

INTERVENTION PROTOCOL

Changemakers

For whom	Children's Services leadership in four local areas within the Family Hub Transformation Fund 1 cohort.
Why	<p>Some of the most effective interventions for children and families are rejected in favour of models that lack evidence or are implemented in a way that compromises their effectiveness. This happens because local areas often do not have the technical assistance capacity to effectively implement evidence-based interventions (EBIs) in a way that takes account of common implementation barriers.</p> <p>The aim of the Changemakers programme is to build our understanding of the role that local evidence leaders (LELs) can play in local authority children's services and public health as agents of change in local systems. This role is seen as an important mechanism for addressing common barriers to evidence-based decision-making and supporting the effective implementation of EBIs. LELs are expected to be evidence-minded rather than implementation specialists, and to have oversight of how the system facilitates and sustains effective delivery of EBIs and promotes evidence use within the local area, building upon existing structures and strategies.</p>
What (programme)	Changemakers supports the implementation of EBIs as part of the Family Hubs transformation programme and reinforces evidence-use more broadly in the local context for children's services. As part of this, Changemakers provides funding to four local areas for recruiting LELs who will lead the planning, implementation and local evaluation of an EBI that has demonstrated impact for children and families.
What (comparator)	N/A
By whom	LELs for selected local areas, funded by Foundations in partnership with the Department for Education and Youth Endowment Fund.
Where (sites)	Within four local areas: Merton, Stockport, Wirral, and York



When	March 2024 – August 2026
Evaluation Partner	Cordis Bright



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Introduction

What does Business as Usual look like?

Family Hubs are a place-based way of locally joining up the planning and delivery of family services across the 0 to 19 age groups (and up to 25 years for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)). A central tenet of Family Hubs is that services are brought together within local authorities (LAs) and partnerships are strengthened to include health and the voluntary and community sector with the aim of improving access, connections, and relationships at all levels of the partnership for the benefit of families. The previous Conservative government committed to championing Family Hubs in their 2019 manifesto.

The Family Hubs Local Transformation Fund¹ (TF1), established in 2021, was a key part of this commitment, funded through HM Treasury's Shared Outcomes Fund. The fund sought to test innovative ways of working across the public sector to address complex policy challenges and to enable greater learning about the process of local transformation, to build the evidence base, and to create resources for those local areas moving to a Family Hub model in the future.

Thirteen selected LAs were part of the TF1 cohort of Family Hubs participating in the Evaluation Innovation Fund² which was launched to better understand the development of best practice around the integration of services for families, and to improve standards of evidence for planning and delivering help and intervention for families. The Family Hubs Transformation Fund supported these LAs with the costs of moving to a Family Hub model but did not include additional funding for services or support to implement evidence-based interventions (EBIs).

The previous Conservative government subsequently invested a further £82 million at the 2021 Autumn Budget to support transformation or development of a Family Hub model, and the current government is seeking to increase the number of Family Hubs and widen the range of services delivered through the Family Hub. The funding is also being used to improve integration across services and promote relational practice across the Family Hub workforce. This investment was part of the £300 million investment into a Family Hubs and Start for Life programme.³ The programme is jointly funded by the Department for Education (DfE) and the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC). This funding is also referred to a 'Transformation Fund Two' (TF2) and was distributed across nearly half the LAs in England. The majority of the funding allocation is to support development of Start for Life services. The Family Hubs transformation fund (TF1) is different and separate to the Family Hubs (TF2) and start for life programme.⁴

¹ See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/family-hubs-transformation-fund-successful-local-authorities/family-hubs-transformation-fund-successful-local-authorities>

² See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evaluation-of-family-hubs>

³ See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/family-hubs-and-start-for-life-programme-local-authority-guide>

⁴ See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/family-hubs-and-start-for-life-programme-local-authority-guide>



The current Labour government have committed to strengthen and join up family services as part of their Opportunity Mission.⁵ This includes continuing to invest in and build up Family Hubs and Start for Life programmes. In January 2025, £126 million was announced⁶ to continue delivery of a network of Family Hubs and start for life services as part of the Family Hubs and Start for Life programme and additional guidance⁷ was provided to the 75 upper-tier LAs participating in the programme to set the delivery expectations for 2025/26.

Why is the programme or intervention needed?

There are a range of EBIs that have been proven to be effective through rigorous impact evaluation. These provide the most reliable way to improve child and family outcomes and strengthen the consistency and quality of family support services. One of the key findings from LAs and their strategic partners found during the DfE's Innovation Fund evaluation⁸ was that many LAs made use of evidence-informed tools and used EBIs. LAs implemented EBIs that were recommended in the Early Intervention Foundation guidebook and Public Health England guidance. The evaluation also found that there was some caution about the push to introduce specific EBIs as a condition of nationally funded programmes. Some LAs were concerned about the burden on staff of introducing new frameworks from the top down, and the potential impact on workload.

