

Session 6:

Transforming Early Years Systems: Scaling What Works Through Community and Evidence



Nottingham Trent
University



NATIONAL
CHILDREN'S
BUREAU





**Community Champions as
Trusted Messengers: Sharing
Early Brain Science
Development with Carers in
Everyday Settings.**



Building  **babies' brains**

General Introductions —



Georgie Marks,
Service Lead
Action for Children



Anna Adcock
Programme Lead
Action For Children



Grace Williams
Building Babies Brain Champion
and
Director and Founder The Fourth
Trimester Postpartum CIC



Designed in collaboration with carers, community volunteers and Exeter University researchers through workshops to help shape this **community-based approach in 2018**



BBB workshops total **15hrs**, blended, face to face and self learn. Offering training to **'trusted messengers'** in the community

An **evidence informed approach** drawing on readily available trusted resources, supporting community champions to **'do more with what they already know'**.



Community Champions are
Toddler group volunteers
Peer Supporters
Homestart volunteers and workers
Family hub volunteers and workers
Early years educators
Perinatal mental health workers
Foster carers etc.

Design, delivery and scaling phases



01

Co design, development with carers, community volunteers and Exeter University researchers

02

Test, learn and develop delivery with 4 communities in Devon

03

Scaling across Devon – 36 courses run

04

Development of a train the trainer model to support sustainability

05

Scaling further afield
Bath, Wales, Torbay and Plymouth. BBB and TtT courses held

06

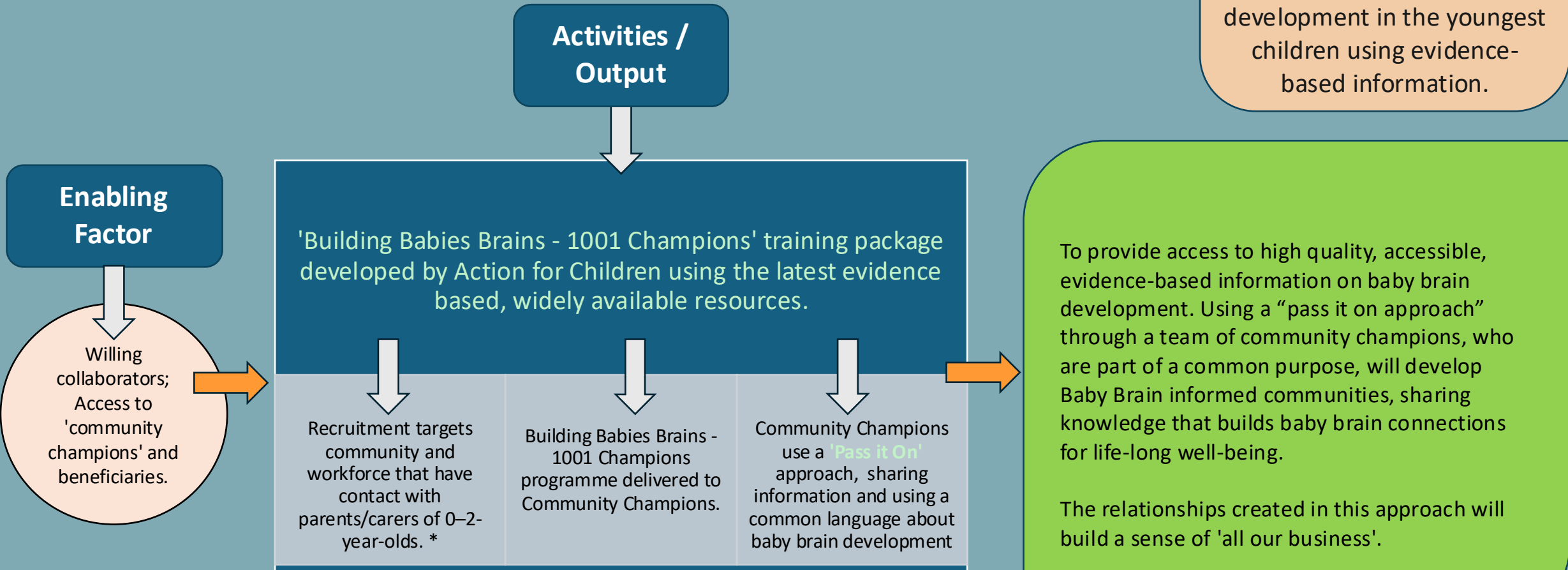
Further scaling to 18 Spring Nurseries across the UK and 4 Mother and Baby units attached to prisons

