Barnardo's Core Priority Programme in Mental Health and Wellbeing

Final evaluation report
Renfrewshire strategic partnership

MENTAL HEALTH FOUNDATION

August 2024

MENTAL HEALTH FOUNDATION

EVERYONE DESERVES GOOD MENTAL HEALTH

About us

Mental health is one of the most important foundations for a healthy and long life.
We believe no-one living in the UK should be deprived of the opportunity for good mental health because of who they are, the community they come from or where they live.

For more information, visit mentalhealth.org.uk

This report was created in partnership with

University of **Strathclyde** Glasgow

BARNARDO'S

Acknowledgements

Recommended Citation

Mental Health Foundation (2024). *Barnardo's Core Priority Programme in Mental Health and Wellbeing. Final evaluation report for Renfrewshire strategic partnership: August 2024.* Glasgow: Mental Health Foundation.

Key abbreviations used

CAMHS: Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

CPP: Core Priority Programme

CYP: Children and young people

EH: Early Help

IMH: Infant mental health

MHF: Mental Health Foundation

MHWB: Mental health and wellbeing

SET: South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

Table of contents

List of figures

About the programme

In 2019, Barnardo's established the Mental Health and Wellbeing Core Priority Programme (MHWB CPP).

This work formed part of Barnardo's Corporate Strategy 2016 – 2025, which aimed to take a more strategic approach to creating better outcomes for children.

Three place-based strategic partnerships were formed, each bringing together partners from Barnardo's, local authority, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), education and the third sector, with the aim of improving the mental health and wellbeing of babies, children and young people through a whole systems approach.

This report

- The Mental Health Foundation and the University of Strathclyde were commissioned as evaluation and learning partners for the programme in September 2019.

- In this report, we summarise insights from the evaluation of the MHWB CPP, funding for which came to an end in mid-2024. The report includes our learnings across three strategic partnership areas, with a summary of programme progress from the Renfrewshire partnership.

Purpose

Through significant investment into each of the three partnerships, Barnardo's aimed to explore how changing the system could reduce the number of babies, children and young people requiring Tier 3 or 4 mental health support in the long term.

Strategic partnerships

1. North Tyneside Strategic Alliance

Partners

Barnardo's and North Tyneside Council

Focus

5-15-year-olds and the transition between Tier 1, 2 and 3 support; neurodiversity

Investment

Approx. £1.25m

2. Renfrewshire

Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategic Partnership

Partners

Barnardo's and Renfrewshire Council

Focus

5-15-year-olds and the transition between Tier 1, 2 and 3 support

Investment

Approx. £1.5m

3. South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

Attachment, Bonding & Communication Parent Infant Partnership (ABC PiP)

Partners

Barnardo's, SET, Tiny Life and Parent-Infant Foundation

Focus

Infant mental health and supporting relationships in the First 1001 Days

Investment

Approx. £550k

Programme summary

Our approach and progress

Our evaluation approach was guided by a theory of change framework underpinned by a systems thinking perspective. Creating sustained change in complex systems requires a systems thinking perspective that recognised and identifies the relationships and dependencies between different actors and parts of a system in order to form the broader whole. Such a perspective requires considering the boundaries of and interactions within a system as well as identifying levers that influence other components and being aware of the various mindsets and worldviews present among system members.[1] Understanding how the wider system operates helps to better understand the role of the MHWB CPP partnerships within that overarching system. This relationship can then be described through a theory of change that describes how the partnerships' actions are expected to interact with and influence the broader system, producing short-, mid-, and long-term impacts.

2019-20

Sep 2019   **Evaluation and Learning Team commissioned**

Jun 2020   **Scoping reports for three partnerships are published**

Included situational analysis for each strategic partnership to gain understanding of the wider context within which the partnerships exist, outcome data available and existing engagement structures within each partnership (including 15 strategic interviews)

Feb - Aug 2020   **Theory of Change workshops in each partnership area**

Mar - Aug 2020   **Publication of two literature reviews** to support local responses to the pandemic 'an overview of evidence-based interventions for children and young people experiencing bereavement, loss and grief' and 'impacts of lockdown on the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people.

[1] Foster-Fishman, P. G. and Behrens, T. R. (2007)

2021

Jan 2021 **Systems change seminar (online) attended by 50 participants**

Presentation to Barnardo's conference on lessons learned

May - Jun 2021 **Baseline evaluation report published and online learning event for the three partnership areas**

Included information from Theory of Change workshops, learning seminar, 26 in-depth interviews, provider training survey (n=54), partnership documentary analysis, governance meeting observation, intervention mapping and analysis of secondary data from within each partnership area

2022

Jun 2022 **Publication of journal paper**
'Developing a theory of change methodology to support the evaluation of a place-based systems change interventions to support child and adolescent mental health and wellbeing.' *Evaluation 2022*, Vol. 28(4) 466-483

Dec 2022 **Phase 2 evaluation report published**
Utilised a case study approach within each of the partnership areas. In North Tyneside focused on Early Help-CAMHS pilot, in Renfrewshire on Non-Violent Resistance (NVR) model and in South Eastern Trust the Attachment, Bonding and Communication Parent Infant Partnership. Data included 44 in-depth interviews, monitoring data analysis and wider partnership documentary and governance meetings analysis.

2023-24

Mar 2023 **Presentation to Barnardo's conference**

Jun-Aug 2023 **Theory of Change workshops to review and update**

Aug 2024 **Final evaluation report published**

Report structure

This report is structured into two integral parts, each focusing on a different lens reflecting systems change and strategic partnerships. Together, these parts form cohesive narrative that underscores the transformative potential of partnerships in driving systemic change.

Part one: The Building Blocks

Part one serves as a foundational exploration into the building blocks of systems change, diving deep into the insights gleaned from the five-year evaluation process. It highlights key learnings, strengths, and challenges encountered by the partnerships, and outlines recommendations to enhance the process and impact of systems change.

Part two: Renfrewshire insights

Part two shifts to assessing the progress within each strategic partnership area, supported by data from programme deliveries, interviews, and practitioner feedback. This section evaluates the impact on children and families by illuminating the tangible outcomes of collaborative efforts. It offers stakeholders a clear understanding of achievements, challenges, and areas for further growth towards systems change within the strategic partnership area.

PART ONE:

THE BUILDING BLOCKS

The Building Blocks

This part highlights five key building blocks identified through the experience of the MHWB CPP partnerships as essential for achieving systems change in infants, children and young people's mental health and wellbeing. These building blocks incorporate insights and lessons learned from all partnership areas and outline recommendations for sustainable, long-term change.

The five building blocks will be outlined in the following structure. Under each building block, key themes that emerged as crucial aspects contributing to the success of local partnerships were highlighted.

Building Block One
01
Shared vision for the model of early intervention and prevention

Building Block Two
02
Effective partnerships

Building Block Three
03
Co-production

Building Block Four
04
Sustainability

Building Block Five
05
Understanding progress through shared outcomes

Building Block One

SHARED VISION FOR THE MODEL OF EARLY INTERVENTION AND PREVENTION

01

Having a shared vision of what work should entail and what success looks like is essential for any successful partnership or systems change initiative.

This is particularly true for the CPP partnerships, as they brought together a diverse range of stakeholders with a variety of roles, responsibilities, and interests.

There are a number of enabling factors that support development of a shared vision. The theory of change process is helpful in guiding conversations about how different parts of the system work together. As understanding of the larger system grows and improves, through improved communication and partnership working, it is also important to regularly revisit and revise the theories of change so they reflect new understandings and priorities and thus stay relevant. The Barnardo's MHWB CPP had a clear focus on early intervention and prevention with significant investment put in to seed fund new and innovative ideas some of which went on to be mainstreamed.

The evaluation found language, communication, and decision-making structures are all important to develop and maintain a shared vision for systems change. Different stakeholders with different priorities and responsibilities naturally use different language, so developing a common language helps to ensure all partners are talking about the same thing. Different stakeholders also naturally see different parts of the system with more detail than others, so sharing information across partners helps promote a shared vision. Finally, establishing processes for collective decision-making encourages buy-in and support of the vision from all partners. The evaluation found these factors were all supported by the third sector investment, which gave partnerships permission to work differently than their normal roles typically support, and enabled a specific focus on capacity building.

Although participation from a range of interests is necessary for systems change work to succeed, it also makes maintaining a shared vision a challenge. People may have competing priorities and agendas due to their day-to-day responsibilities. The evaluation found that there is a constant tension between service delivery and programmes and systems-level work, which made it difficult at times to maintain a systems lens focus. Inconsistent staffing and leadership also made it difficult to maintain a shared vision over time. Clear communication, both within the partnership and spreading key messages to the wider workforce, was also a challenge. Finally, the lack of a clear goal at the start of the partnerships meant that it took time to develop a shared vision of what systems change work meant.

Theory of Change

From the outset the three partnership areas had a strong commitment to shift towards a holistic model of early intervention and prevention embedded within the community. They helped to establish a shared vision across their partnership through a robust and collaborative theory of change.

The theory of change process was helpful in guiding conversations about how different parts of the system could work together and develop a shared understanding of the role partnerships can and should play within a larger system.

In some instances, the theory of change helped to keep the partnership focused and on track, helping to guide whether a specific approach or intervention would help to progress the goals that were agreed.

"For strategic partnerships that are there for a purpose, and it's a big purpose, it's a transformational purpose, then we have to know what we're all heading for."
Renfrewshire

"I think it's the hearts and minds stuff, which is really hard. I think sometimes you can't quantify that, but actually bringing people along with you is often the biggest challenge, isn't it, when you're looking at systems change and theories of change? I think there has been a shift in people's thinking and ways of working because of that."
North Tyneside

"The vision, yes, I think it's fair to say it changed partly, because different people came in with different ideas and new ways of working, which was good, and I think also it changed because we learned and we listened. We listened and watched what was going on around us, and then we adapted and changed to suit that, but the overall vision of making outcomes better for babies by doing these three things, we stuck to that."
South Eastern Trust

Within the CPP partnerships the theory of change process was not revisited in as timely a way as originally planned. This was largely due to the wider context within which the partnerships were delivered. This included significant disruption during the COVID pandemic and related lockdowns; in many areas key partners had to pivot their focus temporarily away from the partnerships. Wider structural changes that were taking place, and changes in leadership, also impacted on planned work and the pace at which programmes were embedded.

"During COVID their focus on priorities had to change. Their focus on priorities became COVID vaccinations. All of their focus went to that, so at those times we maybe lost a bit of that closer communication and leadership at that level."
South Eastern Trust

"When you're working with multiple partners and you're looking at systemic change, I think you need to be able to work with that level of uncertainty. You can't mitigate against everything that might happen within certain parts of that system."
Barnardo's

"I think having the systems change, that people were involved with writing, producing at the beginning, and then when we refreshed it I think people feel some ownership over it."
North Tyneside
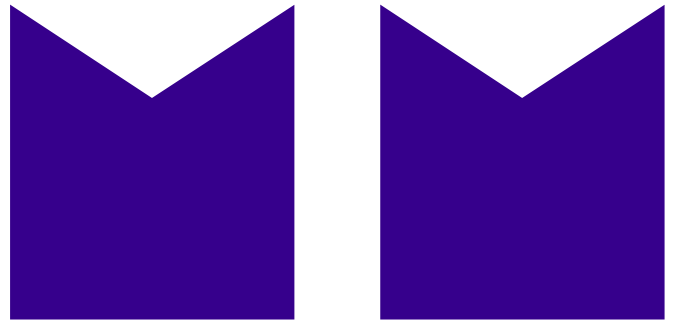
Language, communication and decision-making structures

It was felt that Barnardo's laid down a challenge around shared language from the outset across the partnerships.