While local areas have typically embraced initiatives to increase the use of evidence and implementation of EBIs with strong enthusiasm, many simultaneously struggled to implement EBIs after intervention-specific training has taken place for local leaders. The Innovation Fund evaluation found that local authorities raised concerns around replacing established interventions that were working well in the locality for an EBI – this particularly being the case where EBIs had been trialled before within the locality and were not a good fit. Mis-implementation of, or barriers to implementation of EBIs continues to undermine the efforts of local policymakers, system leaders, and practitioners to make the most effective use of resources to deliver positive outcomes for children and families. Additionally, the gap between evidence and practice may overlook the realities of the local context with its network of organisations, practitioners, and communities. Support for implementation bridges the gap between evidence and practice, and there is a clear need to increase support for local areas to implement EBIs consistently and effectively.

The Changemakers programme seeks to address this challenge by testing how to overcome implementation barriers through the use of local evidence leadership to effectively embed EBIs in local areas and championing evidence use and promoting evidence use behaviours across the local

⁵ See: <https://www.gov.uk/missions/opportunity>

⁶ See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/families-to-receive-126-million-in-early-years-support>

⁷ See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/family-hubs-and-start-for-life-programme-local-authority-guide>

⁸ See: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6567764dcc1ec5000d8eef10/Family_Hubs_Innovation_Fund_Evaluation_Ecorys_Final_Report.pdf



system. The programme will include funding for local areas to recruit a local evidence leader (LEL) and funding for one or more of the following three EBIs:

- **Empowering Parents Empowering Communities – EPEC** (ages 2 to 11 years) is an intervention for disadvantaged families experiencing behavioural difficulties and aims to improve child development, parenting, family resilience, and coping. EPEC is a community-based programme which trains local parents to run parenting groups.
- **Family Foundations** is a perinatal group-based programme for couples expecting their first child. Couples learn strategies for enhancing communication, resolving conflict, and sharing of childcare duties. Training is delivered by the Fatherhood Institute.
- **Triple P: Resilience** (ages 6 to 12 years) is a family intervention for children bullied by peers. Although part of the Triple P suite of interventions, Triple P Resilience will be new in the UK as part of Changemakers. It combines social and emotional skills training for children, with ‘facilitative parenting’ training for parents.

An open call was made to LAs delivering a Family Hubs approach to participate in a scoping workshop. Twelve LAs participated in two workshops led by Local Development Advisers at Foundations to identify barriers and enablers to evidence-use within their contexts, as well as broader reflections on the role of LELs. Through this, the following enablers were identified: creating space for family voices and experiences, good leadership and communication, a shared understanding of robust research, guidelines and systematic approaches, as well as additional capacity. Barriers included: lacking capacity, pace of transformation without good governance and quality assurance, high level of service need and demand, and a lack of funding. Overall, local areas highlighted an appetite for collective approaches to use evidence more effectively.

How scalable is the programme?

The 13 LAs participating in the DfE’s Family Hubs Transformation Fund were invited to apply to become Changemaker sites. Seven of these LAs submitted expressions of interest, indicating a commitment to improving evidence-use and to the Changemakers programme more broadly. LAs were scored based on: their commitment to the programme; plans for developing the LEL role; commitment to local partnership working; commitment and drive to evidence use, sustainability, rationale, overall fit with the Family Hub offer; Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity (EDIE) considerations; and risk.

Additionally, it is recommended that local areas eligible for the programme exhibit the following characteristics as a baseline: readiness for change; prior experience of implementing EBIs; local evidence leadership (such as early adopters who may act as champions of evidence use); established population needs and local services; workforce plans; and risks and mitigations.

On scalability, a key objective is to demonstrate that there is a need for implementation support in local areas, going beyond solely providing funding for EBIs. This programme aims to make the case for government initiatives to increase capacity in the form of LELs in future transformation programmes in local areas. This work will extend beyond Family Hubs and represent a shift in mindset as well as a shift in resource allocation.



The intervention

What does the programme or intervention aim to achieve?

The primary aim of the Changemakers programme is to facilitate the recruitment of a LEL, who will focus on aiding local areas in successfully adopting, installing, and embedding EBIs within the local system. This is operationalised by:

1. Helping local areas select an EBI that is well aligned with community need from a menu of pre-vetted models
2. Helping local areas fund and recruit a LEL to facilitate the planning and delivery of the selected EBIs.

Through the work of the LEL, the following changes in behaviours, decisions, and attitudes are anticipated:

- **Changes to evidence-use behaviours⁹ within the local context:** This involves stakeholders engaging in activities such as reviewing evidence, collecting and analysing data, and commissioning or conducting internal research, and finally linking this evidence to promote and enhance evidence-use behaviours in current practice.
- **Changes in decision-making processes, particularly in how EBIs are selected and implemented:** We would expect to see EBIs implemented in a more thoughtful and meaningful way, with increased consideration of the different stages and resources required. For example, senior management may progressively consult published repositories (for example, the Foundations Guidebook/Practice Guides) to identify the most promising interventions.
- **Changes in attitudes and perceptions:** We would expect stakeholders to have better understanding and enthusiasm for evidence-based practices, as well as actively advocating for their use within the local context.

