

Solihull Approach in Scotland: An Implementation Guide



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Rationale for the Solihull Approach in Scotland

The Scottish Government has demonstrated over a number of years and policies their commitment to investment in the early years. The Mental Health Strategy for Scotland 2012-2015 recognised the need to ensure that basic infant mental health (IMH) training was available for all professionals who work with children, and this was furthered in the commitments of the Mental Health Strategy 2017-2027 with a range of actions targeted at improving mental health across perinatal and infant periods. As a result, the Perinatal Mental Health Network Scotland was established in 2017, followed by the Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Programme Board in 2019 to oversee the Scottish Government investment of £50 million for Perinatal and Infant Mental Health services over the following five years.

The Psychology of Parenting Project (PoPP), within NHS Education for Scotland (NES), was launched in 2012 to promote children's social, emotional and behavioural development through appropriate support for parents and families, facilitated by an appropriately skilled and trained workforce. The initial remit of PoPP intervention was pre-school children with concerning levels of behaviour difficulty and the wide-scale implementation of evidence-based parenting programmes to support those families where difficulties were present has delivered consistently positive outcomes since its inception.

The breadth of focus for PoPP work has widened over the intervening period, as a reflection of the increasing investment of the Scottish Government in early intervention. In 2018, in conjunction with the newly formed Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Managed Clinical Network (MCN), NES launched the Perinatal Mental Health Curricular Framework: a framework for maternal and infant mental health, which detailed the characteristics of the perinatal and infant mental health workforce across four key skills levels. Building on this, in response to the rapid expansion in infant and perinatal mental health services and associated workforce, NES has developed a suite of training offers in IMH across each of the skills levels, with the aim to equip this vital body of professionals with the knowledge and tools required to optimise the wellbeing and development of infants and their families.

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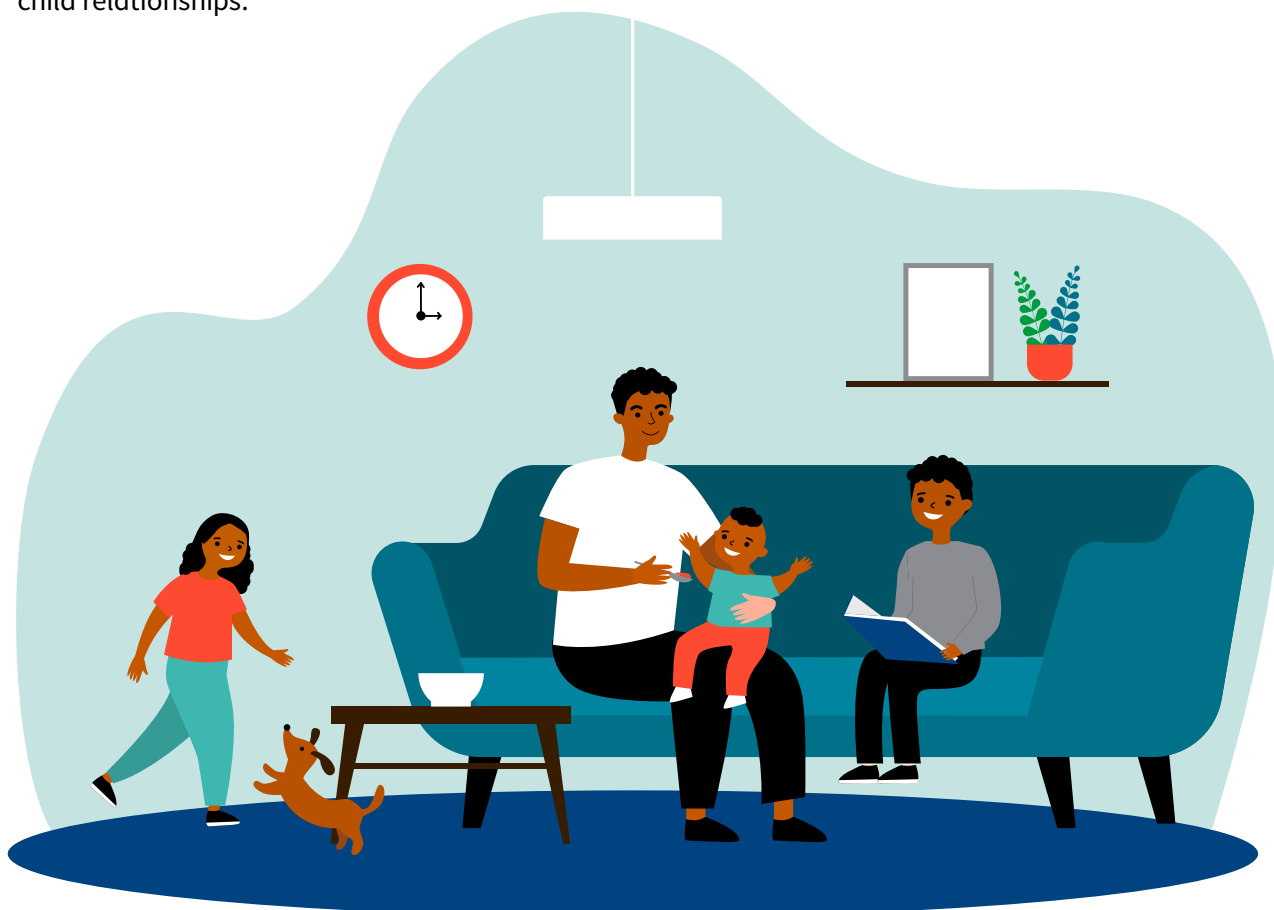
What is the Solihull Approach?

