

ESSS Outline

Schools, safeguarding and early intervention

Annelies Allcock
29 April, 2019

Introduction

This evidence summary seeks to address the following question relating to safeguarding children:

How can schools support early intervention to prevent children and young people from entering care?

About the evidence presented below

We searched for academic research and grey literature on early intervention and children and young people published within the last five years. This included relevant databases (e.g. [ASSIA](#)), as well as the [Iriss National Social Services Search](#) and [SCIE Social Care Online](#). We also searched websites relevant to the safeguarding of children, such as [CELCIS](#) and [NSPCC](#).

We found that academic research looking at collaboration between social services and schools was somewhat limited, and the majority of the sources in this Outline were found by searching the grey literature. This is consistent with the findings of a recent scoping review conducted by Rumping et al. (2018), who found that empirical research into elements and interventions aimed at stimulating interdisciplinary collaboration among social work professionals who work with youth is fragmented.

The evidence about effective early intervention is also limited. However, both the Early Intervention Foundation ([2018](#)) and the House of Commons ([2019](#)) have recognised the launch of the What Works Centre as a vital step in expanding the evidence base. The centre is designed to be a national institution holding intelligence on all good practice in children's social care, including early intervention.

Accessing resources

We have provided links to the materials referenced in the summary. Some materials are paywalled, which means they are published in academic journals and are only available with a subscription. Some of these are available through the [The Knowledge Network](#) with an NHS Scotland OpenAthens username. The Knowledge Network offers accounts to everyone who helps provide health and social care in Scotland in conjunction with the NHS and Scottish Local Authorities, including many in the third and independent sectors. [You can register here](#). Where resources are identified as ‘available through document delivery’, these have been provided to the original enquirer and may be requested through NHS Scotland’s [fetch item service](#) (subject to eligibility).

Where possible we identify where evidence is published open access, which means the author has chosen to publish their work in a way that makes it freely available to the public. Some are identified as author repository copies, manuscripts, or other copies, which means the author has made a version of the otherwise paywalled publication available to the public. Other referenced sources are pdfs and websites that are available publicly.

Background

Rising inequality in the United Kingdom raises profound ethical, economic and practical challenges for those involved in child protection ([Bywaters et al. 2018](#)). A recent House of Commons report (2019) showed that between 2010–11 and 2017–18 the number of referrals to children’s social care increased broadly in line with population growth. In contrast, the report also found that over the same period there was a 77% increase in child protection assessments, and a 26% increase in the number of cases where local authorities considered actual harm or neglect to have been demonstrated. There was also an increase of 15% in the most expensive and serious cases, where children are taken into care.

Poverty and economic stress, alongside ongoing conflict between parents, violence in the community and limited employment opportunities, have the potential to threaten a child’s development, limit their future social and economic opportunities, and increase the likelihood of mental and physical health problems, criminal involvement, substance misuse, or exploitation or abuse in later life ([Early Intervention Foundation 2018](#)). These risk factors are not deterministic or predictive at an individual level, but can help identify children who are vulnerable, and who may benefit from early intervention, which broadly refers to the early identification of issues before they escalate, and the provision of support focused on preventing or reducing the impact of these problems.

The value of early intervention for safeguarding children is widely recognised and supported by evidence ([Her Majesty’s Government 2018](#)), and is reflected in Scotland’s Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) policy framework, which sets out to improve children’s wellbeing via early intervention, universal service provision, and multiagency coordination across organisational boundaries ([Coles et al. 2016](#)). Identifying children experiencing neglect early and offering support soon after a problem arises is

thought to prevent needs from escalating, which may reduce or eliminate longer-term problems, such as those leading to children being placed into care ([National Foundation for Educational Research 2014](#)). Early intervention may also support social workers to maintain links with, and understand the needs of, their community ([Clements et al. 2017](#)).

Despite the recognised benefits, analysis conducted by Action for Children ([2016](#)) found that central government allocation for early intervention funding is falling year on year. The report also found that while local authorities are required by law to provide support to children in need and in care, there are fewer legal requirements dictating the forms of support that must be provided earlier. With reduced budgets and increased pressure, councils are allocating more funds to late interventions, even though reducing the spend on early intervention has a knock-on effect; as these services become less able to support children, demand for late intervention increases.