The role of the LEL will be to:

- a. **Champion for evidence use in the local system**, drawing on research methods and implementation science, as well as local evidence on community needs, user experience, workforce capability, and practitioner knowledge
- b. **Communicate a compelling narrative** about community strengths and needs and how an evidence-based support system can help children and young people to thrive
- c. **Lead stakeholder engagement in evidence generation and use**, applying relational approaches to build partnerships which respond to local priorities

⁹ For a description of evidence-based behaviours, see the table on pp. 76–78 of the Early Intervention Foundation (2022) report on *Leading and delivering early childhood services*, available at: <https://www.eif.org.uk/report/leading-and-delivering-early-childhood-services-10-insights-from-20-places-across-england-and-wales>



- d. Strategically lead for high-quality intervention implementation**, creating the infrastructure, tools and processes required to deliver and monitor the implementation of EBIs and to understand impact
- e. Tailor implementation strategies to the local context** by (i) assessing implementation barriers and enablers within the local context, (ii) identifying methods that will address these, and (iii) building these methods into local implementation strategies
- f. Scaffold the set-up of EBIs** and overseeing quality assurance in the early stages of implementation.

It is important to note that the role of the LEL is expected to vary between LAs and will be adapted to the local needs of each LA. The activities of the LEL will complement any existing structures and work carried out within LAs to promote EBIs and to strengthen and embed evidence use more broadly.

Who is expected to benefit from this programme?

The beneficiaries of the Changemakers programme within the selected four local areas will be those who interact with the LEL – this will include individuals across the local partnership as well as those who are delivering the EBI.

Although forms of engagement may vary, we would expect the work of the LELs to benefit a range of key stakeholders. Firstly, local children's services senior management teams (children's services leaders/decision-makers/heads of services) will gain insights and support in evidence-based decision-making. Additionally, local partnerships collaborating with LELs will enhance their capacity for evidence use, fostering readiness for change.

Indirect beneficiaries of LELs' work include other transformation programmes such as the Youth Endowment Fund (YEF), which can leverage insights and strategies generated from the Changemakers programme. Furthermore, parent and carer panels, as well as participants in Family Hubs Transformation programmes, will benefit from enhanced access to robust research, connections, and relationships, with a focus on prioritising family voices.

What is the programme or intervention?

Participants (individuals across children's services, local partnerships, and delivery partners) would be expected to demonstrate a change in evidence-use behaviours and attitudes, combined with a broader understanding of what evidence is within their local context.

As part of the programme, local area stakeholders may be expected to attend learning events on evidence-use, integrate LELs in their services, participate and implement their selected EBI, and participate and facilitate data collection on progress and feedback. Each local area will be developing their own separate local delivery plan, which will set out clear actions and outputs for the Changemakers programme.

The Changemakers programme is intended to be an exploratory programme to learn more about the characteristics and features of effective evidence leadership and the ways in which the LEL role can scaffold technical assistance support for effective implementation of the EBIs. We do not



anticipate that the approach will look identical across the four local areas as it will be shaped by local priorities and local needs.

How will the programme be delivered?

The programme will be delivered by the LEL, whose role is to work with local leaders and commissioners to *enable* the embedding of an EBI in their local service and act as a catalyst for increased evidence use within the local system. To fulfil this role, LELs will be recruited on the basis that they be evidence minded as well as have in-depth knowledge of their local context.

The LEL will lead all aspects of the programme at the local level, providing or facilitating technical assistance (TA) to the partnership in the form of planned and purposeful capacity-building activities aimed at supporting local change. The role of LELs and the activities they carry out will be tailored to the current context and needs of each local area. We envisage that the LEL will lead on the development of tailored implementation strategies so that local barriers are addressed through appropriate methods for bringing about change. This could involve knowledge transfer activities aimed at increasing area leaders' 'technical' knowledge about the advantages of EBIs and the ways in which they can support local need and providing access to essential resources and supports (based on a training needs analysis). It may also include building relationships between key stakeholders to develop the necessary infrastructure required for the successful delivery of EBIs. Support to EBI practitioners will be provided by LELs during the set-up phase and is expected to include quality assurance in the initial stages of implementation. Additionally, the LEL will identify the most suitable EBIs for the needs of the local population and clarify the systems and pathways required to effectively deliver them across multiple partnerships within the Family Hub offer. (To note: the above LEL activities may change and vary between local areas in line with their Delivery Plans.)

Specific activities that the LEL **might** be expected to undertake include:

EBI local delivery

- Systematically identify, adopt, implement, and sustain EBIs and ensure that they align with the needs of the local population and with the overall Family Hub offer
- Facilitate collaborations between delivery partners and intervention developers for effective partnership working
- Develop a local EBI implementation plan, focusing on managing change through the implementation process.

Partnerships and people

- Strengthen existing and new stakeholder networks within local areas
- Take action to engage and inform local opinion leaders on implementation strategies
- Collaborate with local stakeholders on understanding workforce needs and facilitating data collection processes.

Ensure access and outcomes

- Promote equitable access to support for children, young people, and families



- Lead reporting, monitoring, and programme evaluation, and collaborate with external evaluators
- Demonstrate an active commitment to equality, diversity, inclusion, and equity.

