

**Making Change**  
*with Government*



**Early Intervention  
Transformation  
Programme (EITP):  
Activity and Outcomes**

April 2020

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**SOCIAL  
CHANGE  
INITIATIVE**

# Early Intervention Transformation Programme (EITP)

EITP has resulted in improved services for children, young people and families:



More effective ante-natal services for first time parents, with improved parental confidence and significantly higher rates of breastfeeding.



Enhanced parental engagement in early years education, encouraging positive routines and developmental activity at home.



Improved early years development services – identifying children's developmental needs earlier via enhanced capability and more integrated working between health visitors and pre-school professionals.



Introduction of effective approaches to support families and avoid the need for statutory services.



New approaches developed to better address the impact of adversity on children by intervening both earlier and more effectively:

- *Improved processes for securing permanent care arrangements for vulnerable children*
- *More timely and effective support for families engaged by social services*
- *Better support for parents in custody and their families*
- *Targeted assistance in education for looked after children*
- *Enhanced early support for children becoming involved with justice services*



£25  
Million

Joint Investment

## 1. Introduction

The Early Intervention Transformation Programme (EITP) was one of three signature programmes developed through a collaboration between the government in Northern Ireland and a private philanthropic foundation (Atlantic Philanthropies). The £25m EITP programme operated from 2015-20 and was co-funded and implemented by Atlantic Philanthropies, the Northern Ireland Executive, and five government departments (Departments of Health, Education, Justice, Communities and Economy).

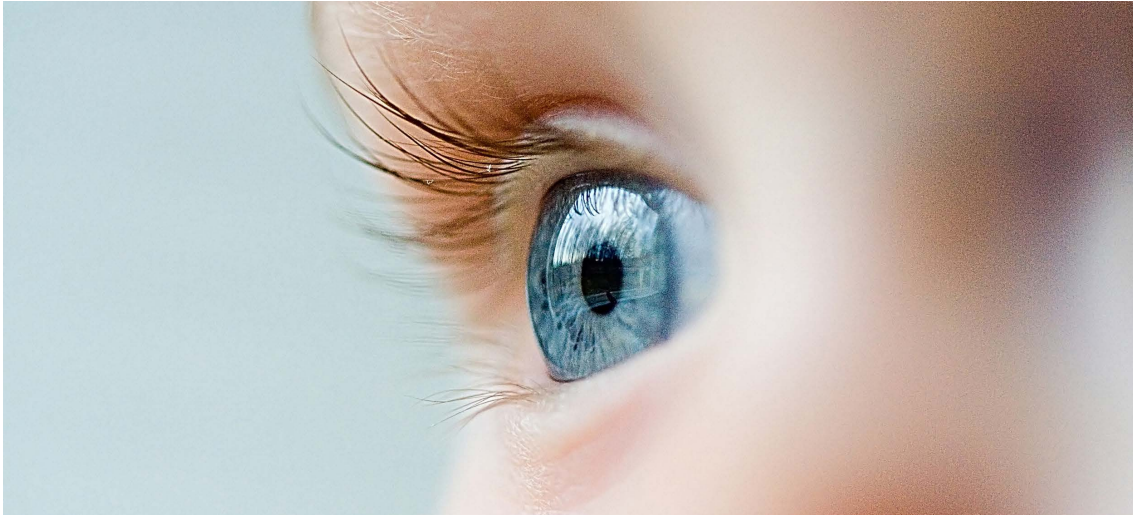
**EITP aimed to transform mainstream services for children, young people and families, and achieve better outcomes, by embedding early intervention knowledge and applying evidence-based approaches to how those services are commissioned and delivered.**

The case for early intervention is clear - it can strengthen the capacity of parents and caregivers to support children's development; help children develop the skills they need to live happy, healthy lives; and reduce the negative impacts of disadvantage. Failing to intervene early also has a significant economic impact. A 2018 study<sup>1</sup> estimated that the annual cost to the Northern Ireland Executive of not intervening early is as much as c.£536m, equivalent to £1,166 per child – including costs of £204m in child protection and safeguarding; £134m in Youth Economic Inactivity; £165m in domestic violence, and almost £75m across school absence and exclusion; youth crime; and child mental health.

*The*  
**A T L A N T I C**  
*Philanthropies*



<sup>1</sup>The Cost of Late Intervention in Northern Ireland. Early Intervention Foundation, London. 2018.



