



# Integrated working

The only way to go...

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[Hester.Hulpia@VBJK.be](mailto:Hester.Hulpia@VBJK.be)  
[Hester.Hulpia@arteveldehs.be](mailto:Hester.Hulpia@arteveldehs.be)

When a baby is born ...

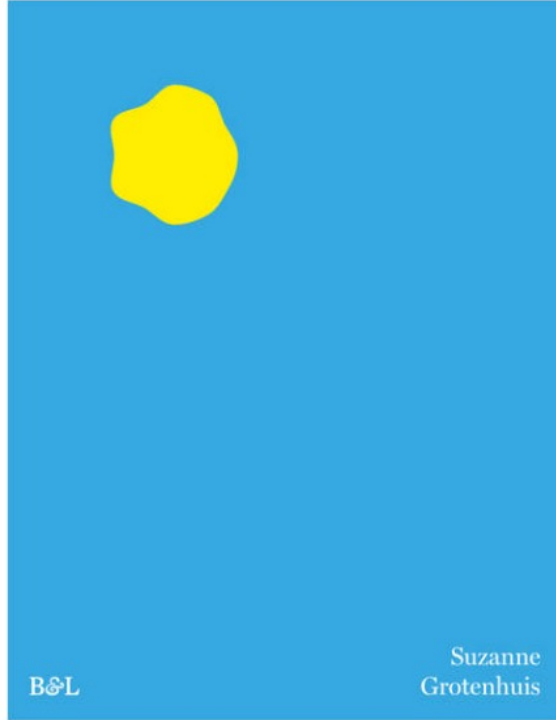




# When a baby is born ...

Waar  
zijn de  
wolken

Een pleidooi voor  
minder zelfzorg



*Also an overwhelming period*

*A lot of questions*

*A patchwork of services*

*Feelings of loneliness*

# When a baby is born ...



*Problem of fragmentation*

*Working in silos at service &  
policy level*



# When a baby is born ...



*A problem of a child or family is never isolated, it's always **holistic**.  
So, services should work holistically  
(Katrien Verhegge, TFIEY)*

# When a baby is born ...



*Poverty and exclusion are complex and multi-faceted problems. One of the main challenges in combating them is the fragmentation of services (Allen, 2003; Provan & Sebastian, 1998).*

*Complex problems require joined-up approaches (Moore & Fry, 2011).*



# Integrated working is the only way to go ...



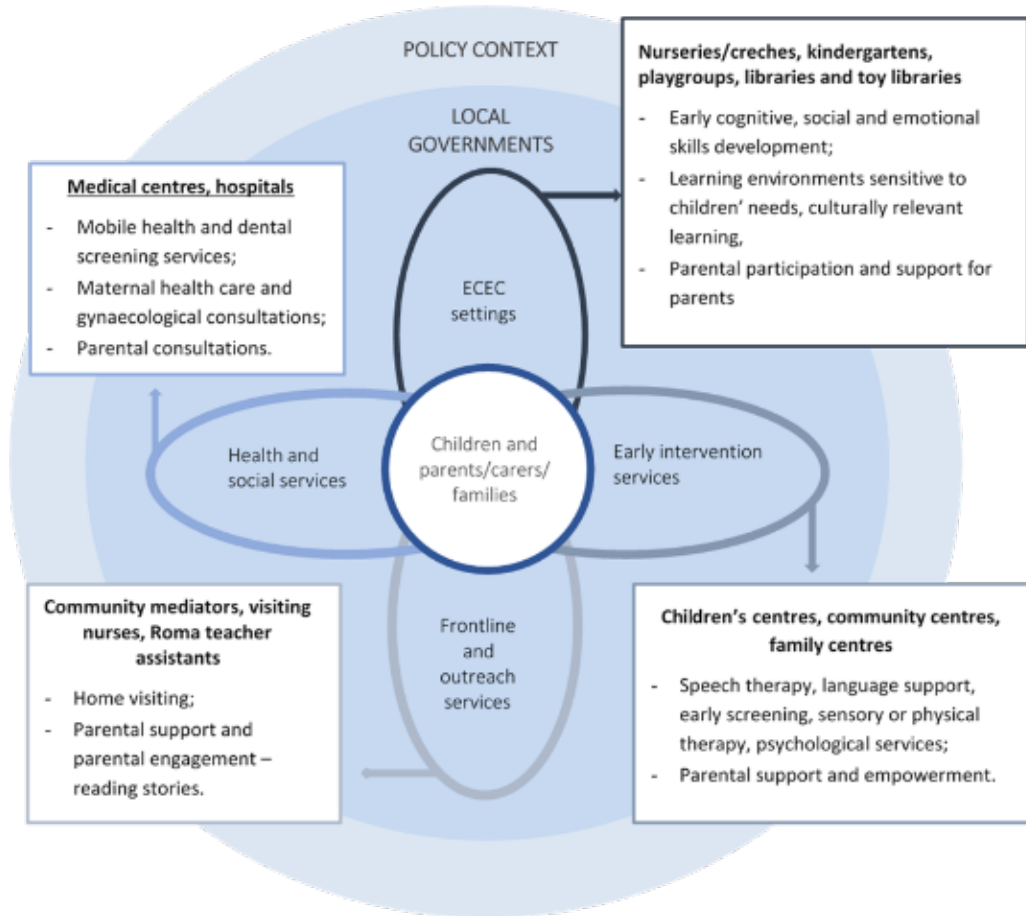
- in EU documents (e.g., EQF 9, OECD Starting Strong Reducing Inequalities by investing in ECEC, Toolkit for inclusive ECEC, European Child Guarantee)
- In research & EU programmes (e.g., INTESYS, ISOTIS, IAS, START)
- In practice (e.g., Family centres, children centres, ...)