Evidence from England shows that resources are increasingly focused on children who have already suffered harm and those at greatest risk, which is thought to be leading to unmet need elsewhere in the system, and a rise in costly late intervention ([Clements et al. 2017](#)). The same inquiry reported that the age of looked after children is steadily increasing, and it is thought that the shift towards late intervention may be a contributing factor. The new emphasis on child protection services also risks changing families' perceptions of social care, making some families, particularly those most at risk, harder to reach.

The lack of public funding for early intervention can also lead to other problems, such as creating organisational climates where limited resources, high caseloads, and staff turnover inhibit the delivery of services ([Clements et al. 2017](#); [Lee et al. 2015](#)). Sharing information between agencies also becomes more difficult in these strained environments ([Lee et al. 2015](#); [National Foundation for Educational Research 2014](#)). Some evidence also suggests there is confusion amongst social workers around what age groups

benefit from early intervention ([Lee et al. 2015](#)), but as emphasised by the Early Intervention Foundation ([2018](#)), interventions can improve children's life chances at any point during childhood and adolescence. However, no single practitioner can have a full picture of a child's needs and circumstances and, if children and families are to receive the right help at the right time, everyone who comes into contact with them has a role to play in identifying concerns, sharing information and taking prompt action ([Her Majesty's Government 2018](#)).

The role of schools

Schools, colleges and other educational providers have a pivotal role to play in safeguarding children and promoting their welfare ([Her Majesty's Government 2018](#)). A recent inquiry into children's social care in England emphasised that children's services cannot be solely responsible for transforming vulnerable children's life chances: schools, health services, police and other agencies must all "play a key role" ([Clements et al. 2017](#)). However, there is limited evidence around how schools can support children and young people before problems escalate. Based on what we found, there are three main ways that schools can help children who are at risk: identify needs and refer individuals to social services; participate in assessments alongside other practitioners; and provide personal, social and health education that can reduce risk factors.

Identify needs

A briefing from the National Foundation for Educational Research ([2014](#)) reported the difficulties school staff face in identifying and supporting children experiencing neglect, particularly "low-level" neglect. Interviews with over 105 multi-agency practitioners found that identifying pupils experiencing neglect is not an exact science, and requires using professional judgement and a nuanced approach with families. The report also found that school staff are often in a good position to gain families' trust, coordinate support or signpost them to other sources of help, and suggests that schools

also have a role in alleviating commonly held misconceptions about the role of children's social care.

Multi-agency working is identified as a key support for school staff in order for them to make timely referrals, however a lack of guidelines around how to appropriately share information can be a major barrier ([Lee et al. 2015](#)). In Scotland, there are inherent tensions around intrusion, data gathering, professional roles, and balancing well-being against child protection that threaten the effectiveness of the GIRFEC policy ([Coles et al. 2016](#)).

An evaluation of the Dundee Early Intervention Team ([Ecorys 2017](#)) found that close working with schools and health visitors had been important in ensuring appropriate referrals were made to the service, and included activities such as regular attendance at school meetings. Some of the benefits of this included improving the team's visibility and networks, as well as enabling staff to ensure partners were clear on the referral criteria. Feedback from a group of headteachers illustrated that, where they had made referrals to the Dundee Early Intervention Team, the benefits were experienced by the child, the school and the wider family.

Engaging with disadvantaged and vulnerable parents can be a challenging undertaking for school staff, and evidence from Pote et al. ([2019](#)) highlights a number of different logistical and emotional barriers. These include awareness barriers (such as lack of knowledge about support services, or lack of recognition of the need for support), accessibility barriers (such as the time, cost and location of interventions), and acceptability barriers (including feelings of personal failure associated with seeking help). Again, successful partnerships and support can help school staff to develop the key skills to engage families; these include openness, honesty, trust and being non-judgemental ([National Foundation for Educational Research 2014](#)).

Support assessment

Recent safeguarding guidance states that every assessment "should draw together relevant information gathered from the child and their family and

from relevant practitioners including teachers and school staff, early years workers, health practitioners, the police and adult social care” ([Her Majesty’s Government 2018](#)). The National Foundation for Educational Research (2014) highlight the benefits of a holistic approach to family assessments and child wellbeing. This was a key goal of the Dundee Early Intervention Team project, and involved family workers undertaking initial visits to families in partnership with staff from referring agencies where possible, which helped facilitate smooth transitions between services ([Ecorys 2017](#)).

While the views of teachers and other school staff might help to provide a clearer picture of student needs, some literature suggests that school is not an appropriate location to conduct assessment. Research conducted by Lucas (2017) found that students’ participation in the common assessment framework (CAF) in England was limited by the physical and relational space of the school environment. These findings suggests that in order for children and young people to fully participate in early intervention assessment, they require more consistent and open-ended approaches that “engage them more fruitfully and personally in solutions to their troubles”.

