



EARLY
INTERVENTION
FOUNDATION

Annual Report
2020–2021

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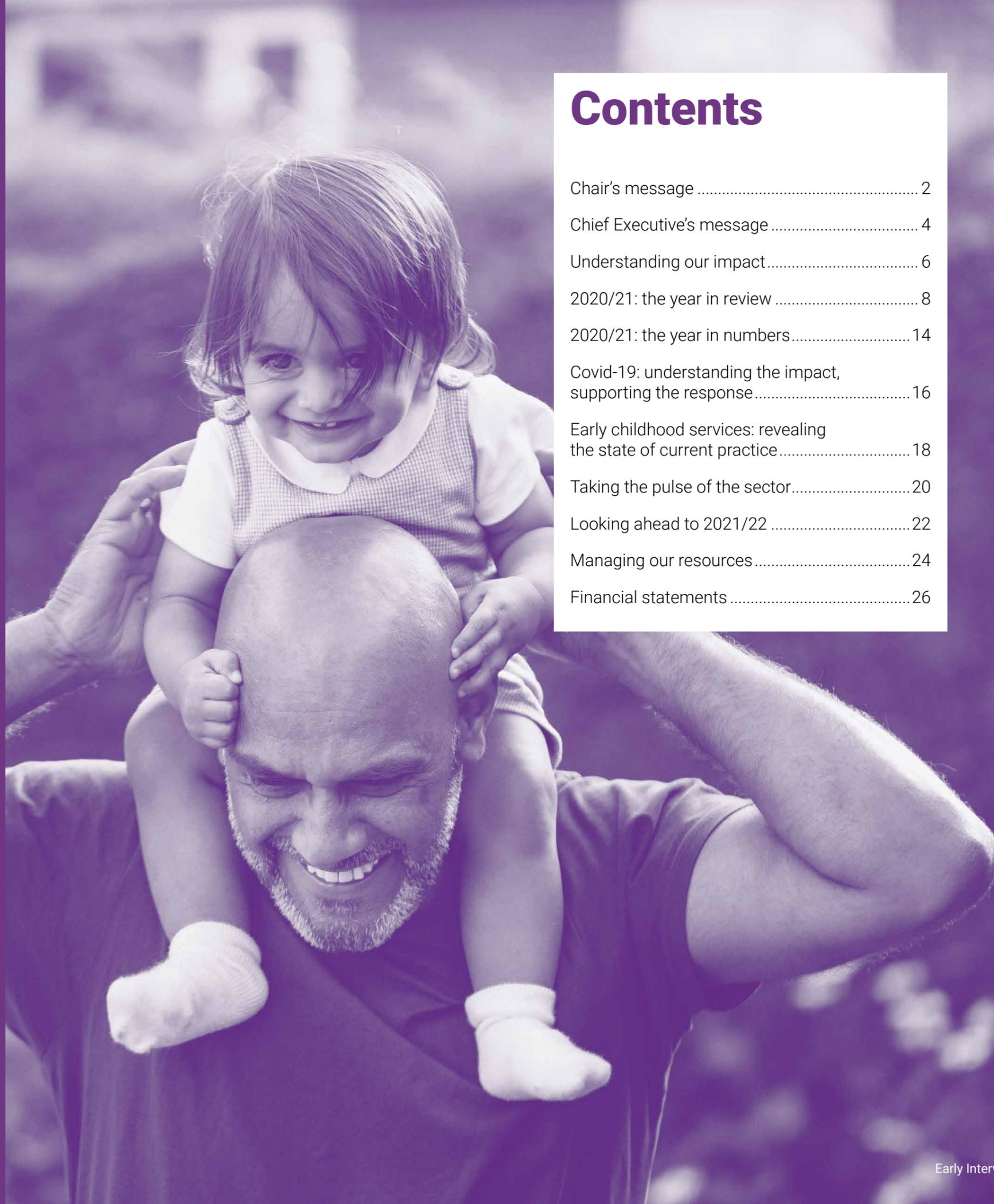
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Chair's message



Professor Nick Pearce
Chair of Board of Trustees

EIF is a research-based charity that champions and supports the use of effective early intervention to improve the lives of children and young people at risk of experiencing serious disadvantages in their lives. The Covid-19 pandemic has made our work ever more urgent and necessary: it has laid bare deeply entrenched inequalities in our society and starkly revealed the widespread need for effective early intervention services.

Recovery from Covid must prioritise children and families living in poverty who are at risk of poor outcomes. During the pandemic, these young people and their families will have seen the challenges they face intensify, and solutions or support harder to access.

At the same time, other families will have been confronting similar challenges for the first time, struggling with pressures – perhaps due to job loss or reduced income, poor housing conditions or relationship breakdown – that are new and unfamiliar to them. There has been a rise in the number of children exposed to domestic abuse in the home, and the number of babies in England that have suffered serious injury through abuse or neglect has risen. Covid has disrupted children and young people's lives, threatening their sense of structure, predictability and security, and this has taken its toll on their mental health and wellbeing. More families are living in poverty.

Early intervention has a vital role to play in providing appropriate and accessible forms of additional support for all these children and families, whether or not they have been in contact with local services in the past. Across so many of the issues thrust into the spotlight by the pandemic, we know there are public

“Covid has disrupted children and young people's lives, threatening their sense of structure, predictability and security, and this has taken its toll on their mental health and wellbeing.”

programmes, interventions and other forms of support which improve outcomes and help to reduce the demand for more expensive acute services later down the line. It is extraordinary and invaluable that so many of these sources of support have remained open and accessible in some form throughout the pandemic.

We have also seen an effective and popular vaccination programme – an exemplar of a prevention-led public programme – which will be held up in future as a positive example of public health in action. Alongside the deep public gratitude for NHS staff, carers and many key workers standing at the frontline through this pandemic, I hope there is some reflected glory too for all those working in public health, early help and family support through these long months, who have applied persistence and ingenuity to continue to reach those who need them.

Looking ahead, there are both opportunities and challenges facing the providers of services for children, young people and families in this country. Perhaps most crucial among these is the government's long-awaited three-year comprehensive spending review, which will set the ground rules for spending across Whitehall and determine annual budgets for individual

departments in England. This year's spending review provides a rare and incredibly timely opportunity to make a commitment, across all the departments with responsibilities for children and families policy, to provide the investment necessary to ensure Britain's young people can bounce back strongly. It has never been more essential to see sustained, sufficient, long-term funding, backed by clear leadership and increased coordination across all the machinery of government.

At EIF we are clear that early intervention and support for children, young people and families must be at the heart of any national Covid recovery plan. For good reason, the Covid response centred on protecting the health of older and more vulnerable adult populations. Now, it must be recognised that children and young people have paid a high price to protect the nation's health.

I know that the EIF team will be working hard in this coming year to provide the evidence, information and guidance that colleagues across government and public services, at the national and local level, need to make good decisions for the future.

