

OCTOBER 2025



Together For Families

Charting a Different Course

Presentation to Public Service Transformation Board



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**Eilís
McDaniel**



**Deirdre
Mahon**



**Jacinta
Linden**



**Lyn
Preece**



**Kate
Beggs**



The Current Position

Why is this necessary?

4,240 children in care in Northern Ireland (August 25) – a **26% increase in the last five years** and a **47% increase in the last 10 years**.

Children known to social services represent approximately **1 in 6 of the population** and they **account for 1 in 2 (49.5%) of all children with poor mental health**.

Children in care are **12 times more likely to experience any mental ill health outcome**.

Care-experienced young adults

8 times more at risk of death by suicide compared to those with no contact with social services
10 times more likely to present to ED with self-harm or suicidal ideation compared to peers with no contact with social services

Sample of referrals to 2 HSC Trusts, of 154 cases referred to the Trusts, it was considered that 74 families (48%) **would potentially have benefited from the offer of an early enhanced parenting support service**.

Focusing on Families Survey.

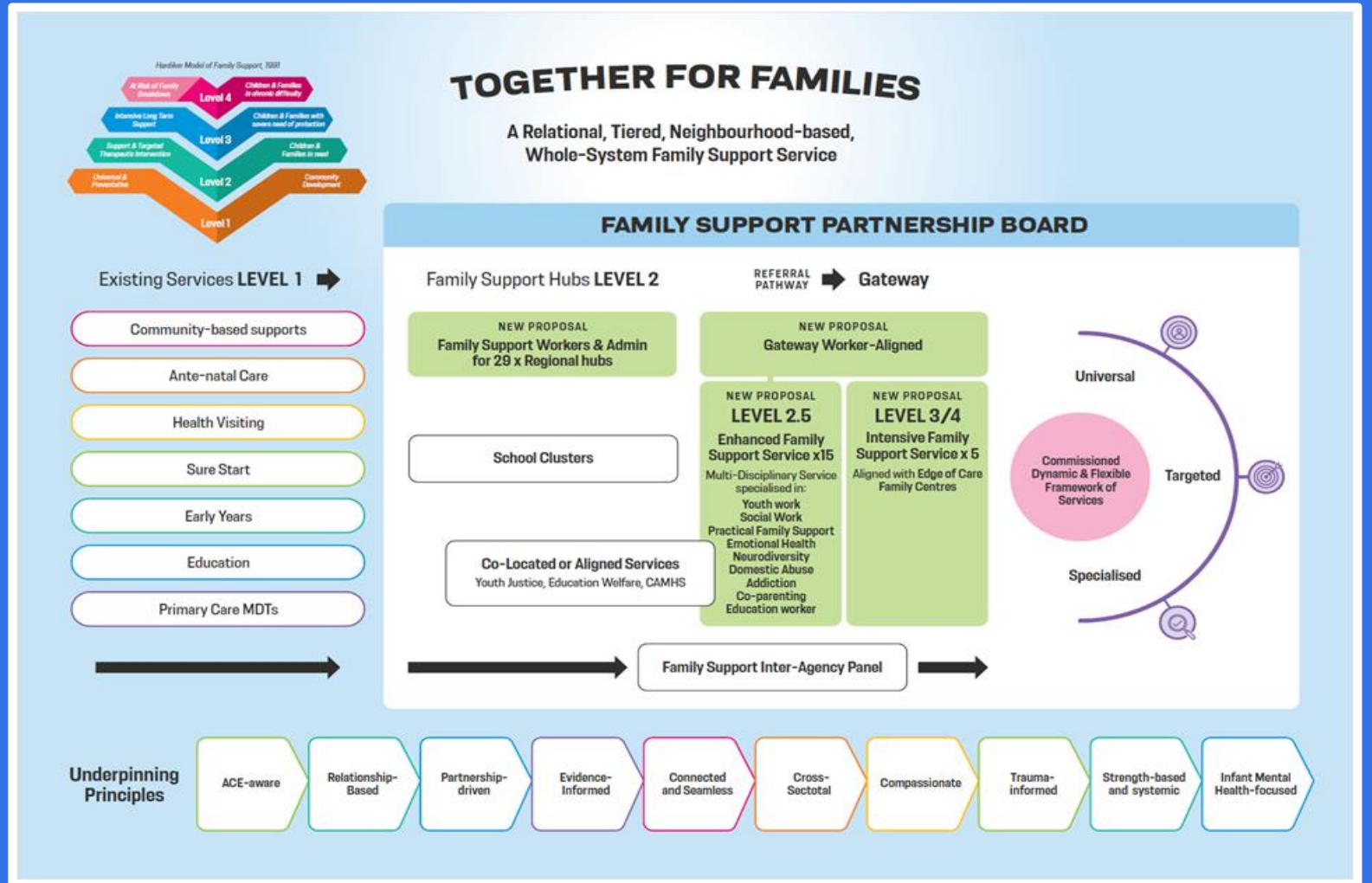
Key frustrations: long waiting times; poor access to information about services available; a lack of service provision in their local area.

Strong support for: the development of a universal, targeted community-based family support model.

Consistent themes - the need for: better co-ordination of services, a greater focus on early Intervention and prevention; and better access to family support services.

The Proposal

A New Family Support Model for Northern Ireland



The Plea

- We can't continue on this trajectory.
- System and families in crisis.
- Investment needed to shift left.
- Attempts to secure funding and what went before.
- Beyond testing.
- We know what families need and what works.



The Promise

- Formal governance arrangements.
- Dedicated implementation resource.
- Whole system support – HSC Trusts, Education and Justice.
- VCSE totally behind the bid. Energy in the sector.
- Developed in partnership, delivered in partnership.
- Ready to grip an unprecedented opportunity.



The Prize

- Late intervention - significant cost both in human and financial terms.
- Shifting left and shrinking right – reducing the late cost bill.
- Not just about reducing the number of children in care or on the edge of care.
- Wider system benefits – now and in the future.
- Breaking the inter-generational cycle of trauma and poor child and family outcomes.



The Future Position
What will a true shift left look like?