Over **450 Building Babies Champions trained** receiving on going support through CPD sessions, community of practice, newsletters and facebook posts.

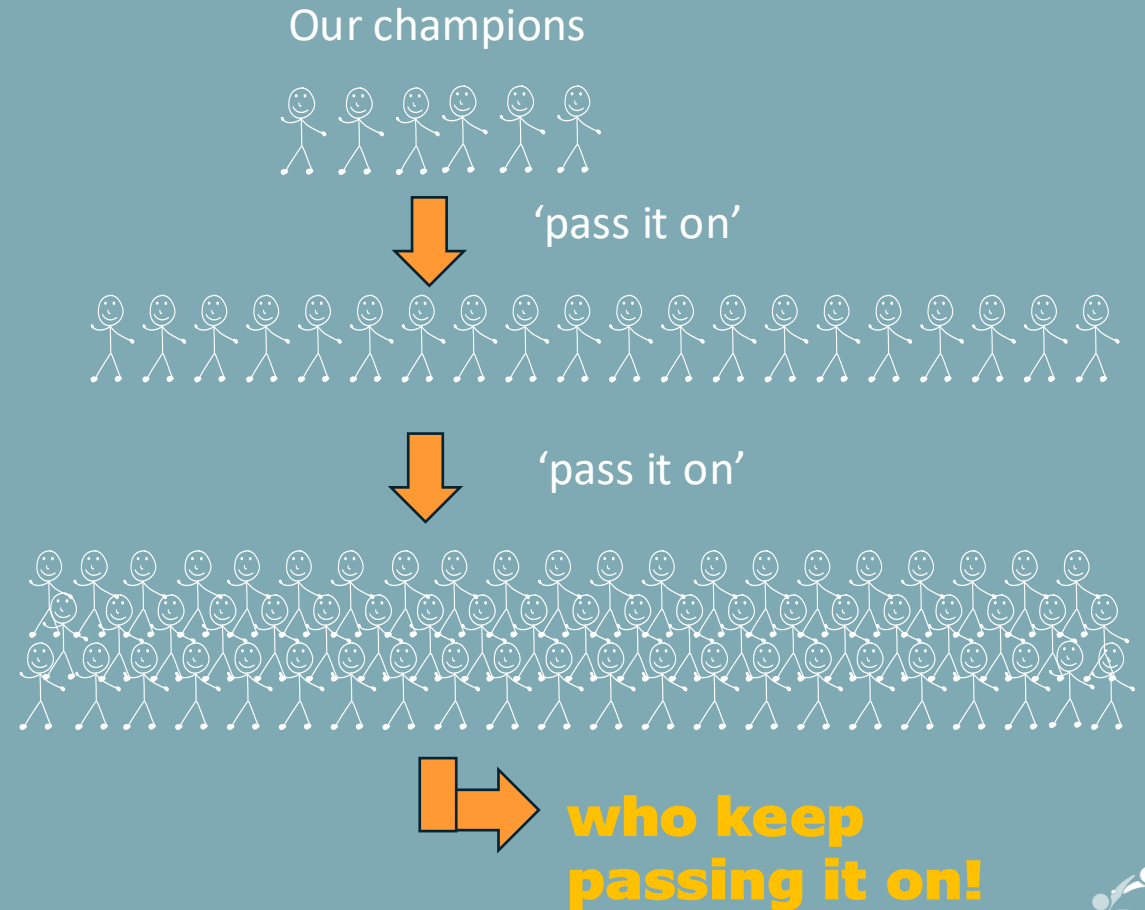
