

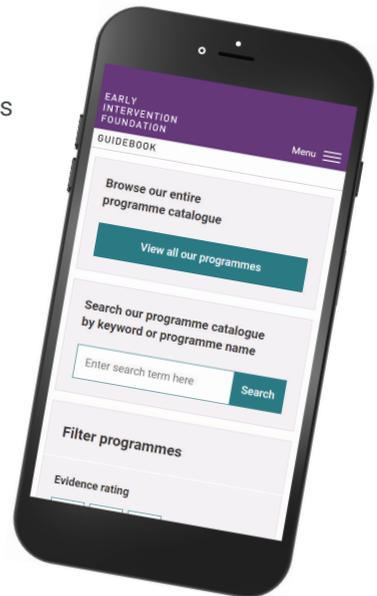
# EIF Guidebook

## Injecting evidence into the commissioning and design of early intervention in the UK

The EIF Guidebook provides a wealth of information about over 100 early intervention programmes that have been shown to improve child outcomes.

To help you make the decisions that impact upon the lives of children and young people in your area, we help you to answer questions like:

- Is there evidence that this programme has achieved positive outcomes for children and young people?
- How strong is that evidence? How confident can we be that these positive outcomes are real and more likely to be replicated as a result?
- What specific child outcomes has it been shown to achieve in the past?
- What does it cost, compared to other programmes?
- What else do I need to know about how it works and how it should be implemented?



# What is the EIF Guidebook?

The EIF Guidebook provides information about early intervention programmes that have at least preliminary evidence of achieving positive outcomes for children, such as improving mental health, school attainment or behaviour.

This information is based on EIF's assessment of the strength of evidence for a programme's effectiveness from past trials and evaluations, and on detail about programmes that has been shared with us by those who design, run and deliver them.

## Who is it for?

The Guidebook serves as an important starting point for commissioners to find out more about effective early interventions, and for programme designers and providers to find out more about what good evidence of impact looks like and how it can be captured.

## Why does evidence matter?

Designing interventions that make a difference is not easy, and not all early intervention programmes deliver improvements.

Rigorous evaluation and testing of early intervention programmes and approaches tells us which forms of support have been effective at improving child outcomes, and which ones have not. This provides invaluable information for future decisions about early intervention policy, funding and service design.

This is why everything we do at EIF is based on the importance of *effective* early intervention: on balance, families and children who receive interventions shown through rigorous testing to have improved outcomes in the past are more likely to benefit and to a greater degree than those who receive other services.

# What does it tell us?

For each programme, the EIF Guidebook provides:

- **Evidence rating:** a score indicating the strength of its best evidence
- **Cost rating:** a score indicating its cost relative to other programmes
- **Child outcomes:** detailing the specific outcomes observed in past trials and evaluations
- Key characteristics:
  - What **age groups** is the programme intended for?
  - What **settings** is it provided in?
  - Is it a **universal or targeted** programme?
  - What **delivery model** is used?
- Has it been used in the UK in the past? Is its best evidence UK-based?
- Information about its theory of change and how it is implemented, including qualifications, training and supervision for practitioners.
- Summary details of the study or studies included in the evidence rating.

## Example Programme

Example Programme is a targeted-selective programme for children between the ages of 8 and 12. It is designed to prevent antisocial behaviour and substance abuse in children from low-income families.

<p><b>Evidence rating:</b> <u>3+</u></p> <p><b>Cost rating:</b> 1</p> <p><b>Child outcomes:</b> Preventing substance abuse Preventing crime, violence and antisocial behaviour</p>	<p><b>UK provision:</b> Yes</p> <p><b>Age group:</b> Preadolescents</p> <p><b>Delivery model:</b> Group</p>	<p><b>Setting:</b> Primary school Secondary school Community centre</p> <p><b>Classification:</b> Targeted selective</p>
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*Handwritten annotations:*

- How strong is the evidence?** (points to Evidence rating)
- What does it cost?** (points to Cost rating)
- What can it achieve?** (points to Child outcomes)
- What does it do?** (points to the programme description)
- Is it in the UK already?** (points to UK provision)
- Who is it for?** (points to Age group)
- Where does it all happen?** (points to Setting)
- Universal or targeted?** (points to Classification)

# How to use evidence

As a tool for commissioners, the EIF Guidebook is designed to help you find out more about a programme that you are thinking about commissioning, or to identify a set of evidence-based programmes that fit your area's needs. You can sort programmes by the child outcomes you are interested in, age groups, settings, and other key characteristics.

**Remember:** Evidence is only part of the picture when it comes to commissioning early intervention programmes. Decisions about whether a programme is the right one for you should also involve considerations of cost and implementation requirements.

In the end, evidence is never a replacement for professional judgment. The evidence does not mean you should only commission programmes at level 3 or 4 – although, all things being equal, these are more likely to be effective. Nor are we saying you should never commission programmes at level 2 or NL2 – but you must continue to monitor these programmes so that you know whether they are working or not.

# What does “what works” mean?

EIF is one of the UK What Works centres, charged with bringing evidence about the effectiveness of early intervention to debates and decisions about policy, commissioning and practice.

The EIF Guidebook is not like a shopping website or market comparison tool: ratings and other information should not be taken as a specific recommendation, kite mark or endorsement for any programme.

**Remember:** Nothing works all of the time. Evidence only tells us what has worked in the past, in a particular time and place, with a particular population. It doesn't tell you whether the same programme will work for you, in your local circumstances.

Evidence changes over time. New studies emerge with new findings, and programmes may be altered, merged or split up. This means evidence ratings can change as well.

# What does the evidence rating mean?

The EIF evidence ratings distinguish five levels of strength of evidence.

A higher rating does not mean more or better impact. Rather, it means that the evidence is higher quality (more rigorous or repeated over time), and so we can be more confident that the programme has actually caused the positive benefits shown, and that those benefits are real.

This evidence assessment is based on a programme's best or strongest evidence.

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**4**

Level 4 recognises programmes with evidence of a **long-term positive impact** through multiple rigorous evaluations.

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**3**

Level 3 recognises programmes with evidence of a **short-term positive impact** from at least one rigorous evaluation.

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The term **evidence-based** is frequently applied to programmes with level 3 evidence or higher, because this is the point at which we can be sufficiently confident that there is a causal relationship between the programme and the outcomes.

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**2**

Level 2 recognises programmes with **preliminary evidence** of improving a child outcome, but where an assumption of causal impact cannot be drawn.

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**NE**

NE, or 'No effect', indicates where a rigorous programme evaluation (equivalent to a level 3) has found **no evidence** of improving one of our child outcomes or providing significant benefits to other participants.

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**NL2**

Programmes that EIF has assessed and which do not meet the criteria for a level 2 rating – which are rated NL2, or 'Not level 2' – are listed on the Guidebook but no other information is provided.

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# Find out more

More information and guidance is available via the EIF Guidebook:

- **How to read the Guidebook:** Guidance on interpreting the evidence
- **EIF evidence standards:** More on the evidence ratings and their meaning
- **Work in progress:** Programmes currently being assessed by EIF
- **Other programmes:** Programmes which have not received a level 2 rating
- **Getting your programme assessed:** More about the EIF assessment process
- **Frequently asked questions:** More on the Guidebook in theory and practice

[Guidebook.EIF.org.uk](https://www.elf.org.uk)



EARLY  
INTERVENTION  
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EIF is a member of

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