

## Session 6:

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



Nottingham Trent  
University



NATIONAL  
CHILDREN'S  
BUREAU





# Exploring School Readiness: Learning from A Better Start

Early Years Systems: Scaling What Works Through Community and Evidence

5 March 2026

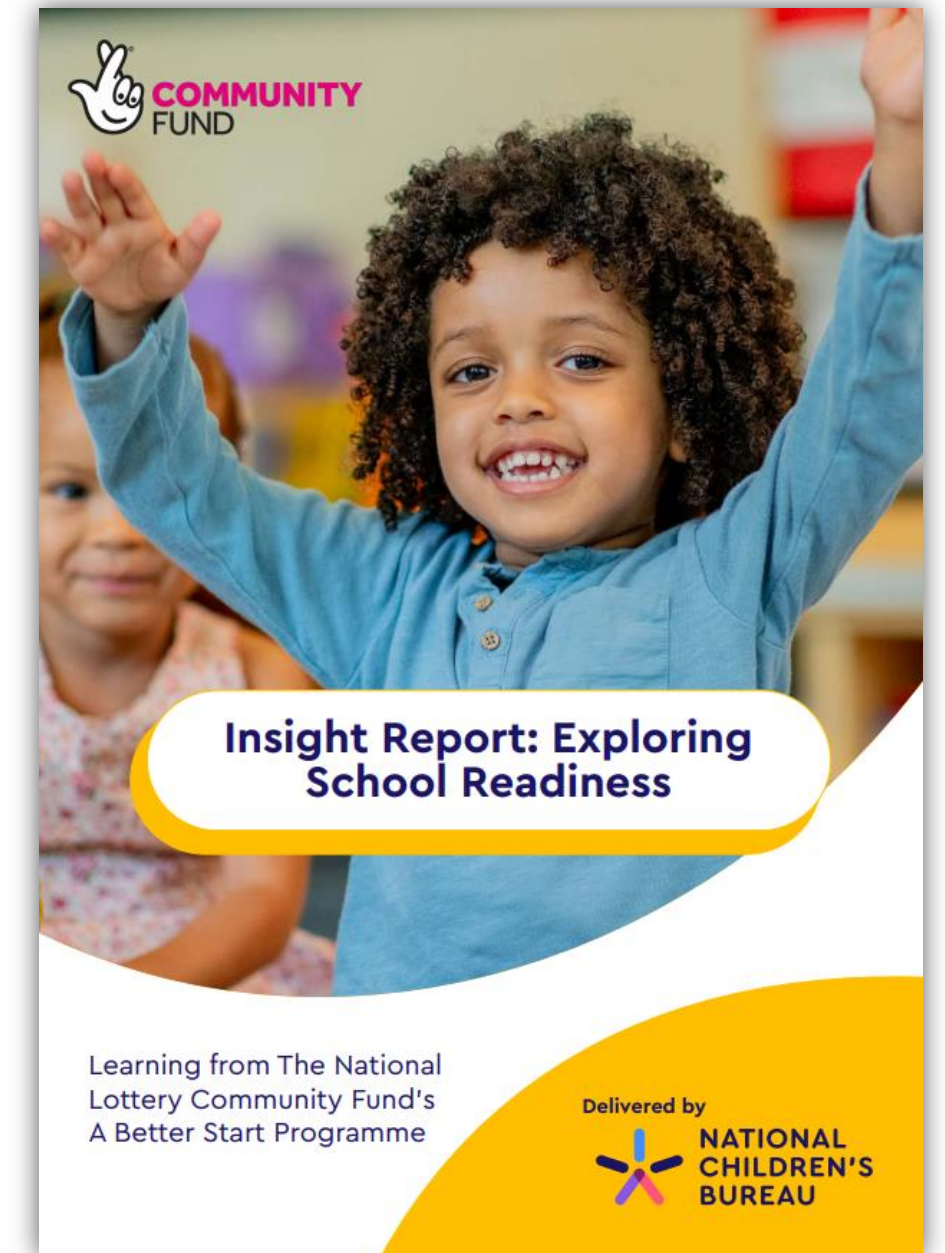
# About A Better Start

- 2015 – 2025, £215 million investment
- Five partnerships supported communities to give babies and young children the best start in life
- Putting children, families and communities in the lead
- Place-based: services and systems tailored to each local setting