Provide education

According to Clements et al. (2017) schools can play a supportive role in early intervention through the provision of consistent, high quality Personal, Social, Health and Economic education (PSHE). The Early Intervention Foundation (2018) also highlight the value of school-based programmes to improve children’s social and emotional skills, while the Dundee Early Intervention Team acknowledge the benefits of good health and hygiene practices learned at school ([Ecorys 2017](#)).

Evidence

The current landscape

This section includes a selection of evidence around the provision of early intervention in children's and young people's services, with a particular focus on child protection. It paints a complex picture, with a range of different, sometimes competing, priorities. Key themes from the evidence below include:

- Funding pressures leading to an increase in demand and a shift in services ([Action for Children 2017](#); [Clements et al. 2017](#); [House of Commons 2019](#))
- The role of wider socio-economic factors and the effectiveness of early intervention ([Axford and Berry 2017](#); [Bywaters et al. 2018](#); [McGhee et al. 2018](#))
- Fragmentation of policy responsibility, particularly around safeguarding and child protection ([Coles et al. 2016](#); [Early Intervention Foundation 2018](#))
- Challenges in taking a child-centred approach ([Clements et al. 2017](#), [Her Majesty's Government 2018](#))
- Barriers and benefits of inter-agency collaboration ([Lee et al. 2015](#); [National Foundation for Educational Research 2014](#))

Action for Children, National Children's Bureau, Children's Society (2017) [Turning the tide: reversing the move to late intervention spending in children and young people's services](#) (pdf)

This report looks at current funding and spend by local authorities across children and young people's services and where this is being allocated. It identifies a reduction in services that help families early as local authorities are increasingly forced to focus on dealing with problems once they have escalated. The analysis compares figures for 2010/11 to 2015/16 and finds a real terms decrease in central government funding and in local government

spending on children and young people's services. Alongside this decrease in spending, it identifies an increase in demand for services, including an increase in referrals to children's social care and an increase in the numbers of children in care. The combination of increased demand for services and decrease in funding has resulted in reduced spending on early intervention services. Evidence suggests that this is likely to increase demand for more costly 'late' interventions. The report calls for the Government to address the funding gap to maintain current levels of spending in the future and to work with local authorities to ensure additional funds are used to improve early intervention.

Axford N & Berry V (2017) [Perfect bedfellows: why early intervention can play a critical role in protecting children](#) - a response to Featherstone et al. (2014) 'A marriage made in hell: child protection meets early intervention', *British Journal of Social Work*, 48(1), pp.254-273 (paywalled)

In their article 'A marriage made in hell: Child protection meets early intervention', Featherstone et al. (2014) question the value of early intervention in preventing or addressing early signs of child maltreatment. In this article, the authors summarise and critique their main contentions. Among the issues covered are the difference between intervention and support, the tension between fidelity and flexibility, the relative value of randomised controlled trials, the evidence of 'what works', the use of neuroscience, the place of innovation and the role of wider socio-economic factors. The authors are sympathetic to many of the points raised by Featherstone et al. but argue that they misrepresent early intervention, provide insufficient empirical support for their case and ignore evidence that runs counter to their views. The authors outline an alternative vision for child protection that addresses many of the concerns expressed while incorporating high-quality evidence on early intervention.

Bywaters P et al. (2018) [Child welfare inequalities in the four nations of the UK](#), *Journal of Social Work*, p.1468017318793479 (paywalled and [author copy](#))

This study reports on a large quantitative, descriptive study focusing on children in contact with children's services on a single date in 2015. It found that children's chances of receiving a child protection intervention were related to family socio-economic circumstances, measured by neighbourhood deprivation, within all four countries. There was a strong social gradient which was significantly steeper in some countries than others. Ethnicity was another important factor underlying inequalities. While inequalities in patterns of intervention between the four countries were considerable, they did not mirror relative levels of deprivation in the child population. Inequalities in intervention rates result from a combination of demand and supply factors. The level and extent of inequity raise profound ethical, economic and practical challenges to those involved in child protection, the wider society and the state.