This was welcomed but recognised as not an easy goal with language clearly tied into the culture and paradigms of different professional bodies and parts of the system (social work, education, health, etc). However, there was agreement that a lack of shared language is deeply unhelpful for children, young people and families.

"The second bit is about the power of language and how professionals use language to disempower people that we work with and support. I think, for me, one of the real challenges that Barnardo's has given us, and when I say us, I'm talking about the collective partnership, is about our use of language."
Renfrewshire

"For me being able to look back and see how different parts of the system are working much more effectively together and what the benefits are for children, young people and families trying to navigate through those systems. I don't think I envisaged at the start, that the systems were so complex and how challenging it was for families to try and navigate their way to support."
Barnardo's

Examples of teams jointly delivering training and support sessions were seen as important to help develop shared language. One significant success across the partnership was the move from deficit to more strengths-based language. An example of this is in the programme of work around neurodiversity in North Tyneside. This has been a more recent development with a strong focus on strengths; one it was felt wouldn't have been possible without the previous work that had taken place to develop a shared vision within the partnership.

"We're talking much more about wellbeing, less around mental illness."
North Tyneside

"It's definitely less deficit-driven, or child-deficit driven, and also parental-deficit driven, as well. We have much more of a recognition of the stresses that parents themselves are under, and how that impacts on their child and impacts on their self-esteem. Yes, I definitely feel, in the vast majority of situations, the language is shared [...]."

Renfrewshire

Finally, establishing processes for collective decision-making in the partnerships was found to encourage buy-in and support of the vision from all partners. Each partnership area had different governance systems which changed over time often in response to wider developments such as REN10 in Renfrewshire.

"I think that there's a bit of disconnect between what's happening and the teams being aware of that, so we're sending information through to them, but actually in terms of referring kids or signposting kids, that's been a bit of a challenge for us."
Renfrewshire

Services developed

Within the partnerships the focus on prevention involved investment in early intervention services and a transition of strategic partnerships towards a focus on the family.

This involved a focus on the child, and on supporting parents and carers, building relationships and capacity, and developing a community around caring for the mental health and wellbeing of babies, children and young people. Part of the challenge of systems change is supporting recipients of early intervention services to be responsive to this kind of relational, familial and community model of support. A good example of a preventative model is the Early Help model in North Tyneside, which aims to reduce unsuitable CAMHS referrals by addressing issues earlier and providing intervention to prevent families from being discharged back into the system without support. This highlights where systems change can be effective.

Another effective preventative approach is the ABC PiP programme in the SET locality, which focuses on improving parent-infant relationships through strengthening attachment during the First 1001 Days and activities that promote positive bonds and professional development in mental health for both parents and their babies. Additionally, the NVR programme in Renfrewshire not only trained teachers in classrooms but also ran parent groups to ensure that learning was applied within the home.

"NVR's focus is to reduce that distress behaviour within the classroom, but also to support parents to reduce the distress behaviour within the home environment as well."
Renfrewshire
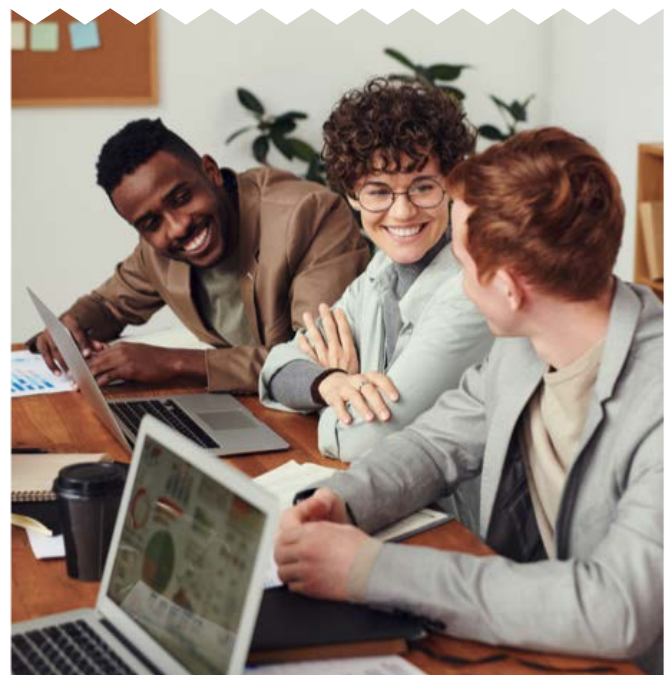
Capacity building

A focus on capacity building is seen as a core component in helping to extend the vision across different levels of the system; also in promoting joint team and cross department learning.

Each partnership had a strong focus on capacity building. This has been a significant part of the investments made and has provided an opportunity to build a shared vision 'in practice' alongside the strategic level.   As a model the capacity building approach has broadly been seen as a success, particularly where training has been multi-agency/ department.   This has helped to create a shared language and vision across the system.

Although challenges remain, particularly around the high turnover of staff, changes in leadership and competing priorities. There has also been recognition that some teams have further to travel as professional identities and culture can historically be embedded in a more medicalised model.

"We've got people who sit on our partnership, partners from health, who still use very medicalised language and like to put things in boxes. We've got the social work service who I think are on a journey too, particularly through our work with young people and the Promise influenced by again, this work stream".
Renfrewshire

"Our relationship with CAMHS has absolutely, hugely improved...now it's very much collaborative decision-making."
North Tyneside
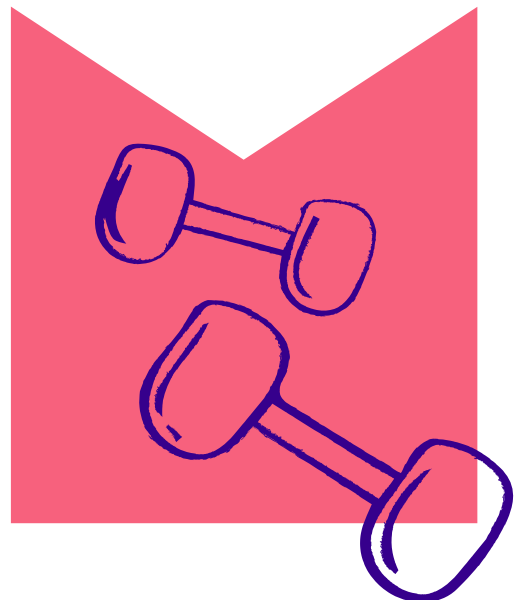
Recommendations

01

01 Develop a theory of change early in the process to understand how the system operates and what the partnership hopes to achieve within that broader system.

02 Regularly update the theory of change as goals and understanding change. The theory of change is only useful in supporting a shared vision if it is dynamic and reflects current priorities and knowledge.

03 Work to develop shared language with families at the heart of this.

04 Innovate and take risks but don't be afraid to stop doing things. More isn't better.

05 Invest in models that build capacity across the system

Building Block Two
EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS

02

Effecting systems change requires that all parts of the system are involved and engaged in the process, with the right people around the table and representation from all relevant sectors.

Strong partnership working needs to be modelled from the top with multi-agency governance groups and buy-in from leadership and staff at all levels of delivery.

Representation across the system is hard to establish and maintain. Some partnerships found membership weighted more towards the local authority, with representation more difficult in mental health, primary care, and third sector organisations. COVID-19 also made participation in the partnerships more difficult for people in certain roles. Staffing changes within organisations can mean that membership within partnerships is not consistent. When good representation of the whole system is established, it can create challenges as well as opportunities, as some stakeholders have competing interests or operate with different models of care.

The findings highlighted several critical factors:

- Success in partnership working and systems change is driven by transparency, collaboration, and a shared vision;

- Effective communication between partners is essential for fostering a relational approach that facilitates systems change;

- A strong governance group structure, with representation from partners across the system, is crucial in supporting systems change;

- Funding models can either support or hinder effective partnership working, particularly when third-sector partners are encouraged to compete rather than collaborate.

The evaluation findings also recognised that third sector facilitation helped support the representativeness and overall functioning of the partnerships. Third sector facilitation meant that the partnerships weren't owned solely by one department or an individual part of the system. Barnardo's brought resources, new ideas and perspectives, and access to broader networks. Barnardo's was also able to help strengthen the knowledge and evidence base of the partnerships.

Representation and buy-in

Having the right people around the table was recognised as crucial for systems change.

However, in practice there were varying degrees of success in establishing the partnerships including consistent governance groups. Where this worked well partners were able to learn from each other and understand new approaches, it also helped to establish a shared language.

Another key factor was ensuring that all the right partners were represented around the table, were clear on their role and what their contribution to the partnership was. In some instances, the connection between organisations was challenging and/or the value of the partner was not communicated well enough. This linked to some concern that the internal communication within the partnerships was not always clear, and there was a confusion over roles and how the work of different teams fitted into the overall vision for systems change. The pace of change was also highlighted, with a recognition that working in partnership takes a longer time.

A major issue identified in partnership working within the strategic partnerships was the competing needs and tensions between different partners. This was exacerbated by reported competition for funding, especially within the voluntary sector, that can hinder collaboration in the pursuit of systems change and can reinforce the cycle of unsustainable interventions being delivered.

"How you can commission or partner with the third sector, I think we've brought a lot of learning to the table on that... I think we've challenged a lot across the system in terms of why are people traditionally delivering services the way they deliver them? Why are certain partners not working together? Why is there not more responsibility given to the voluntary sector to deliver early intervention and prevention support?"
Barnardo's

Leadership

The importance of strong leadership was emphasised at all stages throughout the evaluation.

Some areas benefited from consistency in leadership whilst others struggled as a result of significant change. Leaders within every partner organisation were crucial to instill confidence in their team that the partnership was worth their time and effort thus ensuring maximum participation.

