

Early Intervention Foundation – Guidebook

Case study

Sophie Wilson and Alice Lilly

August 2016

Early Intervention Foundation – Guidebook

Date: March 2013 to the present

Location: England only

Mission: To improve children and young people's life chances and to strengthen their resilience and capabilities as early as possible

Methods: Online database of programmes

Spend: Annual income of £1.125 million for running costs and an endowment of £1.25 million

Reach: There were 71,147 unique visitors to the Early Intervention Foundation website between July 2014 and June 2015, along with 2,940 newsletter recipients. The Early Intervention Foundation has seen 489 people take part in the events it has held across England.¹

Access: Free

Context

As part of the 'What Works Network', the Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) helps to gather and assess evidence on early intervention, and support areas in making practical use of this evidence.

“Early intervention is about taking action as soon as possible to tackle problems for children and families before they become more difficult to reverse.”²

The EIF was set up in response to an Independent Review of Early Intervention led by Graham Allen MP from 2010. The review recommended establishing an independent foundation to motivate those in the early intervention sector, understand the programmes that work, and support 'Pioneering Places' in their efforts.³

In February 2013, the Department for Education and the Early Intervention Foundation Consortium (made up of a variety of organisations, including

4Children, the Local Government Association and Achievement for All) signed a contract to create the EIF, with initial funding from four government departments. As part of this, Graham Allen MP was named as chair of the EIF.⁴

The EIF is part of the Government's 'What Works Network' which is made up of seven independent What Works Centres⁵ that evaluate evidence and encourage the use of this in decision-making across central and local government.

The focus of the EIF is on using evidence to support front-line practice so that children, young people and families showing signs of risk are identified and supported with effective interventions earlier and more effectively. It seeks to 'focus on answering the questions local commissioners ask',⁶ providing evidence on early intervention programmes in an easy-to-digest manner. Although information is available to anyone, the EIF has a particular focus on working with local authorities, police and crime commissioners, and other local commissioners or providers.

Ways of working

The EIF's Guidebook⁷ is an online platform containing information about how to commission and deliver early intervention programmes.⁸ Anyone can access the Guidebook as a free, online resource. However, it has been designed with commissioners of early intervention programmes in mind.

A searchable Programmes Library forms part of the Guidebook. This currently (June 2016) contains information about 50 different programmes, and there are plans to update it with recently reviewed evidence from hundreds of other programmes later this year.⁹ Each programme contained within the library has a webpage with key facts, a brief programme summary, and more detailed information on the practical details of how the programme works and how it can be implemented. The webpage also includes contact information, useful links and details on where the programme has been used before.

Each programme has also been given an evidence rating. Ratings are based on a framework developed by the EIF to rank the standard of evidence available on a programme. They distinguish between interventions that are consistently effective, as shown in 'multiple high-quality evaluations', through to those that have no evidence of effectiveness or good evidence that they are not effective, with ratings ranging from 4 to '-' respectively (see Figure 1).¹⁰ The Guidebook is now moving to communicating programme ratings in a new way that takes greater account of promising evidence.

Figure 1: Evidence continuum for all programmes included in the EIF Programmes Library



Note: The numbers in white represent the number of programmes in the Programmes Library at each evidence level.¹¹

Users of the Programmes Library can search by:

- outcomes they want to improve
- age of recipient population
- evidence rating
- name of a specific programme.

The Guidebook recognises that although robust evidence is important, this does not guarantee that a programme will work in every context. The strength of evidence for different programmes

can change over time and commissioners therefore need 'a solid understanding of an intervention's costs and the systems required to implement it successfully'.¹² In line with this, the Guidebook contains resources and tools to support implementation. Currently, this is based around three themes:

- how to consider innovative finance approaches for early intervention
- how to enhance a business case for early intervention services
- how to improve strategies and commissioning.¹³

Dissemination and wider support

In addition to the Guidebook, the EIF works closely with local authorities and other commissioners across England to support them in understanding the role of evidence and developing their early intervention strategies. It worked initially with 20 'pioneering places' to build tools to support the development of early intervention plans and strategies locally; support commissioning; and provide networking opportunities.

Pioneering places were chosen by the EIF and worked with an Implementation Adviser to develop the support offer that would be of most value to the local area. Most pioneering places were local authority-led partnerships, although two were led by police and crime commissioners. As part of the programme, the EIF held regular events looking at particular issues such as: identifying population needs; developing early intervention strategies; devising a business case; and developing an integrated offer across services.

The EIF also holds an annual conference to share learning; runs events across England; publishes detailed evidence reviews; and provides bespoke support to local areas. It is planning on launching a new network later this year.