The Solihull Approach was developed by Health Visitors, Child Psychologists and Child Psychotherapists in 1996. It is centred on relationships, grounded in child development and psychological theory.

The Solihull Approach brings together three core psychological constructs of containment, reciprocity and behaviour management with the aim of helping parents understand their child's behaviour in the context of their development and the parent-child relationship. It focuses on developing nurturing and supportive relationships between children and their carer by promoting reflective, sensitive and effective parenting. It aims to improve the parent-child relationship as well as the child's confidence, self-esteem and behaviour. The Solihull Approach also affords practitioners with a shared language to understand child development and the importance of parent-child relationships.

The principles of the Solihull Approach are consistently applied across health, education, social care and other agency settings. It is a model that staff, across professional backgrounds, consistently report that they can relate to - that it describes the processes that they recognise in their work with children and families, that it gives a means of collaborative working and shared understanding and even supports report writing and wider processes, with its applicability to overarching structures such as GIRFEC.

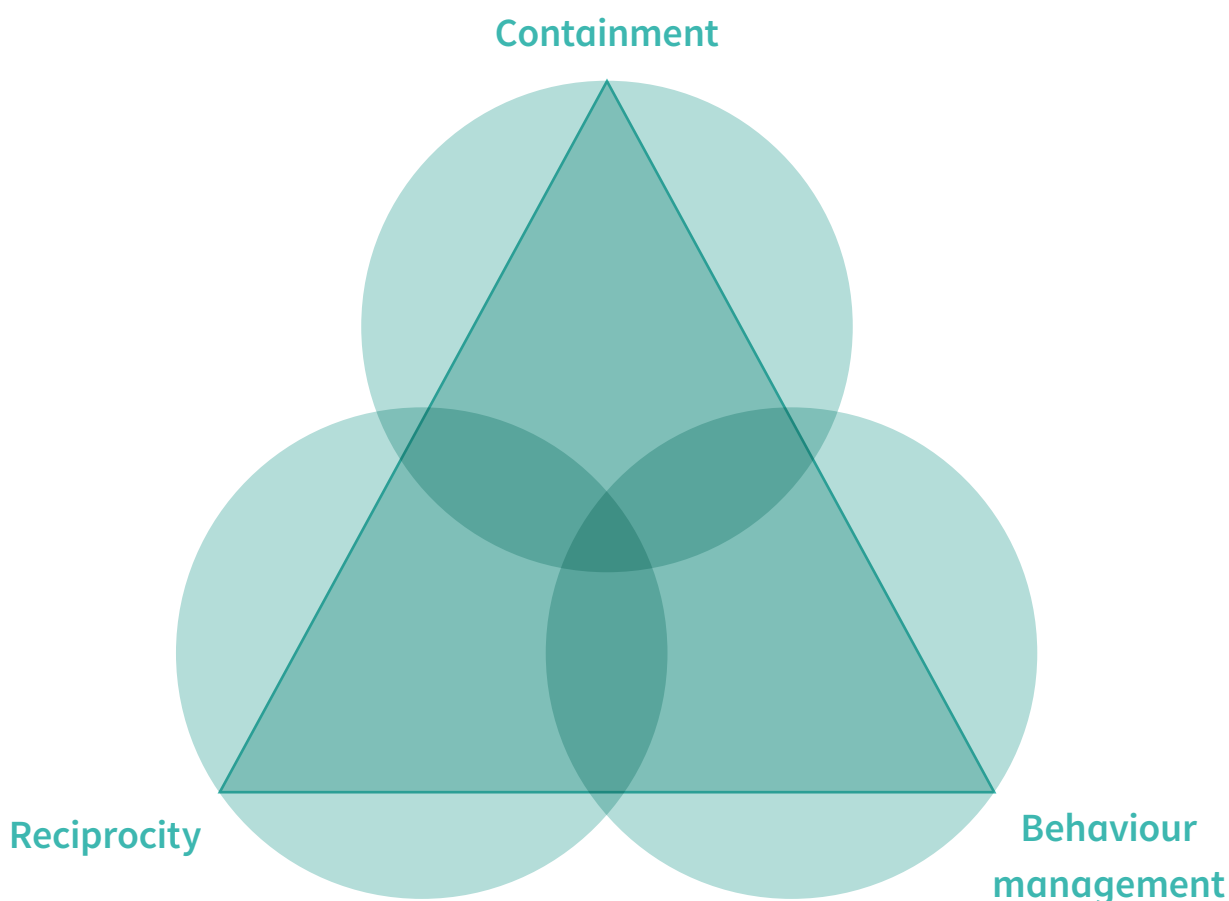
When services are able to fully implement the Solihull Approach across professionals and settings, the benefits are far reaching across practitioners, teams, the organisation and ultimately the children and families with whom they work.



The Solihull Approach Model

Figure 1: The Solihull Approach Triangle

Containment involves supporting someone to process their emotions, including anxiety and distress, to help restore an individual's capacity to think clearly. This happens from parent to child as well as from practitioner to parent.



Reciprocity is the dance of interaction between two individuals when they are tuned in to each other's emotions and needs and respond to these in a sensitive way.

Behaviour Management recognises behaviour as an expression of emotions and is best achieved when both containment and reciprocity are in place.

Structure of Solihull Approach Training

Foundation Level training

The Foundation Level training (FLT) is the core training in the Solihull Approach. The training is facilitated by two Trainers and takes place over two days, with each of the training days two weeks apart to allow time and opportunity for consolidation in the interim.