Across the evaluation it was evident that Barnardo's was central to the development and drive of the strategic partnerships. This included not only the significant financial investment into the partnership areas but their ability to ask questions and take risks in a way that a statutory organisation may find difficult. It was apparent, especially in the early stages, that there was a lack of clarity on the role of Barnardo's and the vision that the partnerships were trying to establish.
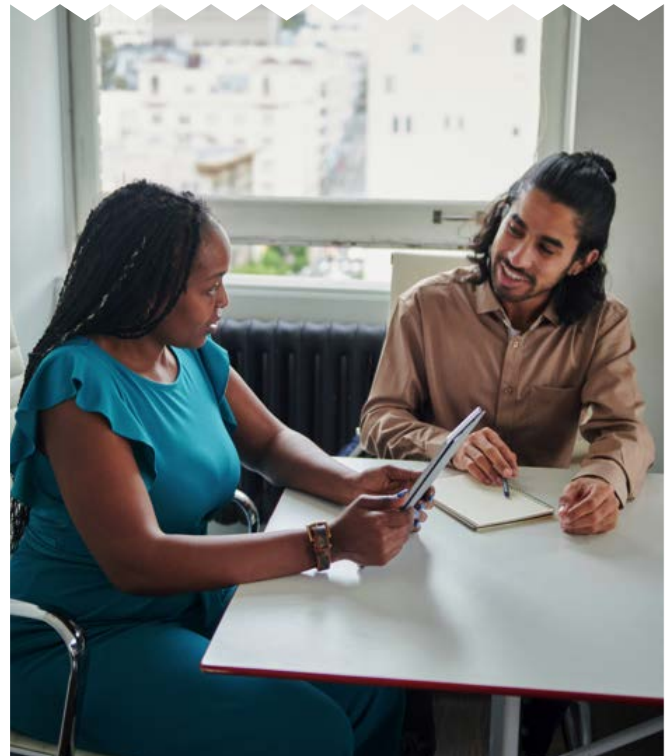
"I think people have been confused about what Barnardo's role is. We've been frustrated at points. I don't think they articulated really well [the benefit of Barnardo's coming in]. We've been able to bring that funding to be creative. It's given people the permission to do things differently. We've been able to make that link, between statutory partners and the wider voluntary sector. So I think across the partnership areas, it's never just been about Barnardo's."
Barnardo's

Recommendations

02

01 Aim for representation across all relevant sectors and roles and establish long-term partnership structures

02 Third sector facilitation of partnerships can help prevent any one organisation or department from being viewed as the 'lead' thus supporting joint ownership

03 Work with local authorities to establish a collaborative commissioning approach to overcome funding competition.

Building Block Three
CO-PRODUCTION

03

Co-production with service users, carers and local communities is an essential aspect of a successful systems change approach.

All partnership areas had an outcome and indicators related to co-production. This co-production is seen in terms of both service design and service delivery. The evaluation findings highlight many examples of co-production but also suggest that progress on this has been variable across partnership areas.

There is evidence of a positive shift towards the principles of co-production amongst stakeholders. This includes many service providers using the language of empowerment and a move amongst stakeholders from the idea of 'doing to', to 'doing with'.

There is also more of a collective rather than an individualistic focus on support throughout the strategic partnership areas, which Barnardo's have played an important role in developing. Having a focus on parental empowerment and community support in meeting the needs of the child, rather than simply an individualistic focus, is an important development in ensuring children, young people and families are at the heart of systems change. This has been a key element of many of the programmes that have been developed through the CPP.

Given the variable nature of co-production work across the partnership areas, it is important to identify the factors that enable the success of co-production work. Key factors in advancing a co-production agenda includes:

- Having a dedicated role to lead participation work within the partnership.

- Being able to tap into existing participation structures within local areas.

The presence of these structures provided a platform on which to build further co-production initiatives and can ensure that babies, children, young people and parents are supported and can effectively contribute to what tends to be adult and professionally focused structures .

There are also a number of barriers to advancing co-production highlighted in the evaluation. One was the presence of different ideas amongst stakeholders about what co-production looked like. Some partners believed that co-production or participation needed to involve a transfer of ownership, whereas other partners had a more tokenistic view of co-production.

Understanding of co-production

Across the partnerships and at different time points there were different ideas amongst stakeholders about what co-production means and looks like in practice.

Some partners believed that co-production or participation needed to involve a transfer of ownership, whereas other partners viewed it more as consultation to shape and improve service delivery. None of the partnership had young people or families directly involved in governance groups but all had examples of engagement and feedback loops into specific services and projects. Some areas also had more strategic links with youth participation structures within local authorities.

"I remember hearing a comment in the early stages... one strategic lead saying 'Well, what do families know about developing services? We develop services and they access them'. Now, even when you're having conversations at steering group meetings partners are talking about co-production. They're talking about how to design services, whether that's partnership across the system with different parts or ensuring that children and young people's voices are at the centre of that. I think there's been a huge shift".
Barnardo's

Having a shared understanding of co-production will allow for structures to be put in place to allow this to be built in. Alternatively, where there isn't a clear and shared understanding of co-production, there can be confusion and teams are less likely to build it into their work.

"I think at the beginning we probably didn't really realise exactly what co-production was and if you're going to do it properly, what that actually meant. I think, if I'm being honest, none of us understood that."
South Eastern Trust

"I think there's still work to do on that [youth voice]. I know things, like when our team go into schools and things, we try and seek the child's voice now more, but I think that still needs to be more to be able to address how we do delivery... It's there, but probably needs to be strengthened a little bit more."
North Tyneside

Embedding co-production

Across the partnerships there was recognition that embedding co-production takes time and expertise.

At different times across each partnership there was a dedicated post/capacity for participation and co-production. This allowed the partnership to create specific programmes with a co-production focus. This had varying levels of success for a variety of factors including most of the posts being time limited. In South Eastern Trust having a dedicated role was recognised as providing time and expertise for the wider team to be trained and to gain a better understanding of what co-production is and how to use it in their work.

"She guided us through and guided our parents. It just brought a real richness to the work and a real richness to the service."
South Eastern Trust

Another enabling factor was being able to tap into existing participation structures within the partnership. This included structures that were established within local authorities and/or health services.

"We heard from families really well at the beginning, and they helped us to design and develop some of our interventions".
Renfrewshire

It was also highlighted that it is important to be purposeful in your ask when engaging with parents, children and young people. Recognising that their time is precious so being clear about what you want their input into and ensuring that input will make a difference.

"We have to be aware that we are asking quite a lot from people who may have a lot on their plate as well. It's about potentially making sure that the points that you want them to engage are really, really meaningful, and maybe they can't be ongoing all the time. That can be too much of a pressure".
Renfrewshire
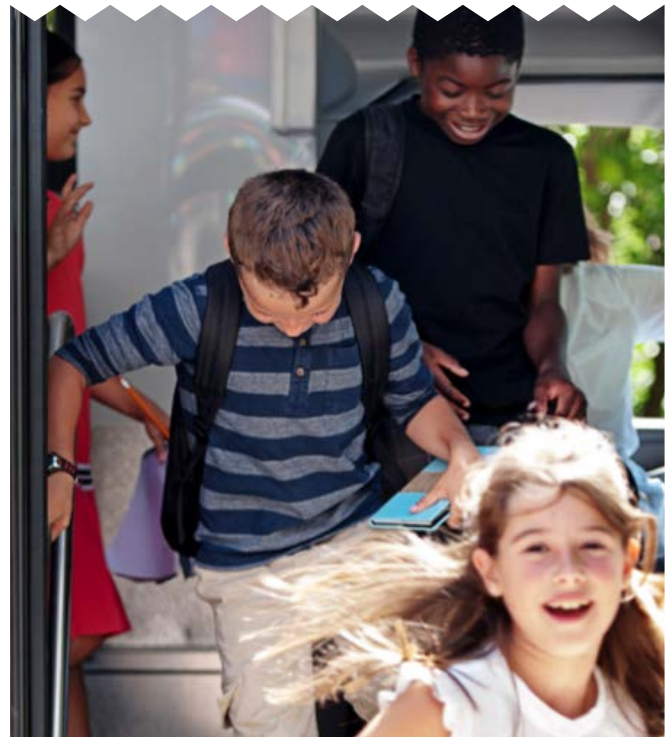
Recommendations

03

01 Share best practice on co-production across the partnership areas, in order to identify how to progress co-production within the wider CPP.

02 Make the case for dedicated participation/co-production workers.

Building Block Four
SUSTAINABILITY

04

Given the time-limited nature of Barnardo's CPP funding, the issue of sustainability is a concern for all the partnership areas.

The findings suggest that the focus needs to be on how to achieve long-term, sustainable change rather than developing short-term initiatives.

This issue of sustainability relates to three key areas. The first incorporates funding and the ongoing implementation of individual programmes within the system, the second relates to behaviour change and prevention within the programmes themselves. Finally, sustainability relates to alignment into local area and regional strategies and the emergence of processes that help to forge strong and lasting relationships between different parts of the system and embed the ethos and principles of the partnership; in this instance to encourage investment in early intervention and prevention approaches.

There are several enabling factors for sustainability within the CPPs. The fact that sustainability was built in from the start as an objective and part of the original Theory of Change is a real strength in ensuring the partnerships promote sustainable systems change. Also, as highlighted above many of the individual programmes have sustainability as a key aspect of how the programme is delivered in terms of sustaining change through building capacity within the sector for that particular approach.

However, there are also a number of barriers to sustainability. A major issue is funding and ensuring the continuation of the work once the investment is gone. There are also challenging external factors such as the cost-of-living crisis and pressures of local authority budgets to fund services. The ability to sustain change is also very dependent on individual partnership leads championing sustainability. If there is a change in personnel, this may reduce the likelihood of achieving long-term sustainability, particularly if that change is at senior leadership level. Similarly significant changes in local structures or commissioning priorities can be a challenge.

Mainstreaming

The investment made by Barnardo's was viewed within two of the partnership areas as an opportunity to seed fund new and innovative ideas, to review the effectiveness and impact of these programmes, and then 'make the case' for those viewed to be successful to be funded via mainstream sources (local authority or health).

There are examples of successes within Renfrewshire and North Tyneside. The lack of mainstream funding available for ABC PiP is a significant blow to that partnership area, not least because of the success around sustainability in other areas including capacity building and strategic influencing.

Although Barnardo's made a long-term commitment to each of the partnership areas how that money was invested raised some challenges. This included the annual agreement on the amount of funding to each partnership and with hindsight a suggestion that the financial model should have built incrementally year on year. This reflects the view that the early stages of the partnership perhaps required less financial investment when there was less activity taking place with more emphasis at the early stage on establishing the wider aspects of the partnership such as building a shared vision, Theory of Change, getting the right partners around the table and establishing clarity on the role and responsibilities of different partners.

"For ABC PiP it's a bit bittersweet because we can see the really good success the service has had. So it's so frustrating that there's not a continuation of funding to support that service or to mainstream it."
Barnardo's

"I think the biggest successes for me are keeping everything on that strategic level, so it hasn't just become an operational ask and providing us with the space to explore things and test things out. So, for me the biggest successes from my point of view are the fact that we've mainstreamed posts and added to them."
North Tyneside

Capacity building

As outlined previously capacity building was a significant area of investment across all the partnership areas.

This is viewed as a crucial part of sustainability in terms of building the capacity of practitioners around specific techniques and preventative approaches in addition to providing parents, children and young people themselves with the tools and approaches to make significant changes in their lives and support and enhance their mental health and wellbeing.