One Local Development Adviser (LDA) at Foundations will be assigned to each LA to establish an ongoing relationship to provide direction and consistency to the programme. Acting as a critical friend, they will assist in navigating processes around the programme and may facilitate further training and support as required. Initially, meetings between LDAs and LAs will occur fortnightly to craft delivery plans and refine strategies, with potential for monthly meetings based on local needs in the future. Quarterly peer learning events to facilitate topic-based discussions may be planned to enhance LEL capacity.

What is the schedule for set-up and delivery of the programme?

Below are a list of key milestones outlining the activities and suggested timeframes. These will be refined by each LA as they develop their delivery plans with support from their Foundations LDA.

Activity	Date
Local Authorities informed of selection	Week commencing 4 March 2024
Project set-up phase <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grant Agreement signed• Agreement of project aims, outcomes, and outputs• Kick-off meeting• Agree on schedule for progress meetings with Foundations' LDAs.	March 2024
Changemakers Plan for Delivery <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participation in Foundations' launch meeting• Work with LDA to develop a comprehensive Delivery Plan, including:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Updated project costing- Detailed outline for the recruitment process of LEL• Participation in Launch event and LEL workshop• Work with Foundations to develop draft:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)- Data Sharing Agreement (DSA)- Data Privacy Notice (DPN).	May 2024



Activity	Date
<p>Identifying local population needs and assets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalised Delivery Plan in each LA • Initiation of contextual needs assessment • Initial engagement with intervention providers • Assess for readiness and identify barriers and facilitators. <p>Changemakers team set-up</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEL recruited and in place at LA • Implementation team identified • Initial engagement with intervention providers. <p>Progress update 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of activities against delivery plan • Summary of progress in evidence leadership • Summary of progress in EBI implementation • Risks and issues. 	<p>August 2024</p>
<p>Intervention set-up</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selected EBI adopted and contractual agreements in place • Planning and outreach regarding EBI • Recruitment of practitioners for training • Coordination of practitioner training and training commenced (*for Family Foundations/EPEC) • Coordination of practitioner feedback on training • LEL developed implementation blueprint – linking aims of Delivery Plan with delivery requirements of intervention • Work with Evaluation Partner to identify and agree measurement tools: outcome data to be collected, recorded and shared (how/where), including timeline for data collection and sharing. 	<p>November 2024</p>



Activity	Date
<p>Implementation activities under way</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building awareness of EBI across the local system • Identification of early adopters • Strengthening stakeholder networks • Taking action to inform local opinion leaders about implementation strategies • Convening implementation team regularly • Demonstrable communication with Children’s Services senior management teams to share progress. <p>Progress meeting with Foundations to assess progress and release of Year 2 funding (subject to satisfactory progress towards implementation of evidence-based intervention/s).</p> <p>Progress update 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of activities against delivery plan • Summary of progress in evidence leadership • Risks and issues. 	February 2025
<p>Programme and intervention delivery ongoing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EBI delivery ongoing • Local areas conducting small tests of change and tailoring strategies as required • Good use of monitoring and feedback systems and communication with stakeholder networks • Delivery/evaluation partnership meetings. 	May 2025
<p>Full implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular meetings with implementation team to gather and use data for ongoing development • Planning for resources needed to sustain implementation and evidence leadership. <p>Progress update 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of activities against delivery plan • Summary of progress in evidence leadership • Risks and issues. 	August 2025



Activity	Date
<p>Building on learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• EBI delivery ongoing• Embedded EBI culture• Working towards a critical mass of EBI provision• Fidelity support systems in place• Working with intervention providers to review fidelity issues and agreed acceptable range of fidelity scores and accommodations to address any deficiencies• Delivery/evaluation partnership meetings. <p>Progress update 4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of activities against delivery plan• Summary of progress in evidence leadership• Risks and issues. <p>Learning event</p>	March 2026

Where will the programme be delivered?

Four TF1 local areas (Merton, Stockport, Wirral, and York) have been selected as sites to initially assess the Changemakers programme.

What variations from the core model, if any, are planned?

Changemakers is a new programme, delivered for the first time in England. The LEL roles are based on core principles (see task descriptions above) but the implementation of these will be variable based on local need and the specific implementation strategies of each LEL. The evaluation will therefore focus on exploring contributing factors to effective evidence leadership across different local contexts and models.

What quality assurance systems are in place?

As there is no defined core model for the Changemakers programme, quality assurance is likely to be through governance arrangements at the local level. Delivery plans, delivery budgets, and key milestones and deliverables will be in place at the set-up phase and will be used to hold local areas to account and monitor progress. Monthly progress meetings will be scheduled between LAs and Foundations to provide feedback and assess progress over the duration of the programme. LAs will meet with intervention providers every six months in relation to the commissioning of the chosen EBI. Foundations will also meet with the intervention providers at six-monthly timepoints to review progress. Furthermore, Foundations will complete a risk register for Changemakers and update over the course of the programme, to identify potential risks, their probability, impact, and a mitigation plan in case the risk were to take effect.



