

- The Early Years Transformation Academy – led by the EIF, the academy will work with a core group of local commissioners and service leaders at local level to support them to redesign their local maternity and early years systems. It will create resources and opportunities for sharing learning at local and national level.

We recognise the important role integrated early years services, such as those provided by children’s centres, can play in improving outcomes for disadvantaged children. In addition to the work outlined above, the Government will commission the EIF to identify tools and support for local areas to help them make informed decisions about different models to deliver early years integrated services, including children’s centres and family hubs. This will include:

- reviewing and understanding the research and practice evidence for different delivery model typologies of integrated early childhood services which respond to statutory requirements;
- developing and testing practical resources for local authorities and their local partners on applying new learning about current practice in delivering integrated early childhood services;
- delivering knowledge mobilisation activity targeted at leaders and commissioners of early childhood services.

We welcome the development of family hubs as a way to meet local need. We encourage local authorities to adopt the family hub approach, which aims to build stronger relationships and co-locate services, if they believe it would deliver improved outcomes for their areas. The new work led by the EIF will consider the role that family hubs can play as a model of service delivery so that local areas can make informed decisions.

Ultimately, it is not the role of central government to promote one specific way of delivering services to children and families. While some argue that government should be working to put in place a 0-19 model across the country, we know others advocate for a sharper focus on younger children, proposing that children’s centres focus on a 0-2 age range. Both these models could work and provide much needed support to families – there are other models that can work too. It is for local authorities to determine the model that they believe will work best for them, based on their area’s specific needs, the evidence base, history of local provision, local community circumstances and priorities.

14. Developing communication and language ability in the early years is crucial for children’s outcomes. The home learning environment has a huge part to play in supporting children to develop those skills. Interventions to support the home learning environment should have a particular focus on communication and language. (Paragraph 59)

We agree that the home learning environment is crucial to improving children’s life chances and that improving children’s’ language development must be a priority for government. This is why in July 2018, the Secretary of State for Education set an ambition to halve the proportion of children who finish their reception year without the communication, language and literacy skills they need to thrive.