"I think across the partnerships has been building that capacity in the workforce to be able to respond. So that's part of that legacy work that will continue in the partnerships."
Barnardo's

Examples of capacity building can be found across the partnership areas. This includes Five to Thrive training in ABC PiP, NVR training in Renfrewshire which aims to support behaviour change in a sustainable way, so that parents are equipped to deal with challenging behaviours, sustain change and prevent further problems in the long run; also Sleep Well in North Tyneside to promote positive sleep hygiene techniques. North Tyneside have invested not only in training but in ongoing support for implementation with the view of building reflective practice to help embed new way of working. This can be seen in the investment in Schwartz Rounds and School Supervision.

"When we have the training with social work, education, and health, we can see that health visitors are using the language or using some of the skills of NVR to support parents, but then potentially, if they need a more high-intensity input, then they are signposting them. There's more of a community approach, and there's more of a shared language, and there's more of a shared ownership".
Renfrewshire

"I think through the training and support and education we've delivered into the workforce, those messages around attachment and early relationships are more mainstreamed, and the fact that all of our health visitors have completed Five to Thrive. I think the likes of the health visitors in our MDTs, our multidisciplinary teams, will certainly be able to continue some of this work."
South Eastern Trust

There is a dual question as to how the programmes are supporting sustained change for practitioners, babies, children, young people and families, as well as being self-sustaining as a programme. Ultimately the programmes and initiatives taken forward by the partnerships aimed to better support end beneficiaries and equip parents and young people with new skills and techniques to better manage and support their mental health.

Relationships and structural changes

Another key aspect of building sustainable approaches for prevention and early intervention is ensuring that the vision and ethos of the partnership is embedded within local strategy documents.

The importance of the partnership governance models being embedded into the existing systems for reporting was also raised in the evaluation.

"I think that strategic buy-in is there because we've invested so much already, and it's part of the strategies. So, all of the strategies that have been refreshed, this is part of what we're looking at. So, we're just refreshing the Early Help strategy now... So, I think we've got a really good strategic framework around that now to build on the partnership working that we had, but yes, a more strategic buy-in."
North Tyneside

An example of this wider strategic influencing was a core aspect of the work taken forward by ABC PiP partnership. Chaired by the partnership the Stronger from the Start is an alliance of more than 60 organisations from across the community and voluntary sector in Northern Ireland, who work together to promote and improve infant mental health.

"The success of that [Stronger From The Start] I think has been very real, and we have seen real change as a result of that. One of those would be having infants mentioned in the mental health strategy, where in the first draft they weren't. Since the reformation of our assembly and executive, there's language in there around the first 1001 days and the important stuff that wasn't around before."
South Eastern Trust

"I think a lot of the success that's come out of NI, is building that capacity in the system to be able to respond. I think that the policy and influencing work that they've done has been significant... I think that real traction and buy-in across the system to want to do things better for babies in terms of infant mental health."
Barnardo's

One of the opportunities that the partnerships offered was for people to work with partners that they may not have had the opportunity to before or that they may not have thought to work with. The establishment of these relationships can support greater understanding of how each partner works and how they approach obstacles, thus making future working relationships easier to build.

Recommendations

04

01 Build in plans for sustainability at the start of programme and partnership development.

02 Consider sustainability across the three areas highlighted: securing mainstream funding and ongoing delivery/expansion of programmes; capacity building of practitioners, parents and young people; influencing and aligning in to local and regional strategy and embedding in to existing governance and engagement structures.

Building Block Five

UNDERSTANDING PROGRESS THROUGH SHARED OUTCOMES

05

One of the most important findings to emerge from the evaluation is the need to develop a clear plan for understanding progress in systems change.

The evaluation has generated not only important data on the impact of the partnership but also provided useful insights on how to evaluate systems change within a strategic partnership programme. This involves the use of different forms of data mapping to assess the impact of partnership activity on different beneficiaries, including policy-makers, practitioners and service providers, family carers and young people.

There are several enabling factors for understanding progress:

- First, making effective data collection and data sharing a priority. Strategic partnerships have successfully integrated this into their Theory of Change process.

- Second, aligning the Theory of Change outcomes with a clear evaluation framework that includes identified indicators and utilises a range of data sources. It is important that these data sources are realistic and, where

possible, embedded in existing or developable processes.

- Lastly, working with partners to identify the joint benefits of collecting monitoring and evaluation insights, and determining who is responsible for collecting monitoring data with agreed milestones for reporting.

There are significant barriers too. One is the challenge of measuring system-level progress when many service providers would prefer to focus on programme impact. This is problematic when the data collected is different across individual programmes. This makes it difficult to aggregate and assess systems change. Finally, while partnership building in data collection is a crucial enabling factor, the absence of a clear plan from the start makes it very challenging to understand progress.

Quality of data

As part of the evaluation, a review of data collected by each partnership was undertaken. This helped to identify the extent to which partnerships could report on progress against each of their identified outcomes.

This process highlighted the challenges in reporting progress at a systems level. Most of the data was very specific to individual programmes or 'owned' by different services such as CAMHS or the local authority. In some instances, being able to access routinely collected data, such as CAMHS waiting lists, was challenging particularly when it was reported at a regional level but needed at a more local level – for instance a local authority boundary. There weren't clear mechanisms for data to be shared centrally in a timely way and there was often a lack of clarity on individual responsibilities to collate data and report back.

"I think people being quite protective of some of the data and viewing the work that's happening from a kind of deficit and not from the benefits it will bring."
Barnardo's

In addition to gathering statistical data there was recognition of the importance of wider experiential insights. This included feedback from practitioners on the ground as well as parents, children and young people themselves. Having clear mechanisms to gather and reflect on this data, and to give it status, was felt to be important.

"So, some of the changes that have happened, we know should have made a big impact. Some schools are saying that the system isn't working for them. So, we need to understand that from a different perspective. It might just be we haven't got the comms to them right, and they don't know A, B and C and that would make an impact to them, or we think what we've put in place should have that impact and it hasn't because of something they need to tell us about."
North Tyneside

Evaluation framework and wider benefits

The evaluation framework was recognised as an important tool in helping to identify the information required to evidence impact across the partnership.

"I think the evaluation framework we needed earlier. I think it's really good that we've got that now, but I think that would have helped focus people earlier."
North Tyneside

The evaluation also flagged wider benefits of data collection including supporting decision-making and utilising data gathered for other purposes, such as to be able to make the case for the work being taking forward within the partnership area.

"We've started to use the data to ask ourselves other questions, to be much more strategic."
Renfrewshire

"Actually having that data has benefitted us. So when we go to [the] Scottish Government to do a presentation, it will be a good amount of data that we've got to demonstrate what we've done in Renfrewshire. Yes, I don't have any issue with it. I think, because we're actually using it."
Renfrewshire

Recommendations

05

01 Develop a plan for measuring impact at the design stage and ensure this is part of the Theory of Change with an aligned evaluation framework.

02 Work to agree on a small number of core indicators that are collated across programmes. This can complement programme specific data whilst providing insights into impact across the system.

03 Where possible identify routine data collection that can be used as part of a suite of indicators aligned to the systems change.

PART TWO:
RENFREWSHIRE INSIGHTS

Renfrewshire insights

The strategic partnership between the Renfrewshire Council and Barnardo's was launched in January 2019 with a focus on children and young people's mental health and wellbeing, specifically for ages 5-15.

This section provides findings of programme insights and the partnership outcomes across the five years of delivery (January 2019 – June 24), which will be presented in the following outline:
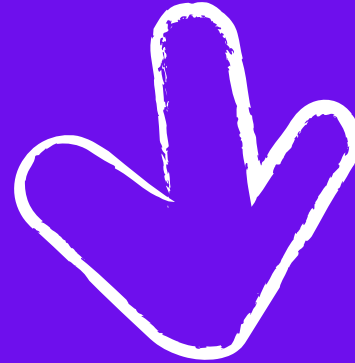
01 **CONTEXT**

02 **RENFREWSHIRE'S THEORY OF CHANGE**

03 **EVALUATION FRAMEWORK**

04 **DELIVERY AND INSIGHTS**

Context

Demographics

Renfrewshire has an overall population of around 184,340. Of this population 52,336 are in the overall Barnardo's age range of 0-26, and 21,161 are in the targeted age range for Renfrewshire of 5-15. According to The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation 2020 (SIMD), 25% of the data zones in Renfrewshire fall into the most deprived 20% data zones in Scotland. Renfrewshire has the 9th highest share of deprived data zones nationally (of 32 areas).

There are 62 schools in Renfrewshire with a school roll of just over 23,500. Free school meals in Renfrewshire (38.6%) are slightly higher than the national average (37.9%). There are around 1,090 pupils aged between 15-18 in Renfrewshire who are in receipt of Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA), which is 3.9% of all those in receipt of EMAs in Scotland.

The rate of children (0-15) on the child protection register in Renfrewshire (3.4 per 1,000) is higher than the national average (2.9). There are 656 looked after children (0-18) in Renfrewshire, 55% of whom are male. 18% of the looked after children are under 5 and 12% are

16 or over. 1% are known to be from a minority ethnic background and 5% are known to have a disability.

Local authority and mental health and wellbeing context

The Renfrewshire strategic partnership sits within a national policy context (including the Scottish Mental Health Strategy) advocating for Good Mental Health for All and which implements a national model of practice to ensure that children and young people get the right support, at the right time, and from the right people.

In 2021, the Children and Young People Community Mental Health & Wellbeing Strategy was launched by Renfrewshire Council and Renfrewshire Children's Services Partnership. More recently in Renfrewshire, the Scottish Government has demonstrated its aspiration to increase the provision of Tier Two early intervention and prevention services, to support children and young people across the local authority experiencing challenges with their mental health and wellbeing. A key aim of this is to relieve pressure within Tier Three services such as CAMHS that have extensive waiting lists.

The Renfrewshire Strategic Partnership has incorporated the Barnardo's CPP with its systems change lens into a wider portfolio of community mental health and wellbeing work. The Barnardo's CPP currently sits in a portfolio of early intervention and prevention work called REN10, which is a community mental health and wellbeing network of early help services, that are designed for children and young people aged 5-24 and their families.

Renfrewshire Theory of Change

The Theory of Change, developed in partnership with Barnardo's and facilitated by the University of Strathclyde and the Mental Health Foundation, is a framework for describing how the partnerships aim to influence the broader system through their activities (Weiss, 1995; Weiss, 1997). It represents how a programme or intervention's short and mid-term outputs are expected to influence long-term outcomes, including the indicators that provide feedback on performance and the assumptions that the causal story relies upon.

The figures on the next page showcase the Theory of Change that was strategised for the Renfrewshire partnership area.