Theory of change and evaluation questions

Theory of change

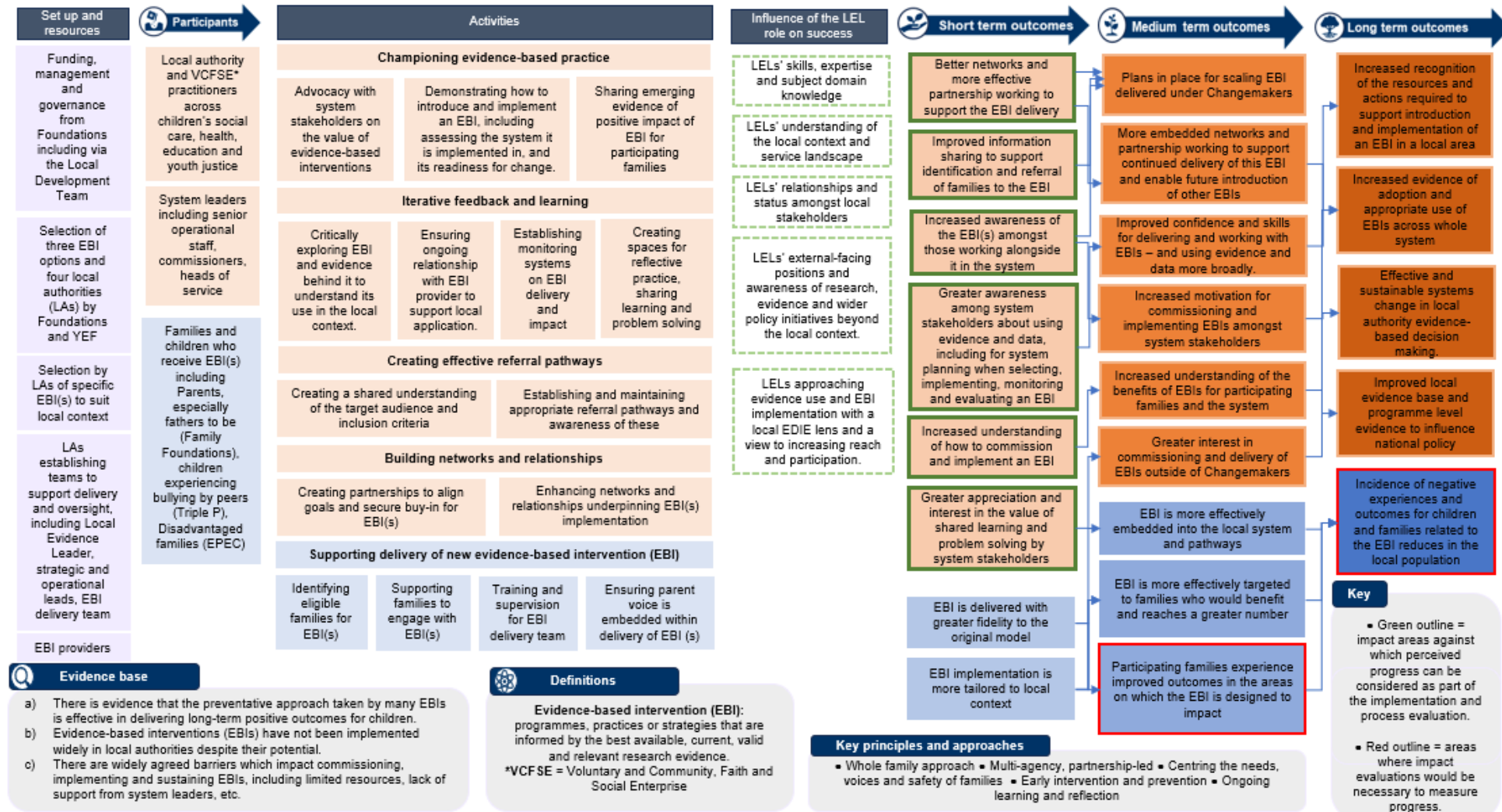
Throughout the set-up phase of the implementation and process evaluation, Cordis Bright have worked collaboratively with Foundations and Local Evidence Leaders (LELs) to codesign and refine the programme-level Changemakers theory of change. Each of the four sites have created their own local theory of change. This has been done through the following activities:

- Review of programme documentation
- Collaborative workshop with Foundations and LELs
- Feedback from programme stakeholders including Foundations and LELs.

Figure 1 sets out the Changemakers programme-level theory of change which has been developed through this process. We intend to continue revisiting the theory of change and our understanding of pathways throughout the study as our understanding of programme theory improves. Further narrative regarding the details of the theory of change are provided below.



Figure 1: Changemakers programme-level theory of change





Who are the participants and target population?

The Changemakers programme is designed to benefit a diverse range of individuals and groups who are central to improving outcomes for children and families within local systems. The target population includes:

Local authority and VCFSE practitioners:

- Professionals working across children's social care, health, education, and youth justice, who play a crucial role in referral and delivering interventions and creating sustainable systems change.

System leaders and policymakers:

- Senior operational staff, commissioners and heads of service within local authorities who are essential for driving strategic decision-making and ensuring organisational buy-in for EBIs.

Children and families:

- Disadvantaged families participating in Early Parent Education and Care (EPEC) programmes, aimed at strengthening parenting skills and creating nurturing home environments
- Children experiencing bullying who are supported through Triple P interventions, equipping them and their families with strategies to address peer victimisation
- Expectant parents, particularly fathers, engaged in Family Foundations programmes to foster healthy co-parenting relationships and improve family dynamics from the earliest stages.