The training covers the key principles of the model in detail, through video material, case studies and large and small group discussions. Day one is dedicated to outlining the core elements of infant and adolescent brain development, followed by an introduction to the concepts of Containment, Reciprocity and Behaviour Management. Participants finish the day with an observation task to complete in the intervening fortnight. Day two builds on this learning by embedding the Solihull Approach in their thinking and practice, with exercises focused on how the concepts relate to their own professional roles as well as strategies for dissemination.

The optimal model for delivery is with a multi-disciplinary approach, for both facilitators and participants. This allows for rich discussion of different professional perspectives within the Solihull Approach framework, as well as key networking within local areas.

Train the Trainer training

In order to support sustainability, the Solihull Approach facilitates a Train the Trainer model. Trainers must have undertaken the Foundation Level training and ideally have had opportunity to embed the Solihull Approach within their professional roles.

The Train the Trainer training takes place over one day and comprises of a revision of the key elements of the Foundation Level training, as well as fostering skills in training delivery and participant engagement. Once practitioners have undertaken this training, they are recognised as Solihull Approach Trainers and can go on to deliver Foundation Level Training.

Manuals



The Solihull Approach Resource Pack accompanies the 2-day Foundation Level training and familiarisation with the content is part of the

training programme. It is recommended that all practitioners trained in the Solihull Approach have access to this Resource Pack.



The Solihull Approach Trainers' Manual accompanies the Train the Trainer training and contains the slides and materials necessary for

trainers to go on to cascade Foundation Level training. It is essential that trainers have access to this Trainers' Manual.

Modes of delivery

The trainings are developed and delivered in such a way to allow the modelling of the Solihull Approach concepts of Containment, Reciprocity and Behaviour Management throughout. Where possible, refreshments are provided, a comfortable training setting is arranged and across modes of delivery, participants are welcomed by name and held in mind by the facilitators.

Although the trainings were originally designed as face-to-face experiences for up to 12 practitioners at a time, the resources have been adapted in the face of COVID-19 restrictions, to allow delivery remotely via online platforms such as Microsoft Teams. It is recommended that trainings continue to be delivered to a maximum of 12 participants via this mode and the flexibility that the online delivery allows is beneficial in the context of limitations on social contacts, but also for those areas for whom in-person training presented a range of potential barriers. For example, for those boards with vast geographical expanse, the opportunity to disseminate training and connect professionals remotely has been warmly welcomed.

Feedback on the remote sessions has been as positive as that received for the face-to-face training, with the opportunity for online breakout groups and different modes of interaction allowing the training to continue to have a relatable and engaging essence.

Emotional impact of training

The Foundation Level training has, by the nature of its content, the potential to evoke emotional reactions for participants and trainers. The focus on early brain development, the importance of early relationships and parenting in general can raise a host of responses for those involved. Trainers acknowledge this at the start of the training and part of their role is to monitor the climate of the group, offering means by which participants can ensure their self-care through stepping back from the training or connecting with the trainers.

A new dimension on this is present with the remote delivery of the training and trainers have to remain mindful of the experience of their participants with the additional complication of not being in face-to-face contact.



Solihull Approach in Scotland

Solihull Approach Cascade Scheme (SACS)

In 2014, NES launched the Solihull Approach Cascade Scheme (SACS), to develop the Solihull Approach as a sustainable key practice model for professionals working within early years services. Since then, 14 health boards across Scotland have taken up the Foundation Level and Train the Trainer training on offer, and although initially targeted through SACS at the Health Visitor workforce, practitioners from a wide range of agencies and professional backgrounds have engaged with the Solihull Approach model.

Current Context

In line with the enhanced national agenda for IMH, reflected in policy and investment as detailed earlier, the Solihull Approach forms a core part of the NES IMH training plan. Recognition of the Solihull Approach as a foundation for understanding children's development, emotional regulation and the key role of parent-infant relationships in underpinning these, has led to renewed commitment to the model. Working with health boards across Scotland to understand the extent to which the Solihull Approach is embedded, NES is supporting leads within services to scope current Solihull Approach activity and to develop tailored implementation plans to ensure the model can be fully sustainable on a local level.

NES provision of training is specifically focussed on Train the Trainer, to support areas to build up their own pool of Trainers to sustain dissemination of the model on a local level. For those areas in which there is not a baseline of practitioners trained in the Foundation Level training and therefore in a position to go on to become Trainers, NES is able to support access to Foundation Level training for those practitioners identified as future Trainers.

Solihull Approach Online

Solihull Approach Online is a suite of courses, based on the principles of the Solihull Approach, with the aim to provide parents and carers with information about children's development and support their understanding of child and teenage behaviour in the context of the underlying thoughts and emotions.

In 2020, as a result of COVID-19 necessitating new ways of providing parenting support, the Scottish Government committed to providing free universal access to the Solihull Approach Online resources for all families and practitioners within Scotland. Thousands of parents and practitioners across Scotland have registered for these free resources.

There are now 6 courses on offer:

- Understanding pregnancy, labour, birth & your baby
- Understanding your baby
- Understanding your child (0-19 years)
- Understanding your child with additional needs
- Understanding your teenager's brain
- Understanding your brain: for teenagers only!

Although aimed at parents (and teenagers), the courses are equally relevant and valuable for professionals working with children and families, to enhance their learning and scaffold the support that they deliver.

Further information is available in the Solihull Approach Online Implementation Guide (NES, 2020).