# ABS Insight Report: method

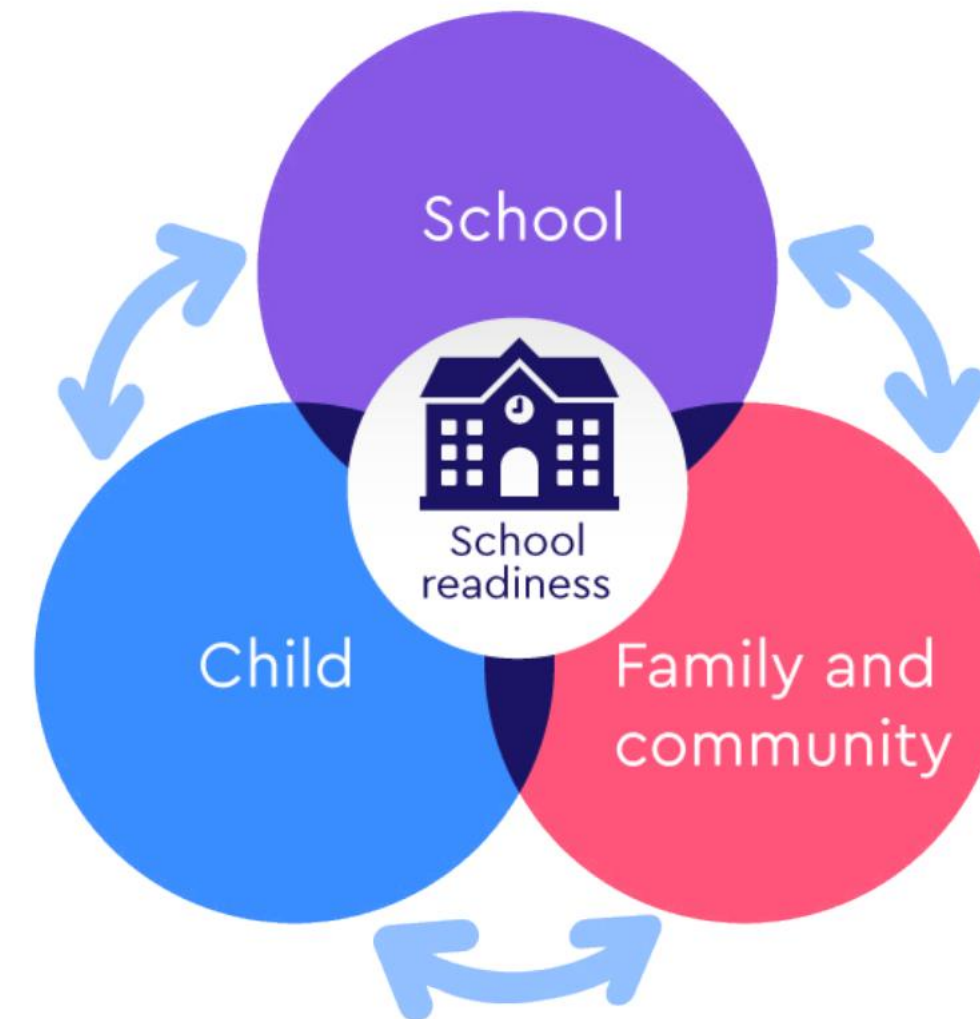
- Over 90 pieces of published ABS evidence reviewed
- Cross-site synthesis of learning and evidence
- Key themes across sites identified and selected based on early years landscape and policy influencing potential
- First (of 4) report topics chosen based on policy landscape and government commitment to Good Level of Development target