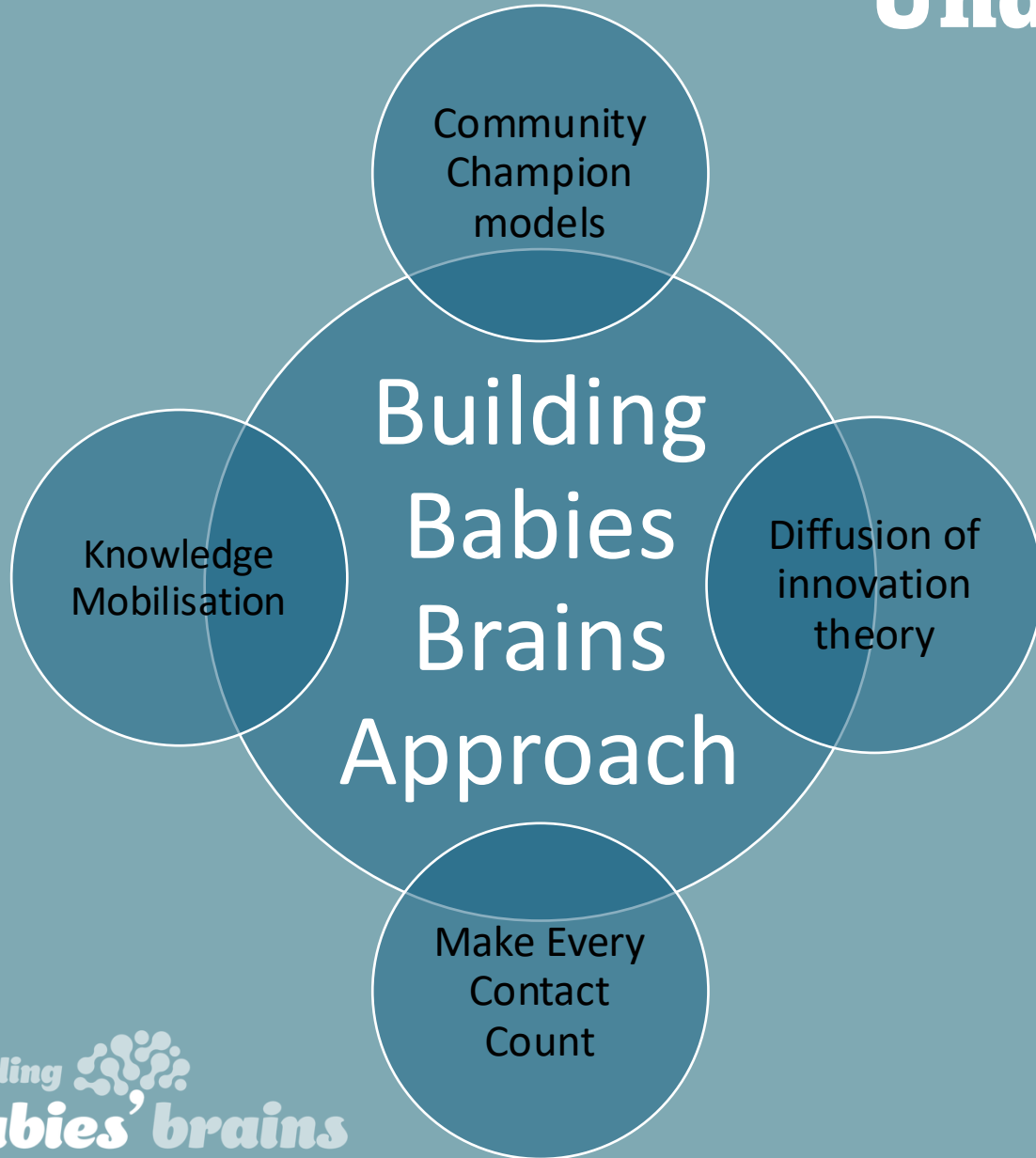
Logic Model for Building Babies' Brains... all our business




To develop a community approach to support brain development in the youngest children using evidence-based information.