Professor Nick Pearce
Chair of Board of Trustees

Chief Executive's message



Dr Jo Casebourne
Chief Executive

When we closed EIF's south London offices on 18 March 2020, none of us imagined that we would go on to deliver our entire 2020/21 programme while working remotely and only seldom meeting face-to-face with colleagues, partners and vital stakeholders. The EIF team responded incredibly to the challenges of working from home during Covid-19, managing to keep our work going and to deliver our mission, despite the huge adjustment everyone had to make, from working in small flat-shares, to dealing with isolation, sickness and loss in their families or communities, to balancing working at home with home-schooling children. I am hugely grateful for the commitment that our staff have shown through the lockdowns and the restrictions in between.

To use a metaphor that has become common in this last year, the pandemic has shone a light on the issues we care about and work to address at EIF. In the first few months of lockdown, we quickly shifted our work programme to examine the impact of coronavirus, and through the summer of 2020 we published three reports focusing specifically on the pandemic: on the effectiveness of digital or other 'virtual' forms of delivering early intervention services; on addressing harmful conflict between parents and its impact on children; and on the situation facing local authorities and local services in the teeth of the crisis – what barriers were they facing, what were they doing differently, and what would be the impact on the services they were providing. Alongside insights on rising demand and over-stretched resources, we found positive examples of innovation, as new partnerships and collaborations were developed, silos between agencies were broken down, and longstanding barriers to data-sharing were overcome. To make the most of this innovation in the future, the key will be finding out which of these new approaches improve outcomes for children and which don't, so that local areas can make evidence-informed decisions about which of these changes to service delivery to keep.

A personal highlight of the year for me came in December, when we hosted the 2020 national conference, postponed from April and

“Given the profound impact that Covid-19 has had on vulnerable children, our work in the year ahead will be focused on the issues children and families face that have got worse due to the pandemic.”

reimagined as a hybrid event, with speakers and presenters appearing both 'on location' at the venue and beaming in from home, and all delegates attending online. It was fantastic to be able to bring the early intervention community together, and we had more than 300 people attend, from Exeter to Edinburgh, and from local government, health, education, the police, charities, academia and Whitehall, to hear from ministers, service managers, academics and practitioners. The line-up of amazing speakers meant that we had a great day of discussion and debate to re-energise us all as we ended a really challenging year.

I am also very proud of the work we have done in 2020/21 to embed the values of diversity and inclusion at the heart of EIF. This comes as the pandemic has exposed yet again the inequalities in our society, which have only got worse due to Covid-19. Our mission is for all children to achieve their full potential, and to improve the lives of all children at risk of poor outcomes, so we are working to understand more about the different barriers and disadvantages that some children face. We want EIF's work to improve outcomes for children from minority ethnic backgrounds and from other disadvantaged groups, and we have designed new work for 2021/22 to help us to do this. We have also agreed a new equality, diversity and inclusion strategy for EIF, so that we can play our part as an employer in building a more inclusive society in the years to come.

Given the profound impact that Covid-19 has had on vulnerable children, our work in the year ahead will be focused on the issues children and families face that have got worse due to the pandemic. This includes work on adolescent mental health, domestic abuse, parental conflict, and early childhood and early help services. In all of these areas we will be building and sharing our understanding of what causes problems to emerge, the impact they have on a person's life, and what works to provide support and to improve outcomes.

We will also be working to ensure there is significant increased support for vulnerable children and families, so that this generation of children do not have to live with the knock-on effects of Covid-19 for the rest of their lives. Our unique position – at the point where scientific knowledge, real-world evaluation, national policies, local services and frontline practice meet – means we are well placed to bring an evidence-informed perspective to the big debates and crucial decisions that will shape how the country recovers from Covid-19. In this time of unprecedented challenge for children and families, the case for early intervention has never been stronger.

Dr Jo Casebourne
Chief Executive

Understanding our impact

As a What Works Centre, it's vital that we understand how our work is having a positive impact in the world. Our impact framework helps us to plan, deliver and assess our projects and other activity in a way that focuses on achieving real, lasting change.

What is the EIF impact framework?

Our impact framework is rooted in the COM-B model developed by Professor Susan Michie: the theory that for people to behave in the way we want them to – in our case, to prioritise and invest in effective early intervention – they need to have the capability, opportunity and motivation to do so.

- Capability: the right knowledge and skills, in the right hands
- Opportunity: the right conditions around them
- Motivation: the desire, intention or belief to act.

This helps us to think about the barriers that might prevent people from taking decisions or actions that we want to see, and to plan and deliver projects that work to reduce or remove those barriers.



Strategic priorities	Vision: That all children are able to achieve their full potential.		
	Mission: To ensure that effective early intervention is available and is used to improve the lives of children and young people at risk of experiencing poor outcomes.		
Desired behaviour change	Overall aim: To achieve greater prioritisation of and investment in effective early intervention.		
Short-term impact measures, via COM-B	Improved CAPABILITY to prioritise and invest in effective early intervention	Improved OPPORTUNITY to prioritise and invest in effective early intervention	Improved MOTIVATION to prioritise and invest in effective early intervention
	EIF is a sustainable, high-performing, well-respected organisation.		
	Underpinning assumptions		

What does it take to get evidence used?

We know that better use of evidence will lead to improved services for children and families, and ultimately to better outcomes for children. Our focus is on generating relevant evidence and ensuring that this evidence is being used in policy and practice decisions, both locally and nationally.

We cannot afford for our research to end with a report that simply sits on a shelf gathering dust. Our work has to be seen, valued and used to inform and shape crucial decisions about how early intervention is planned, funded and provided.

We call this knowledge mobilisation – putting evidence into action – and it's an increasingly vital part of our work. We have experimented with new methods, and continue to sharpen our approach. Over the past year, we have reviewed the growing body of academic

literature in this field, and worked with a new advisory group to help us apply key concepts to our work.

90% of stakeholders surveyed say they trust the information provided by EIF. See page 20 for more

Understanding our impact and continuing to develop our ability to mobilise evidence are the two sides of what makes EIF an effective and trusted source of knowledge and guidance on early intervention.