## Vision

Built on strong evidence, the EITP vision was that emerging issues would be dealt with earlier, support would be offered more quickly, and services would be more rooted in evidence. Staff development would be improved, and new, better-integrated teams of professionals would be in place.

The programme provided additional funding and space within which to develop and test new, more effective approaches, with a clear pathway to sustainability via one of three main routes:

- A new way of delivering pre-existing services – improving outcomes whilst not costing any more. EITP funding would cover the ‘set up’ costs of the new model, but long-term delivery would simply require existing mainstream budgets to be spent differently.
- By intervening early, the project would reduce the need for more costly ‘downstream’ intervention. While maintenance of the intervention would require additional earlier spend, it would be justified by later savings to the public purse and/or improved outcomes.
- The state had already committed to investing more in a particular area, but EITP spend could be used to improve the efficacy of that planned additional spend.

**There is evidence that the programme positively impacted on the wellbeing of children, young people and families and resulted in more effective services. It also realised systemic change in terms of public-sector thinking on the importance and potential value of early intervention, more systematic use of evidence in decision making, capacity to work collaboratively. All of this provides a platform from which to sustain the transformational change for which EITP was a catalyst.**

This paper sets out a brief summary of the work of EITP and its impacts to date. Further analysis of EITP and resources relating to philanthropy working with government can be found on the Social Change Initiative website [www.socialchangeinitiative.com](http://www.socialchangeinitiative.com).

## 2. What did EITP Deliver?

EITP ran for five years and included four workstreams, with eighteen individual projects, all working towards the same overarching goal – to transform children’s services and improve outcomes for children and families<sup>2</sup>.

### Workstream 1

Helping parents to give their child the best start in life

### Workstream 2

Helping families in trouble before they need statutory services

### Workstream 4

Better equipping health & care professionals to intervene early

### Workstream 3

Addressing the impact of adversity on children & young people

<sup>2</sup>Note that a 19th project is not included in this analysis - the Belfast Intensive Family Support Service was brought under the EITP governance structures but was not funded via the pooled budget created for EITP.

# Workstream 1

## Helping parents to give their child the best start in life

Under Workstream 1 more than £7m was invested in four projects that helped parents give their child the best start in life.

### Workstream 1 Supported:



45,000+

0-4 year olds



6,500+

Expectant Mothers



900

Health & Early years Professionals

### 1. Getting Ready for Baby (GRfB)

Before EITP, ante-natal services were clinically focused, provided limited education to parents regarding child development and were variable across Northern Ireland. Designed to establish a consistent, Northern Ireland-wide approach to ante-natal support that would replace existing services for first time, low-risk pregnancies across Northern Ireland; GRfB introduced an antenatal care and education programme that combined group-based education on child development with the usual individual clinical checks. The programme was enabled via training and development of almost 450 midwives in the Solihull Approach, which focusses on improving the emotional health and wellbeing of children, parents and families before and after birth. [Funding: c.£2.7m]

#### Impact & Sustainability:

- Improved parental confidence and knowledge of child development among GRfB participants, and significantly higher breast-feeding rates: 60% of first time mothers breast-fed at point of discharge compared to 48% of mothers within the universal service.
- A marked difference in ante-natal midwifery practice including: a transformed (more efficient and effective) service and improved capability among midwives.
- The GRfB model is being rolled out across NI as a mainstream service for all first-time mothers with a non-complex pregnancy (40% of first time mothers).

*“The support of midwives and being part of a group of people going through the same experience with me and my partner was priceless”*

(GRfB Participant).

## 2. Getting Ready for Toddler (GRfT)

Before EITP, young children might have had a structured health and development review with a health visitor at age 2, and not had another one until they started primary school at age 4. Government had already committed to introducing an additional check before age 4 and EITP offered the opportunity to rethink how this would be delivered. Via GRfT, health and education practitioners designed a more joined-up approach – putting in place an additional structured 3+ health visitor review within pre-school settings (rather than in the home) that would identify and address developmental delay earlier and help parents and practitioners better identify and understand the development needs of toddlers. By the end of the introductory period in March 2019, a structured 3+ health review had been administered to 60% of children in Department of Education funded pre-school settings. **Funding:** c.£1.8m.

### Impact & Sustainability:

- Implementation of an additional standardised 3+ health review for children in pre-school.
- Improved partnership working between education and health and with parents.
- Stronger identification of and early intervention into social, emotional and behavioural issues.
- The GRfT model will be rolled out across early years settings using mainstream funding, working towards delivery of the service to all children participating in statutory-funded pre-school settings.



