

## Voice of the Infant Event Summary (19/02/25)

The event, focused on improving how the needs and perspectives of infants are represented and addressed within the care system in Scotland. Organised with contributions from CELCIS, NSPCC, Barnardo's, Aberlour, and the Family Nurse Partnership, the event featured presentations and discussions centred on current practices, areas for improvement, and collaborative strategies.

### CELCIS Presentation

Linda Davidson, is the Early Help Lead at CELCIS, the leading improvement and innovation centre in Scotland. Linda opened the event providing a background to infant voice and the legislative context.

The presentation highlighted the difference in legislation and the legislative process for infants in Scotland in comparison to the rest of the UK and that despite 30 years of good policy with regard to early family support, there has been significant issues with long term funding and implementation, including delays in bringing new duties into force and poor execution of existing ones.

### NSPCC Presentation

Joanne Smith is Policy and Public Affairs Manager at NSPCC Scotland where she leads the organisation's work around relational health across ages and stages, child development and trauma prevention in infancy. Joanne provided an input on Keeping the Promise to Infants.

The presentation emphasised the importance of preventative and collaborative work with babies and families, ensuring infant voice and lived experience are central to service design and delivery.

### **Discussion**

Short-term funding, loss of relationships due to service changes, and the need for decision-makers to better understand family needs were highlighted as significant issues during discussion.

### **Key Points:**

- **Current Strengths:** Participants highlighted improvements in understanding early brain development, non-verbal communication, and the establishment of infant mental health teams. Collaborative work and relationship-building with families were also recognised as strengths.
- **Areas for Improvement:** Discussions emphasised the need for more training across professions regarding pre-birth to age 3, better support for staff (especially during leave), and addressing resource limitations and postcode lotteries in service provision. The impact of poverty and short-term funding on service continuity were also major concerns. Participants noted a need to learn from practices outside of Scotland.

## Key Themes:

- **The Importance of Early Intervention:** Recognising and addressing needs early is critical for positive outcomes.
- **Relationship-Based Practice:** Building and sustaining strong relationships with families and infants is essential.
- **Addressing Systemic Barriers:** Overcoming challenges related to funding, resources, staff support, and inter-agency collaboration is vital for improving services for infants and their families.
- **Elevating Infant Voice:** Ensuring that the voices and needs of infants are prioritised and considered in all aspects of service design, delivery, and decision-making.

## Supporting Infants

The event showcased different approaches to supporting young parents, families affected by substance use, and first-time young mothers, aiming to provide children with the best start in life.

We were joined by Barnardo's Louise Wakeling, Promise Lead and Participation Coordinator shared learning and discussed practice from the [Threads](#) Service, providing support to young parents to help them give their children the best start in life. Interventions including group-work, home support, advice on benefits/ housing, parenting programmes. and work with Birth Parents and, Viv McCurdy, Promise Development Lead – [Fostering and Adoption](#) shared learning and practice from Barnardo's Adoption service.

Liz Nolan - Director of Children and Families at Aberlour, joined us and shared learning from the organisations work on [Mother and Child Recovery Houses](#). These support women and children affected by problematic alcohol and drug use. The goal is to help mothers stabilise their substance use, prevent drug deaths, avoid children being taken into care, and keep families together.

We were also fortunate to have Ilona Greives, Family Nurse Supervisor, shared learning on [The Family Nurse Partnership](#) (FNP) where specially trained nurses work with first-time young mothers to support them during pregnancy and their child's first 2 years of life to help them to make positive choices for themselves and their child.

Checkout

Reflecting on what you heard today, where do you think there's areas of opportunities or challenges across Scotland?

39 responses



A word cloud of 39 responses on a green background. The words are arranged in a circular pattern, with some words appearing more frequently than others. The words are color-coded in shades of green, yellow, and orange. The most prominent words are 'prevention', 'collaboration', 'support', 'education', 'relationships', 'primary legislation', 'permanence', 'residential support', 'babies' rights', 'powerful partnerships', 'calabaration', 'specialised', 'why did it stop', 'lived experience', 'the baby blindspot', 'effective listening', 'increased knowledge', 'improved team around the', 'focusing on relationships', 'long term funding', 'infant rights', 'early intervention', 'intensive supports', 'adoption advisory', 'funding issues', 'rights of adoptees', 'rights of children', 'funding', 'sharing what we have', 'kinship support', 'holistic support', 'mother-baby homes', 'hds programme lnh', 'having equity of services', and 'consistent funding'.

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