Evaluation questions

We have structured our evaluation around four overarching research questions. These questions align with Proctor et al.'s (2011) Implementation Outcomes Framework, a comprehensive model designed to evaluate the effectiveness of implementation strategies across various contexts, particularly in complex settings such as healthcare. This framework identifies eight distinct implementation outcomes, which underpin our evaluation and, in particular, research question 2 around the extent to which Changemakers was implemented as intended.

Question 1. Programme theory validation: To what extent is Changemakers' theory of change rooted in evidence?

- a. To what extent is the Changemakers programme's theory of change validated by the evidence?
- b. Were there any critical outcomes or mechanisms missing or mis-specified in the theory of change, and what implications does this have for future programme implementation?



Question 2. Implementation feasibility: To what extent has Changemakers been implemented in line with the following dimensions of implementation?

Adoption

- a. What specific activities have LELs undertaken in local areas to support EBI implementation, such as training and stakeholder engagement?
- b. What specific decision-making processes in local areas led to the adoption of the LEL role, such as governance arrangements at the local level?

Fidelity and adaptation

- a. To what extent was the LEL role implemented with fidelity to the theory of change?
- b. How well did the implementation process adhere to the Changemakers delivery plan?
- c. Were any adaptations made to intended delivery plans, why were they made, and what impact did they have on EBI implementation?

Acceptability, appropriateness, and feasibility

- a. How do different stakeholder groups perceive the acceptability and appropriateness of the LEL role in their local context?
- b. What were the perceived barriers and facilitators to the recruitment of LELs and their integration into local areas?
- c. What were the perceived barriers and facilitators to LELs' engagement with local stakeholders for EBI introduction?
- d. Were these barriers overcome to embed the LEL role within existing local services? If so, how?
- e. How could the role of LELs and the implementation support they provide be improved?

Penetration and integration

- a. How effectively did the LEL role integrate into the local system?
- b. What types of stakeholders are LELs engaging with in LAs to implement the EBI and promote the use of evidence (such as local children's services senior management, including children's services leaders, decision-makers, heads of services)?
- c. How did the LEL's efforts to build relationships and engage stakeholders influence broader access to and use of EBIs?

Cost and sustainability

- a. What were the costs associated with implementation of the LEL role and how do these compare to the perceived benefits?
- b. To what extent is the LEL role or its principles likely to be sustained in local areas beyond the initial programme period?

Question 3. Programme differentiation: Does Changemakers work differently in certain conditions?

- a. Was the Changemakers programme appropriate for the needs of the four local areas?



- b. How did local context and external factors influence the implementation of the Changemakers programme?
- c. Were there any perceived differences between the implementation strategies employed by LELs for the different EBIs?
- d. What local factors (for example organisational culture, stakeholder readiness, perceived agency of the LEL) influenced the effectiveness of the LEL role and the short-term outcomes of the EBI implementation?
- e. How did the perceived outcomes of the LEL role vary by local area or stakeholder group, and what factors contributed to these differences?
- f. Were there differences in how LELs approached their roles across different sites, and how did these variations impact implementation outcomes?

Question 4. Perceived impacts: To what extent does Changemakers show evidence of promise?

Perceived impacts on EBI implementation

- a. How do stakeholders perceive the impact of the LEL role on enhancing the acceptability of EBIs in their local contexts?
- b. What are the perceived improvements in the feasibility of implementing EBIs due to the involvement of the LEL role?
- c. To what extent has the LEL role increased the adoption and appropriate use of EBIs among local stakeholders?
- d. Is there any evidence across the local areas that the LEL role has begun to contribute to broader penetration of EBIs, particularly among diverse and vulnerable populations? If so, what evidence is there for this?
- e. What is the perceived value-for-money of the LEL role in enhancing the cost-effectiveness of EBI implementation? Did the investment in the EBI go further because of the LEL role?
- f. How likely is it that the LEL role will be sustained in local areas after the programme ends?

Perceived impacts on local stakeholders and systems

- a. In what ways has the LEL role influenced stakeholder engagement and buy-in for broader EBI implementation?
- b. Is there any evidence of changes in engagement with evidence, motivation to draw on evidence, or changes in decision-making processes (such as which opportunities are pursued) which can be attributed to the LEL role? If so, what evidence is there for this?
- c. How has the LEL role affected the formation and strengthening of local partnerships and networks that support EBI implementation?
- d. Are there any unintended impacts or negative consequences observed as a result of the LEL role's introduction?

Does the intervention work?

The Changemakers programme aims to achieve the following outcomes, as identified in the theory of change.



Short-term outcomes

Short-term outcomes for families and children who receive EBIs are:

- EBI is delivered with greater fidelity to the original model.
- EBI implementation is more tailored to each local context.

Short-term outcomes for local authority and VCFSE staff delivering the EBI and working alongside it, as well as system leaders involved in commissioning and implementing EBIs are:

- Better networks and more effective partnership working to support the EBI delivery
- Improved information sharing to support identification and referral of families to the EBI
- Increased awareness of the EBI(s) among those working alongside it in the system
- Greater awareness among system stakeholders about using evidence and data, including for system planning when selecting, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating an EBI
- Increased understanding of how to commission and implement an EBI
- Greater appreciation and interest in the value of shared learning and problem solving by system stakeholders.

