

Early Intervention Transformation Programme (EITP)

March 2014 - March 2020



OVERVIEW

The Early Intervention Transformation Programme is a Delivering Social Change/Atlantic Philanthropies Signature Programme. It invested £30 million over a six year period, aimed to improve outcomes for children and young people through embedding early intervention knowledge and approaches. 19 projects were funded across universal health and education services, family based support, public law proceedings, the care system and prisons. Fourteen projects will be sustained beyond EITP funding and the programme has made a demonstrable change to working practice and decision making in Northern Ireland.

OUR APPROACH

Projects aimed to transform how mainstream services are provided for children and families. A number of secondary criteria were also applied:



Evidence Based: Projects identified a clear evidence of need and delivered evidence informed models of practice.



Outcomes Focused: Projects set out measurable improvements for children, young people and families underpinned by performance indicators.

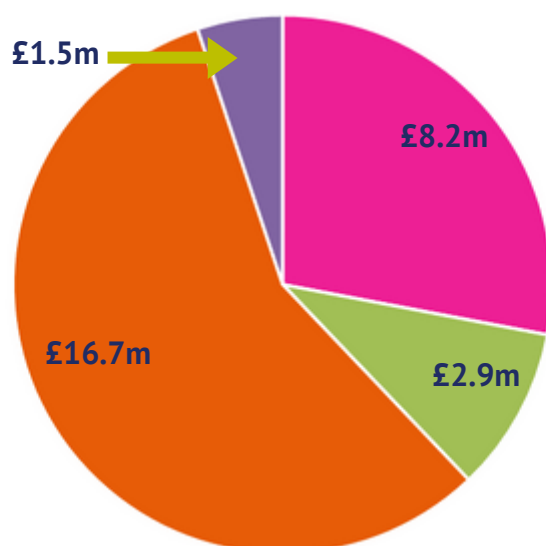


Prevention & Early Intervention: Projects intervened at the earliest opportunity or supported vulnerable children, young people and families.



Sustainable: Projects developed sustainability pathways to ensure that transformational change was embedded beyond EITP funding.

OUR FUNDING



Spread of investment across four workstreams aligned to programme objectives

EITP provided early age and stage support to potentially address persistent policy issues in the long term while responding to the immediate needs and experiences of children, young people and families.



Workstream One: Funded four projects across health and education to equip all parents with the skills, knowledge and confidence to give their child the best start in life.



Workstream Two: Funded one project across five different geographic areas across NI to support families when problems first emerged before the need for statutory involvement.



Workstream Three: Funded 13 projects across the care system, public law proceeding and justice to positively address the impact of adversity on children and young people.



Workstream Four: Funded one project to strengthen the culture of inter-professional working practice with a particular focus on trauma informed practice.

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WHY INTERVENE EARLIER?

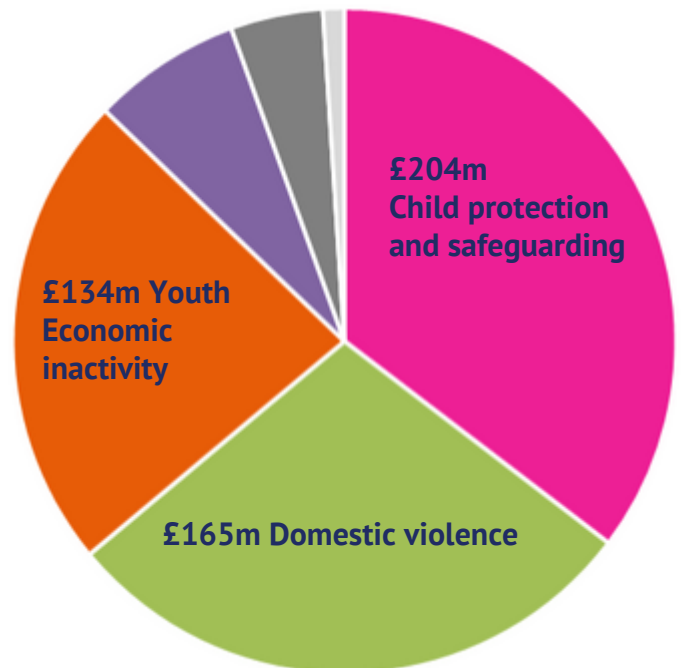
Early intervention (EI) can strengthen parents' and caregivers' capacity to support children's development. It can help children develop the skills they need to live happy, healthy and successful lives, and work to reduce the negative impacts of disadvantage. Leaving problems unresolved in childhood also impacts on society and the economy.