Underpinning theories and models



The role of community champions in place-based early years support: how can we successfully share knowledge and build parent confidence?

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INTRODUCTION

A child's early life experiences and the relationship they have with their caregiver significantly influences the trajectory of their cognitive, emotional, behavioural and social development across the life course.¹ Supporting parents in their caregiving role during a child's early years, particularly those parents from low-income families, is crucial in

addressing health inequalities.² Children from low-income families are at particular risk of delay and impairment and are more likely to have poorer social and emotional wellbeing than their peers.³

Research has demonstrated the critical role that Early Year's intervention services can play in reducing health inequalities²; however, there is differential reach in the uptake of parenting programmes with poorer attendance for low-income parents, suggesting that those parents with the greatest potential to benefit may be the least likely to

engage.⁴ There is, therefore, a need for a new approach; one that is socially sensitive, trusted and sustainable and, crucially, able to engage parents across the socio-economic spectrum.

Research evidence supports the need for more community-centred approaches to health and wellbeing,⁵ particularly for disadvantaged families, and involving volunteers as community assets has been highlighted as a key strategy.^{6,7} In particular, existing work highlights the importance of trust and relationships when it comes to successful implementation of these programmes.⁸ While more research is needed, the impact of community champions on behaviour is promising, such as increased accessing of services, positive lifestyle changes and improved self-management of conditions such as diabetes.⁹ In this article, we present a case study of a community programme

using volunteer champions to show how trust and relationships were developed with parents.

CASE STUDY: BUILDING BABIES BRAINS
Run by the charity Action for Children in Devon Children's

Centres, the programme's aim is to take evidence-based neuroscience, historically held by 'professionals', and make the information and associated parenting strategies accessible to parents within the community, using community champions to disseminate this knowledge as part of their everyday



credit image to Action for Children

interactions. Champions, working across four diverse communities across Devon, were trained to 'bridge the gap' between parents and professionals by offering reassurance, building trust, disseminating messages and signposting to professionals if needed.

Action for Children commissioned the University of Exeter to complete interviews with 15 community champions. Ethical approval was obtained through Devon Children's Centres, and consent was sought from each participant prior to interview. Interviews explored community champion motivations and experiences in relation to training, support and dissemination of messages. Interviews were analysed thematically using a deductive approach.¹⁰ This article will share core relational elements that led to improved peer-to-peer knowledge exchange.

CREATING A RECEPTIVE CONTEXT FOR BUILDING TRUSTED RELATIONSHIPS

Champions described both successes and challenges in passing messages on in their community. In terms of successful experiences, champions described how their ability to pass messages on was supported by

Article

Understanding Knowledge Mobilisation between Community Champions and Parents: Evidence from a Community-Based Programme to Support Parents with Young Children

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Abstract: Background: Community champions have been employed across various settings to disseminate evidence-based public health information. The Building Babies' Brains programme trains champions to work with parents in communities, equipping them with child development knowledge and parental engagement strategies. We explored what makes community champions effective in distributing information to parents, including how the champion-parent relationship and champions' personal characteristics affect information dissemination. Methods: Champions included both peers and professionals working with parents in target communities. We administered an online survey ($n = 53$) and follow-up interviews ($n = 14$) with champions, with representation from across all training cohorts. We conducted a realist-informed reflexive thematic analysis to generate themes in the data and highlight the contexts, mechanisms, and outcome patterns identified. Results: We observed 15 Context-Mechanism-Outcome configurations across five themes: information sharing opportunities, information relevance, the nature of the champion-parent relationship, interaction expectations, and champion confidence. Our programme theory for how the community champion approach works identified that peer champions focused more on building rapport, modelling behaviours, and being a trusted community resource than direct information transfer. Professional champions, in contrast, showed greater expertise and confidence in discussing parenting practices directly. For both groups, traits such as friendliness and the ability to establish a trusting relationship enhanced effectiveness. Conclusions: This research identifies the impacts of knowledge mobilisation in this context, with implications for training and recruitment of champions. Those using a champion model in comparable settings should ensure that champions have the necessary knowledge, skills, and confidence to engage parents and share information effectively.