Find out more about our approach to knowledge mobilisation at <https://www.EIF.org.uk/KM2021>

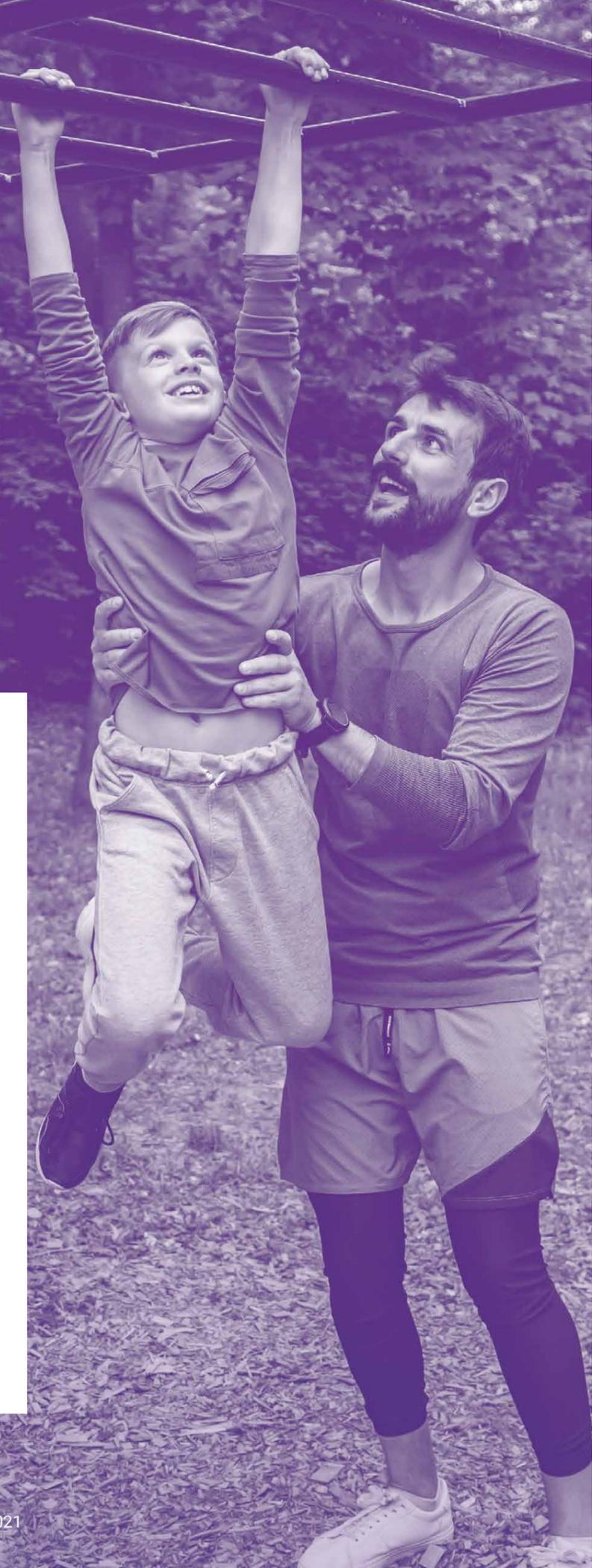
2020/21: year in review

2020/21 was a challenging but highly significant year for EIF, as the Covid pandemic and lockdowns highlighted many of the issues we care about and focus our work on.

Over the past 12 months, we have solidified our role and reputation as a trusted, independent source of evidence-based policy advice for Whitehall departments and sector bodies looking to understand and address the impacts of the pandemic on families and young people.

We have continued our work with local areas, in new ways and around the necessary prioritisation of the Covid response, to better understand the challenges they're facing and provide appropriate and useful support.

And we have carved out new territory in our work and our communications, in areas such as adolescent mental health and domestic abuse, which are likely to remain in the headlines as the full impact of the pandemic period is gradually revealed, and where we will have new and relevant evidence and guidance to share.



A trusted, independent source

At the national level, we worked throughout the year to provide input and expertise to departments with responsibility for policies relating to children and families. Through strong relationships, we are actively supporting policy development in critical and potentially game-changing areas.

This included work with the Department for Education on early years support, family hubs and the impact of Covid-19 on young people; with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government on the use of evidence in the next stages of the Supporting Families programme (formerly Troubled Families); and with the Home Office on services for the victims of domestic abuse. We are pleased to be a strategic partner in the government's work on family hubs and the Supporting Families programme, providing input on aspects of programme design, evaluation and delivery, and have worked closely with the ongoing independent review of children's social care.

Our research on domestic abuse services highlighted the lack of evaluation in this area, and so we were able to encourage the Home Office to focus on improving the evaluation of their £8 million Children Affected by Domestic Abuse fund. We have submitted recommendations to the team, who are taking these forward, and who will now require consistent monitoring data from funded projects, using metrics suggested by EIF.

Similarly, on trauma-informed care, the Home Office has agreed that they will work with EIF and the Youth Endowment Fund to evaluate

trauma-informed approaches that they are funding through Violence Reduction Units, as a way of reducing serious youth violence, and that funding will be extended to allow evaluation to continue beyond the scheme's 12-month timeframe.

We remain an integral part of the national Reducing Parental Conflict (RPC) Programme, run by the Department for Work and Pensions, and in autumn 2020 ran a 'Healthy Relationships Week' series of webinars and blogs, to disseminate evidence and enable information-sharing across the network that supports the RPC programme. Our online Reducing Parental Conflict Hub has become a popular and well-used portal providing tools and resources for local RPC leads, with 11,000 visits in 2020/21.

In October, Public Health England published a series of reports summarising the evidence for the effectiveness of universal approaches to improving children and young people's mental health and wellbeing, which drew significantly on EIF reports and the EIF Guidebook.

Beyond this, we have been part of conversations with the Government Office for Science about areas of research interest relating to the pandemic, and we are part of the advisory board for Nuffield research on Covid and childcare. We also used insights from our Covid-related reports to submit evidence to the House of Commons education committee and Lords public services committee on the impact of the pandemic on services for children and families, and subsequently gave oral evidence to the Lords' inquiry.

Introducing early intervention

Three new animations are helping us to tell the story behind our work. Launched in May 2020, the trio are already among our most-watched videos and our most-shared social media posts.

- ▶ **[What is early intervention?](#)**
- ▶ **[Why does early intervention matter?](#)**
- ▶ **[Who are EIF, and what do we do?](#)**



Supporting and learning from local areas

Our Covid-focused research highlighted the scale of adaptation happening in local services and early intervention programmes. With this in mind, we offered bespoke evaluation support to local areas who were making changes to their service models, to enable them to generate useful data about the impacts of these changes. In all, 16 areas took up this support.

Our early years maturity matrix, published in autumn 2020, provides an evidence-based tool for local areas to discuss and agree on the current 'maturity' of their local system, and make coordinated plans for improvement. While initially developed for use in the English context, interest from the Welsh government resulted in the tool being adapted for use in Wales as well. To help us to form an improved picture of the state of early years provision, 20 local areas – 10 each from England and Wales – have completed the maturity matrix process and provided data back to EIF.

Other work to support local systems and workforce development happened through our research on current approaches to family hubs and children's centres. To inform our November report on early childhood services,

we engaged with 14 local areas across the country to understand their varied approaches to providing early years and maternity services in the community.

Elsewhere, we commenced work with four local authority areas to explore the nature of support for victims of domestic abuse, mapping each local system in detail, and incorporating the views of practitioners, managers and children and families themselves to help us better understand the complex network of local support.

The lack of capacity and capability locally to evaluate local services is a significant barrier to improving the effectiveness of services locally, and so an important priority for EIF is supporting early-stage evaluation at the local level. We worked with six local areas to inform the development of our evaluation guide focused on reducing parental conflict. And in March, we launched the EIF Evaluation Hub, which brings together a range of practical tools and resources to support people in councils and services who are taking the first steps in trying to evaluate their effectiveness and impact.

