / Harmful	–	Redesign / Avoid / Decommission

Programmes not yet rated, including those rated by evidence bodies whose standards are not yet mapped to the EIF standards, and submissions from providers or local areas of innovative or promising interventions	TBD	TBD	?	

*RCT = Randomised Controlled Trial: An evaluation where children or families are randomly assigned to the programme of interest or to a comparison group which receives existing support. In this case the intervention and comparison groups are plausibly similar in all respects apart from intervention status.

*QED = Quasi-Experimental Design: An evaluation where assignment of children or families to an intervention is not randomly controlled. Instead, the researcher attempts to identify a plausibly similar comparison group on the basis of programme enrolment criteria/barriers, or statistical methods and analysis.

How have we categorised programmes?

We have categorised these programmes in terms of the standard of evidence achieved, the outcome impacted and the age of recipients.

We have looked at outcomes in 9 key domains:

- Mental Health
- Abuse and Neglect
- School and Employment
- Crime, Violence and ASB
- Substance Use

- Risky Sexual Behaviour
- Obesity and Physical Health
- Early child development
- Features of context, e.g. parenting or parental relationships

Why these in particular? We chose these as they cover the span of policy interests of our five sponsoring Government departments.

We have included information from 15 authoritative bodies of evidence:

- Blueprints Initiative for Violence Prevention

- Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP)

- NAPR Parenting Commissioning Toolkit

- Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy

- RAND Promising Practices Network

- Office of Adolescent Health (OAH)

- Office of Justice Programs (CrimeSolutions.gov)

- National Registry for Evidenced-Based Programs and Policy

- Centre for Analysis of Youth Transitions

- The California Evidence Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare (CEBC)

- Project Oracle

- The Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services (C4EO)

- Social Research Unit at Dartington – Investing in Children

- Australian Institute of Family Studies

- Child Trends

- We have also included the programmes in Graham Allen's report.

Why these in particular? This is not an exhaustive list but, as a starting point, these evidence bodies are particularly well used by our Early Intervention Places and will therefore be especially interesting and useful to them. We will be adding other bodies of evidence, such as the Campbell Collaboration. (You can find more information on our Places on the website).

Putting the Ratings into Context

For reference, **we assessed our ratings structure against those provided by other respected key bodies in the field of Early Intervention research**, named in the box below.

We do this to reaffirm our ambition to align, as far as possible, the range of existing standards and approaches to data analysis so that they can be understood by all parties and applied to a broad range of programmes and practice.

| EIF	Project Oracle / Nesta	Allen Review		Blueprints	Washington State Institute for Public Policy (WSIPP	Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services (C4EO)	Coalition for Evidence-Based Policy (CEBP)	RAND Promising Practices Network	Department for Education Parenting Programme Toolkit	Office of Adolescent Health (OAH)	California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare (CEBC)		Crime Solutions	Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS)	Centre for Analysis of Youth Transitions (CAYT)	
															Study grade	Impact grade
5	4-5	1[a]		Model	Evidence-Based		Top Tier	Proven[a]	★★★★		1		Effective (Multiple)			
4	3	1[b]	2-3	Promising	Research-Based		Near Top Tier	Proven[b]	★★★	High / Moderate	2		Effective (Single)		≥ 5	≥ 2
3	2				Promising	Validated / Promising		Promising	★★		3	NR[c]	Promising	Promising	≥ 5	1
															2-4	≥ 2
2	1					Emerging			★			NR[d]			2-4	< 2
															1	
1															0	
–					Null / Poor						4-5		No Effect		≥ 5	0

Notes:
[a] Programmes with multiple impact studies that meet required criteria.
[b] Programmes without multiple impact studies that meet required criteria.
[c] Programmes with an impact study which does not meet required criteria.
[d] Programmes with no impact study.

Where a programme has been rated by several evidence bodies and those ratings do not agree in terms of the implied EIF rating, the modal rating is selected. If there is no modal rating because of an even split between different ratings, then the lower of these ratings is selected in order to take a conservative approach. The exception to this is where other evidence bodies' standards relate to different parts of the EIF scale (e.g. Blueprints and C4EO), in which case the rating assigned by the body which covers the higher part of the EIF scale (e.g. Blueprints) is selected.

EARLY INTERVENTION FOUNDATION

The Continuum of Evidence: How will it work?

1. Select an undesirable outcome (e.g. Crime, Violence and ASB) on the homepage and you will be shown a continuum of the appropriate programmes, generated by the EIF ratings criteria.