### 3. Getting Ready to Learn (GRtL)

Before EITP, health and education practitioners were becoming increasingly concerned about the prevalence of delayed speech, language and motor skills. There was also anecdotal evidence to suggest that basic child development (for example the ability to listen or concentrate) and independence was becoming increasingly delayed. GRtL aimed to support staff in early years and pre-school settings to engage more effectively with parents and enable them to create and sustain positive home learning environments. GRtL funded 619 (77%) pre-schools to provide structured information to parents, educational resources (via lending libraries for books and educational toys), and practitioner training. The project reached 32,000 families, helping to build stronger school – parent relationships, instil enthusiasm for reading (and school more generally) among children, and ultimately improve developmental outcomes at the end of pre-school. **Funding:** c.£3.3m.



32,000  
Families Reached

#### Impact & Sustainability:

- Improved parental engagement in their child's pre-school education and anecdotal evidence of improved childhood development.
- The capacity, resources and relationships developed through GRtL will enable it to be sustained in the settings already involved. Mainstream funding will be used to support those settings to develop networks of peer support and to expand the model to currently non-participating pre-schools.

*“Before only 10 children a week would have taken home a [book] bag but now every child is taking one home and coming in to exchange it, so it’s tripled our interaction with parents.”*

(GRfB Participant).



## 4. Getting Ready to Play (Play Matters)

There has been a growing body of evidence highlighting the essential role of play in all children's lives, contributing both to their enjoyment of childhood and their social, emotional, intellectual and physical development. Through play, children are able to learn about and interact with the world around them and to explore ideas and concepts whilst developing understanding and new skills. Play Matters was designed to provide parents with the knowledge, confidence and techniques they need to play more meaningfully with their children - 40 play awareness programmes were delivered to more than 300 parents - and to embed better knowledge of the benefits of play among health and social care staff, social workers, public servants and the general public. It included 40 play awareness programmes delivered to more than 300 parents, 81 training programmes for play professionals attended by more than 430 people, 50 seminars and workshops for other relevant service providers and policy makers and a public media campaign. **Funding:** £450k.

### Impact & Sustainability:

- Increased awareness of the benefits of play among parents and improved levels of awareness regarding the importance of play among health, care and public policy professionals.
- Play Matters was designed as a short-term investment to build play awareness, knowledge, capacity and resources, the benefits of which will continue to be seen long after delivery.

*“Play is the cornerstone of the work we do. It is an essential life skill and I think everything that can be done to promote and champion the message that play builds brains is brilliant.”*

Play Matters Participant.



## Workstream 2

# Helping families in trouble before they need statutory services

Workstream 2 (c.£3m) set out to support families facing social and wellbeing issues in advance of (and potentially avoiding) the need for intervention by statutory agencies. Evidence indicated that not all early intervention needs were being met via existing provision, one-to-one family support was not equitably available for families assessed as being vulnerable, and existing services were variable depending on geographic location and age of the child. There was no commonality or consistency in service provision.

The Early Intervention Support Service (EISS) was delivered in 5 pilot sites via voluntary sector organisations that provided early intervention support to children, young people and families with a diverse range of needs. It aimed to provide a more integrated and consistent approach, building on and linking with existing services and adopting a common key worker model and set of evidence-based intervention strategies, for example, motivational interviews, Brief Solution Focused Practice, group conferencing, Incredible Years Parenting Programmes and Strengthening Families Programmes. It sought to provide a more timely response at a less critical point to families with emerging problems, to prevent those problems from becoming intractable, and / or developing into acute crisis. Between December 2014 and August 2018 EISS supported around 2,000 families.

### **Impact & Sustainability:**

- EISS was found to have supported individual wellbeing, emotional needs and boundaries and behaviour. The support also helped families increase their social networks and had a positive impact on education and learning.
- EISS secured short term funding to support a 12 month extension beyond EITP but, despite support for the model among practitioners, commissioners and service users has not yet secured the long-term funding commitment needed to embed it as a mainstream service.