# Integrated working is the only way to go ...

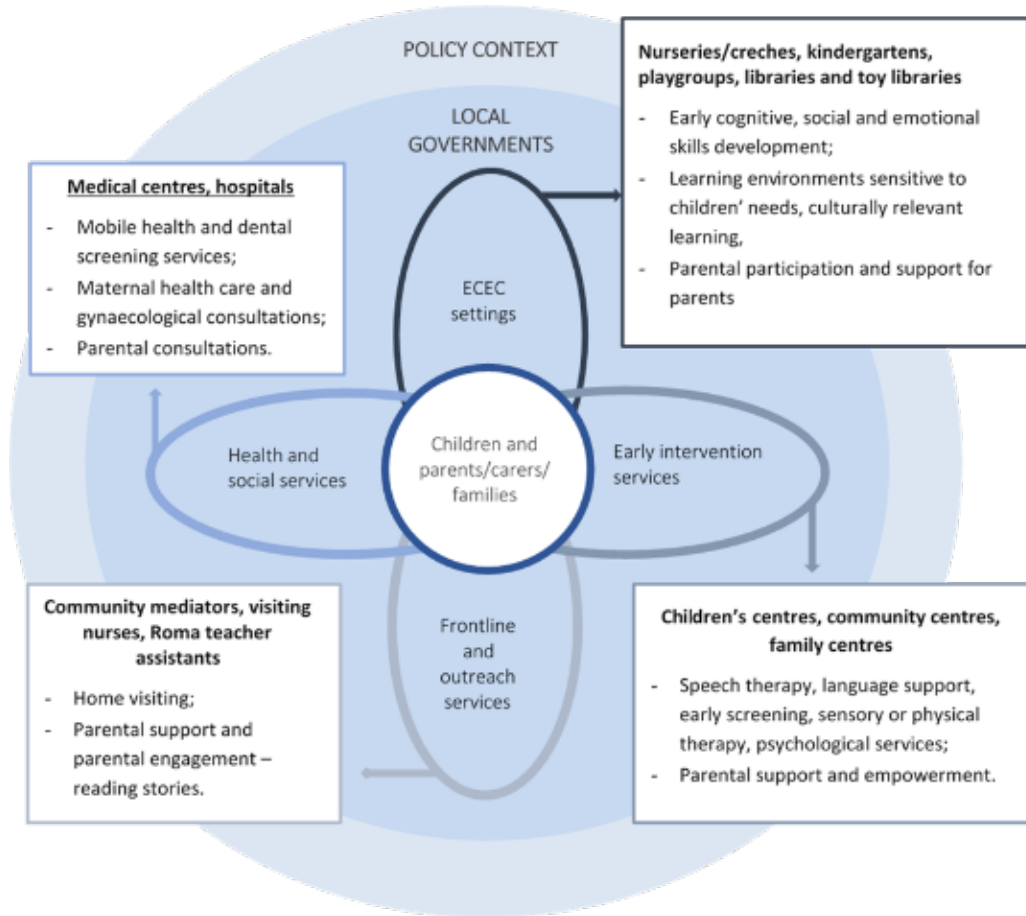




# ... and ECEC can play a pivotal role ...



# ... and ECEC can play a pivotal role ...



E.g., Children centres (Pen Green, Newry early years and family centre), Elmer childcare, KOALA

- Enriching practices for children & Supportive for parents
- Accessibility ECEC <-> partner services
- Professionals share knowledge & expertise (e.g., work child centred, reciprocal partnerships with parents, working with diversity)



# ... but why is it so hard?



## **Challenging times**

e.g., complexity, staff shortage, work pressure, feels like extra work ...)