2. Click on a programme to be shown the full analysis, plus links to further resources and the places which are currently trialling the programme.
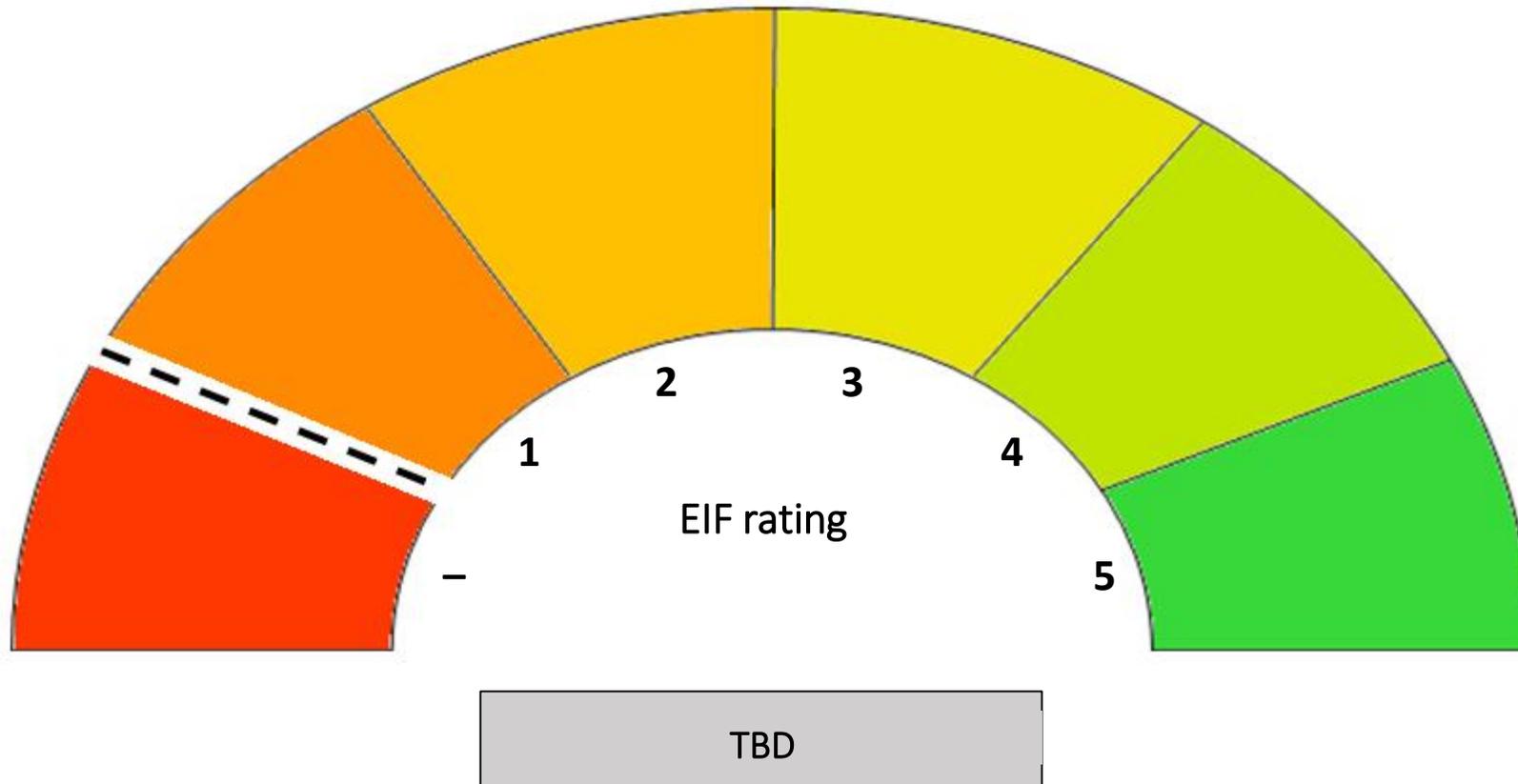
The Pipeline of Innovation

A goal of the Early Intervention Foundation is to support programmes in moving across the Continuum of Evidence, improving their evidence and effectiveness in small steps as well as making substantial shifts. This is particularly important where there are no existing proven programmes to address a particular issue or target population.

The continuum is relevant not just for new programmes but also for established practice which might also improve its evidence and effectiveness.