“At a time of rising demand and resources that are, at best, failing to keep pace, every decision about which services to provide and which forms of support to introduce, keep or replace, becomes critically important. In this situation where the stakes are so high, local leaders and managers need more than ever to back the ‘best bets’ – the services and interventions that have been shown to work in the past.”

– Dr Jo Casebourne, EIF blog

Generating and sharing evidence

We were able to respond swiftly to the Covid-19 pandemic, producing a series of outputs on pressing issues for the sector. The first, *Covid-19 and early intervention: Evidence, challenges and risks relating to virtual and digital delivery*, was the most downloaded new report of the year, with over 9,000 downloads. The second, *Understanding the impact, preparing for recovery*, was downloaded more than 3,000 times.

Later in the year, as the first lockdown came to an end, we published a suite of resources for heads and teachers to help them support children and young people's social and emotional wellbeing as schools reopened. With young people's mental health continuing to be a focus of recovery planning, the links with social and emotional learning and the importance of these fundamental skills will remain a key part of our work to support children's wellbeing.

Following on from our major February 2020 report on adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), we conducted a Delphi exercise – a multi-stage survey designed to build consensus on the policy and practice implications of the report's findings – which will report in 2021.

A survey we conducted at the start of this process told us that 75% of participants thought the report had increased their knowledge and understanding of the evidence on ACEs, 87% thought it had helped them to understand or be aware of some of the evidence gaps in relation to ACEs, and, importantly, 39% said that the report had changed how they worked, suggesting that it was also influencing change in practice.

The EIF Guidebook is our flagship resource for commissioners. It is an accessible and searchable database which offers a wealth of information on both the quality of evidence underpinning programmes designed to improve outcomes for children and young people, and vital aspects of implementation, such as the target population, estimated cost and level of practitioner qualifications required.

During the past year, we undertook user testing to help us understand how the Guidebook was being used and how we might make improvements. Dartington Service Design Lab surveyed 169 people (both users and non-users) and undertook 21 qualitative interviews. In addition to providing a number of avenues for future development, this research showed that the current features of the Guidebook were all seen to be of high priority to those who use it, that the information it contained was clear, and that it was easy to use.

We have also played a role in supporting future research. We advised the DfE on their early development of the 'Children of 2020' longitudinal study, which they have now put out to tender, taking on many of our suggestions. And we were influential in recommending an evidence-based approach in the decision to extend the Study of Early Education and Development (SEED), which will produce evidence on the impact of early years education. Working to support and shape these major research projects is a critical part of ensuring policymakers and decision-makers have the evidence and information they need.

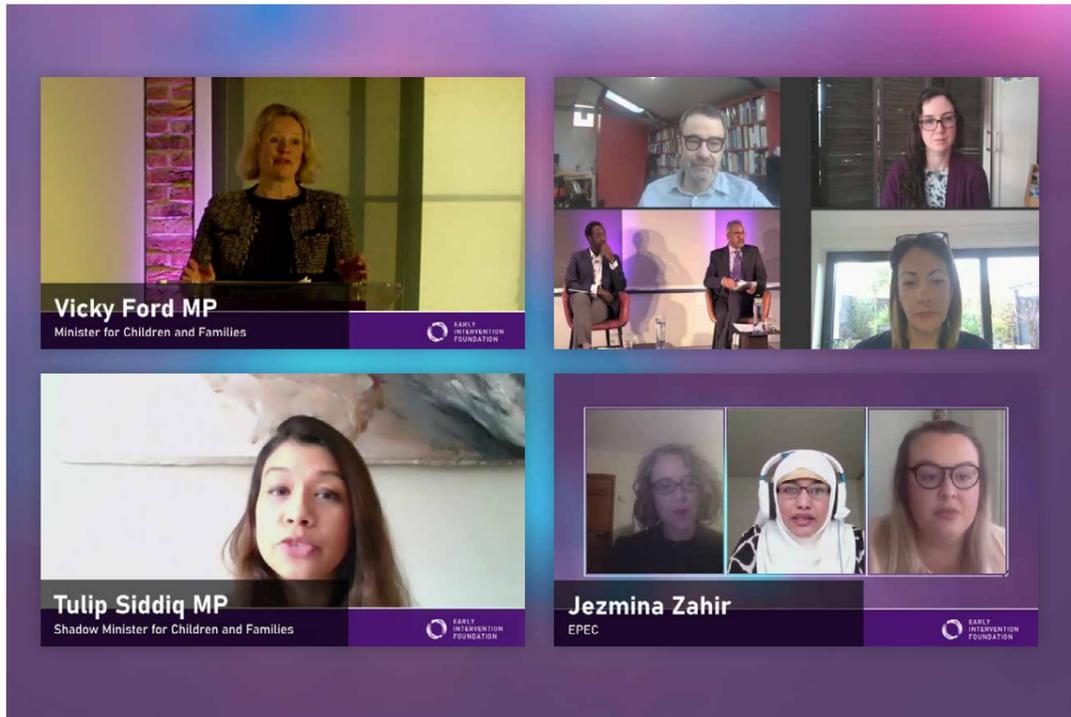
Supporting the Youth Endowment Fund

Over the past year, EIF continued to deliver the evidence and evaluation function for the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF), the 10-year, £200 million investment in finding out what works to prevent children and young people from being drawn into violent crime.

In response to the Covid pandemic, the evaluation function was expanded in order to adapt existing plans for the delivery and evaluation of the programmes that had been funded through the fund's inaugural grant round in the previous year, and a new, targeted Covid-19 grant round was opened, eventually funding 129 organisations and setting up the YEF to learn quickly what works to reach vulnerable young people during a period of social distancing.

Major outputs and achievements included producing a What Works Evidence Review and an interactive Evidence and Gaps Map, and winning funding from #Iwill and the Co-op to set up an ambitious peer research network.

To find out more, visit <https://YouthEndowmentFund.org.uk>



Bringing the early intervention community together

EIF national conference 2020 was held in December, having been postponed from April by the pandemic and lockdown conditions. The event was broadcast online and hosted at a central London venue, with all delegates attending virtually, and speakers and panellists joining us at the venue or beaming in from home.

We were thrilled to welcome an exceptional, varied line-up of speakers, including children and families minister Vicky Ford MP, shadow minister Tulip Siddiq MP and ADCS president Jenny Coles, alongside a range of experts, leaders and practitioners, while Jade Batten and Jezima Zahir spoke compellingly about their personal experiences as parents supported by Family Nurse Partnership (FNP) and Empowering Parents Empowering Communities (EPEC) respectively.

As well as bringing our community together, the conference provides an invaluable opportunity to share evidence and connect it to our delegates' work. When we asked delegates about our four breakout sessions – on adverse childhood experiences, speech and language, social and emotional learning, and youth crime and violence – an average of 74% said they understood the evidence on what works after the conference compared with before, a rise of 10 percentage points from our pre-conference survey.