The EITP Programme Board commissioned the Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) to quantify the fiscal consequences of failing to intervene before issues become harder and more costly to resolve. The EIF estimated the annual cost of late intervention in Northern Ireland is **£536 million**, the equivalent to **£1,166 per child**.

£42m School absence and exclusion 

£26m Youth crime 

£6m Child mental health 



EIF: The cost of late intervention in Northern Ireland (2018)

BETTER OUTCOMES?

There is a growing body of evidence that early intervention is effective at improving outcomes for children and young people, with the greatest impact in early years and tackling particular threats to the lives of children. The EIF outlines four areas where early intervention can have a lasting impact into adulthood.



Physical development: EI has a positive impact on birth outcomes and early maturation.



Cognitive development: EI is effective in addressing educational attainment gaps.



Behavioural Difficulties: are highly predictive of criminal involvement in later life.



Social development: EI can improve child-parent attachment, playing a role in later development.

Workstream One: Getting Ready...

For Baby

For Toddler

To Learn



EITP funded three large scale projects to transform universal health and education services targeted at children aged 0-3 years. Projects have collected robust data to indicate improvements in:

Breastfeeding rates

Knowledge in child development

Social and emotional development

Physical activity

Parental confidence

Reading ability

Motor skills

Collaboration with parents

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WORKING TOGETHER

Supported by Atlantic Philanthropies and the Northern Ireland Executive, five government departments (DoH, DE, DoJ, DfC & DfE) agreed to collaborate and pool funds on an experimental basis through EITP to promote early intervention approaches. Delivery of the EITP was enabled through partnerships with departments, arms-length bodies and the Voluntary and Community Sector.

MEANINGFUL COLLABORATION

EITP promoted greater collaborative working and co-operation by government departments, services commissioners and those responsible for delivering and planning services to children, young people and families.



Pooled Funding: Projects were commissioned by a cocktail of government, Executive Programme and private philanthropic funds.



Governance: Functions of the programme and projects were underpinned by a cross-departmental Programme Board and inter-agency implementation groups.



Practitioners: Projects increased collaboration between practitioners across a range of disciplines to provide families with holistic support.



Shared vision of success: Programme measures of success were co-designed by strategic and implementation level stakeholders.



Data & knowledge sharing: The OBA and governance processes allowed for greater shared interrogation of the data. This led to a wider and deeper understanding of evidence and learning from the projects.



Voluntary & Community: A number of EITP projects were delivered by VCS partners to provide family based support, adolescent support and work in prisons.

OUR TEAM



Programme Board: Chaired by the DoH to provide operational oversight and strategic direction.



Central team: Based within the DoH to co-ordinate programme management, finance, strategic learning & evaluation



Implementation Team: Comprising of skilled staff across government departments and ALBs to enable effective project implementation.



Development & support: EITP benefited from technical expertise to develop and deliver projects.



Public Health Agency

National
Children's Bureau

Barnardo's
NIACRO

Action for Children

Workstream Two: Early Intervention Support Service (EISS)

The EISS formed collaborative relationships across statutory and voluntary sectors to support 2000 families, producing improvement in child behaviour, routine and family dynamics.

This project continues to support families through the DoH Transformation Fund.