Journey of development to proven practice

2   3

1   4

EIF rating

–   5

TBD
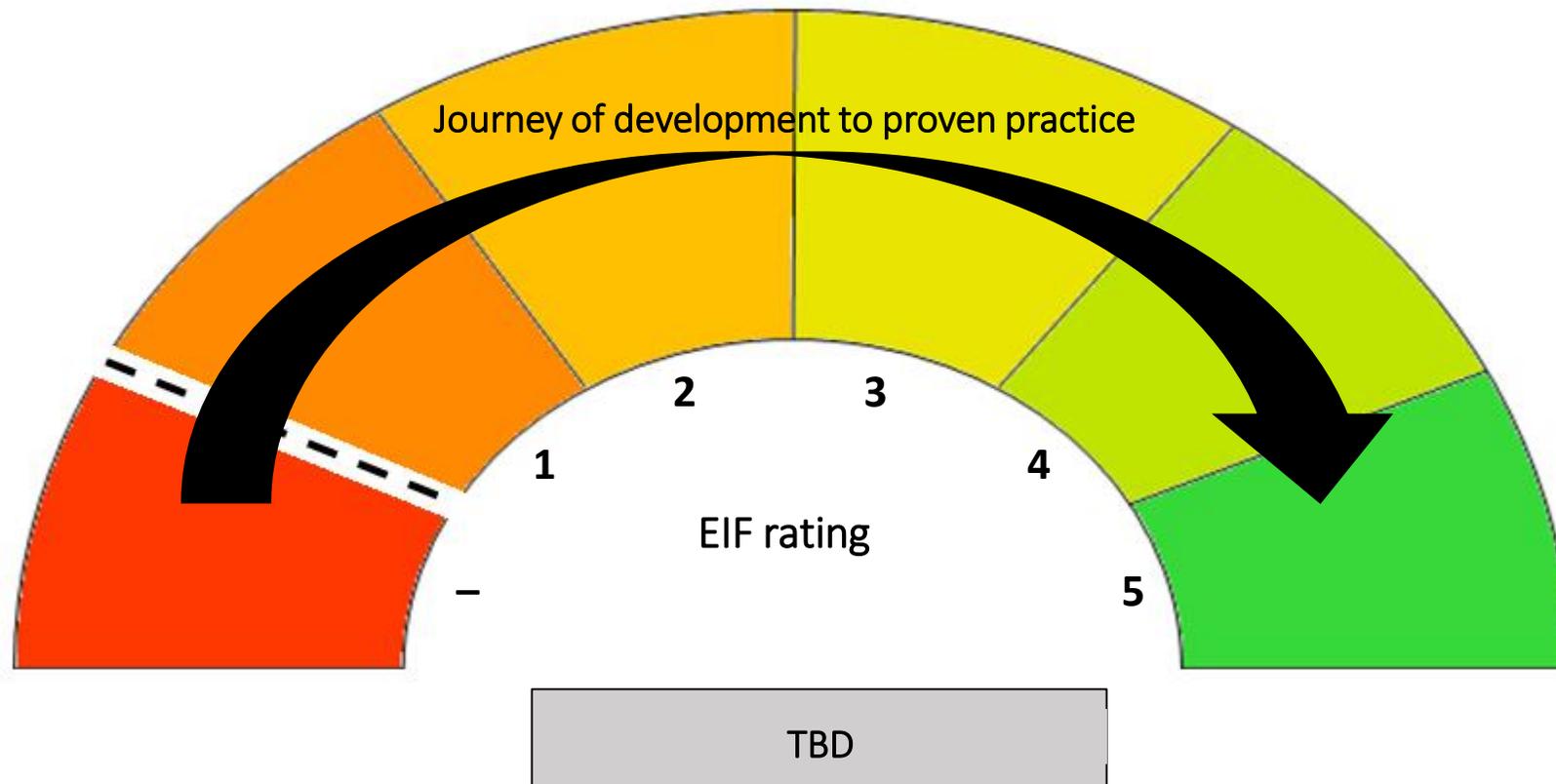
A particular focus on programmes that show promise but are not yet proven to work:

Programmes rated as '2' and '3' on our Evidence Continuum

There are many existing Early Intervention programmes that show promise and innovation, but as yet don't score highly in the most rigorous assessment criteria. This is often because they are new or small scale, or have not been evaluated.
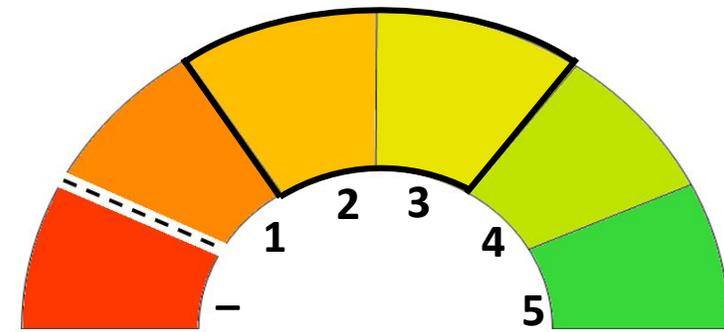
We think it is important that innovations or programmes with undemonstrated potential be tested, so that they have a chance to adapt and develop, and improve their rating.

