

Why Early Intervention ?

Evidence

Every year, children in the UK fail to meet developmental milestones such as gaining a healthy weight and learning to speak, play and interact with their peers at an age appropriate level. Later down the line, some young people experience severe difficulties such as engaging in youth violence, developing mental health issues, being taken into care or being excluded from school.

There is a substantial body of evidence building on theories that demonstrate that particular early interventions can be very effective at improving outcomes for young people and families.

In principle, extensive research from psychology, economics and neuroscience has shown that early intervention works. We know that:

- The varying environments in which children grow up in shape their development.
- Early on, there are emerging gaps in children's skills and differences between children's development becomes apparent.
- There are certain factors that drive children's development that can be influenced to enhance their life chances.
- Research about early intervention in theory can be used to create and deliver effective interventions that can work for families and children.¹

There is clearly a need for early intervention. We know it is possible to make a difference for children and adolescents by preventing problems before they escalate and by enhancing their ability to navigate life's challenges.

What is Early Intervention?

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

Generally, there is a focus from conception to early adulthood because intervention is not just about the early years but also about preventing adolescents and young adults from developing problems.

When a young person is developing and growing up, this is a crucial opportunity to provide them with the skills and support they need. It is much more difficult if they have dropped out of school, become involved with youth crime or developed a serious mental health problem.

Early intervention involves identifying children and families that may be at risk of running into difficulties and providing timely and effective support.

Early intervention is about enhancing the capabilities of **every** parent to provide a supportive and enriching environment for their children to grow up in. Its purpose is to improve the life chances of children and families and benefit society at large, whilst being cost-effective.

¹ <http://www.eif.org.uk/how-do-we-know-early-intervention-works/>

What does early intervention look like?

Early intervention covers an array of different sectors including education, health, and crime. It can take the form of a parenting programme for a pregnant mother and her partner or a behaviour class for adolescents who are at risk of being involved in crime.

Because a child or family can experience an array of problems all at once, early intervention requires a multilevel, holistic approach. For example, in a local area early intervention may involve health visitors and a youth offending team working together to get to the root of a family's issues and refer them to the best support for their particular situation.

Early intervention is about working with children and families to help them. It is a collaborative approach to providing effective support.²

Early intervention in Jersey

Jersey has had the principal of investing early to mitigate problems in later life for at least the last 10 years through the Building a Safer Society Strategy (BaSS) which has invested in early interventions for children and young people in order to promote personal resilience and enhance community safety by preventing future crime and substance misuse. This investment has been shown to be successful with recorded crime per 1,000 population in 2016 being at its lowest since 2005 (57 to 28) and the proportion of known offenders under 18yrs having reduced from 31% in 2005 to 15% in 2016.³

More recently the 1001 Critical Days agenda for Jersey was endorsed by the Chief Minister and championed by the Minister for Home Affairs. The agenda highlights the importance of intervening early in the 1001 critical days between conception to age 2 to enhance the outcomes for children. The importance of this period in a child's development has been recognized across the UK. In Jersey, however the agenda goes beyond the first 1001 days into the early years and beyond into adolescence.

Early Intervention in Jersey refers to a range of positive services, systems and practices dedicated to ensuring that children and young people stay on track into adulthood, without facing the prospect of leaving school with no qualification, being taken into care or entering the criminal justice system.

Early identification

The early identification of children with special educational needs has also been widely recognised in that "identifying need at the earliest point and then making effective provision improve long-term outcomes for the child or young person."⁴ The impact of speech, language and communication needs (SLCN) can be wide-ranging and long term – affecting other areas of development as well as learning, attainment, behaviour, self-esteem and long-term prospects⁵

²<http://www.eif.org.uk/what-is-early-intervention/>

³<https://www.gov.je/SiteCollectionDocuments/Government%20and%20administration/BaSS%202016%20-2019.pdf>

⁴2014 SEND Code of Practice, section 6.14

⁵ The cost to the nation of Children's Poor Communication, I CAN, 2006

<http://www.ican.org.uk/~media/Ican2/Whats%20the%20Issue/Evidence/2%20The%20Cost%20to%20the%20Nation%20of%20Children%20s%20Poor%20Communication%20pdf.ashx>