## **Structural issues**

e.g., different governance structures

e.g., different funding (often chronically underfunded, or project subsidies)

e.g., different qualifications / structures / cultures / rules / language / laws / ... - no time to connect

e.g., lack of clear operational frameworks

# Needed preconditions



1. A **shared vision**, starting from the **needs** of children & families
2. Family and community involvement – **child & family centred**
3. High quality services (cfr. EQF)
4. A **competent system** with strong **leadership** and **reflective staff, with supportive system**
5. Supportive **policy, funding & time**





# 1. A **shared vision**, starting from the **needs** of children & families

## @ national level

Discussed & shared across all relevant sectors → time & resources

Based on the Rights of the Child & respecting diversity

## @ local level & service level

Define the **why**: Common vision & goals to work in the best interest of the child & family, responsive to their multi-dimensional needs

Define the **how**: Roles & responsibilities

An example

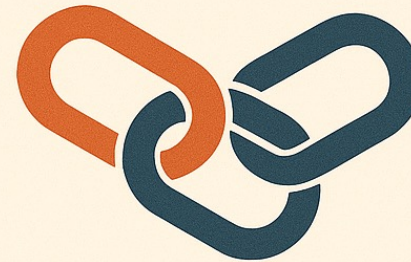
...

# Why would we work together?

For children -  
families - the  
community?

For ourselves &  
colleagues - our  
organisation?

For the policy level?



With whom do we  
have to work  
together?

- In close collaboration
- More ad hoc





## 2. Family and community involvement

### Family involvement

- Legislation & policies promote involvement of families
  - Need for policies on accessibility & reaching families & data protection
  - Work towards warm reciprocal relations with families, starting from mutual respect
- > < Hard to reach services (vs hard to reach families)

### Community involvement

Outreach strategies (e.g., community mediators – to bridge the gap between families and different services – through building mutual trust)

# 3. High quality services

**Process quality**

**Structural quality**

**Accessible**

Available? Comprehensible?

Affordable? Known? Usable? Reachable?

**Value diversity & inclusion**



## 4. A **competent system** with strong **leadership** and **reflective staff**

### **Reflective staff**

Willing to cooperate, open minded, shared learning, participative & inclusive work attitude

- Quality standards for integrated working
- Building capacity of all staff: well-qualified & supported (e.g., more joint courses & engage in greater collaboration; PLCs, networking, mentoring, ...)
- Promote staff diversity & community representation





## 4. A **competent system** with strong **leadership** and **reflective staff**

### **Competent system**

- Support at individual, team, institutional & interinstitutional level (e.g., multi-agency teams, team learning, clear protocols and mandates, joint training, sharing expertise, frequent and regular information sharing, and reflective practice)
- Structural conditions (e.g., child free hours)



A spotlight beam of warm, golden light shines down from the top center of the frame, creating a cone of light that widens as it descends. The word "LEADERSHIP" is centered within this beam of light.

**LEADERSHIP**

Spotlight on network leadership



# Spotlight on network leadership



***Strong leadership** is a crucial condition for integrated working (Barnes et al., 2018).*

*The leader is required to keep the integrated network heading in the right **direction**, and to **maintain cooperation** between partners in order to reach their **commonly agreed goals**.*

*In essence, the leader's role is to ensure the network is **viable and lasting**.*





# Spotlight on network leadership

## Role

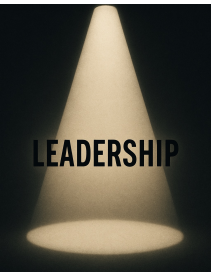
- Not hierarchical leadership
- **Connect** families, professionals, organisations
- **Support** network building: motivate, support, value, coach, empower, inspire, promote solidarity, ...
- **Search participatively** for shared vision, clarify expectations, keep focus, change management...
- **Neutral** position

## Needed

- Clear communication
- Democratic decision-making
- Mutual respect
- Clear mandates & roles

## Competences

- Managerial skills, strategic thinking, communicative skills, coaching skills, skills in change management
- Network skills: support & facilitate collaboration between families, professionals & organisations



# Spotlight on network leadership

## Recommendations

- Invest in developing **leadership capacity** at
  - regional level /local government
  - the integrated network (e.g., network coordinator)
  - service level
- By specific training courses on:
  - Networking, collaborative working
  - Information sharing
  - Change management
  - Inspiring & motivating integrated teams
- By individual & group learning