Figure 1. Renfrewshire Theory of Change

ACTIVITIES
What we plan to do / are doing to work towards our medium term outcomes

Barnardo's CPP funded activities

Non Violence Resistance Training (NVR)

Social Work Front Door (Early Help)

Empowering Parents Empowering Communities (EPEC)

Corrective Virtual Reality Headsets

Other activities funded through Whole Family Wellbeing Fund

Let's introduce Anxiety Management (LIAM)

Group Supervision

CAHMS Education Advisor

Headstrong

Counselling skills course

Theraputic support for social work

WAYS OF WORKING
How we need to work in order for our activities to lead to our medium term outcomes

A diverse range of stakeholders from across the system are engaged and collaborate

Partners and professionals have the capacity, skills and resource to deliver the work

Partners embed effective governance mechanisms

Partners have a clear implementation plan which maps onto wider local strategies

Partners buy into the long-term vision and have shared values

Partners have access to high quality data

Service users are able to access up to date information

MEDIUM TERM OUTCOMES
What we want to achieve by the end of the programme in order to contribute towards our long term vision

Evidence of a shift to a more community-based model of **early intervention** and **preventative** mental health and wellbeing

Evidence of a **sustainable** approach delivered through effective **partnership working** and collaboration between key stakeholders

Evidence of a shared **strengths-based language** across the mental health and wellbeing system

Evidence of **co-production** and a focus on collective ownership and decision making informed by lived experience

Evidence of effective use and sharing of **key datasets** to underpin planning, decision making and ways of working

LONG TERM VISION
How we want the system to look in the future

Systems-level shift towards an early intervention and prevention model of mental health and wellbeing

Children, young people and families get the right support at the right time by the right people

Aligned with, and feeding into, wider Renfrewshire strategies e.g. Children's Services, Child Protection and Corporate plans

45.

Evaluation framework

The Evaluation Framework was developed to complement the work of Theory of Change.

It encompasses key medium-term outcomes that define the specific achievements it aimed to reach by the end of the programme. These outcomes are essential steps toward realising the long-term vision.

Tangible indicators have been mapped out under each outcome to help assess them comprehensively from different perspectives. The following section of this report highlights the various evidence collected from different sources, demonstrating the progress in achieving these outcomes.

However, it is important to note that the limited amount of data collected for each programme, coupled with the absence of research capturing the impact of strategic partnerships on end-user beneficiaries due to the early termination of funding, presents challenges in drawing robust conclusions or conducting detailed assessments of the programme's effectiveness. This data insufficiency impedes accurate measurement of progress against the pre-aligned indicator framework and identifying areas for programme improvement.

01 Early intervention and prevention
A shift to a more community-based model of early intervention and preventative mental health and wellbeing

02 Sustainability
A sustainable approach delivered through effective partnership working and collaboration between key stakeholders

03 Shared strengths-based language
A shared strengths-based language across the mental health and wellbeing system

04 Co-production
Co-production and a focus on collective ownership and decision-making informed by the lived experience of children, young people and families.

05 High quality data
Effective use and sharing of key datasets to underpin planning, decision-making and ways of working

DELIVERY AND INSIGHTS

Outcome One

A SHIFT TO A MORE COMMUNITY-BASED MODEL OF EARLY INTERVENTION AND PREVENTATIVE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

01

Increase in the number of programmes focusing on early intervention and prevention and their participants

Sixteen new projects and activities were launched as part of Barnardo's CPP to support and enhance the health and wellbeing of children, young adults, and families in Renfrewshire. These initiatives address various aspects, such as direct support provision, peer support, workforce and parental capacity building, and co-production. Key programmes, including Non-Violent Resistance, Empowering Parents Empowering Communities (EPEC), and Early Help SW Front Door, have been the primary drivers and have received the majority of the funding from Barnardo's CPP. The number of workshops, training sessions, and one-on-one/group support under these programmes has increased annually since their inception and continues to grow.

REN10, self-referral approach and the building of parents' capability

REN10[2] is Renfrewshire's community mental health and wellbeing network, developed to provide children, young people aged 5-24 and their families

with more accessible support and early intervention services provision. Five psychology-led interventions are included in the REN10 programme, with oversight from the Educational Psychology Service, including NVR, Let's Introduce Anxiety Management (LIAM) training and interventions for families, informed by Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) methods.

REN10 can be accessed directly by service users, service providers and professionals – including GPs and schools – through an online self-referral form removing the need for a formal referral process. It is part funded by Barnardo's and the Scottish Government and a lead officer steers the overall portfolio of work.

[2] https://www.ren10.co.uk

The vision behind allowing families to self-refer is to enable quicker and easier access to early intervention services suited to their needs, potentially reducing the demand for Tier Three services. This complements and helps facilitate the wider aspiration for systems change in Renfrewshire that focuses on building the capacity of professionals, parents and families to manage children and young people's mental health and wellbeing.

At the strategic level, REN10's self-help approach is considered a crucial component of the local authority's early intervention, prevention, and systems change strategy. It has significantly contributed to Renfrewshire's systems change journey, aiming to establish sustainable, community-based interventions that enhance system and family capacity.

"REN10 is the umbrella in terms of our approach within Renfrewshire; lots of web-based information, signposting to counselling, signposting to self-help to try and divert people out of systems."
Renfrewshire partnership member

Previous interviewees felt that the self-referral approach, while a positive one, could create increased demand and was a potential ongoing challenge. As one strategic partner noted, "the last thing I want to do is dismantle a waiting list in one part of the world and create a new one somewhere else".

Data from the REN10 team, collected between March 2022 to June 2024, indicates that the platform engaged 11,800 new users, with an average session duration of 1.78 minutes in 2023. The most frequently viewed sections were the home page and the 'Get Help' section, particularly the information pages for parents, professionals, and children aged 5 to 15.

"We managed to deliver a number of approaches that took us out of the face-to-face delivery... some folk were saying, 'We need some advice and guidance.' So the development of the website was really important in terms of being able to support the general advice to families to pinpoint them quickly to fast support."
Renfrewshire partnership member

PROGRAMME IN HIGHLIGHT:
Non-Violent Resistance

Non-Violent Resistance is a multi-modal, community-based intervention designed to support families experiencing violence or controlling behaviours from their child.

This trauma-informed approach helps parents, carers, and professionals address unmet needs behind such behaviours through four key concepts: Resist, Persist, Unite, and Repair. NVR focuses on perceived aggressive behaviour, including self-harm, rather than just violence.

Delivery

The programme supports parents and carers via workshops, individualised support, and a parent support network. Schools also receive accredited NVR training, coaching, and individual support. Renfrewshire's aim is to expand training and increase the number of practitioners qualified to Levels Two, Three, and Four to enhance system capacity and ensure programme sustainability. The local authority plans to run parent groups and provide ongoing support through drop-in sessions and coaching, ensuring long-term impact and sustainability for families. At the core, NVR builds the capacity of parents and professionals to help children regulate their emotions in a nurturing manner.

Parent groups

Since 2020, the programme has provided spots in NVR Parent Groups to 240 families across four localities, with facilitation of 40 groups. Additionally, a pilot anxiety-specific group was launched in one area, and there are plans to expand it to other regions. However, despite these achievements, the data indicates that acceptance rates have varied and fluctuated over the years. (See figure 2)

Figure 2. Parent Groups statistics

	Accepted	Offered
2020-2022	94	121
2022-2023	79	174
2023-2024	67	94
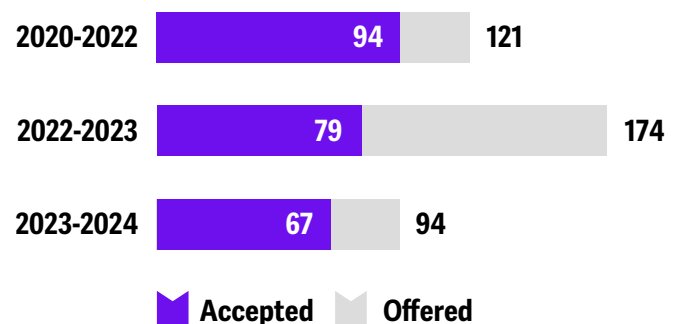
Reasons for declining included:

- Scheduling conflicts, with parents asking to join another group.

- Preferences for specific group formats, such as online, face-to-face, or evening sessions, leading to delays until these options became available.

- Situational changes, where parents no longer needed the group due to improved behaviours at home.

Another challenge is the limited availability of trained facilitators. Currently, only a small number of facilitators are trained to the required level to lead parent groups. Efforts are underway to train more staff and explore additional ways to increase the number of facilitators in the next session. However, funding cuts may pose difficulties in expanding the facilitator pool as initially hoped.

NVR Level 1 Training for staff

Since September 2019, approximately 350 education, health, social work, and third sector staff have been trained in NVR Level 1, with increasing demand over time. Several parents have also attended this three-day training to help facilitate parent groups and support other parents. During the 2023-2024 academic year, 63 professionals across sectors, including secondary, primary, and early years education, ASN staff, social workers, school nurses, residential workers, and the Whole Family Wellbeing team, completed Level 1 training.

Where NVR Level 1 aims to develop a secure grounding in NVR and build adult confidence in how to approach situations where there is distressed and/or distressing behaviour, Level 2 gives a more in-depth understanding of how strategies can be adapted and applied, and supports practitioners in helping others implement NVR.[3]
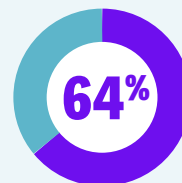

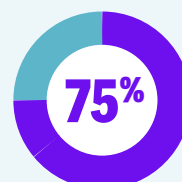### Figure 3. Sleep Well Deliverables Data

Survey data gathered from this group of families indicates:
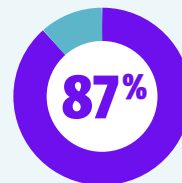
87% of parent / carers felt more confident in managing their child's distressed / distressing behaviours.

64% of parent / carers reported that the frequency of distressed / distressing behaviour at home had decreased.