Medium-term outcomes

Medium-term outcomes for families and children who receive EBIs are:

- EBI is more effectively embedded into the local system and pathways
- EBI is more effectively targeted to families who would benefit and reaches a greater number
- Participating families experience improved outcomes in the areas on which the EBI is designed to impact.

Medium-term outcomes for local authority and VCFSE staff delivering the EBI and working alongside it, as well as system leaders involved in commissioning and implementing EBIs are:

- Plans in place for scaling EBI delivered under Changemakers
- More embedded networks and partnership working to support continued delivery of this EBI and enable future introduction of other EBIs
- Improved confidence and skills for delivering and working with EBIs – and using evidence and data more broadly
- Increased motivation for commissioning and implementing EBIs among system stakeholders
- Increased understanding of the benefits of EBIs for participating families and the system
- Greater interest in commissioning and delivery of EBIs outside of Changemakers.

Long-term outcomes

Long-term outcomes for families and children who receive EBIs are:

- Incidence of negative experiences and outcomes for children and families related to the EBI reduces in the local population.



Long-term outcomes for local authority and VCFSE staff delivering the EBI and working alongside it, as well as system leaders involved in commissioning and implementing EBIs are:

- Increased recognition of the resources and actions required to support introduction and implementation of an EBI in a local area
- Increased evidence of adoption and appropriate use of EBIs across whole system
- Effective and sustainable systems change in local authority evidence-based decision-making
- Improved local evidence base and programme-level evidence to influence national policy.

Evidence summary

The outcomes agreed as part of the theory of change are informed by the following evidence:

- Prior research has demonstrated that lack of awareness and understanding of EBIs is a significant barrier to implementation (Proctor et al., 2011).
- Training and technical assistance increase practitioners' confidence in evidence use (Olson et al., 2020).
- Local authority leaders play a pivotal role in embedding evidence-informed decision-making (Aarons et al., 2017).
- Local system integration is essential for long-term sustainability of EBIs (Olson et al., 2020).
- Previous research indicates that embedding evidence-use champions increases in EBI adoption rates (Metz et al., 2015).
- Systems that embed evidence-based decision-making show sustained improvements in service quality (Aarons et al., 2017).
- Early interventions like EPEC and Family Foundations reduce the need for intensive crisis support (Bywater et al., 2019).

Remaining uncertainties

There are a number of remaining uncertainties regarding the implementation of Changemakers, including:

- The extent to which awareness translates into action (that is, commissioning and implementing EBIs) remains unclear. It is also unclear whether confidence gains persist beyond the intervention period.
- The extent to which relationships will persist beyond the Changemakers funding period is a remaining uncertainty.
- Whether local authorities will sustain EBIs post-funding is unknown.
- The extent to which EBIs will scale beyond the initial cohort remains unknown. The long-term financial sustainability of the LEL model remains untested.

Does the intervention work as intended?

The Changemakers programme supports LELs in developing and implementing locally tailored activities that activate specific pathways of change, addressing both systemic and individual needs



within their contexts. Rather than following a predefined set of activities, LELs have shaped their approach in collaboration with local stakeholders, with the Foundations local development team providing support and challenge throughout the process. The overarching aim of the programme is to embed conditions that foster evidence-based decision-making, commissioning, and delivery in work with children and families. The delivery of the EBI serves as a mechanism for testing and refining these approaches while also driving improved outcomes for children and families. These might include:

Championing and embedding evidence-based practice

- Advocating with system stakeholders for evidence-based approaches within local systems
- Training and supervision will be provided to equip professionals with the skills and confidence needed to deliver EBIs to fidelity, with ongoing supervision to ensure quality
- Areas will engage senior leadership through targeted communications to promote the value of EBIs and secure long-term commitment; assessing the system that the EBI is being implemented in to support with implementation.

Iterative feedback and learning

- Critically exploring EBI and research underpinning it to understand how it can be best applied in the local context
- Ensuring an ongoing relationship with the EBI provider to support local application and resolve issues that arise in local areas as they arise during implementation
- Ongoing monitoring through collecting data to measure intervention effectiveness, identify barriers, and refine delivery in real-time
- Space for action and reflection by providing forums for professionals to reflect on their practice, share learnings, and collaboratively address challenges. This will occur at a local level, led by LELs, and at a programme level, led by the Foundations Local Development Team.

Creating effective referral pathways

- Areas will establish robust systems to identify and refer families to the most appropriate interventions, ensuring timely access to support
- Ensuring a shared understanding of where the intervention sits in the system and the EBI's target audience and inclusion criteria.

Building system capacity and relationships

- Areas will conduct assessments of local needs, service landscapes, and priorities to inform tailored implementation plans
- Partnerships will be developed with local authority teams, system leaders, and national policymakers to align goals and secure buy-in for EBIs
- Strengthening local networks will facilitate collaboration across sectors, including children's social care, health, education, and youth justice, to enhance coordination and resource sharing.