## 5. Supportive **policy** and **funding**

### Structural requirements

- Clear policy frameworks for universal, inclusive & comprehensive ECEC-systems
- Promote progressive universalism → increase accessibility
- Different forms of ECEC & family support services responsive to the needs of families (e.g., community-based programs)
- Effective governance & monitoring processes





## 5. Supportive **policy** and **funding**

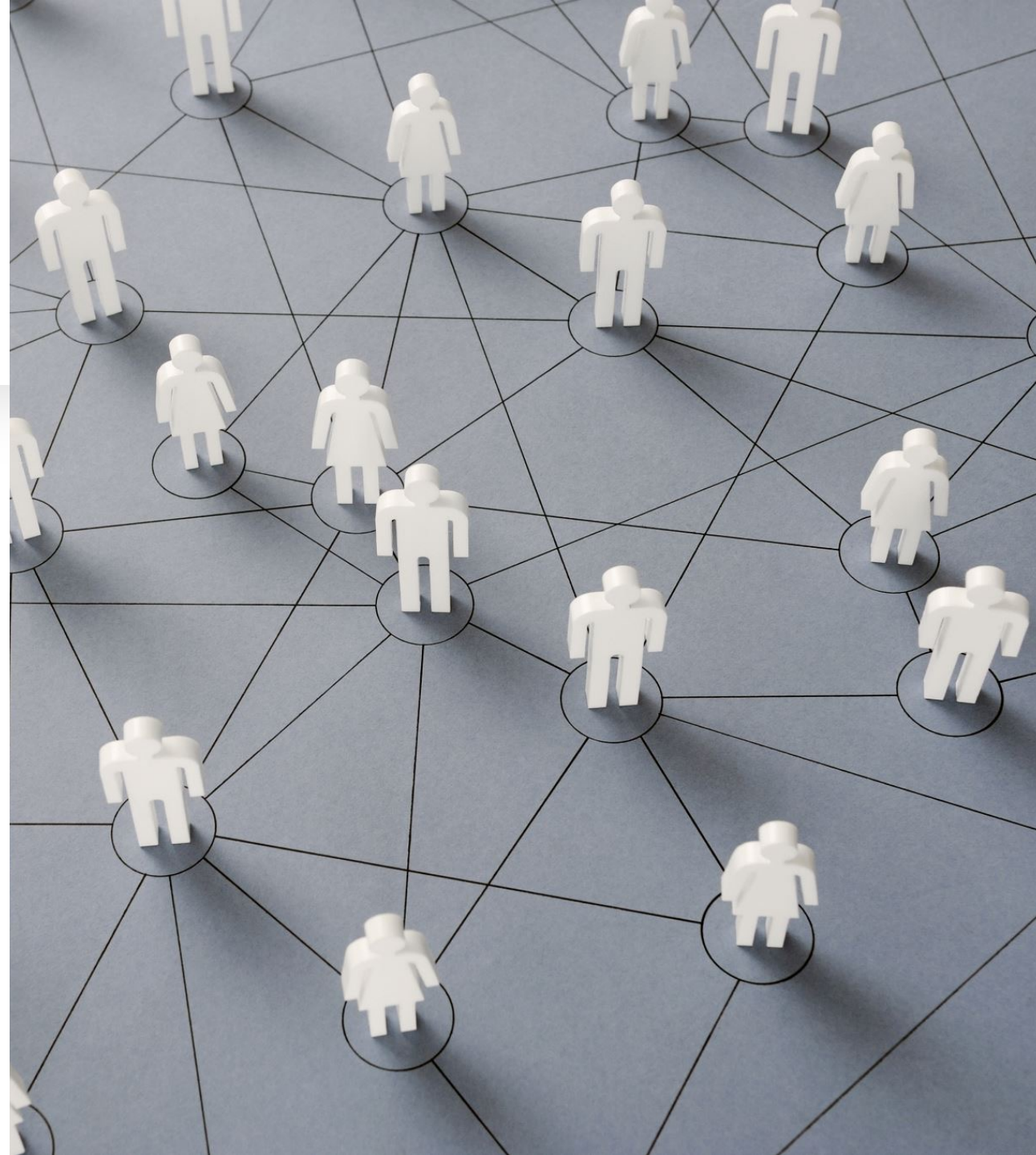
### **Adequate & sustainable funding**

- Secure working conditions (e.g., wages, support, working hours, ACR, case load, ...)
- Support collaboration

**Political will & commitment @all levels**

In reality ...

[Samenwerken in een netwerk | VBJK](#)







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