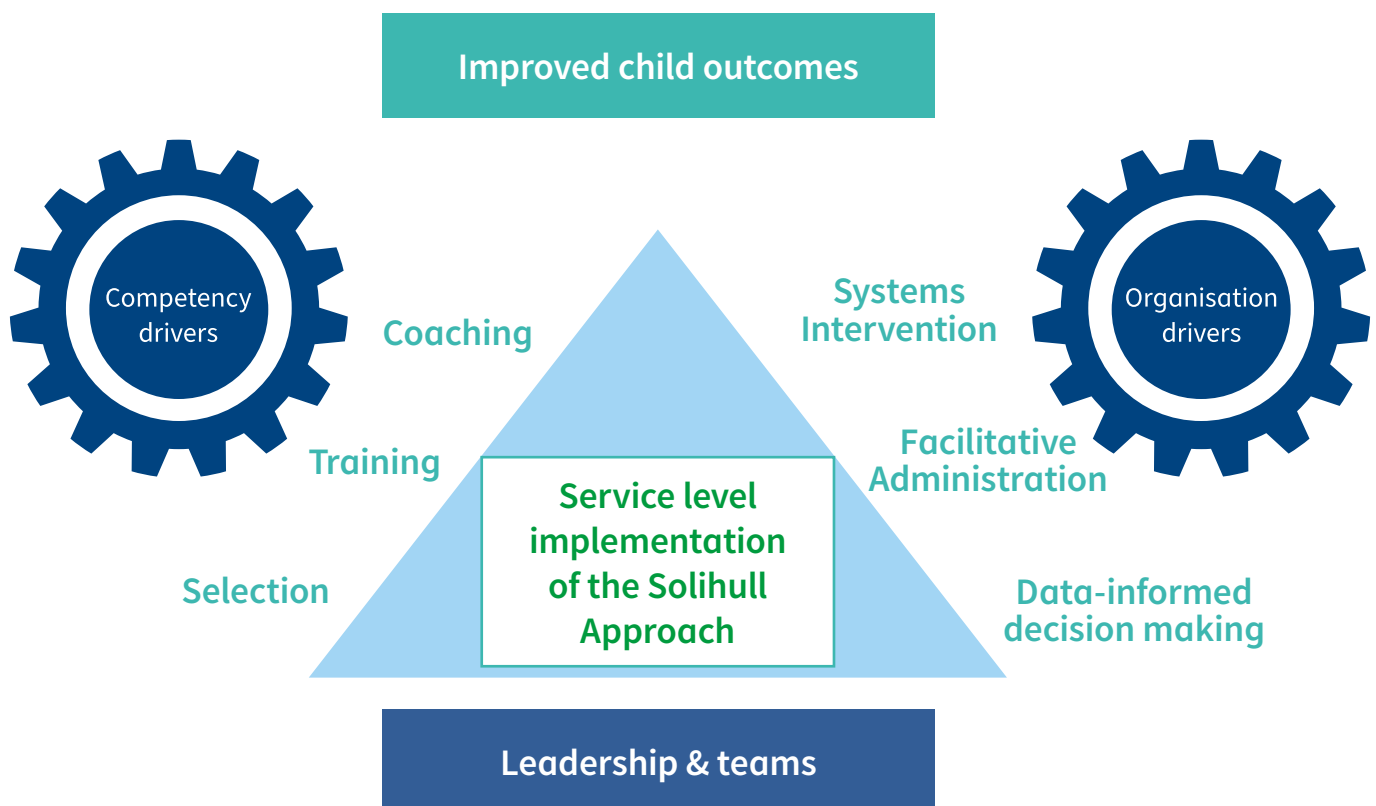
Implementation Framework

Effective implementation across settings needs to be held within an Implementation Framework. The model of implementation developed by the National Implementation Research Network (NIRN) at the University of North Carolina (UNC) at Chapel Hill underpins the wider work of PoPP and across Psychology in NES and is highly relevant to the implementation of the Solihull Approach.

The model is structured around two implementation drivers: **Competency drivers** and **Organisation drivers**.

Each of these different facets will be considered in relation to:

- the effective implementation of cascade delivery of Foundation Level training across the relevant workforce and
- the effective embedding of the Solihull Approach model within the practice of the appropriate workforce



Competency drivers

Competency drivers include those aspects which contribute to the development and improvement of staff competencies, for example selection, training and coaching. These factors ensure that staff have the capacity and confidence to be able to implement, promote or disseminate a programme with fidelity.