In addition to the 300 who took part on the day, the conference had significant reach, with over 70,000 views of EIF tweets over a 48-hour period, and more than 800 views of recordings of the various speakers and panel sessions in the weeks following conference day.

“It’s vital that we can come together, debate, discuss and celebrate the work we all do to support the children, young people and families whose lives can benefit from extra support.”

– Dr Jo Casebourne welcomes delegates to the national conference

Building knowledge and creating change

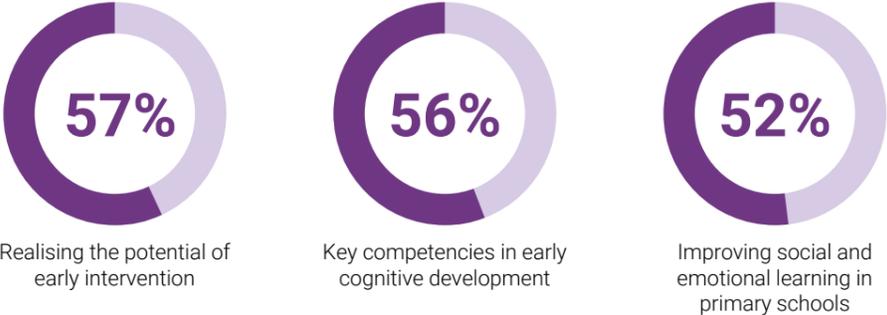
As set out in our impact framework, we seek to generate evidence and tools that increase people’s understanding of the evidence around what works and how to apply that evidence, and which actively create changes in how people make decisions or do their jobs.

This is a challenging goal, as we know that commissioners, managers and practitioners receive information from multiple sources, must weigh multiple factors in their decisions, and work within complex, interconnected organisations and environments, which can make innovation and new ways of working difficult to advance.

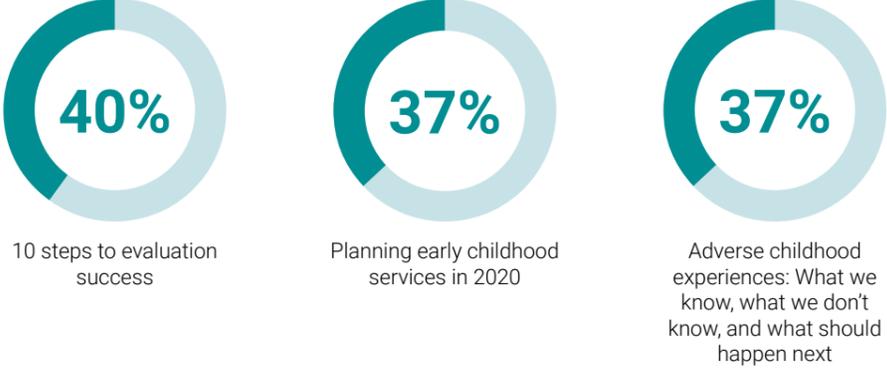
Through our 2021 stakeholder survey, we set out to test the impact of a range of significant outputs and activities. In light of the challenges, it is pleasing that around half of those accessing our information and support felt their understanding of the evidence improved, around four in 10 felt they could apply that to their work, and around a quarter had actually made changes as a result.

Which EIF reports, resources and activities....

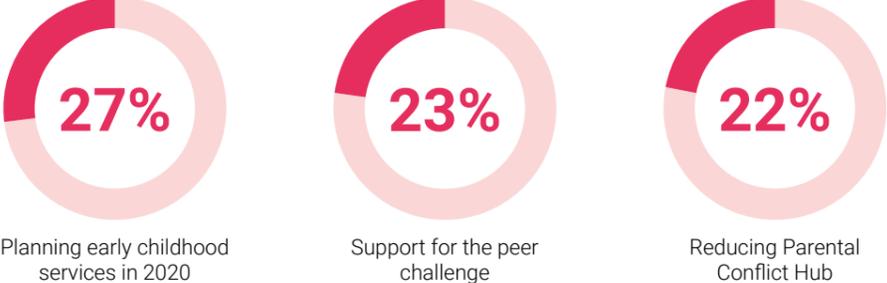
- Improved your understanding of the evidence?



- Improved your understanding of how to apply the evidence in your work?



- Resulted in changes in your work?



2020/21: the year in numbers



458,000

pageviews on EIF.org.uk from 175,000 visitors



85

local areas engaged directly in our research and support activities



15,000

Twitter followers, generating over 5,000 retweets and likes



92

national and sector press hits



42

posts on the EIF blog



Over 310,000

downloads of reports and major resources



Over 300

delegates and participants at EIF national conference 2020



Over 31,000

views of EIF videos across all social media channels



135,000

pageviews on the EIF Guidebook from 37,000 visitors



77%

of UK visitors across all EIF websites come from outside London



82%

of EIF staff said in our 2020 staff survey that they'd recommend EIF as a great place to work

New reports and resources



2020

April

Covid-19 and early intervention: Evidence, challenges and risks relating to virtual and digital delivery

Developing a behavioural approach to knowledge mobilisation: Reflections for the What Works Network

Video: Developing a good theory of change

Video: What's in the EIF Guidebook, what's not, and why?

Video: Using the EIF Guidebook to help make decisions: Thinking about fit

May

Video: Introduction to early intervention: what is it, why it matters, and what does EIF do?

EIF webinar: Covid-19, early intervention and delivering services remotely

October

Adolescent mental health evidence brief 1: Prevalence of disorders

Reducing parental conflict: Outcomes framework

EIF webinars: Healthy Relationships Week

September

Supporting children's social and emotional wellbeing as they return to school

August

Reducing parental conflict in the context of Covid-19: Adapting to virtual and digital provision of support

July

The role of primary schools in early intervention to prevent youth violence: Insights from work in two London boroughs

June

Covid-19 and early intervention: Understanding the impact, preparing for recovery

Closing the gap on speech, language and communication in the early years: local case studies

November

Planning early childhood services in 2020: Learning from practice and research on children's centres and family hubs

Early Childhood Services Hub

EIF maturity matrix: Maternity and early years

Using validated tools to measure parental conflict and its impact on children

December

RPC Measures Selector

2021

January

Videos: EIF national conference 2020

March

EIF Evaluation Hub

Reducing parental conflict: A practical evaluation guide for local areas

Conducting a needs assessment on parental conflict

Our reports set out all of the findings, conclusions and recommendations from our research programme. Visit <https://www EIF.org.uk/reports>

EIF resources are designed to help decision-makers and practitioners to put effective early intervention into action. Visit <https://www EIF.org.uk/resources>



Covid-19: understanding the impact, supporting the response

The Covid-19 pandemic, lockdowns and social restrictions defined 2020/21, and represent the biggest change in the conditions facing children, young people and families in generations.

While the pandemic has meant an increased public focus on many of the issues EIF has long centred its work on – such as mental health, educational attainment, child vulnerability and family relationships – it was immediately clear that Covid and the government's response were extraordinary and important factors to understand in their own right.