75% of parent / carers reported that the duration of distressed / distressing behaviour had decreased.
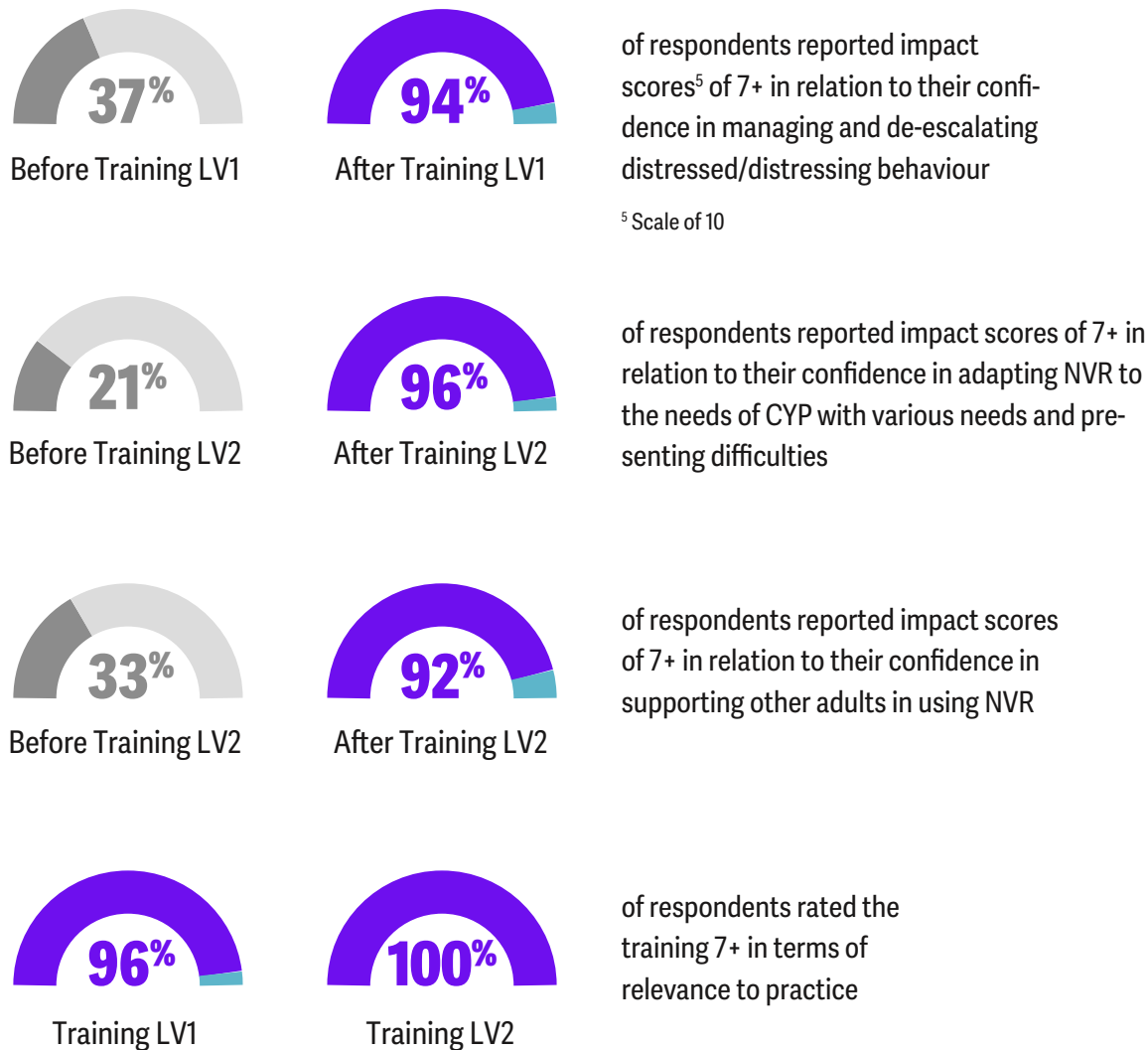
As the programme has become more accessible to families, demand has increased significantly. Currently, 77 families are on the waiting list for NVR in Renfrewshire, despite substantial funding cuts.

Since 2020, 87 staff members have been trained at NVR Level 2. Notably, the 2023-2024 academic year marks the first year that REPS[4] has been accredited to deliver Level 2 training without outsourcing to external partners. Three-day training sessions have been successfully delivered to four cohorts of professionals (30 individuals), including those in education and social work, as well as colleagues from the Children with Disabilities team.

[3] More information can be found at https://nvrinnovations.com/what-we-offer/

[4] Renfrewshire Educational Psychology Service

Figure 4. Evaluation data for Level 1 & Level 2 NVR courses (2023 - 2024), shows that:

37% Before Training LV1

94% After Training LV1

of respondents reported impact scores[5] of 7+ in relation to their confidence in managing and de-escalating distressed/distressing behaviour

[5] Scale of 10

21% Before Training LV2

96% After Training LV2

of respondents reported impact scores of 7+ in relation to their confidence in adapting NVR to the needs of CYP with various needs and presenting difficulties

33% Before Training LV2

92% After Training LV2

of respondents reported impact scores of 7+ in relation to their confidence in supporting other adults in using NVR

96% Training LV1

100% Training LV2

of respondents rated the training 7+ in terms of relevance to practice

Whole school implementation

Across the authority, 24 establishments are now implementing the whole school NVR approach. Several other schools have identified NVR in their School Improvement Plan for the 2024-2025 session.

NVR whole school training is split into two half-day trainings which are delivered at least a term apart. Part one focuses on relational repair and de-escalation while part two hones in on how to target priorities for behaviour change and implement correctional strategies which limit shame and encourage connection.

Data collated from 399 members of staff who have attended part one training, shows that respondents rate their knowledge of understanding of the importance of relationships and how they can be strengthened, significantly higher (average 7.81 out of 10) after training compared with (average 5.42 out of 10) before training. Similarly, the majority said that their knowledge of the importance of relationships had increased (84.3%) after the training input.

Long-term impact

In 2023, the local authority conducted a follow-up survey from January to August to assess the ongoing implementation of strategies and explore the impact of NVR on children and young people. The survey received 46 responses from a range of professionals across education, social work, and parents. They were asked to report on the effectiveness of NVR techniques they have been using. These findings below suggest that NVR strategies are perceived positively by respondents and have had significant beneficial effects.

- The survey revealed that nearly 94% of participants use NVR regularly or frequently, with over 90% expressing a high level of confidence (rating 7 or higher) in managing distressed or distressing behaviour.

- 84% of respondents observed a reduction in instances of distressed and distressing behaviour. Furthermore, 55% reported quicker de-escalation of escalated incidents compared to previous methods, and 58% noted improved relationships between pupils. Additionally, 45% highlighted NVR's support for inclusion and increased time spent in class.

94%

regularly use NVR

84%

observed reduction in distressed and distressing behaviours

PROGRAMME IN HIGHLIGHT:
EPEC

Empowering Parents, Empowering Communities is a group parenting intervention, delivered to 8-12 parents over 8 weekly two-hour sessions by two certified EPEC peer facilitator group leaders.

EPEC groups offer parents the skills to listen, communicate and interact more effectively with their children, nurture closer parent-child relationships, accept and manage feelings, promote positive development manage difficult and challenging behaviour as well as look after their own wellbeing and health.

Delivery

Between August 2022 and July 2024, there were approximately 100 referrals or inquiries for both the "Being a Parent" and "Being a Parent - Autism" courses. During this period, eight "Being a Parent" (BAP) courses were conducted at five venues, each lasting eight weeks, and one "Being a Parent - Autism" (BAP-A) course was held over Zoom for ten weeks. Approximately 65 individuals showed interest by attending at least one session, and around 30 participants completed the programme by attending more than 60% of the sessions.

Additionally, a Parent Group Leader training group was recently conducted, with eight attendees completing the course, thereby doubling the number of potential group leaders available to run courses to 16.

Impact

EPEC integrates the latest developmental science and well-evidenced parenting strategies, empowering parents and carers to understand and manage their children's needs and development while also caring for themselves. A recent report on the programme's effectiveness, involving 9 families from a wider group, showed that 89% of participants improved their understanding of their parenting - 56% rated this improvement as 'A great deal' and 33% as 'Quite a lot'. Additionally, 88% of participants expect to apply what they've learned, and 89% expressed high satisfaction with the programme. Further data is illustrated in Figure 5.

Figure 5. EPEC evaluation data

Acceptability	Not at all	A little	Quite a lot	A great deal
Did the programme improve your understanding of your parenting?	0%	11%	33%	56%
Did the programme help you to develop your parenting skills?	0%	22%	22%	56%
Has the programme made you more confident in being an effective parent?	11%	11%	44%	33%
Do you expect to make use of what you have learned in the programme?	0%	11%	44%	44%
How competent were the group leaders?	0%	0%	0%	100%
Overall, how satisfied are you with the programme?	0%	11%	11%	78%
Did the programme cover the topics it was supposed to cover?	0%	0%	11%	89%
Did the group leaders relate to the group effectively?	0%	0%	0%	100%
Were the group leaders motivating? (e.g. energetic, attentive and creative)	0%	0%	0%	100%

End-user feedback

Comments collected from parents who participated in EPEC groups

Q: How EPEC helps you?

"Discussions and sharing in person. It made me realise that I am not the only one who has issues with parenting, who's finding parenting hard at times. It made me take time to reflect and assess. I'd so love to be a gentle supportive parent, at the same to be firm and predictable when it comes to boundaries, a real "captain of the ship"! I don't know if I got any closer to being like that! But the course made me appreciate little successes. I wish there was some sort of a monthly group catch up to keep all the good intentions and shared wisdom more alive."

Q: How EPEC helps you?

"Realising I wasn't the only one going through that kind of stress other mums needed the same kind of help I did and the leaders were great and there was no judgement from anyone at all it was a safe space!"

Q: Recommendation?

"It needed a bit more time I think. Our group was very chatty but it felt rushed at the end of each session. Having a session near the end to talk about specific examples and how they could be approached better. Theory is great but talking through some actual situations helps us consider how to use the tools."

Q: Other comments?

"The creche offering was really good. The sessions content was great, I did learn and take away a lot of thought provoking theory. It's definitely helped me look at parenting more positively. Have a Dad's session for the women's group; even just 1 Saturday for a couple of hours to talk through some of the key areas. The mums need the support of them so giving them an overview would be beneficial."

Outcome Two

A SUSTAINABLE APPROACH DELIVERED THROUGH EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIP WORKING AND COLLABORATION BETWEEN KEY STAKEHOLDERS

02

Investment for capacity building

Since the strategic partnerships were established in 2019, Barnardo's sustained investment in workforce development and capacity building has been evident, supporting programme delivery and long-term systems change (see Figure 6 for a detailed breakdown).

The local partnership has placed a strong emphasis on capacity building and workforce development to ensure the sustainability of care for children and families with a focus on early intervention and prevention. Programmes such as NVR and EPEC are set to continue, reflecting the commitment to maintaining and expanding the skills of staff and practitioners in school and community-based settings, as well as enhancing the capabilities of parents and carers in family settings. Additionally, through the Voluntary Sector Fund, training programmes and supervision are being extended to several voluntary sector professionals working with children, young people, and families within the community.

"We've had NVR, LIAM, VIG, EPEC. There's going to be continuation of those capacity building programmes. We've already reached a high number of the workforce, and as new people enter into the workfoce, there's a sustainability plan built in for how those workers will be trained. I think that's significant impact in terms of bringing in a consistency of approaches across local authorities in terms of the language used by professionals and the approach used for families."