Impact

As the EIF is a relatively new organisation, it is difficult to assess the impact the Guidebook has had so far and there is little evidence yet of the organisation's wider impact on early intervention outcomes. However, for a 2015 interim evaluation of the EIF, qualitative interviews were conducted with EIF staff, lead representatives from the pioneering places and a sample of representatives from other stakeholder groups.¹⁴ The evaluation found the following:

- The pioneering places felt positively about the Guidebook and the way in which they were able to 'work alongside' the EIF evidence team to ensure it was easy to use. Representatives from wider stakeholder groups also praised the usefulness of the Guidebook, including the specificity and detail of the guidance.
- In contrast, one stakeholder described how they found navigating the Guidebook more difficult than using a toolkit from the Education Endowment Foundation, another What Works Centre.¹⁵

“The Guidebook – it’s just genius because people can actually understand the data.”

Pioneering places interviewee from the interim evaluation¹⁶

The evaluation also found that, between August 2014 and March 2015, the Guidebook was viewed 6,037 times and 984 pdfs on programmes in the library were downloaded.¹⁷ It reported that by March 2015, 11 of the pioneering places and 11 additional areas nationally had populated a Maturity Matrix – one of the implementation tools contained in the Guidebook – illustrating how the materials available on the EIF website are being used.¹⁸

The EIF intends to start collecting data on the progress made in early intervention outcomes in areas it has worked with, to help it to assess its impact and measure the effectiveness of different support methods.

Insights

Online resources are helpful, but cannot replace face-to-face engagement

Online resources and tools can be a useful ‘way in’ for places to get a flavour of what others are doing and to identify whether an example is relevant to them before embarking on further research or connecting face to face. But, as we argue in our accompanying paper, *Local Public Service Reform: Supporting learning to integrate services and improve outcomes*,¹⁹ online methods cannot replace face-to-face engagement, which provides the chance for people to get into the detail of ‘how’ a programme has been implemented or ‘how’ it can be adapted to a new place.

Building evaluation into programmes is necessary to understand ‘what works’

Encouraging places to make greater use of evaluation as part of delivering programmes helps to build the evidence base on what is working or not working. Collecting key outcomes data and designing feedback loops that transfer information from the frontline to policymakers can help organisations to learn and make the most of insights from citizens.

Further resources

[Early Intervention Foundation](#) website.

Allen, G., *Early Intervention: The next steps*, Cabinet Office, London, 2011.

Notes

1. EIF, 'Our Impact and Progress', EIF, London, 2016, retrieved 17 May 2016, www.eif.org.uk/our-impact-and-progress
2. EIF, 'What is Early Intervention?', EIF, London, no date, retrieved 18 January 2016, www.eif.org.uk/what-is-early-intervention
3. Allen, G., *Early Intervention: The next steps*, Cabinet Office, London, 2011, p. v.
4. EIF, 'New Early Intervention Foundation is Born', Press Release, EIF, London, 5 February 2013, retrieved 17 May 2016, www.google.co.uk/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKFwjU26bhnOHMAhVkcMAKHQ2HAcMQFggcMAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ncb.org.uk%2Fmedia%2F888557%2Fef_press_release.docx&usq=AFQjCNHZO5uwtlzFN0RI9M0SSaYSBkZMuA&bvm=bv.122129774,d.ZGg
5. Cabinet Office, *Government – Guidance: What Works Network*, Cabinet Office, London, 2013, retrieved 10 December 2015, www.gov.uk/guidance/what-works-network
6. Allen, G., Speech to Local Government Association Labour Group, 26 March 2013, retrieved 17 May 2016, www.local.gov.uk/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=de723e2d-6c41-48ff-ba1d-f2f1b4e385d8&groupId=330956
7. EIF, 'Guidebook', EIF, London, 2016, retrieved 21 July 2016, <http://guidebook.eif.org.uk>
8. EIF, 'About the Guidebook', EIF, London, 2016, retrieved 17 May 2016, <http://guidebook.eif.org.uk/about-the-guidebook>
9. *Ibid.*
10. EIF, 'Your Programmes', EIF, London, 2016, retrieved 17 May 2016, <http://guidebook.eif.org.uk/programmes-library/search?outcomes%5B%5D=&min-age=-1.00&max-age=20.00&submit=search&s>
11. EIF, Guidebook 'Your Results Summary', retrieved 18 January 2016, <http://guidebook.eif.org.uk/programmes-library/search?min-age=-1.00&max-age=20.00&submit=search&s=>
12. EIF, 'About the Guidebook', EIF, London, 2016, retrieved 17 May 2016, <http://guidebook.eif.org.uk/about-the-guidebook>
13. EIF, 'Implementation and Support', EIF, London, 2016, retrieved 17 May 2016, <http://guidebook.eif.org.uk/implementation-and-support>
14. Cullen, M., Bakopoulou, I., Lindsay, G. and Totsika, V., *Evaluation of the Impact of the Early Intervention Foundation: Interim report: The set-up phase*, Centre for Education Development, Appraisal and Research, University of Warwick, Warwick, 2015.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 22-3.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 22-3.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 38.
19. Wilson, S., Davison, N. and Casebourne, J., *Local Public Service Reform: Supporting learning to integrate and improve outcomes*, Institute for Government, London, 2016, www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/publications/local-public-service-reform