Supporting cascade delivery of Foundation Level training

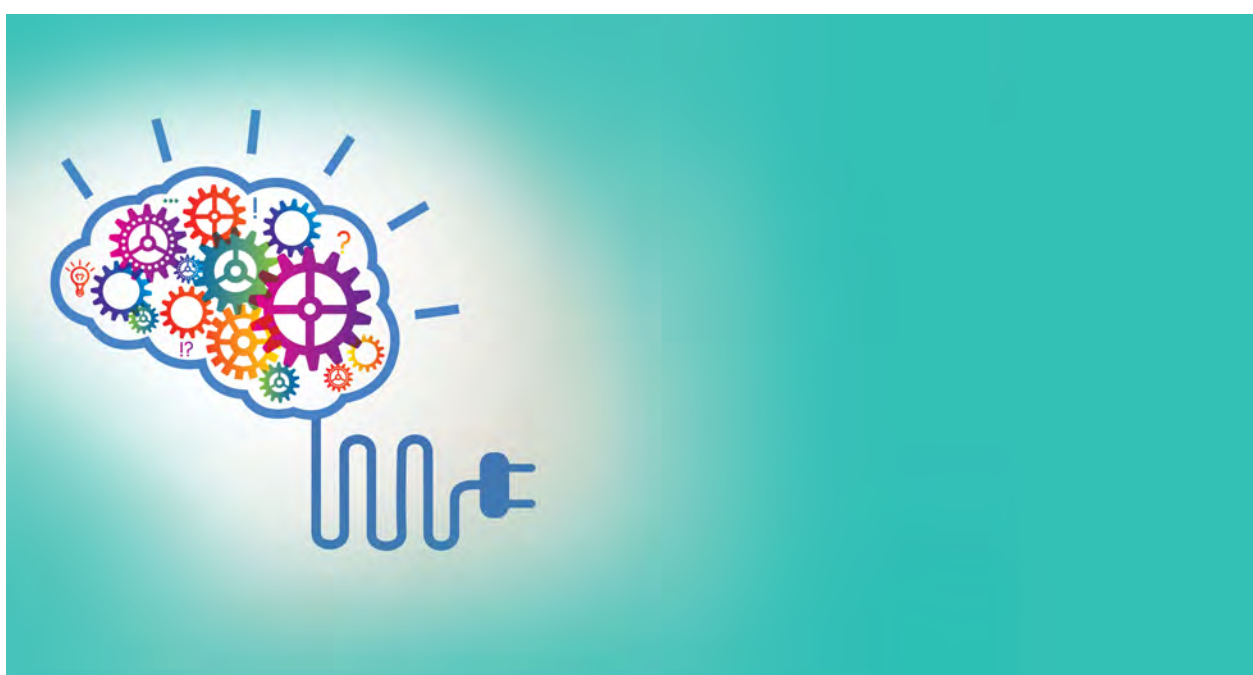
Solihull Coordinator/Champion

In order for the cascade programme to be fully sustainable and to give staff the capacity to deliver, the organisation of the cascades needs to be held at a central, cohesive point. With a coordinator taking a cross-agency approach to the administration of the cascades, this allows a point for trainers to link with and for practitioners to know how to access the training within their region. This is an integral part of the implementation plan and an essential component of a fully integrated approach.

Selection of Trainers

The selection of appropriate practitioners to undertake the Train the Trainer training is a key facet of the competency drivers. Decisions regarding the numbers of trainers required will be part of the scoping/mapping that informs the local implementation plan, ensuring that there are sufficient numbers of trainers to allow a sustainable, rolling programme of Foundation Level training delivery.

Trainers need to be in a position of having capacity to deliver Foundation Level training for at least 2 cascades in their first year-post training and ideally continuing regularly beyond this. They must also have the motivation and skills to effectively facilitate the training. Ideally, these trainers will come from a range of professional backgrounds, bringing an array of experience and skills to the training process.



Access to Train the Trainer training

Once identified as potential trainers, practitioners must have access to the appropriate Train the Trainer training. This one-day training, delivered in person or remotely, will be offered on a rolling basis from NHS Education for Scotland (NES) as part of the IMH training plan. Services should make NES aware, via their local area Solihull Approach Coordinator/Champion if in post, when they have potential trainers identified to complete a brief nomination form for the training and be kept informed of available spaces. Train the Trainer trainings may be delivered on a region-specific basis or as a mixed region approach, depending on demand and capacity.

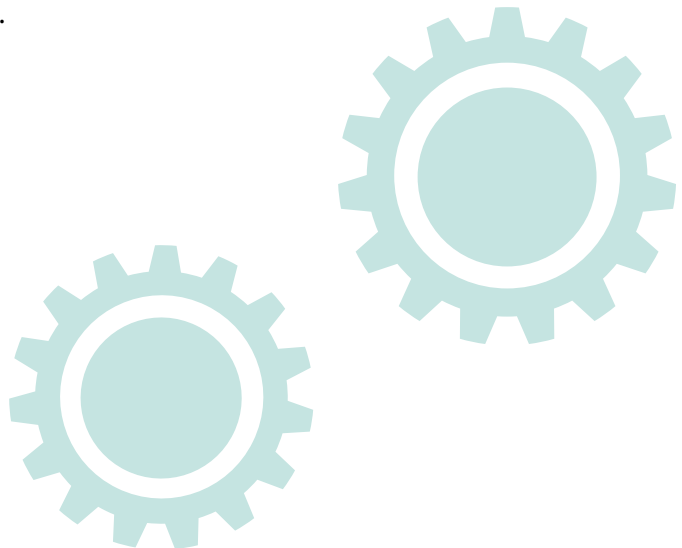
Trainer skills consolidation

Following Train the Trainer training it is important that trainers are supported to maintain their enthusiasm and skills for delivering Foundation Level training. Prompt delivery of the training as a new trainer can help trainers to feel more assured in their ongoing cascades, with benefits also harboured from pairing new trainers with those more experienced in Foundation Level delivery to further embed concepts and bolster confidence.

Ongoing trainer support and coaching

In order to consolidate trainer skills and maintain engagement with the model and training delivery, it is important for trainers to identify as part of a wider network of Solihull Approach practitioners. Linking up with other trainers allows the sharing of skills as well as sustains the momentum of ongoing cascades. This can be done on a local level, ensuring that trainers are aware of each other and have opportunity to share resources and deliver together wherever possible, whether Foundation Level training or local consultation and CPD.

Coordination of trainers on a national level is also important, with services across regions sharing examples of barriers and enablers for cascade delivery, as well as maintaining skills in Solihull Approach content and dissemination. With this aim, NES coordinates a national network of trainers and an annual network event.



Supporting embedding of Solihull Approach across services

Local culture of Solihull Approach

In order for the Solihull Approach to truly embed in services and bring sustained impact to families who access them, not only must focus lie in increasing access to the Solihull Approach across regions through a network of trainers and programmes of cascade delivery, but also on how best to support practitioners to become comfortable with the concepts of the model and integrate these across their levels of practice.

