



Call for local areas to work with MHCLG and EIF on evaluation of effective approaches within the Supporting Families programme

We know that investment in research and evaluation is crucial to ensuring that we learn what works to support vulnerable families.

MHCLG robust impact study research has shown that the Supporting Families programme can create positive change for families and prevent issues from escalating into statutory systems. But we also know that approaches within the programme vary locally and that the evidence base for some of these approaches is limited, with local areas facing challenges in evaluating their effectiveness.

As set out in [Supporting Families 2021-22 and beyond](#) policy narrative, MHCLG is working with partners including EIF to understand what specific approaches are most effective for what families. The aim is to provide evidence to support local areas to improve their family support services.

EIF would like to work with local Supporting Family programmes to evaluate the effectiveness of their approaches.

Based on previous evaluation and continued work with local areas, three areas have been identified as areas of interest to supporting families within the programme:

- **Psychologically informed keyworker practice built around an evidence-based practice model**
Some of the root causes of poor outcomes for vulnerable families are driven by a complex interaction of different needs. Providing support from key workers using psychologically informed practices (such as family systems therapy or cognitive behavioural therapy) to build supporting relationships and help families identify strengths at the child, family, service/school and community level can support families with complex needs to develop strategies specific to their risks, to strengthen family relationships and make positive change.

We would like to work with local areas that have an evidence-based psychologically informed practice model with a defined approach to working with families (such as a formalised practice framework with a common way of assessing and supporting families using psychological techniques and therapies), where key workers are supported for instance via training, ongoing coaching and/or peer supervision.

- **Joint whole-family working between Early Help practitioners and housing providers and homelessness services**
Insecure housing and rent arrears are particular issues that many families who come into contact with Early Help face, which have a host of complex and often interconnected causes (such as insecure income, domestic abuse, mental health and substance abuse). However, evidence from the MHCLG national evaluation indicates that keyworkers can struggle to address housing and housing-related issues for families without input from housing services.

We would like to work with local areas who have developed a strong partnership model with housing services (such as through funding a housing link worker or through joint supervision,

assessment or data sharing) to support early identification of housing need, multi-agency working with housing services to provide a whole-family approach, and provision of interventions to prevent poor housing outcomes.

- **A comprehensive package of evidence-based interventions used by keyworkers to support families with a range of needs**

By their definition, evidence-based interventions provide positive outcomes for their participants. Providing the right type of intervention (at the right time) is critical to achieving positive outcomes for vulnerable families with complex needs. However, there is significant variation in what specialist interventions are offered locally (for example, interventions focused on parenting, mental health, domestic abuse or parental conflict) and the extent to which they are evidence-based, consistently delivered and evaluated. There is also very limited evidence on what an effective package of support looks like for different types of needs and different types of families.

We would like to work with local areas where key workers draw on a package of evidence-based interventions to support specific cohorts of families with their complex needs to achieve better outcomes. According to [EIF's evidence standards](#), a programme is 'evidence-based' if it has evidence from at least one rigorously conducted impact evaluation demonstrating a statistically significant positive impact on at least one child outcome. Examples include Triple P, Incredible Years, Multisystemic Therapy, Child First, Functional Family Therapy (FFT), and the Family Nurse Partnership.

If your local area has developed any of the approaches set out above, or an approach within your Supporting Families programme which you have evaluated and believe to be effective, EIF would like to work with you to support your evaluation and evidencing of effectiveness.

If you would like to find out more, please contact Max Stanford, Head of Early Childhood Education & Care at EIF: max.stanford@eif.org.uk