*“I think it actually boosted your self-confidence a wee bit more and gave you the confidence to then try new things and see if it worked... and then when it works you feel great - you feel like “I’ve got control back again.”*”



2,000

Families Supported

(December 2014 - August 2018)

*“I think that even from a mental health point of view... the house feels a lot calmer...this has been the best thing in terms of all the options that have been presented to us, this is the best thing in terms of helping my parenting.”*



**3,500+**

**Children &  
Young People  
Supported**

## **Workstream 3 Addressing the impact of adversity on children & young people**

Workstream 3 supported 12 individual projects that sought to positively address the impact of adversity on children, by intervening earlier and more effectively using a range of evidence-based interventions, to reduce the risk of poor outcomes later in life. Funding of just under £11m allowed the projects to support at least 3,500 children and young people, as well as building capacity among the professionals supporting them. The table summarises the Workstream 3 projects and further details on selected examples are provided below.

Project	Purpose	Impact & Sustainability
<b>Home on Time</b>	Improving the process of finding permanent secure care for children.	Significant improvements in securing early permanence for children. Home on Time model embedded into mainstream practice.
<b>Edges</b>	Early intervention service supporting over 500 young people on the 'edge' of care, custody, exclusion from education.	Pilot generated useful learning about children on 'the edges' but was not able to generate robust evidence of effectiveness so will not be sustained.
<b>Building Better Futures</b>	More robust & timely evidence-based assessments & interventions for children/families reaching the threshold for statutory social services involvement. Supported almost 400 children and 320 social work staff.	The model is being sustained & fully implemented into business as usual across all areas using core budgets.
<b>6 in 10</b>	Supporting c.45 young parents in & coming out of prison to reduce re-offending & enhance longer-term outcomes for their children.	Improved parenting skills & reduced re-offending in short term. Lessons from approach being applied into future service design.
<b>Joint Care Proceedings Pilot</b>	Improve the mechanism & time for completion of Family Court Proceedings for children. Cases of 94 families (178 children) tracked through family proceedings court.	Significant reduction in the length of time for court proceedings. Pilot recommendations will be embedded into mainstream processes & absorption of staff costs into mainstream budgets.
<b>Family Drug &amp; Alcohol Court Pilot</b>	Small scale pilot of a collaborative service delivery model for children at risk due to parental substance misuse. Aim to allow more children to remain with their family.	Pilot ceased in advance of evaluation due to staffing issues.

Project	Purpose	Impact & Sustainability
<b>Children of Imprisoned Parents (CHIP)</b>	To minimise the significant adverse effect on children of having a parent in prison, through development of more family-focused approach in prisons & support for children/families of prisoners. Support provided to c.230 children and young people.	More positive experience of prison for families. Prison staff better equipped to positively engage with children & families. Approach sustained with an immediate shift from EITP to mainstream resources.
<b>Thrive</b>	Trialled a new approach to parenting & child development support via therapeutic childminding & mentoring for families being supported by social services. More than 80 families supported in one Trust area.	Positive impact on parenting capacity & child development, and improved outcomes in terms of reducing risk of children going into care. Approach sustained in the pilot Trust area.
<b>Community Family Support Programme</b>	Integrated support for young people & families with a high level of need to reach their potential by addressing the health, social, economic, educational, employment & training issues that impact on their daily lives. 1,726 families enrolled during EITP pilot.	Improvements in employability, social inclusion, family relationships and engagement with specialist support provision. Programme being sustained at current scale until 2022 via European Social Fund Programme.
<b>Raising Educational Outcomes for Looked After Children</b>	To address barriers & intervene early with looked-after children so as to support them to raise their educational outcomes. Delivered interventions to 305 looked-after children.	Improved cognitive ability & school attendance. Formal educational outcomes being tracked in medium term. Anticipated to be sustained beyond current funding.
<b>Community Diversion Project</b>	Early intervention, providing additional supports to children who have become involved with youth justice services or are on the cusp of the criminal justice system. 104 additional supports put in place for children.	Outcomes data indicates a reduced risk of offending & the approach will be sustained via an immediate shift from EITP to mainstream funding.
<b>Social Enterprise</b>	Self-employment / business development support & placements in employment aiming to enhance the economic prospects of care leavers. Business plans developed with cohort of care leavers & 3 placements completed.	Model being sustained in current form & potential for expansion & further development.

Workstream 3 was the broadest of all EITP initiatives. As such it derived varied and wide-ranging outcomes for the children and families involved, as well as numerous valuable lessons about what worked, what didn't and why. The examples below provide more insight into several of the projects supported.