Those regions where the Solihull Approach has been fully embedded have ensured that the model has been delivered across services and professional backgrounds. For there to be a true shift in the culture of a region, to embrace a shared language and most importantly, a shared understanding of children's development in the context of the relationships around them, the Solihull Approach must be woven through all agencies, at all levels.

This extent of implementation requires time, coordination and commitment, and for some regions has taken years of dedicated work and even policy change. The positive outcomes for the children, families and workforce are testament to the benefits of this investment where it is possible to implement.

Consultation/refreshers for practitioners

Once practitioners have completed their Foundation Level training, they are equipped with the knowledge and skills to be able to implement this learning into their own specific roles. The consolidation of this however can be supported by services affording practitioners opportunity to use the Solihull Approach language and concepts wherever possible. In those areas where there is a wide understanding of this, it becomes part of report writing, conversations and interactions with families and colleagues.

In order to build up practitioners' confidence to use the model in this way, a local programme of consultation and continuing professional development events can be highly beneficial. These may be general refreshers of the core components of the Solihull Approach, reflective practice sessions drawing the approach in to case discussions, or more tailored to specific local need, for example linking GIRFEC to the Solihull Approach. Consultation and consolidation such as this have the dual benefit of also allowing experienced Solihull Approach practitioners and trainers to build on their continuing skill base in disseminating the model.



Organisational drivers

Organisational drivers encompass those factors which support an appropriate environment for a programme or initiative to be effectively implemented. These drivers ensure that the necessary operational support and resources are in place to allow staff to facilitate effective programme promotion and dissemination.

Supporting cascade delivery of Foundation Level training

Appointment of Solihull Approach Coordinator

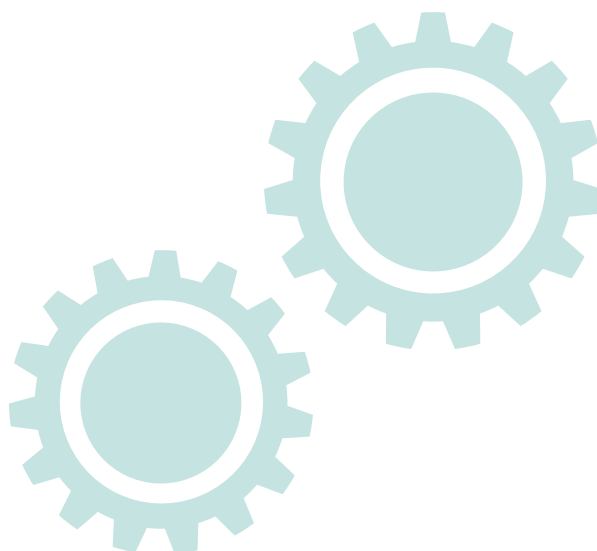
As detailed within Competency Drivers, but equally as pertinent within organisational factors, the development of a local Solihull Approach coordinator and/or champion(s) is key to supporting a sustainable model of dissemination across a region.

Roles are likely to include:

- organise the rolling programme of Foundation Level training cascades
- coordinate trainers in their regular, paired delivery
- organise venues, materials and practicalities of Foundation Level cascade delivery
- manage a local trainers' network for continuing skills development and shared practice
- coordinate a local programme of Solihull Approach CPD for practitioners working with the approach in their specific services
- coordination of local data and liaison with NES to update national data

Resources

Funding streams must be in place to support cascade delivery on a practical basis. For example, access to the appropriate Resource Pack or Trainers' Manual for practitioners undertaking training, the provision of training venues, refreshments and travels costs if necessary for face-to-face training, or access to the appropriate technology and support for remote training. In addition, resources need to be available for practitioners to be freed up to attend or deliver Solihull Approach training, consultation and CPD.



Supporting embedding of Solihull Approach across services

Organisational structures

In order for the approach to be fully embedded, there needs to be commitment from a senior management level throughout the tiers of service design. In those areas in which the Solihull Approach has been incorporated within local strategic priorities and job plans, and specifically named as one of the parenting offers available within the community, we begin to see the culture shift that allows the most widespread benefit to families and professional practice.

Data management

Effective implementation is driven by data-informed systems. It is essential that data is collated on a local basis, regarding the extent to which cascade training is disseminated and across which areas of the workforce. This allows monitoring of the impact of the Solihull Approach on aspects such as staff skills and confidence, cross-agency liaison and ultimately, outcomes for children and families.