Through an initial set of projects focused entirely on the pandemic and its impacts, and through later work to capture the views, concerns and priorities of those working to support children, families and communities, we have developed and shared our understanding of how Covid-19 has shifted the ground for early intervention in the UK.

What did we do?

We identified a set of immediate priorities for EIF:

- To understand what works in providing early intervention remotely, via virtual or digital approaches, as lockdown conditions forced services to significantly reduce face-to-face provision.
- To gauge the scale and speed of adaptation among programme providers in response.
- To collate initial experiences from local authorities and frontline service leaders, to understand the impact of the pandemic.
- To provide additional guidance to services for reducing parental conflict, to strengthen an important national programme supporting families under increased stress and pressure.

To address these needs, we produced a series of Covid-focused reports through spring and summer 2020, and put the pandemic front-and-centre in our research projects throughout the year.

Snapshots from 2020/21

On changes to service delivery

By April 2020, over three-quarters of early intervention programme developers and providers (76%) said they had made major adaptations in order to continue delivery. Only 9% said they had stopped delivery, and just 2% said they were continuing as usual.

EIF survey of 88 programme developers and providers, April 2020

On the impact for the most at-risk

Our survey of programme developers and providers working on reducing parental conflict highlighted that of the interventions that had been stopped entirely rather than adapted, all were targeted indicated interventions, designed for those who were already experiencing adverse outcomes.

EIF survey of 13 providers and developers, June–July 2020

On out-of-sight children

Most local leaders we spoke to recognised a particularly significant challenge in identifying children who may have become vulnerable as a result of Covid-19 or the lockdown, but who were not currently known to any service, who were seen as potentially being the most vulnerable.

32 structured interviews with local authority and school leaders, EIF and Action for Children, March–May 2020

On understanding the impact of service changes

Four in five local authorities working on reducing parental conflict were planning to evaluate the impact of the adapted services they were providing. Nearly two-thirds (63%) had not been providing digital or virtual services prior to the pandemic.

EIF survey of 42 local authorities, June–July 2020

On parents' concerns

As pupils returned to school at the end of the first lockdown, over half of parents (51%) said they were concerned about their children's mental wellbeing. These concerns were higher among parents in lower-income households: 58% among those earning up to £19,999, compared with 44% among those earning £55,000 or more.

Ipsos MORI for EIF, survey of 643 parents of school-age children, August–September 2020

On tackling domestic abuse

Rates of domestic abuse have risen through the pandemic period. Just four in 10 people (42%) said they would be confident knowing where to go or who to speak to in order to get help, if someone they knew personally revealed themselves as a victim of domestic abuse. Nearly three-quarters (71%) said there should be greater support provided to the victims of domestic abuse.

YouGov for EIF, survey of 1,725 adults, March 2021

On pupils' mental health

By March 2021, 70% of teachers and school leaders said they had observed a worsening condition for teenage pupils who were already known to be experiencing mental health problems, and 62% said they had teenage pupils presenting with mental health problems that they weren't known to be experiencing before. Just 4% had observed no major changes.

NFER for EIF, survey of 700 teachers and head teachers, March 2021

On the pandemic's silver linings

Four in five of those surveyed through our stakeholder research project (83%) identified providing digital or virtual support as a positive benefit of the pandemic, alongside innovation in services (59%), adaptation of administrative structures (47%) and more or better partnership working (46%).

BritainThinks for EIF, survey of 549 members of the early intervention community, March 2021 (see page 20 for more)



Early childhood services: revealing the state of current practice

Published in November 2020, our major report *Planning early childhood services in 2020: Learning from practice and research on children's centres and family hubs* set out to understand more about how local places are delivering early years and maternity services in community settings.

Early childhood is a period of rapid physical, social and emotional, behavioural and cognitive development, which lays the foundations for a happy and healthy life. This means it is an especially important period for early intervention to prevent or reduce the negative impacts of problems experienced by a child or family.

Maternity and early years services are a vital means of both providing support to children and families who need it, and identifying those who may need additional support from other local services.

Children's centres have been an important and evolving part of the local service landscape for the past two decades, intended to provide an accessible base and contact point for families to reach a range of local support services. Following a change in statutory guidance in 2013, the diversity of local approaches to providing this access to early childhood services has increased and expanded to include other models with similar aims, such as family hubs or integrated hubs.

Today, early childhood services may differ from place to place: for example, in terms of their focus on whole-family support; their integration with other services; the age groups of children involved or prioritised; the balance between universal support for everyone and targeted support for the most vulnerable; or the number, spread and accessibility of physical hubs or centres.

As local authorities, the NHS and other local partners work out how best to maintain and develop maternity and early years services in the face of current pressures, there is a demand for evidence to guide local decisions, and for support to plan an effective local system for children and their families.

“It is difficult to think of a more effective way in which the government might realise its vision to level up Britain and ensure equality of opportunity than through ensuring access to high-quality local family services which start in maternity and run throughout childhood.”

– Donna Molloy, Director of Policy & Practice, foreword to the report

Our research was designed to improve our understanding of local areas' current, practical experience of delivering services via children's centres, family hubs and other similar approaches, and to explore how this real-world picture relates to what we know from the literature.

Our work with 14 local areas across England, in conjunction with a rapid review of existing evidence in this field, highlighted some key findings:

- A lack of national monitoring and evaluation means there is relatively little robust evidence on the different approaches that local areas are taking.
- Local approaches are context-specific and diverse, and there is no shared way of specifying different approaches from place to place.
- Local areas are increasingly connecting early childhood services with whole-family

services and focusing on targeted support, but also continue to make the case for open-access centres to reach vulnerable families.

- The lack of up-to-date evidence makes it difficult to be conclusive about what works in delivering children's centres and hubs.
- Funding pressures and the lack of evaluation pose a risk to increasing the use of evidence-based approaches within local services.

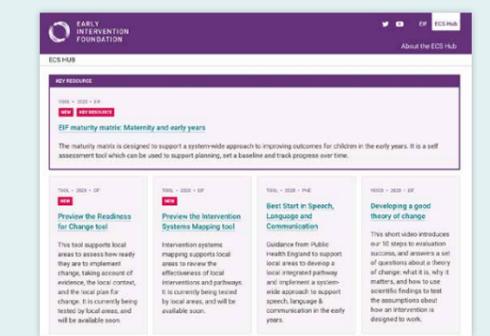
Download the report at <https://www EIF.org.uk/ECS2020>

In addition to continuing to develop and share resources, we will take this work forward in our work with the Anna Freud Centre, who have been appointed to run the new National Centre for Family Hubs.

Introducing the Early Childhood Services Hub

Alongside the report, we launched a new EIF online hub, bringing together information and tools for commissioners, managers and others looking for evidence-informed guidance on early years and maternity provision.

With sections focusing on outcomes, using evidence, identifying interventions, planning, implementation and peer learning, the hub provides information on multiple aspects of service design and delivery, and we will continue to add to the resources that it provides.