## 1. Home on Time

Before EITP, vulnerable children within the care system were having to wait too long to find permanent, secure care. Navigating the care system was slow and complicated and often resulted in negative experiences for both children and carers. The Home on Time (HOT) Concurrent Planning Project ran across all 5 health trusts in Northern Ireland between June 2014 and August 2018, providing support to children going through care proceedings. It sought to speed up decisions on whether looked after children would return to their birth family or be adopted, reducing the extent of uncertainty and instability faced by children in the care system. The project liaised between the legal system and families, and provided intensive support to birth parents. Prospective carers were approved as both foster and adoptive parents, facilitating smoother transition of children into adoption where that was the court decision. By August 2019 109 children had been accepted and 86 had been placed. Eighty-five concurrent carers had been approved, and 71 were still in assessment. **Funding:** £2.5 million.

### Impact & Sustainability:

- Permanent placement of 86 children within stable family homes and a significant reduction in the time taken to achieve permanence.
- Home on Time model embedded into mainstream practice.



## 2. Building Better Futures

Designed to provide more timely and effective support to children and families who have reached the point where social services family support is necessary. Building Better Futures sought to improve outcomes for children by training social work professionals to use tools and interventions that have been shown to be effective in developing key parenting capabilities, like better communication and behavioural control. The Building Better Futures model explicitly recognises parents' own history, experiences and context as key influencers of their parenting behaviour. It provides child and family social workers with a conceptual framework to actively engage parents in the assessment and enhancement of their parenting capacity when there are concerns about how their care-giving is impacting on their children<sup>4</sup>. These included family network meetings, motivational interviewing and mediation skills. By seeking to mobilise family resources at the earliest stage, Building Better Futures offered the potential to improve outcomes without increasing public spending. It supported almost 400 children and 320 social work staff between 2015 and 2019. **Funding:** £1.2 million.

### Impact & Sustainability:

- Development of a practitioner-friendly and locally applicable model, resulting in improved engagement with families and a more comprehensive understanding of their needs and strengths over time.
- Positive impacts in terms of strengthening social work practice, with high levels of buy-in amongst senior staff and practitioners using the model.
- The revised approach is being sustained and fully implemented into business as usual across all areas using core budgets.

<sup>4</sup>Adverse Childhood Experiences, "Evidence Review: Developing Trauma Informed Practice in Northern Ireland", Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland, 2018



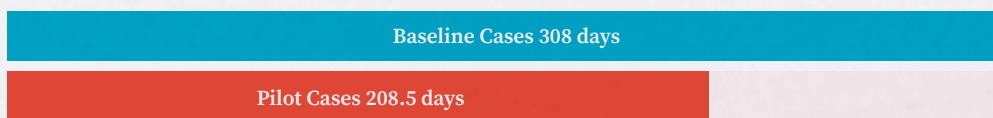


### 3. Joint Care Proceedings Pilot


This pilot aimed to promote good decision making and minimise unnecessary delay for children and young people subject to public law proceedings, thereby improving outcomes for children by achieving permanence for them at an earlier stage. A whole system cross-organisational review was taken with a view to improving processes. A revised process was piloted in two areas (WHSCT and Londonderry Family Proceedings Court and SEHSCT and Newtownards Family Proceedings Court) and involved 94 Families with a total of 178 children. **Funding:** £342k.

#### Impact & Sustainability:

- A significant reduction in the length of time for Court Proceedings - median duration of completed pilot cases was 208.5 days while the baseline cases (cases lodged at the same period in 2014) was 308 days.



- The recommendations of the pilot are being embedded into mainstream care proceedings processes and the staff costs associated with the new process are expected to be absorbed into mainstream budgets.



## Workstream 4 Better equipping health & care professionals to intervene early

### Overview

Workstream 4 supports agencies and organisations that work with children and adults who may be affected by Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Taking a trauma-informed approach to safeguarding, it involves equipping health and care professionals to intervene early. It raises awareness of ACEs across Northern Ireland and provides guidance and resources to practitioners to mitigate the negative impact of ACEs. Between April and July 2019, Level 1 ACE awareness training was provided to 517 stakeholders across the public sector and 66 Trauma Informed Practice events took place. Workstream 4 continues into 2020/21. **Funding:** £1.4 million.

### Impact & Sustainability:

- Feedback from training has been positive, with attendees reporting an improved knowledge of the issue, increased empathy, and increased confidence and skills to more effectively address ACEs at an earlier stage.
- It is intended the project will support long term sustainability through creating organisational training capacity and resources.