Keywords: community support; champions; parenting; implementation; knowledge mobilisation; realist

1. Introduction

1.1. Early Interventions to Improve Child Health

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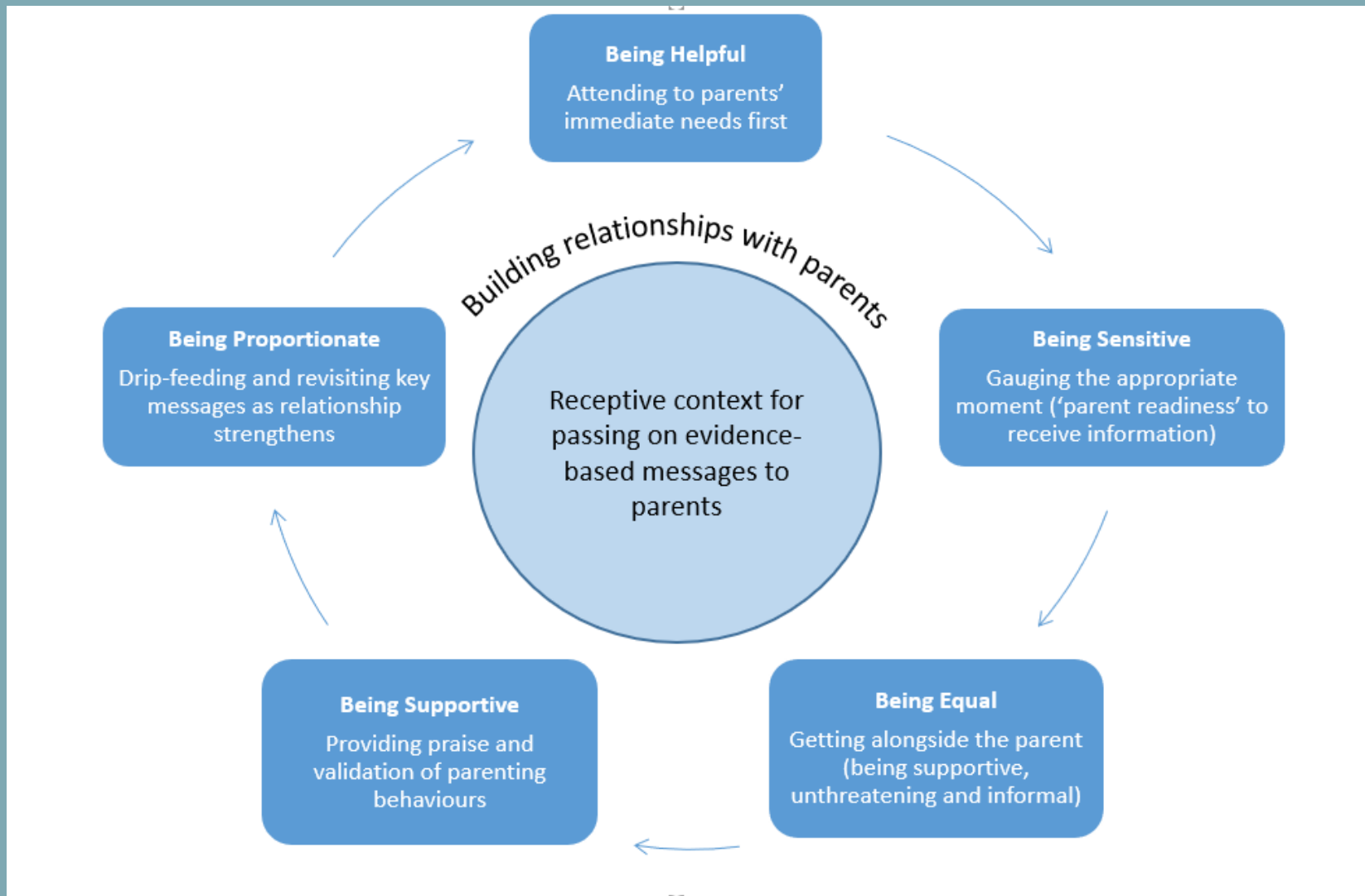
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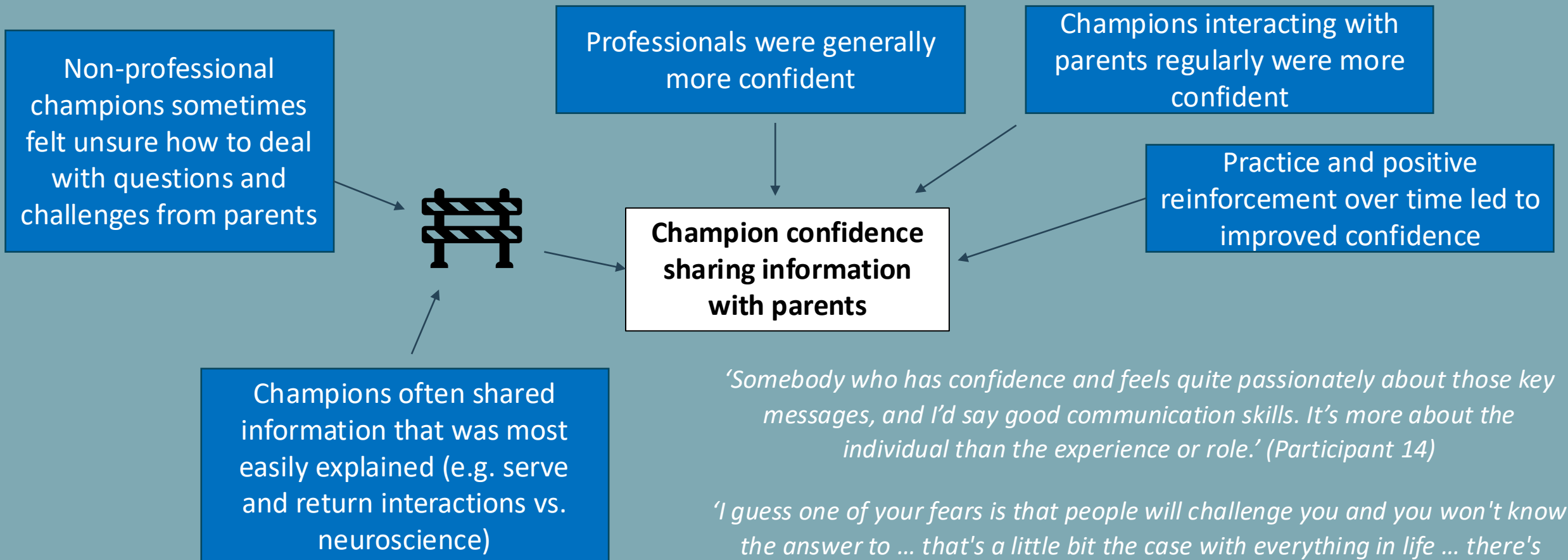
What champions felt was needed to build relationships for 'pass it on to be successful





Theme 5: Champion confidence

Confidence was considered more important than champion role for sharing information with parents





Grace Williams

Building Babies Brains Champion

Director and Founder, The Fourth Trimester Postpartum CIC



Grace Williams

Director and Founder



And a

Babies Brains Champion



Key take aways to support approach development and scaling



1. Test, listen and learn from champions
2. Learn from Research
 - Increase in delivery time supported more reflective conversations and time over content
 - Champions confidence benefit from continued support, so we increased support from facebook posts to CPD session with external researchers, newsletters and community of practice sessions.
 - Production of a champion handbook so they have a physical resource.
 - Continued access to resources via our website.
3. Give time to recruit trusted messengers – visiting the community, build relationships
4. Having capacity within the approach to adapt reflective space to the local community needs

'TRUSTED MESSENGERS'

Sharing evidence- based
messages about baby
development with all who
need to know

Because...

**It takes a village to
raise a child**