Visit the hub at <https://EarlyChildhoodServices EIF.org.uk>

Taking the pulse of the sector

Our stakeholder research provides a rare and important way of understanding more about the concerns and priorities of people across the early intervention community, and an opportunity to gather wider feedback on EIF's work.

In 2021, this research focused on three areas in particular:

- the prominence and prioritisation of early intervention and use of evidence
- the impact of Covid-19 on early intervention services and workforces
- the perceived value and impact of EIF's work.

Many of the headline findings on EIF and our work are presented throughout this report.

What did we do?

We commissioned research agency BritainThinks to carry out a large-scale online survey and a series of in-depth follow-up interviews, taking place in March 2021. The online survey received a total of 549 responses from stakeholders across local and national government, charities, national sector bodies, NHS and commissioning groups, schools, police, and academia.

549 survey respondents

Twenty-five respondents were then selected to take part in qualitative interviews by phone or video call, from among nearly 200 who volunteered.

25 in-depth qualitative interviews

This 2021 activity follows three years after our previous round of stakeholder research, conducted in winter 2017/18.

On early intervention Key findings



Prioritising early intervention

While three-quarters of respondents (75%) strongly agreed that early intervention is a priority for them and their work, just over half (56%) strongly agreed that it is a priority for their organisation or workplace.

Overall, this level of prioritisation was higher than in the 2017/18 survey, with the proportion of respondents agreeing that early intervention is a priority in their own work rising by five percentage points to 95%, and those agreeing it is a priority in their organisation rising by six points to 86%.

On the impact of Covid-19 Key findings



Delivering during the pandemic

More than seven in 10 respondents (73%) said that Covid-19 had made it more difficult to deliver effective early intervention. Just over half (54%) said that the pandemic had reduced the resources available to provide early intervention support.

Asked about how the pandemic had affected the priority given to early intervention, views were split: 27% said it had become a greater priority in their organisation or workplace, 31% said it had become a lower priority, and 36% observed no change.



Barriers

Asked to identify the main barriers to more early intervention being available, the most popular responses were being outranked by higher priorities (selected by 53%) and the lack of statutory status (49%), followed by three barriers identified by 35%: benefits accruing too far into the future, short-term costs being too great, and a lack of support from key leadership figures.



Adapting services

The pandemic led to significant changes in provision. Overall, 77% of respondents had observed new, adapted or scaled-up services or interventions in their organisation, and 37% reported that interventions or services had been scaled back or stopped. 82% of respondents said that all such reductions or stoppages were expected to be temporary.



Using evidence

Just over half of respondents (51%) said they use evidence and research in all or most decisions, or all major decisions. When we focused on 'formal' evidence sources (academic research, evaluation trials and What Works Centres), 87% of respondents said they use at least one in their work.



Top concerns

Two issues dominated concerns about the impact of Covid-19. Mental health (85%) and parenting & family relationships (82%) were most commonly identified as areas of greatest concern, and were also most often identified as areas where services or interventions had been scaled up, by 46% and 47% of respondents respectively.

Looking ahead to 2021/22

As we start a new work year, early intervention is at a crucial juncture. The Covid-19 pandemic has reshaped our world, and especially the needs of many families and young people, and the landscape of additional support services available to them.



A national Covid recovery programme is taking shape as the nation emerges from lockdowns and restrictions, and the government is focused on its commitment to levelling up our places and communities. The comprehensive spending review will set the terms of public spending for the years ahead. Taken together, this means there is both an unprecedented need for effective early intervention to be as widely available as possible, and an invaluable opportunity to invest in achieving that goal.

At the same time, EIF has passed the midway point in our current five-year strategic cycle, and so we have identified three overarching priorities for the 24 months ahead.

Our priorities for the next two years are:

- To be integral to achieving increased government prioritisation of and investment in effective early intervention and family help.
- To address the most substantive gaps in the evidence base by generating new evidence, including through running trials or robust impact evaluations.
- That our evidence is changing policy and practice, through applying tested methods to support evidence-use locally and nationally.

Our three major portfolios of work cover areas where early intervention can be effective, and where there is considerable demand for evidence and evidence-informed guidance

from national, local and frontline stakeholders. In addition to the planned projects outlined below, we will continue to provide bespoke advice to stakeholders working in relevant Whitehall departments, to inform and support government policies and programmes.

Improving outcomes for children in the early years

In 2021/22, our work in the early years will:

- Review and refresh existing evidence on the effectiveness of early years programmes, so that we can add to and update programmes on the EIF Guidebook database.
- Undertake a significant programme of activity to mobilise existing evidence on early years practice, including supporting system planning and evaluation in local areas, supporting children's early language provision, partnering in the DfE's Growing Up Well and family hubs programmes, and continuing our work on understanding the maturity of the local early years system, using data generated through the EIF maturity matrix tool to paint a national picture.
- Continue our ongoing research for the Nuffield Foundation, in partnership with the University of Cambridge, into the 'common elements' of effective early education provision.

Improving children and young people's mental health and wellbeing

In 2021/22, our work on mental health and wellbeing will:

- Communicate the findings from our major review of what works to support adolescents' mental health, based on over 130 systematic reviews and primary studies. This review highlights the importance and potential both of universal or 'whole-school' approaches, to provide a supportive environment for all pupils, and of targeted interventions, delivered by trained practitioners rather than teachers, for individuals who need additional help.
- Produce and disseminate guidance for secondary schools, based on the findings of the evidence review.
- Establish and communicate the links between social and emotional learning (SEL) and the relationships and health education curriculum in primary schools, including building on and mobilising our 2019 guidance on supporting SEL in primary schools.

Supporting the most vulnerable children and families

In 2021/22, our work on addressing child vulnerability will:

- Extend our work on services to support families affected by domestic abuse by facilitating a research-practice partnership with a small number of local areas, to improve the use of evidence in local systems through early-stage evaluation support.
- Support the next phase of the Supporting Families programme (formerly the Troubled Families programme), including through providing evidence relating to family support and advice on implementation and evaluation within the programme.
- Continue our practical support for the national Reducing Parental Conflict programme, which is administered by the DWP, through focused work with local authorities and evidence synthesis on interparental relations and family interventions.

Cross-cutting projects

A portion of our work is focused on aspects of supporting early intervention beyond or across the particular issues and policy areas covered by our portfolios.