## 3. Systemic Change & Lessons Learned

Ultimately EITP sought to bring about transformational change in the way health, social care and education services are provided to children and families in Northern Ireland. The fact that a majority of EITP initiatives are expected to be sustained in some shape or form (n=14) illustrates the success of its individual workstreams. But beyond that, EITP impacted on how services for children and families are planned and delivered, developing professional practice and increased capacity to further transform services and adopt early intervention approaches. Key lessons from EITP that can inform future transformation of services aiming to improve outcomes for children and young people include:

### Effective impact measurement

EITP projects were generally limited to capturing data on short-term effects and were unable to measure long term outcomes for practical, ethical and financial reasons. At a population level, the programme did not establish a baseline position, which presented challenges in measuring the delivery of objectives. Future programmes should commission longitudinal studies to measure effectiveness and inform future interventions.

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### Investment in co-design and planning

Transformation requires a deep understanding of organisation culture, values and people. EITP facilitated large scale transformation across health and education services through the development of collaborative relationships, an adaptive approach to implementation and effective leadership by key individuals to own and drive change.

**The exploratory phase built into the programme plan gave time and space to assess system readiness and engage key stakeholders in co-designing models of practice.**

## **Enabling Collaboration**

Relationships and co-operation across a wide range of public and third sector stakeholders have been strengthened through EITP.

**Some of the key enablers of the programme's collaborative working approach appeared to be a shared purpose, strong leadership, pooled multi-year funding, a cross-departmental programme board with shared decision making and an element of independent or external scrutiny.**

The importance of an implementation team drawn from participating departments and agencies cannot be overstated in establishing and maintaining relationships at an operational and strategic level.

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## **Capacity and commitment to data collection**

EITP was an early adopter of Outcomes Based Accountability, and while the methodology provides opportunity to improve the effectiveness of government funded projects, it requires increased capacity and commitment to data collection in order to be effective. By making effective use of project and programme evaluation, EITP has tangibly influenced the development of government strategy and policy, placing a greater emphasis on early intervention approaches.

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## **Planning for and investing in sustainability**

EITP had an early and consistent focus on sustainability, requiring projects to have defined their route to achieving long-term impact. Despite this focus, it was sometimes difficult to embed change in a time constrained period with no recurrent funding.

**Successful project sustainability appeared to hinge on a number of factors: sufficient evidence, competing priorities, stakeholder engagement, staff buy-in and strong leadership.**

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## **Independent broker**

Atlantic Philanthropies made a significant financial contribution to EITP, enabling end-year financial flexibility, unique to central government programmes, which was a critical success factor in the delivery of projects. Atlantic also provided valuable independent challenge, technical expertise and complemented evaluation and strategic learning activity.

## 4. EITP Legacy

In January 2020 the Northern Ireland Executive was restored following a three-year absence. This provides genuine opportunities to help secure a lasting legacy for EITP and the new ways of working it developed via a new multi-year Programme for Government. Yet there are real and substantial risks to sustaining its legacy, notably the competing priorities that exist for funding and transformation attention in Northern Ireland's public services.

**Maximising the existing impact and future potential of EITP requires a longer-term commitment to be made to improving outcomes for children and young people by implementing early intervention approaches, supported by multi-year, pooled funding and a collaborative / multi-agency working model.**

# Making Change

*with Government*

## *The* A T L A N T I C *Philanthropies*

Atlantic Philanthropies is a global philanthropic foundation that aims to advance opportunity and tackle the root causes of inequity. Over its lifetime it awarded grants of more than 8\$bn in 8 countries. Atlantic operated in Northern Ireland for 25 years, investing 570\$m of grants to cement peace, improve public services, and protect and promote human rights. Among its final investments in Northern Ireland was a collaborative initiative with the NI Executive that aimed to improve services and outcomes for citizens – focusing on shared education and services for children, young people and families, and people with dementia - and develop more collaborative, effective and outcome focused ways of working.

Social Change Initiative collaborates internationally with activists, policy makers and funders to deliver lasting social change. Established in 2015, it took on responsibility for Atlantic Philanthropies' remaining commitments in Northern Ireland and has a particular interest in extracting and sharing the lessons from its partnership with government. This report is one of a series exploring how this experience can support broader social change efforts.



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CHANGE  
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