About the authors

Sophie Wilson is a Researcher at the Institute for Government. Since joining the Institute in 2015, she has been involved in its ministerial development programme and work on public service delivery. Prior to this, Sophie was a researcher at the Office for Public Management, working on a range of engagement and evaluation projects across UK public services. She holds an MPhil in International Relations from the University of Cambridge and a BA from King's College London.

Alice Lilly is a Researcher at the Institute for Government, having first joined the Institute as an intern in 2015. She is currently finishing her PhD thesis at the University of Nottingham, which explores transatlantic links in anti-poverty policy during the 1990s and early 2000s, under New Labour and the New Democrats. While a PhD student, Alice spent a short time as an intern at the Social Market Foundation. Prior to undertaking her PhD at Nottingham, she completed an MA in American Studies, also at Nottingham, and a BA in History at the University of Cambridge.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks are due to all those who we spoke to outside of the Institute for Government, who gave their time generously and whose insights and experiences are reflected here. In particular we would like to thank Ben Lewing from the Early Intervention Foundation for providing us with invaluable insights. We are also grateful to our Institute colleagues; particularly Jo Casebourne, Nehal Davison and Caoimhe Udom for providing valuable support, advice and guidance throughout our research, Nicola Hughes and Daniel Thornton for their constructive feedback and advice on drafts, Matthew Batchelor for managing the publication process, and Nicole Valentinuzzi for communications advice and support.

All errors or omissions are the responsibility of the authors.

About the project

Last year, the Institute for Government began a major research project on public service delivery at a local level in England. This is a vast, complex terrain and there are many important areas that require urgent attention – whether it is how to drive efficiency savings, deliver digital transformation or make effective use of all providers in a local area, including voluntary and private sector organisations. We decided to focus on one aspect that is critical to achieving better public service outcomes for citizens: joining up and integrating public services around local, citizen needs.

Our briefing paper, [Joining Up Public Services around Local, Citizen Needs](#), identified five perennial barriers that repeatedly hinder integration at a local level, as well as several insights on how to tackle them. Limited sharing of what works (and doesn't work) emerged as a critical barrier that needs urgent attention. Although variation is crucial in ensuring that public services meet local needs, not learning from what has been tried before, or elsewhere, is costly, time intensive and risks duplicating the progress made in other parts of the country. At a time when capacity within local government is declining, and less money is available for service delivery, we cannot afford to keep reinventing the wheel.

A set of eight case studies, including this one, provides more detail about the methods and impact of different approaches designed to support learning between areas. Our accompanying paper, [Local Public Service Reform: Supporting learning to integrate services and improve outcomes](#), provides much-needed clarity on what would help people leading integration programmes to share experiences and learn from one another to improve outcomes on the ground.

For more information and resources, visit www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/local-service-delivery

The Institute for Government acts as a catalyst for better government.

We are an independent charity working to make government more effective.

- We carry out research, look into the big governance challenges of the day and find ways to help government improve, rethink and sometimes see things differently.
- We offer unique insights and advice from experienced people who know what it is like to be inside government, both in the UK and overseas.
- We provide inspirational learning and development for senior policymakers.

We do this through seminars, workshops, talks or making connections that invigorate and provide fresh ideas.

We are well placed for senior members of all parties and the Civil Service to discuss the challenges of making government work, and to seek and exchange practical insights from leading thinkers, practitioners, public servants, academics and opinion formers.

Copies of this case study are available at:
www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/local-service-delivery

August 2016

© Institute for Government 2016

2 Carlton Gardens
London SW1Y 5AA

Tel: +44 (0) 20 7747 0400

Fax: +44 (0) 20 7766 0700

Email: enquiries@instituteforgovernment.org.uk

Web: www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk

Twitter: @instituteforgov

The Institute is a company limited by guarantee registered in England No. 6480524

Registered Charity No. 1123926