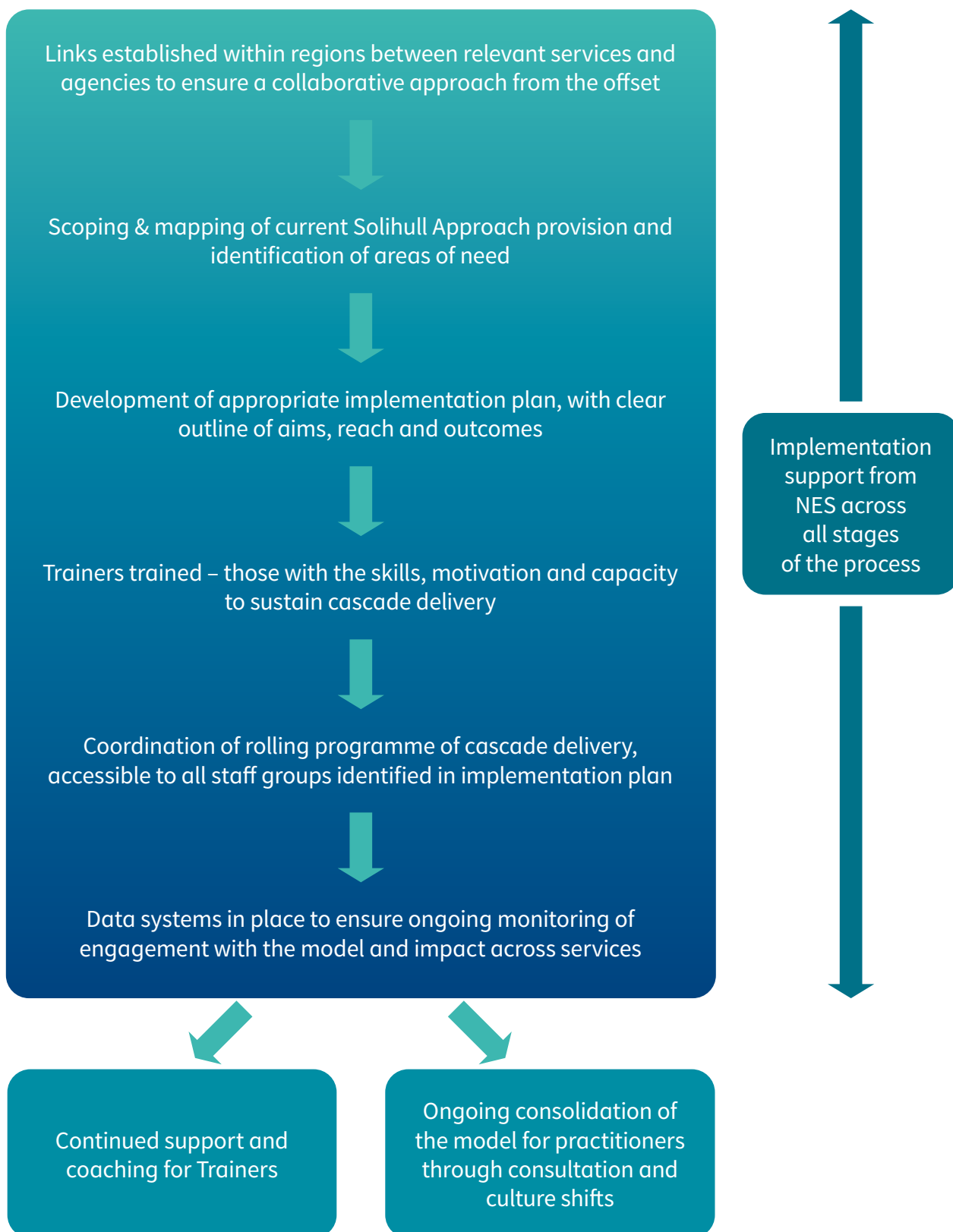
Data collection also facilitates mapping of where training is still needed or areas in which consolidation of the model might be beneficial.

Consultation models

The ongoing consolidation of the Solihull Approach across the workforce is a key aspect of effective implementation and can be supported by a consultation model within local services. If practitioners are able to access regular discussion around incorporating the Solihull Approach concepts in to their work, they are more likely to continue to draw upon these and integrate them across their practice. Resources and appropriate structures need to be in place on a service level to allow consultation to be sustained and effective.



Solihull Approach Implementation Process



NHS Education for Scotland

Implementation Support

NES is committed to offering continued support for the implementation of the Solihull Approach across Scotland.

Development of local implementation plans

For those regions who are committed to increasing their Solihull Approach work, NES will work alongside service leads to develop a detailed implementation plan, in line with the mapped needs and capacity of the area. This plan will include a timeline for developing a sustainable pool of trainers for Foundation Level training cascade delivery, as well as consideration of those specific sections of the workforce to target and how to ensure progress across the region is maintained.

NES will organise regular contact with appropriate Solihull Approach leads within the region to support ongoing consolidation and a collaborative approach to trouble shooting any challenges that might arise.

Training

NES will continue to offer a rolling programme of access to the Train the Trainer training. This will be delivered on a region-specific basis or across regions, dependent on demand and capacity. NES will provide Trainers' Manuals for all practitioners enrolled in a Train the Trainer training.

For those practitioners who have been identified as potential trainers who need to first undertake the Foundation Level training themselves, NES will support access to this training.

Data management

NES holds a central national database of Solihull Approach cascade data for Scotland. This is to allow the development of a national overview of Solihull Approach activity, to support organisations at local and wider levels to make data-driven decisions.

It is essential that alongside local management of data, local trainers submit figures regarding the numbers and professional backgrounds of attendees to NES data team to ensure a complete record of service delivery (as detailed in Appendix 1). Submission of local data is a compulsory aspect of implementation agreements with NES, in recognition of the key role this plays in driving ongoing data-informed development. NES can support with this through providing templates for data submission, reminders as needed and access to relevant local and national figures where applicable.

Trainers' network

In recognition of the importance of trainers' continued support and skill consolidation, NES have developed a shared online forum for Solihull Approach trainers to share resources and practice. This will allow the maintenance of links between practitioners and across regions, helping trainers to continue to deliver with fidelity to the Solihull Approach model.

In addition, NES will host annual skills/coaching sessions for trainers. This will allow networking as well as skills development, with the hope that services will release trainers to attend to reflect their investment in sustaining the Solihull Approach in their area.