We seek out promising or interesting 'innovations' and incorporate them if they demonstrate the following:

i. Theory of change	ii. Testability	iii. Potential impact	iv. Replication technology	v. Cost consequences
• Clear logic model with theory-grounded effect on outcomes	• Identifiable outcomes • Measurement model to enable evaluation	• Indicative grounds for potentially positive impact	• Documentation and support to facilitate replication elsewhere	• Clear specification of pilot and delivery costs

Required to be rated at '2'

Additionally required to be rated at '3'

What else will the Guidebook feature in future?

Systems and practice: It is not all about programmes

Successful Early Intervention Places = Sound Implementation + Good Supporting Evidence

- As referred to on slide 8, good commissioning requires more than good evidence of past effectiveness.

- A programme must address the key challenges for an area and provide value for money.

- A programme may look perfect on paper, but you cannot be sure how real people will deliver it.

- Without a robust and sustainable implementation process, the programme is likely to fail.

Quality of the evidence

Cost Benefit Analysis
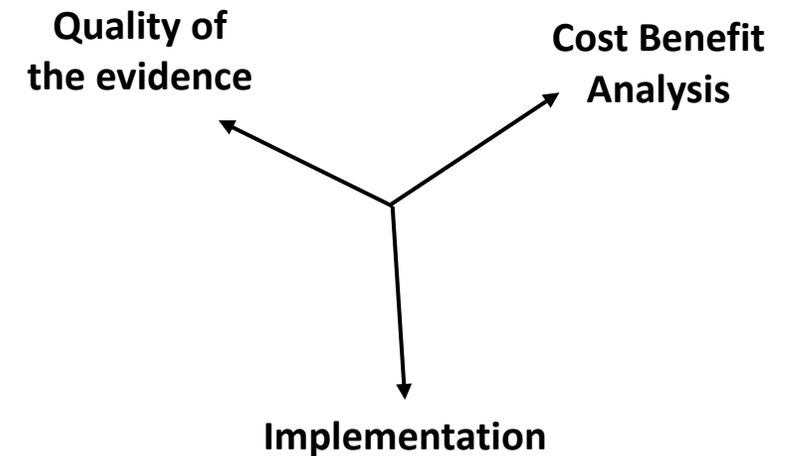
Implementation

What System information will the Guidebook include?

The EIF recognises the challenges faced when it comes to implementing and sustaining programmes and Early Intervention systems.

The Guidebook will provide **tools and information** – examples on the next slide – which provide solutions to **implementation problems** and for improving **system design**, including:

- How to measure success
- How to assess implementation quality
- How to improve strategies and commissioning
- How to enhance business cases
- How to integrate services

Examples of the tools we can offer:

The Journey of Improvement: Maturity Matrix

- The Early Intervention Maturity Matrix is a self-assessment tool which allows places to look at their current delivery of early intervention, and to identify their strengths and the areas that need to be improved.

- Using a Maturity Matrix begins with an EIF workshop which identifies priorities and encourages the place to explore their progress. Over time the Maturity Matrix can be used to map progress, develop strategy and business planning, and open up peer discussion.

*The Maturity Matrix can currently be found on the **Publications page** of the website.*

Business Case Tools

- Our guides in the *Making an Early Intervention Business Case* series are aimed at supporting commissioners to secure long-term investment in Early Intervention. This is part of our wider work helping the twenty Pioneering Places to establish an early intervention strategy, quantify spending on early intervention, measure their outcomes and effectiveness, and improve delivery.

*Examples of the kind of guides, tools and resources we will publish in the Guidebook can currently be found on the **Publications page** of the website.*

What will the first iteration of the Guidebook include?

Spring 2014

- A populated continuum of the first outcome of **Abuse and Neglect**;

- **130 Abuse and Neglect programmes** - we will have contacted clearing houses and the programme providers to verify this information;

- **Summaries** of these programmes with information about what they do and how to find out more.

Through 2014/15

- We will regularly update the Guidebook with **programmes on further outcomes.**

In future the Guidebook will also include:

- More examples of innovative or promising programmes that ought to be tested where there are important gaps in evidence;

- Advice on which programmes should be scaled up, which need to be tested further and which should be decommissioned;

- More tools and resources for implementation;

- Lessons learned from our 20 Early Intervention Places.

If you would like to know more about the Guidebook or would like to be informed when it launches on the website, please email guidebook@eif.org.uk