Clements K et al. (2017) [No good options: report of the Inquiry into children's social care in England](#), All Party Parliamentary Group for Children (pdf)

Report of the All Party Parliamentary Group for Children (APPGC) Inquiry into children's social care, which brings together evidence on current resourcing of children's social services, changes in the nature and level of demand and the impact of these changes on the delivery of services. The Inquiry gathered evidence from organisations in the statutory and voluntary sectors; heard directly from children and young people about their experiences; surveyed directors of children's services in England; and collected examples of good practice. The Inquiry found evidence that children's social care is struggling to keep pace with increasing and diversifying demand. Resource is focused on child protection, whilst preventative, early help and even statutory services for 'children in need' are facing cuts. Children's outcomes also vary widely depending on where they live, leading to a 'postcode lottery'. The

Inquiry identifies key areas that need to be addressed if children's services are to reach all children and young people in need of support. These are: greater consistency in access to services, improving stability and supporting stable relationships; involving and listening to children about their care; developing an approach to accountability and service improvement in order to improving the quality of services. The report highlights the need for central Government to address the funding crisis in children's social care and take steps to understand the cause of the variation in access to services and its impact on outcomes for vulnerable children.

Coles E et al. (2016) [Getting It Right for Every Child: a national policy framework to promote children's wellbeing in Scotland, United Kingdom](#), *The Milbank Quarterly*, 94(2), pp.334-365 (paywalled or [author copy](#))

This article explores the origins and emergence of GIRFEC and presents a critical analysis of its incremental design, development, and implementation. There is considerable scope for interpretation within the GIRFEC legislation and guidance, most notably around assessment of well-being and the role and remit of those charged with implementation. Tensions have arisen around issues such as professional roles; intrusion, data sharing, and confidentiality; and the balance between supporting well-being and protecting children. Despite the policy's intentions for integration, the service landscape for children and families still remains relatively fragmented.

Early Intervention Foundation (2018) [Realising the potential of early intervention](#) (pdf)

The report looks at where early intervention can have the greatest impact and how it can support child development and improve outcomes for children and young people. This includes how early intervention approaches can support the four key domains of children's development: physical, cognitive, behavioural, and social and emotional. And how early intervention can tackle three major threats to children's development: substance misuse, risky sexual behaviour; and child maltreatment. The report highlights barriers

within the current system that inhibit the potential of early intervention: funding, short-termism, fragmentation of policy responsibility across government departments, not delivering interventions that work, and gaps in the evidence base on what works in early intervention. It concludes by setting out six key actions – four at the national level, two at the local level – that are required to realise the potential of early intervention.

Her Majesty's Government (2018) [Working together to safeguard children: a guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children \(pdf\)](#)

Updated statutory guidance on inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The guidance applies to all organisations and agencies who work with children and focuses on the core legal requirements, making it clear what individuals, organisations and agencies must and should do to keep children safe. It emphasises that a child-centred approach is fundamental to safeguarding. The guidance sets out a framework for the three safeguarding partners - the local authority, the clinical commissioning group, and the police - who will be required to work together to make joint safeguarding decisions to meet the needs of local children and families. It also provides the framework for the two child death review partners - the local authority and clinical commissioning group for an area - to make arrangements to review all deaths of children normally resident in the local area, and if appropriate, for those not normally resident in the area. The guidance replaces Working Together to Safeguard Children (2015). Links to relevant supplementary guidance that practitioners should also consider are included as appendices.

House of Commons (2019) [Transforming children's services: eighty-eighth report of session 2017-19, Parliament, House of Commons, Committee of Public Accounts \(pdf\)](#)

A report from the Public Accounts Committee on the funding pressures facing children's social care services in England. The report looks at the variation between local authorities in activity and cost of children's social care; the

resource needs of children's services; residential care capacity and evidence on the effectiveness of early interventions. It found that the Department for Education (DfE) cannot explain the variation between local authorities in the activity and cost of children's social care; there is increasing use of residential care, placing local authorities under extreme financial pressure; and there is a need for more evidence on the effectiveness of early interventions. The recommendations include: for the DfE to set out by September 2019 how the What Works Centre will identify cost-effective early; for the DfE to set out the quality of children's social care it is seeking to achieve by 2022; and for the DfE to lead on a cross-government strategy for raising quality in children's social care.