Does the intervention work differently in certain conditions?

Variation by local area context

Changemakers operates across four local authority areas (Merton, Stockport, Wirral, and York), and its effectiveness is influenced by local governance structures, leadership buy-in, and pre-existing partnerships. Some areas may have stronger partnerships that facilitate smoother implementation, whereas others may require more effort to establish collaborative working relationships.

- **Governance structures and leadership buy-in:** Local areas with more established governance processes and leadership commitment to evidence-based interventions (EBIs) may see greater success in embedding the role of Local Evidence Leaders (LELs) and implementing interventions.
- **Partnership strength:** Pre-existing partnerships between agencies (for example children's services, maternity services, voluntary sector) can impact the ease of implementation. Areas with well-integrated services may find it easier to embed EBIs.
- **Service demand and capacity:** High service demand and workforce constraints in some areas may limit the time and resources available for implementation, impacting the success of Changemakers.

Variation by EBI selected

The effectiveness of Changemakers may also vary based on the EBI being implemented, as different interventions require distinct local conditions for success.

- Empowering Parents Empowering Communities (EPEC) relies on community-based peer facilitators, and recruitment challenges in some areas may hinder implementation.
- Family Foundations requires strong local buy-in from maternity services, which may vary across local areas. Areas with strong links to maternity services may find it easier to implement the programme successfully.
- Triple P: Resilience may face different challenges related to workforce training and system integration, which could vary based on existing support structures in each area.

Evidence base and strength

- **Governance and leadership influence:** Prior research highlights that leadership commitment and strong governance structures are critical to the successful implementation of EBIs (Aarons et al., 2017).
- **Local system integration:** Evidence from Olson et al. (2020) indicates that integrating EBIs into local systems is essential for long-term sustainability.
- **Variability in implementation success:** Studies suggest that the success of implementation strategies often depends on local factors such as service infrastructure, workforce capacity, and partnership strength (Proctor et al., 2011).

This variability presents opportunities for further research into how local conditions shape the effectiveness of evidence leadership and EBI implementation.



To what extent was the intervention implemented as intended?

The implementation of the Changemakers programme is expected to be influenced by several key factors that will either support or hinder its success. While the programme has been designed with clear structures and processes in place, its delivery across different local areas is likely to be shaped by variations in governance, workforce capacity, and competing priorities.

A key factor anticipated to drive successful implementation is the credibility and expertise of LELs. LELs will play a central role in engaging stakeholders and facilitating the implementation of EBIs. Their ability to translate research into practice will be crucial in ensuring that EBIs align with local needs and are embedded effectively within the system. Previous research highlights the importance of evidence champions in embedding research-informed practice, with studies suggesting that local champions can improve the uptake and sustainability of EBIs (Aarons et al., 2017; Metz et al., 2015). However, it remains to be seen whether LELs will be able to secure long-term buy-in and whether their influence will persist beyond the programme's funding period.

Another key expectation is that local areas will successfully adopt EBIs in ways that reflect their specific needs and priorities. The Changemakers programme has been designed to support LELs in leading the selection process, ensuring that interventions are chosen based on local priorities and existing service provision. Research suggests that structured decision-making processes improve the likelihood of an EBI being implemented effectively (Proctor et al., 2011). However, there may be variation in how different areas approach this process, and it is uncertain whether all local areas will be able to embed EBIs in a way that ensures long-term sustainability.

A further anticipated enabler of successful implementation is the integration of EBIs within local systems. In areas where local authorities have strong existing partnerships, Changemakers is expected to facilitate deeper collaboration and more effective multi-agency working. Evidence suggests that embedding EBIs within local service structures is critical for long-term sustainability (Olson et al., 2020). However, whether local governance structures will support or hinder this integration remains to be seen. Some areas may find it easier to incorporate EBIs within existing frameworks, while others may require additional support to build the necessary partnerships and systems for long-term success.

Despite these expected enablers, there are also anticipated challenges related to workforce capacity constraints. Many local authorities already face staffing shortages and service pressures, which could limit their ability to engage fully with Changemakers. High service demands may mean that practitioners and system leaders struggle to prioritise EBI implementation, even with LEL support. Research has consistently found that workforce capacity is a key factor in determining whether EBIs are implemented successfully (Proctor et al., 2011). While the programme includes mechanisms to support capacity-building, the extent to which these efforts will overcome local staffing constraints is uncertain.

Another potential challenge is competing priorities within local authorities. Financial pressures and urgent service demands could result in Changemakers being deprioritised in some areas. Studies suggest that policy and funding instability can reduce the effectiveness of EBI implementation (Aarons et al., 2017). It remains to be seen whether local leadership will maintain



a strong commitment to Changemakers or whether some areas will struggle to fully engage with the programme due to other pressing demands. Future monitoring will be needed to understand how different local contexts affect the extent to which Changemakers is prioritised and embedded.

Overall, while the Changemakers programme is expected to be implemented as intended, its success will likely vary across different local areas depending on leadership buy-in, workforce capacity, and competing priorities. The credibility of LELs, structured EBI selection processes, and local system integration are all expected to support effective implementation. However, staffing constraints, service pressures, and funding uncertainties may present challenges.



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