Renfrewshire partnership member

The strategic use of funds to enhance staff competency is seen as a cornerstone of sustainability. Barnardo's is also exploring additional funding sources, such as the Pupil Equity Fund and the Scottish Attainment Challenge fund, to support ongoing and future initiatives, as highlighted by one of the interviewees. This approach to building and sustaining a skilled workforce underpins the partnership's long-term strategy for sustainability and impactful service delivery.
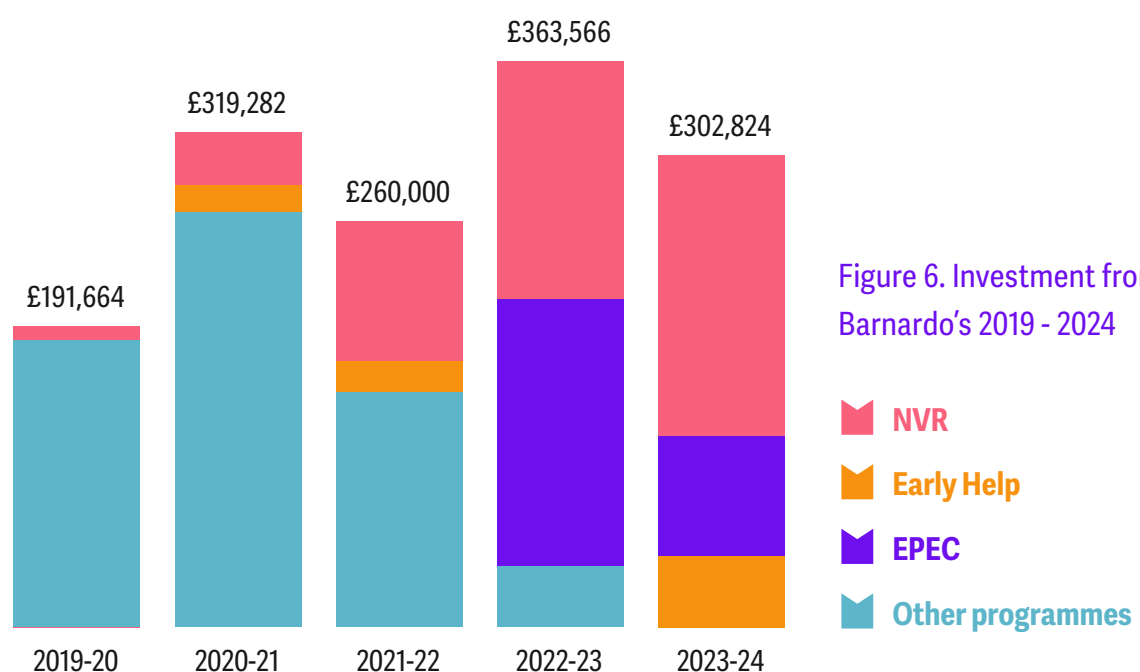
"We've managed to use our money to build staff competency, which I think is one of the big areas that means sustainability. But we're still in the process where we are doing some redesign work and I do hope that some of that redesign work will release some funding to allow us to be different. There's also other funding out there that we are exploring. So there's the Pupil Equity Fund, there's the Scottish Attainment Challenge fund, that all marry together. So I think we've got a wee bit of work still to do to build everything that we want in terms of sustainability."
Renfrewshire partnership member

However, some participants felt that the introduction of multiple funding streams has contributed to a tension between systems change and programmatic delivery, and possibly introduced greater competition for funding within the local authority. These issues were noted across strategic partnerships. It was reported that multiple funding streams that are not always aligned could present a barrier to collaborative working and to wider systems change:

"As much as the additional funding brings opportunities, it also brings challenges, and it's maybe diluted what some of the key initial vision was, that we need to go back and revisit. It's almost a gift and a curse... It's created more workstreams."
Renfrewshire partnership member

£363,566

£319,282

£302,824

£260,000

£191,664

Figure 6. Investment from Barnardo's 2019 - 2024

⚑ NVR
⚑ Early Help
⚑ EPEC
⚑ Other programmes

2019-20   2020-21   2021-22   2022-23   2023-24

Partnership working and Barnardo's role within systems change governance

Governance structures in Renfrewshire have adapted to reflect additional funding sources, including the Scottish Government's Children, Young People and Families Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund, mental health and wellbeing funding from the Alcohol and Drugs Commission, and Whole Family Wellbeing funding. Consequently, an increased number of partners now sit on the Strategic Governance Group, which includes Barnardo's. This group also comprises representatives from social work, the Renfrewshire Health and Social Care Partnership, education, and the third sector. A key benefit of this arrangement is that Barnardo's and the CPP with its systems change focus, are now embedded within Renfrewshire's broader system, potentially facilitating conditions for local programme wide systems change.

One of Barnardo's notable moves has been to step back from a directive role and truly engage as a partner in collaborative efforts. This approach has been described as brave and reflects a deep commitment to partnership working. This includes supporting collaborative bids for funding, particularly those involving third-sector organisations. The partnership has shared resources and information to prioritise initiatives that are best delivered by independent charities, demonstrating a flexible and supportive approach to partnership. Successful examples, such as the Early Help bid with Dartington, illustrate the potential of these collaborative efforts to secure funding and drive impactful projects.

"I think one of the things that was really brave of Barnardo's was to step back and actually be a partner and not being a director of the way this was to go."
Renfrewshire partnership member

"I think what we can do in the partnership is support collaborative bids, particularly those third-sector bids to independent funders that show that we have perhaps given some support in kind, or that we're sharing information that we've identified a priority, and that that priority is best delivered by the independent third sector, charitable organisations. [...] We've had some experience of that in the past. The Early Help bid was a situation where we made that bid jointly with Dartington, to the big lottery. So I think, yes, that's something we'd build on."
Renfrewshire partnership member

Despite the overall progress and successes, the journey of the partnerships was not without its challenges. Participants highlighted several difficulties encountered along the way. One noted initial frustrations on both sides during the partnership's early stages, attributed to lengthy discussions on strategy and roadmap plans. The COVID-19 pandemic further disrupted operations, requiring revisiting and additional effort to sustain momentum. Another participant highlighted ongoing challenges related to strategic changes and staff turnover, which have impacted the continuity of work and joint efforts. These reflections underscore the complexity and resilience required in navigating partnership dynamics and intensive work.

"I can reflect back to Renfrewshire, and strategic leads getting quite frustrated with Barnardo's because it took a long time and a lot of conversations to identify what we wanted to achieve, and to start to look at how we might delivery some of that... I think there were a lot of frustrations probably on both ends for the first two years."
Renfrewshire partnership member

"I suppose there was a loss of momentum for a period during those partnerships [during Covid], and it almost felt that once we regrouped, we had to then go back and revisit what we'd already established."
Renfrewshire partnership member

"I think there've been a number of changes at [the] strategic level across each of the parnterhsip areas. I know in Renfrewshire we had a steering group meeting at one point... We revisited the Theory of Change and there was only myself and one other person from Renfrewshire that were around the table, that had been around the table when we developed the original Theory of Change".
Renfrewshire partnership member
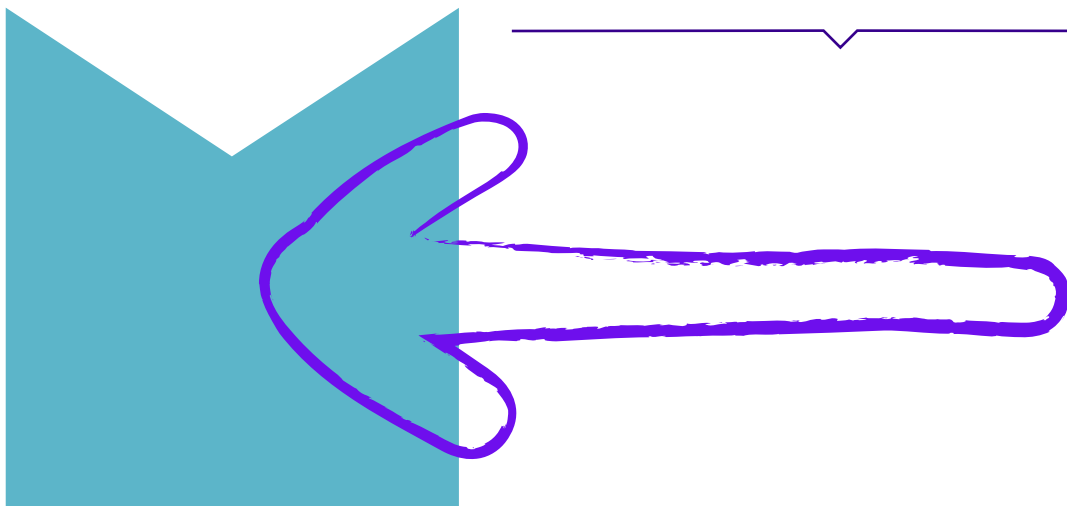
Shared vision and responsibility

There has been a cultural shift towards a sense of shared vision and responsibility for supporting children and young people across organisations within the partnership as reflected by one participant. The change suggests that staff now view their roles through a lens of shared responsibility, which enhances collaborative efforts and improves outcomes for service users.

For example, to improve access to early intervention and prevention-focused support for inappropriate referrals to CAMHS, the Renfrewshire 'Wellbeing Bridge' proposal aims to provide a multi-agency approach to coordinating step-up and step-down support across tier 1 and tier 2 for all children and young people requiring more than universal support. As part of this approach, the 'CAMHS Liaison' role facilitates communication between the 'Wellbeing Bridge' and CAMHS, improving mutual understanding of services and client groups. This ensures that wrap-around support is tailored to individual circumstances

"I think there was a clear culture shift in terms of how staff across all the organisations viewed their responsibility to support children and young people."
Renfrewshire partnership member

Another success is the Early Help model implemented by Barnardo's. From the outset, the Early Help team has collaborated closely with multiple agencies across Renfrewshire, including Intensive Family Support, CAMHS, the Community Mental Health Team, Police Scotland, and Education Establishments, to assist referred families in addressing their immediate needs and achieving positive outcomes. Effective partnership

working has been highlighted as a key success factor by the team. Further outcomes and achievements of the Early Help programme are detailed in the section below.

"So the Early Help model, where Barnardo's were able to set up a service which was responsive and focused and took parents through an individualised plan with their child over a 12-week period, I think was one of the big successes of the work with Barnardo's. [...] All with the focus on how we get support to children at the earliest possible point. So the work that the partnership influenced was a refresh of our 'Getting it right for every child' policy in Renfrewshire, which was significantly rewritten to be much more empowering for families and was about sharing the power that professionals hold over families. I don't think we would have got there without some of this early work with Barnardo's."
Renfrewshire partnership member

## PROGRAMME IN HIGHLIGHT:
Early Help

Early Help SW front door was a programme funded by Barnardo's, aimed at providing a bespoke early intervention offer for children and young people who do not meet the threshold for CAMHS services, but where there is an unmet need or a provision that could be offered to the family.

Feedback from families engaged in support was highly positive, reflecting their satisfaction with the programme, and many remain engaged with community resources after completing Early Help interventions.

From November 2022 to March 2024, the programme received a total of 216 referrals involving 221 adults and 263 children. During this period, support interventions were completed for 149 families, with 64 families still having open cases.

Following referral, each family undergoes a wellbeing assessment to determine appropriate, time-limited interventions. These interventions can be tailored as whole family approaches or individual support for parents/carers and children/young people. Many cases are resolved within a 12-week period, with families often requesting continued support due to trust and effective relationship building with EH workers. Staff were reported becoming skilled to support families to access community support for longer term intervention.

87%
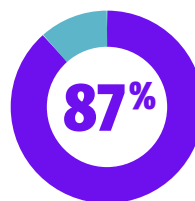
Children & young adults

Outcomes were assessed with significant improvements noted for children and young adults, including enhanced mental health (82%), reduced harm (81%), and increased social capital (77%).