Lee SY et al. (2015) [Accessing quality early care and education for children in child welfare: stakeholders' perspectives on barriers and opportunities for interagency collaboration](#), *Children and Youth Services Review*, 55, pp.170-181 (paywalled)

Emerging evidence suggests that high quality early care and education (ECE) programs can improve children's developmental outcomes, particularly for at-risk children. Yet, ECE remains under-utilized by children in the child welfare system. This study illuminates some of the reasons for this by presenting findings from a series of ten focus groups with child welfare workers, ECE providers, and parents/caregivers of young children involved with the child welfare system (N= 78). Fourteen themes emerged regarding organizational and system-level barriers to enrolling children involved with the child welfare system in ECE. These include generic barriers to inter-agency collaboration in human services, such as challenging work climates characterized by limited resources, high workloads and staff turnover, and lack of guidelines for collaborative infrastructure. Findings more specific to inter-agency collaboration between child welfare and ECE include the disruptive effect of foster placement changes and case closures on ECE stability, policies restricting ECE eligibility and availability for birth and/or foster parents, and child welfare workers' limited understanding of

the value of high quality, learning based ECE programs versus custodial child care, particularly for infants and toddlers.

McGhee J et al. (2018) [Looking after children in the UK - convergence or divergence?](#) *British Journal of Social Work*, 48(5), 2018, pp.1176-1198 (paywalled)

Comparative child welfare administrative data from each of the four jurisdictions of the UK (Scotland, England, Northern Ireland (NI) and Wales) were analysed over a ten-year period to examine rates and patterns of public care. Scotland followed by Wales has the highest rates of children in out-of-home care, followed by England and NI with similar lower proportions. Despite strong links between deprivation and higher chances of becoming looked after, this national variation appears more a reflection of differing legal and operational practice than higher levels of need for public care. Notwithstanding differing devolution settlements, a convergence in the direction of policy across the UK towards early intervention, extensive use of kinship care and adoption as an exit route from public care is apparent. This convergence is most apparent in the increased entry of very young children to public care in Scotland, NI and Wales. The lack of any systematic collection of data by governments on the social and economic conditions of children reflects a missed opportunity to examine separately their influence on rates of children in public care.

National Foundation for Educational Research (2014) [Teachers want to teach and not be social workers': key messages about neglect and early intervention for schools](#) (pdf)

This summary presents key messages for those working in and with schools on how best to support families and engage with families whose children are experiencing neglect. The summary is based on research which carried out interviews with over 105 practitioners (including headteachers, teachers, support staff, SENCOs and Education Welfare Officers from both primary and secondary phases), and 40 children and families across nine English local

authorities. It highlights some of the enablers and barriers to helping a pupil who is experiencing neglect.

What works?

Recent reports show that early intervention programmes traditionally commissioned by local authorities may not have much of a chance of stopping the trajectory of children from families with entrenched difficulties, often across generations, into the high-risk part of the system ([House of Commons 2019](#)). The Early Intervention Foundation ([2018](#)) highlights the often significant gap between what the evidence tells us is effective and what is actually being commissioned and delivered for children and families. According to their report, the strongest evidence is from the evaluations of individual early intervention programmes: formalised and highly repeatable packages of activity designed to tackle specific issues among specific groups. However, these interventions are difficult to deliver within the current climate of constrained public spending. The following section provides a brief selection of examples of early intervention programmes in Scotland, as well as literature on engaging the voices of vulnerable children and their parents.

Ecorys (2017) [Dundee Early Intervention Team: independent evaluation report](#) (pdf)

This evaluation report captures learning about the partnership model underpinning the Dundee Early Intervention Team, and provides evidence the impact of its support on families. The partnership, led by Aberlour Child Care Trust and including Barnardo's Scotland, Children 1st and Action for Children Scotland, was funding to deliver an early intervention and preventative support service to families who did not meet the threshold for social care or support from Dundee's Integrated Children's Services. Practising a social pedagogy model, the team work alongside families to build their capacity to tackle challenges and make sustainable change, placing relationships at the centre of the work. The evaluation provides a profile of the families supported and practitioners' accounts of the main issues for families, including risks and strengths; the main lessons learned

from project delivery, including main achievements, the type of outcomes reported the extent to which these outcomes have been sustainable. The evaluation identifies four key approaches to the DEIT support provision which contributed to its effectiveness: social pedagogy, where families are viewed as experts; flexible support for families which can be accessed seven days a week, 7am to 10pm; easy to access support with one point of access; and building community resilience. It also highlights that the partnership developed was a key factor in its success, enabling staff to support families to engage and access a range of services, both within the delivery partnership and with external agencies.