- Youth Endowment Fund: From April 2021, EIF takes on a new role in supporting YEF, particularly in its evidence-focused functions, after the consolidation of the YEF team within a single organisation at the end of 2020/21. In the year ahead, we will provide research and evidence synthesis on parenting and families, supporting a major YEF grants round in this area. We will support development of the YEF Toolkit, and assess a set of programmes to be added to this online database tool. And we will support YEF's forward strategy and planning, engagement with Whitehall and the sector, and communications about evidence.
- Policy and public affairs: Our work in this area will focus on the Comprehensive Spending Review process, and maintaining relationships with Whitehall departments that will allow us to support increased priority and investment for early intervention in departmental plans and spending review bids. We also seek to build and maintain productive relationships across political leadership, sector bodies, charities and the evidence community; to improve our understanding of engagement with stakeholders in the NHS; and to continue to input into key inquiries, reviews and strategic processes.
- Early intervention and ethnicity: Our renewed organisational commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion includes a new focus on understanding and addressing the influence of ethnicity in a child or young person's development. A key part of our work will be to search for and comment on evidence regarding the value or impact of interventions, policies and practices on UK minority ethnic children and families, and where such evidence does not exist, to highlight these gaps in order to improve future research. In addition, a new project will explore what an improved family support offer should look like for minority ethnic children and families, and ensure that their priorities and experiences are fed into the development of policy on early help and family hubs.
- EIF Guidebook: The EIF Guidebook is our flagship resource for providing evidence-based content about effective early intervention programmes. In 2021/22, in addition to our review of early years programmes on the Guidebook, we will undertake improvements informed by the in-depth user research undertaken in 2020/21.

Managing our resources



**staff employed on average
over 2020/21**

Income

EIF receives core funding from central government. In 2020/21 this totalled £1.9 million (compared to £2.0 million in 2019/20). While this forms the majority of our funding, we continually aim to diversify our income sources. To that end, we have secured £697,000 of grants from trusts, foundations and other charities, £35,000 of funding on a commercial basis from contracts for services, and £55,000 from running our national conference, all of which further our charitable purpose. Non-government sources provided 29% of our funding in 2020/21.

97%

of our income in 2020/21 was restricted, meaning it can only be used for specific purposes

As a registered charity, the EIF is required to account for its income in line with the Charities SORP.

Thank you

We could not have delivered our work in 2020/21 without the support of our funders, listed on page 29.



Expenditure

EIF looks to maximise its in-house capacity to deliver its evidence-based analysis, policy and practice work (project direct costs), and to minimise the cost of its corporate core (management costs).

83%

of evidence-based analysis, policy and practice work delivered in-house

Of the £2,746,000 disbursed on project costs, the equivalent of £2,274,000 was delivered using in-house resources, meaning £472,000, or 17%, was delivered using external resource (compared to 11% in 2019/20).

EIF employs people with a variety of skills in the field of evidence-based policy and practice, some of whom are subject experts in the field of early intervention. EIF provides excellent value for money and does not employ any fundraising staff.



Financial statements

Statement of Financial Activities (Including an Income and Expenditure Account) For the year ended 31 March 2021

Note	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	2020/21 Total funds £	2019/20 Total funds £
INCOME:				
– Investments	625	–	625	6,319
– Charitable activities	90,584	2,633,559	2,724,143	2,888,253
Total	91,209	2,633,559	2,724,768	2,894,572
EXPENDITURE:				
– Charitable activities	68,962	2,965,570	3,034,532	2,564,079
NET INCOME (EXPENDITURE)	22,247	(332,011)	(309,764)	330,493
RECONCILIATION OF FUNDS				
Total funds brought forward	1,583,746	365,054	1,948,800	1,618,307
TOTAL FUNDS CARRIED FORWARD	1,605,993	33,043	1,639,036	1,948,800

Balance Sheet At 31 March 2021

	2021 £	2020 £
FIXED ASSETS		
– Tangible fixed assets	7,703	–
	7,703	–
CURRENT ASSETS		
– Debtors	586,344	289,125
– Cash at bank	1,494,098	1,898,115
	2,080,442	2,187,240
LIABILITIES		
– Creditors falling due within one year	(449,109)	(238,440)
NET CURRENT ASSETS	1,631,333	1,948,800
TOTAL NET ASSETS	1,639,036	1,948,800
FUNDS OF THE CHARITY		
– Restricted funds	33,043	365,054
– Unrestricted funds: General Fund	1,178,791	1,156,544
– Unrestricted funds: Designated Fund	427,202	427,202
TOTAL FUNDS	1,639,036	1,948,800

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees on 26 July 2021 and were signed on its behalf by:



Mr MG Pilgrim MBE, Honorary Treasurer

**Early Intervention Foundation
Cash Flow Statement
For the year ended 31 March 2021**

	Total 2020/21 £	Total 2019/20 £
Cash flows from operating activities:		
Net movements in funds for the year	(309,764)	330,493
Adjustments to cash flows from non-cash items		
Depreciation and amortisation	7,538	–
Interest receivable	(625)	(6,319)
	(302,851)	324,174
Working capital adjustments		
(Increase)/decrease in debtors	(297,219)	99,473
Increase/(decrease) in creditors	210,669	63,357
Net cash flow from operations	(389,401)	487,004
Cash flows from investing activities:		
Interest received	625	6,319
Purchase of fixed assets	(15,241)	–
Net (decrease)/increase in cash and cash equivalents	(404,017)	493,323
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the reporting period	1,898,115	1,404,792
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the reporting period	1,494,098	1,898,115

The summarised accounts presented here are extracted from the Report of the Trustees and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2021, which were approved by the Trustee Board on 26 July 2021. The report of the auditors on these Accounts was unqualified. These summarised accounts do not contain sufficient information to allow for a full understanding of the financial affairs of EIF. A copy of the full document can be obtained from the charity commission website or EIF's registered office.

**Notes to the Financial Statements
For the year ended 31 March 2021**

	Unrestricted funds £	Restricted funds £	2020/21 Total funds £	2019/20 Total funds £
GRANTS FROM CENTRAL GOVERNMENT				
– Department for Education	–	–	–	48,935
Cross Government Grant 2018/19	–	–	–	48,935
– Department for Education	–	–	–	951,924
– Department for Work and Pensions	–	–	–	500,000
– Public Health England	–	–	–	100,000
– Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government	–	–	–	100,000
– Department for Health and Social Care	–	–	–	70,000
Cross Government Grant 2019/20	–	–	–	1,721,924
– Department for Education	–	1,512,400	1,512,400	–
– Department for Work and Pensions	–	283,038	283,038	201,562
– Public Health England	–	45,000	45,000	–
– Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government	–	95,500	95,500	–
Cross Government Grant 2020/21	–	1,935,938	1,935,938	201,562
Total	–	1,935,938	1,935,938	1,972,421
OTHER GRANTS				
– Youth Endowment Fund	–	644,886	644,886	796,082
– Battersea Power Station Foundation	–	–	–	40,000
– Nuffield Foundation	–	52,735	52,735	18,906
– Economic and Social Research Council	–	–	–	29,297
	–	697,621	697,621	884,285
OTHER SOURCES				
– Contracts with charitable purpose	35,303	–	35,303	23,025
– Conferences and events	55,071	–	55,071	7,272
– Other income	210	–	210	1,250
	90,584	–	90,584	31,547
	90,584	2,633,559	2,724,143	2,888,253

The work that we have undertaken in 2020/21 would not have been possible without the support of our funders. Accordingly we would like to extend our thanks to all these organisations for their support.

Early Intervention Foundation

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EIF is a member of



EIF is a registered charity (1152605) and a company limited by guarantee (8066785).