# A broader framing of school readiness

## UNICEF's model of school readiness:

1. Children's readiness for school
2. Schools' readiness for children
3. Families and communities' readiness for school


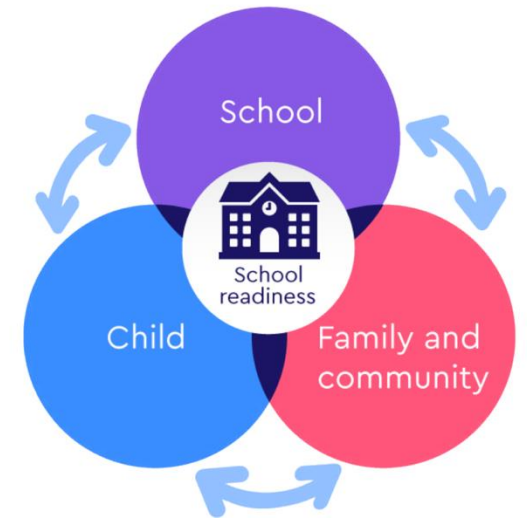


- Inclusive practices
- Teacher preparedness
- Resources


- Cognitive development
- Social-emotional development
- Physical development

- Understanding expectations
- Engagement and support

# Children's readiness for school



- Ready Steady School
- Early Years Park Rangers
- Parks and Open Spaces



- Natural Thinkers



- Forest Schools Play
- Talking Together



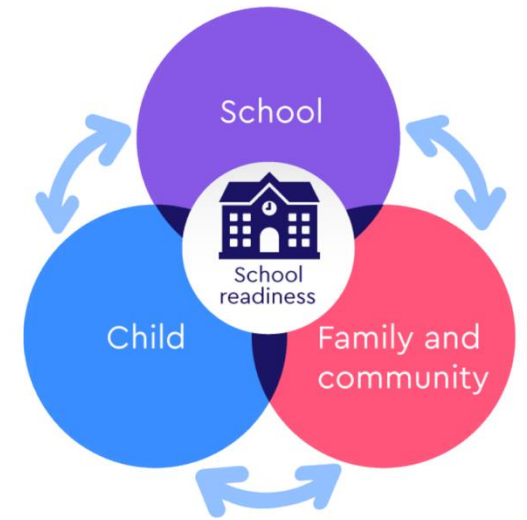
- Dolly Parton's Imagination Library
- Room to Play



- Let's Talk
- Umbilical Chords




# School's readiness for children




• Ready Steady School



- Evelina Award
- Natural Thinkers



• Talking Together



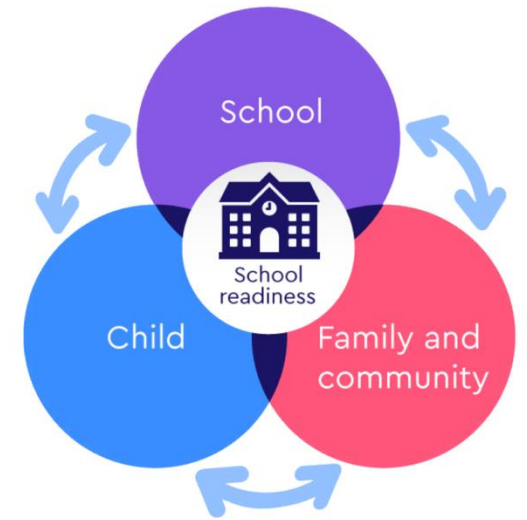
• Room to Play



• Talking Transitions




# Families and communities' readiness for school



- Ready Steady School




- Making it REAL
- Natural Thinkers



- Better Start Imagine
- Talking Together



- Small Steps at Home



- Storysacks
- Umbilical Chords



# System-wide enablers

## 1. Holistic services which support:

- physical, communication and social and emotional skills
- partnerships between schools and services
- support improved transitions and shared practice

## 2. Parent and community engagement:

- building trusted relationships to improve impact
- families are key system actors