79%
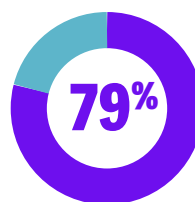
Parents

Similarly, parents and carers experienced improvements in mental health (79%), enhanced parenting skills (87%), reduced harm (86%), and increased social capital (90%).

Outcome Three

A SHARED STRENGTHS-BASED LANGUAGE ACROSS THE MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING SYSTEM

03

In shifting to community-based systems change for children's and young people's mental health, stakeholders in the Renfrewshire partnership highlighted the need to move away from medicalising and pathologising natural life stresses.

Instead, they advocated for a strength-based language centred on mental and emotional wellbeing. Participants noted that a nurturing, less clinical, and shared language is emerging among practitioners and parents, driven by whole system approaches focused on families, such as NVR.

The use of strength-based language is critical in children's services and mental health care. One participant highlighted that within children's services, there is a concerted effort to respectfully discuss children by using the term "additional support needs" rather than focusing on deficits, aligning with their legislation. Conversely, CAMHS uses "disability," particularly for children moving into adult services, due to its legislative framework, leading to a disconnect in language that affects relationships with, and planning for, children and young people. Another interviewee emphasised that language is essential for helping families cope,

providing guidance and reassurance that mental health challenges are normal. It reduces stigma, encourages acceptance, and promotes seeking help, underscoring the importance of language that normalises and supports mental health and wellbeing.

"Within children's services, there's a real agreement about how we discuss, respectfully, children who are struggling. I suppose this is maybe not quite the same, but we use the language of additional support needs because that's our legislation. Our CAMHS colleagues, particularly for children moving into adult services, but also children in school, they talk about disability. That's their legislation. What it means is that, when you're planning for young people, how you assess them, how you talk about them, how you think about their future needs, that language isn't quite joining up."
Renfrewshire partnership member

"I think the second bit for me, was assuring and giving families a degree of reassurance that their children are not mad or bad. [...] It's absolutely normal for people to experience these differentials. Also, sometimes you just need to learn how to listen, you need to have language that helps you cope, and you need somewhere sometimes to get advice and guidance."
Renfrewshire partnership member

Across strategic partnerships, this was appreciated but acknowledged as a challenging objective, given that language is closely linked to the culture and paradigms of various professional sectors, such as social work, education, and health. Nevertheless, there was consensus that the absence of a shared language is highly problematic for children, young people, and families.
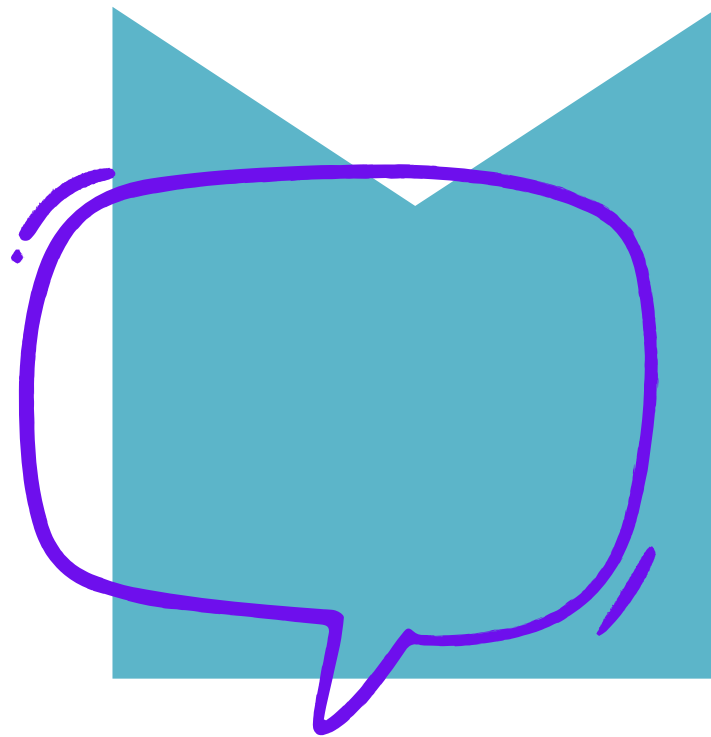
Outcome Four

CO-PRODUCTION AND A FOCUS ON COLLECTIVE OWNERSHIP AND DECISION-MAKING INFORMED BY THE LIVED EXPERIENCE OF CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES

04

The journey towards improving mental health and well-being support recognised the necessity of directly involving children, young adults, and their families in the creation process.

Designing solutions in isolation was deemed insufficient; their voices, experiences, and insights were crucial for developing interventions that genuinely meet their needs. To achieve this, a series of workshops were organised to gather firsthand perspectives. Participants in these workshops provided invaluable feedback on necessary changes and the types of support systems they believed would make a difference.

"We had a number of workshops where we spoke to children, young people, and their parents or carers, who were in the midst of experiencing challenges around mental health or wellbeing, or had been previously and were in recovery, or had addressed a particular issue. They were telling us what needed to change and about the kinds of supports they wanted. I think the biggest bit for me was that the work allowed us to shift from the nine-to-five approaches."
Renfrewshire partnership member

However, as the project progressed, maintaining this level of engagement became a challenge. It became clear that while their initial input was invaluable, their ongoing participation was equally crucial to ensure that interventions remained relevant and effective.

"We heard from families really well at the beginning, and they helped us to design and develop some of our interventions. I think we became less good at getting their voice maintained. Those folk who gave us time at the beginning. I think we should have found a way to make sure that they were part of this right through."
Renfrewshire partnership member

Across the partnership, there is consensus on the importance of the participation worker position. This role has been instrumental in developing and supporting various engagement and co-production activities, which have been adopted and reflected in the work of the strategic partnership. This post aims to promote participation and ensure that the voices of children, young adults, and families continue to shape initiatives from start to finish.

Ultimately, co-production is recognised as a key contribution from Barnardo's by steering group members. However, more work is needed to achieve tangible outcomes for the co-production agenda.

"One of the most important things that Barnardo's brought to this was consultation with young people. That has been going on right the way through this process ... but one of the really valuable bits was all that consultation that was done that was really helpful."
Renfrewshire partnership member

Outcome Five

EFFECTIVE USE AND SHARING OF KEY DATASETS TO UNDERPIN PLANNING, DECISION-MAKING AND WAYS OF WORKING

05

As part of the evaluation, a review of the data collected by each partnership was undertaken, along with gathering staff opinions on the progress of data collection and sharing across the partnership. This helped identify the extent to which partnerships could report on progress against their identified outcomes, including High Quality Data as mapped out in the Theory of Change specific to Renfrewshire.

This process highlighted the challenges in reporting progress at the systems level. Most of the data was specific to individual programmes or 'owned' by different services, such as CAMHS or the local authority. Additionally, funding cuts disrupted the evaluation process, leading to limited and scattered data collection. As a result, the data presented only showed pieces of completed work with concise outcomes. More comprehensive evaluations are required to assess the effectiveness of the programmes, how they contribute to the shared vision and systems change, and their long-term impact on children and families.

Feedback from partners across the Renfrewshire partnership illustrates both the ongoing challenges and incremental progress in collecting and sharing high-quality data. One interviewee highlights

a fundamental issue of inconsistency in data collection practices due to varied questions asked, which hampers the ability to obtain comparable information. Data presentation for shared decision-making remains a challenge in supporting and improving the work of the strategic partnership and the individual partners.

"I think we still struggle because we don't always ask the same questions. Therefore, it's very difficult to understand whether or not we are getting comparable information."
Renfrewshire partnership member

"There's a lot of work still to be done (around data being used more effectively to support and improve the work of the strategic partnership and the individual partners), but systems are now being developed in order for that to happen. So I can see that it's moving in the right direction now, rather than no direction. So yes, I definitely think there's movement in the right way. We're not there yet, but we're certainly far better and in a far better place than we were at before this strategic partner."
Renfrewshire partnership member

"I think that, yes, we probably don't do that so well in terms of presenting the data to make shared decisions. I think there's a bit of work there."
Renfrewshire partnership member

Despite these challenges, many participants acknowledge the positive progress that has been made. One noted the increased accountability in ensuring clear data impact measures and the ability to demonstrate them. Another viewpoint highlighted recent improvements in information flow thanks to strategic meetings that facilitate and help partners stay aware and informed of programmes' progress, though challenges in case

signposting and referrals remain. Meanwhile, another staff member observes that significant work remains to optimise data usage for strategic partnerships, though there is a clear and positive movement towards more effective systems. Overall, the importance of and effort around data collection, sharing, and utilisation have been acknowledged across the partners. There has been substantial progress, but there are still areas needing improvement, particularly in standardisation and distribution.

"Yes, it's held us to account. We've had to make sure that we have clear data impact measures, and we're able to demonstrate those. Yes, I think it has been positive."
Renfrewshire partnership member

"I think the strategic meetings have been helpful recently, when they've started to bring in staff [...] to help make sure that they're informed. I think that there's a bit of disconnect between what's happening and the teams being aware of that, so we're sending information through to them. [...] And for a lot of the partners around the table, they were saying that was information they've actually really needed and has probably been missed a bit. But actually, in terms of referring kids or signposting kids, that's been a bit of a challenge for us. Yes, I would say more recently it's improved, and I think that has been because they've done little highlights at the different meetings, which has helped us."
Renfrewshire partnership member

References

1. Foster-Fishman, P. G. and Behrens, T. R. (2007) 'Systems change reborn: Rethinking our theories, methods, and efforts in human services reform and community-based change', *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 39(3-4), pp. 191–196. DOI: 10.1007/s10464- 007-9104-5.

2. The Scottish Government (2020) *SIMD (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation).* Available at: https://simd.scot/#/simd2020/BTTTFTT/9/-4.0000/55.9000/ (Accessed: July 2024).

3. Weiss, C. H. (1995) 'Nothing as Practical as Good Theory: Exploring Theory-Based Evaluation for Comprehensive Community Initiatives for Children and Families', in Connell, J. I. et al. (eds) *New Approaches to Evaluating Community Initiatives: Concepts, Methods and Contexts*. Washington: The Aspen Institute, pp. 65-92.

4. Weiss, C. H. (1997) 'How Can Theory-Based Evaluation Make Greater Headway?', Evaluation Review, 21(4), pp. 501–524.

MENTAL HEALTH FOUNDATION

LEADING THE UK IN GOOD MENTAL HEALTH

The home of

MENTAL HEALTH FOUNDATION

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS WEEK

London
Mental Health Foundation,
Studio 2, 197 Long Lane,
London, SE1 4PD

Glasgow
Mental Health Foundation,
2nd Floor, Moncrieff House,
69 West Nile Street, Glasgow, G1 2QB

Cardiff
Mental Health Foundation,
Suite 7, Floor 9, Brunel House,
2 Fitzalan Road, Cardiff, CF24 0EB

Belfast
Mental Health Foundation,
5th Floor, 14 College Square North,
Belfast, BT1 6AS

MENTALHEALTH.ORG.UK

Search for "Mental Health Foundation" and follow us