IMPACT



A more systematic use of evidence to support decision making:

EITP has raised understanding, capacity and focused attention on the processes for gathering and using evidence within decision-making. It provided the space to gather evidence and develop ideas to develop approaches and different ways of working.

The EITP adopted Outcomes Based Accountability (OBA) methodology and promoted the collection, analysis and use of robust data to guide service delivery. Projects and the programme as a whole have been subject to rigorous evaluation, which informed decision making on sustainability.



Greater collaborative working across services for children, young people and families:

Relationships and co-operation have been strengthened through the EITP across a wide range of stakeholders.

The key ingredients of pooled multi-year funding, external oversight, a cross-departmental programme board and multi-agency implementation groups facilitated collaboration which was generally regarded as superior to previous efforts.

More importantly, dialogue and communication between agencies and departments has continued post project implementation.



An ongoing commitment to investment in early intervention approaches:

14 out of 19 projects will be sustained beyond EITP funding - some through mainstream funding and some through fixed term sources.

EITP has influenced the development of government strategy and policy, placing a greater emphasis on early intervention approaches.

Discussions are underway to build on the success of the EITP.



Improved knowledge, skills and confidence

EITP has developed professional practice and increased capacity to further transform services and adopt early intervention approaches. There have been gains in relation to:

- Evidence gathering and reviewing skills;
- Understanding of sustainability;
- Outcomes practice; and
- Development of collaborative relationships.



Improved well-being for children, young people and families:

Breastfeeding rates
Cognitive ability and reading
Increased physical activity

Reduced time in care
Reduced delay in care proceedings

Lower recidivism rates
Reduced number of young people in justice system

Improved speech and language skills
Improved parental confidence and capacity

LESSONS LEARNED

EITP tested new ways of working and provided the space to generate evidence on what works. A significant body of evidence has been generated at a project, workstream and programme level through the application of Outcomes Based Accountability and robust evaluation. This has enabled the Programme Team to identify thematic lessons learned:



Early Intervention benefits are rarely realised quickly and can be challenging to measure.

EITP projects were generally limited to capturing data on short-term effects and were unable to measure long term outcomes for practical, ethical and financial reasons. At a population level, the programme did not establish a baseline position, which presented challenges in measuring the delivery of objectives. We would recommend that similar programmes should commission longitudinal studies to measure effectiveness and inform future interventions.



Transformation requires a deep understanding of organisation culture, values and people.

EITP facilitated large scale transformation across health and education services through the development of collaborative relationship, an adaptive approach to implementation and effective leadership by key individuals to own and drive change. The importance of an exploratory phase cannot be understated, to assess system readiness and identify key stakeholders to co-design models of practice.



Collaboration is not without challenges but made possible by strong leadership, a shared purpose, pooled funding with shared decision making, and an element of independent or external scrutiny. The importance of an implementation team drawn from participating departments and agencies cannot be understated in establishing and maintaining relationships at an operational and strategic level.



Outcomes & Evidence take time to get right. EITP was an early adopter of OBA. However, this was a new way of working for many and projects took an iterative approach to collect, analyse and present data. Added to this is the fact that the impact of early intervention is likely to be evident in the longer term only. Lastly, it was important to select measurement tools that were appropriate to engaging with children, young people and families. It was important to draw upon technical expertise in setting data collection systems and reporting frameworks.



Sustainability not only relies on producing evidence that a project is effective and well implemented. Projects developed sustainability plans as a starting point, however, it was sometimes difficult to embed change in a time constrained period with no recurrent funding. Successful project sustainability hinged on a number of factors: sufficient evidence, competing priorities, stakeholder engagement, staff buy-in and strong leadership.

External Partner: Atlantic Philanthropies made a significant financial contribution to EITP, enabling end-year financial flexibility, unique to central government programmes, which was a critical success the delivery of projects. Atlantic's contribution was not solely limited to funding, they provided valuable independent challenge, technical expertise and complemented evaluation and strategic learning activity.