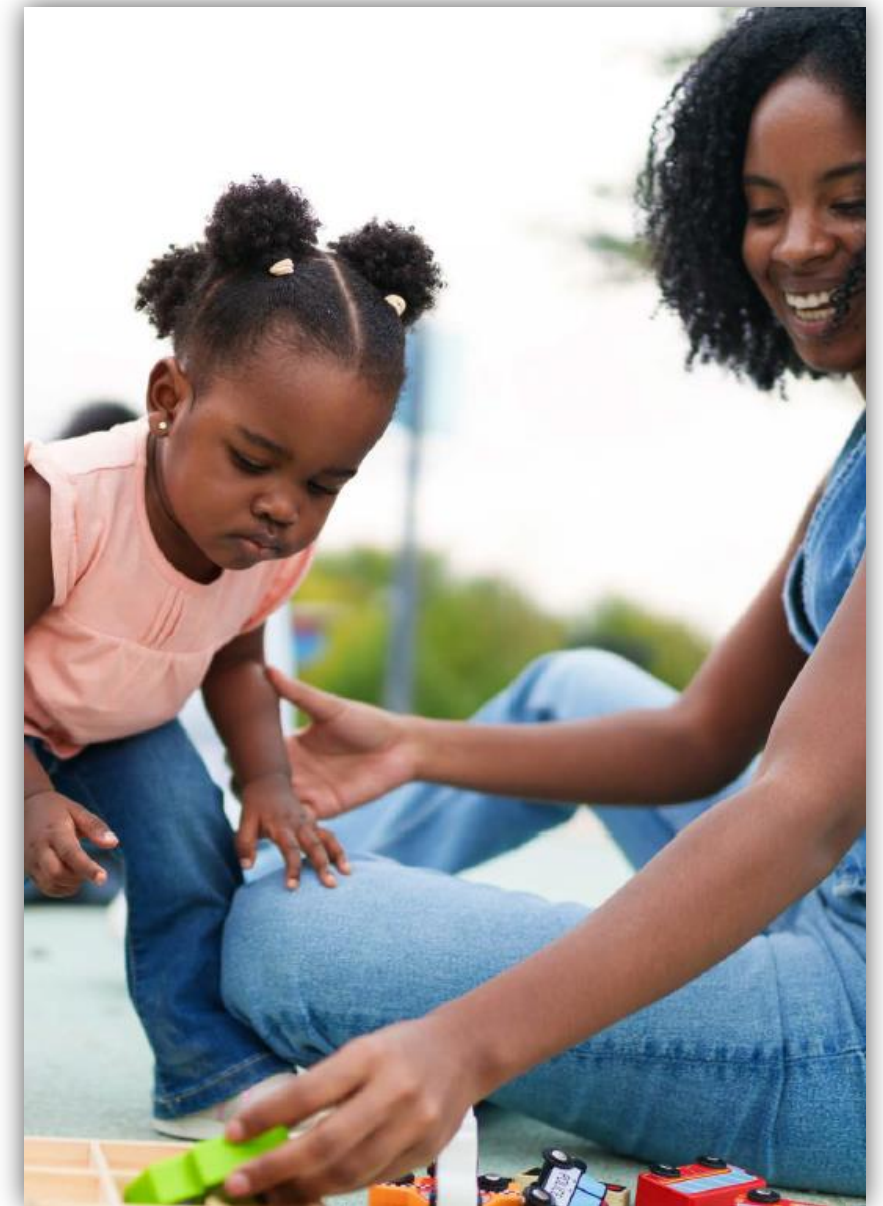
# System-wide enablers

## 3. Community spaces as early years infrastructure, support:

- children's physical development
- children's emotional regulation
- development of language through play
- parent confidence using outdoor spaces

## 4. Home learning as a system lever with evidence for positive impacts for:

- parent-child interaction
- children's communication and language development
- children's literacy behaviours



# Next steps

To be published in March:

1. **Best practice guide** for practitioners
2. **Podcast** with parent and practitioner experience of school readiness
3. **Free webinar** on 24 March

A promotional graphic for a webinar. It features a yellow background with a large white circle on the right containing a photo of a young child with curly hair, wearing a blue shirt, with arms raised. The text is in black and pink. At the bottom, there is a pink button with the text 'BOOK NOW'.

Delivered by

 **COMMUNITY FUND**

 **NATIONAL CHILDREN'S BUREAU**

Free webinar:

**Conception to reception:  
Reframing school readiness**

Tuesday 24 March  
11:30 - 12:45

**BOOK NOW**