Healy M & Rodriguez L (2019) [Listen to them! The challenge of capturing the true voice of young people within early intervention and prevention models; a youth work perspective](#), *Children and Youth Services Review*, 96, pp.27-33 (open access)

This paper aims to explore the challenges to youth work in capturing the voices of young people in a meaningful way within Meitheal and the Child and Family Support Networks model (Meitheal). This is a prevention and early intervention model for statutory and non-statutory agencies working with children, young people and families. This paper, within the context of Meitheal, will explore how best to achieve positive outcomes for young people, and identify what are the barriers which inhibit their full participation in this model. A total of 16 youth workers completed semi-structured interviews that were transcribed and analysed using inductive thematic analysis. The analysis identified three themes: 'Role of youth work in Meitheal', 'Barriers and facilitators of adolescent voices in Meitheal' and 'The young person'. The study found that youth workers recognise advocacy and support of young people as a key role for their profession within models of prevention and early intervention. Barriers to adolescents' active engagement in Meitheal were the formal structure and agenda, but also the need to achieve outcomes in exchange of professional validation. Youth workers are also concerned about the nature of young people's participation

as being fully participatory and voluntary in the process, whilst questioning if their voices are truly being included in a meaningful way.

Lucas S (2017) [A children's space? Participation in multi-agency early intervention](#), *Child & Family Social Work*, 22(4), pp.1383-1390 (paywalled)

The common assessment framework provides a model of early intervention, which is familiar in local authorities throughout England, and asserts a participatory framework of child and family engagement. This article draws on data from a research project undertaken in 1 local authority in the Midlands of England, to explore the experiences of children, young people, and their families, who were engaged in the process of multi-agency early intervention. The article considers the young people's involvement, including their accounts of attending common assessment framework meetings, and their engagement by practitioners. The research found that young people's participation was limited. The findings suggest that this is, in part, a response to disciplinary discourses around schooling and attendance. In addition, the narratives of parents and young people showed that under-resourcing of work with young people meant that the time taken to build relationships and engage them in a process of self-assessment, planning, and decision making was constrained and rationed. The article concludes that to achieve a participatory children's space, an active and more engaged model of childhood needs to be facilitated by practitioners and parents outside the school-dominated space found in this study.

Pote I et al. (2019) [Engaging disadvantaged and vulnerable parents: an evidence review](#), Early Intervention Foundation (pdf)

Disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, such as low-income families, ethnic minorities, families with young or LGBTQ+ parents, and people with mental health problems, tend to be less likely to engage in interventions. This report sets out the findings from a rapid evidence review to understand what is known from the literature about encouraging disadvantaged and vulnerable parents to take up, fully participate in and complete parenting and parental conflict programmes and services. The method for the review involved

contacting subject-matter experts, handsearching the reference lists of key studies, and targeted searches of Google Scholar and grey literature websites. Key findings identified a number of barriers to engaging with parents and couples with interventions, which include: lack of awareness, difficulties in accessing interventions such as time and cost; and feelings of personal failure associated with seeking help. The review also identified the importance of using multiple communication channels to recruit parents. Strategies for retaining parents in programmes and services include: designing intervention delivery around the needs of the target population and ensuring that practitioners have the relevant skills, experiences and characteristics. It makes recommendations relevant for people involved in designing interventions, engaging participants, conducting evaluations and those within the wider early intervention system.

Treanor M (2016) [A 'pockets' approach to addressing financial vulnerability](#), Centre for Research on Families and Relationships (pdf)

This briefing paper outlines recent evidence on financial vulnerability among families in Scotland, and draws on the Healthier, Wealthier Children case study as an example of action that could help families both at risk of, and experiencing, poverty. New research using Growing Up in Scotland (GUS) data involving more than 5,000 children shows the negative associations between financial vulnerability, maternal emotional distress and children's wellbeing. Successful approaches, such as the Healthier, Wealthier Children (HWC) project within NHS Greater and Glasgow and Clyde, have been shown to 'put money into families' pockets'. HWC is an initiative that developed new approaches to providing money and welfare advice to pregnant women and families with young children experiencing, or at risk of, child poverty across NHS GGC. A performance evaluation of the intervention has shown that the project has conservatively achieved a benefit to cost ratio of around 5:1; a major achievement which exceeded the initial remit and best case scenario expectations. Families also received additional gains; for example, help and support with childcare, housing, charitable applications, advocacy, accessing cheaper utility options as well as help with immigration and social work

issues. The briefing suggests that adding a financial inclusion role within universal services could be a potent mechanism to ensure that children's developmental milestones and learning outcomes are achieved.

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