Implementing for Success

Those sites across Scotland who have had successes in their implementation approach have found the followings aspects to be key:

Investment in the Solihull Approach as a model of practice

Practitioners and managers need to have a belief in the impact that the Solihull Approach model can have for children, families and staff, in order to fully commit to it. This can be supported through access to materials about the approach, review of impact data for services delivering within the model as well as direct report from those already implementing.

Commitment across all levels of the organisation

In order for implementation to be effective, the Solihull Approach needs to be a thread that runs throughout service levels. Managers as well as their teams need to undertake the Foundation Level training, to fully understand how best to implement the approach. The resources needed, both in time and cost, must be sustainable, and therefore embedded into local policy.

Ongoing coaching & reflection

Practitioners who have been supported to attend the Foundation Level training need ongoing local opportunities for reflection, consultation and coaching within the Solihull Approach model as part of their core role. This is a key aspect of supporting professionals to fully understand the concepts of the approach and integrate these across their practice.

Data-driven implementation

Effective data collection and management, on a local and national basis, allows recognition of the impact of the Solihull Approach and can continue to inform how services adapt and develop to hold the Solihull Approach at their core.

References

NHS Education for Scotland (2018). Perinatal Mental Health Curricular Framework : a framework for maternal and infant mental health

NHS Education for Scotland (2020). Solihull Approach Online Implementation Guide

Scottish Government: Mental Health Strategy 2012-2015

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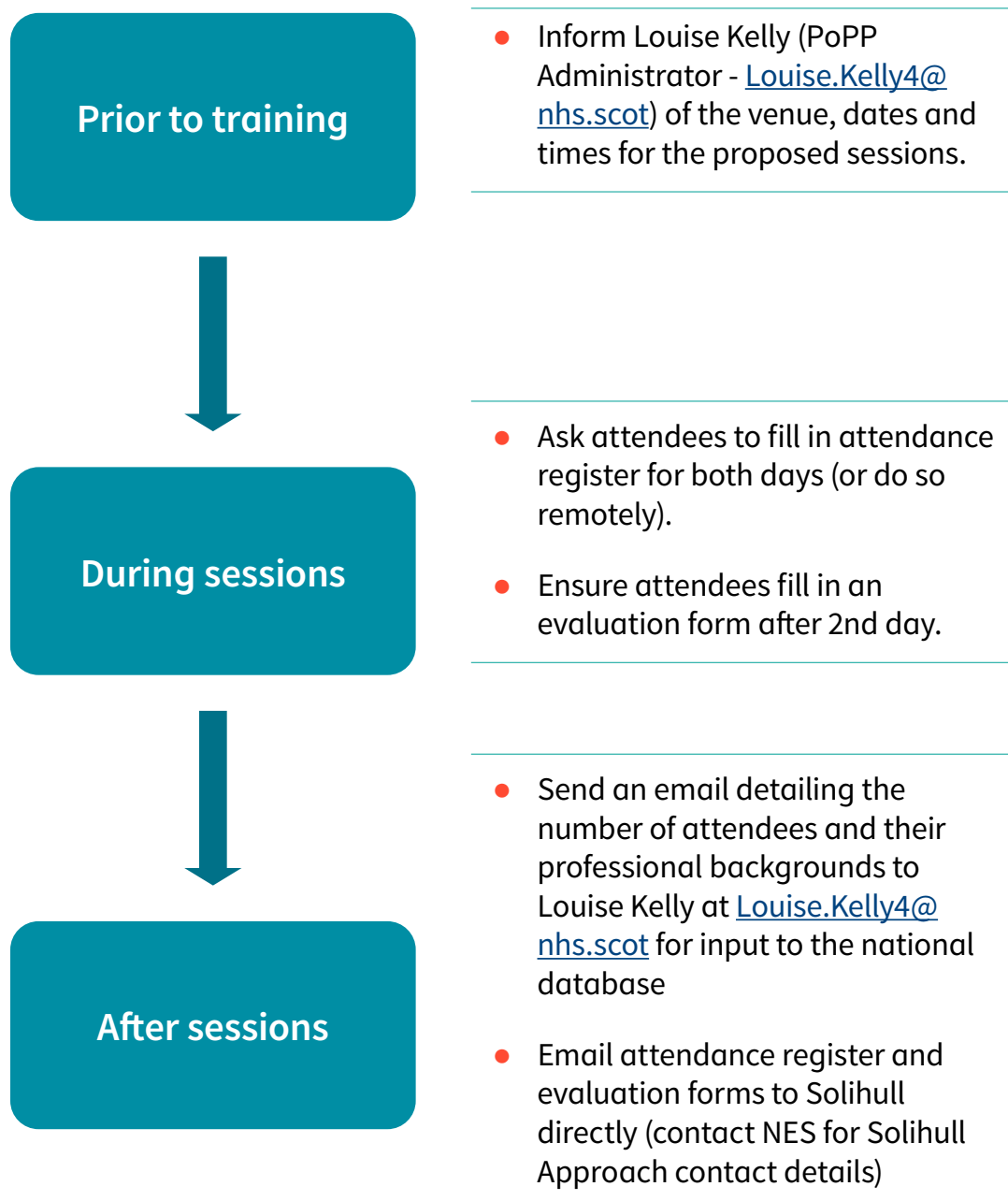
<https://solihullapproachparenting.com/>

Many thanks to the Solihull Approach for permission to include their graphics in this document



Appendix 1

Flow Chart for Trainers Delivering the Solihull Approach Foundation Training





Solihull Approach in Scotland: An Implementation Guide

This resource may be made available, in full or summary form, in alternative formats and community languages. Please contact us on **0131 656 3200** or email **altformats@nhs.scot**



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