

# Margate Early Learning Community Systems change evaluation report

March 2023

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**collaborate**  
for social change

**NPC** 

in partnership  
with



**Save the Children**

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# Introduction

This report summarises the findings from the third evaluation of the Margate Early Learning Community (MELC) using the Systems Change Maturity Model. The Maturity Model is a tool developed by Collaborate, NPC and SCUK to evaluate systems change progress and articulate the direction that systems change efforts are working towards. This evaluation builds on the previous evaluations conducted by Collaborate and NPC:

- **Evaluation 1:** Fieldwork conducted January-February 2021: reports shared in March 2021.
- **Evaluation 2:** Fieldwork conducted September-October 2021; reports shared in November 2021.
- **Evaluation 3:** Fieldwork conducted from November 2022-January 2023; reports shared in February 2023 (this report).

The Maturity Model contains ten systems change ‘conditions’. These are the foundations and enablers for collaborative, long term and sustained change that we believe will contribute to improving early years outcomes. The model has four levels of maturity for each system condition, ranging from ‘emerging’ to ‘thriving’. Each round of evaluation has used the Maturity Model as a basis for understanding the progress towards the ELC’s systems change goals. We have made an assessment on the level of maturity for each one, compared these across different time points. For each round of evaluation, similar reports have been produced for the other ELCs in Sheffield, Bettws and Feltham.

## Report structure

This report contains three sections:

- **Introduction:** This section introduces and outlines the structure of the report. It summarises the evaluation methodology, outlines key considerations for interpreting the findings, and details the main updates to MELC’s work since the last evaluation.
- **Key mechanisms for systems change:** This section presents the key insights identified through this evaluation, focussing on the key mechanisms that are enabling progress on the systems change conditions in the Maturity Model. The findings focus primarily on the activity of the ELC that has taken place since the last evaluation, however, it also contains some reflections on how the work has developed over the entire ELC-funding period.
- **Future priorities:** This section identifies a number of key priorities for the future of the ELC, that cut across multiple conditions in the Maturity Model. At the upcoming cross-ELC learning event, ELCs will have chance to consider and expand these future priorities.
- **Systems change conditions :** The table in this section summarises progress against each system condition in the Maturity Model. This builds on the mechanisms section, by summarising how the

mechanisms have contributed to change in the systems change conditions since the last evaluation. The table also summarises the level of maturity in previous rounds of evaluation for each condition.

## Methodology

For this evaluation, Collaborate and NPC conducted 8 interviews with 10 participants and 1 focus group from November 2022 to January 2023. This included one site visit to Margate, where the focus group and 3 of the interviews took place. The interview participants included the MELC Lead; MELC Data, Evaluation, and Impact Advisor; the Thanet LCPG Chair / County Council Chair and several members of the project board, working group and delivery partners. The focus group was held with the working group, with 2 out of the 3 parent representatives present.

## Interpreting findings

When interpreting and acting on the findings, it is important to bear in mind that:

- **Systems change is not linear.** Systems are dynamic and continually evolving. Systems have many different elements, so change happens at different times and at different speeds.
- **The external environment has changed significantly throughout the ELC funding programme, particularly through the pandemic and cost-of-living crisis.** Both of these factors have had significant impacts on the way organisations are able to operate, often creating more intensive needs in the community. This has impacted the ELC's work throughout the programme and created new challenges.
- **Systems change takes time.** Although the ELCs have now been operating for a few years, in most cases we would not expect them to be at the 'thriving' side of the spectrum at this stage, because of the long-term nature of systems change efforts. The Model should be viewed as a tool to help understand and support long-term progress, not a short-term 'scorecard'.
- **The main purpose of this evaluation is to enable learning** and help inform and improve local systems change approaches, not to generate data for performance management. Linked to this, the purpose of these summaries is not to directly compare or rank ELCs. Rather our aim is to understand progress and enable learning in each ELC's specific context.

## MELC context

The previous evaluation was conducted against the backdrop of the receding pandemic, but we should recognise that there are new challenges for families in Margate, including the cost-of-living crisis and further reductions to statutory

budgets. MELC has made good progress over the past year and this report aims to detail the progress made, as well as suggest further areas for development.

Our last evaluation took place in November 2022. Since then, MELC has developed and delivered new opportunities for professionals and families in the area, building on the foundations highlighted in our previous reports. This has included another round of innovation funding and a co-design process engaging the wider system in Margate. MELC has engaged new partners, increased its staff team, and made significant progress in a number of different areas.

- **Co-design:** Through funding provided by the Bvlgari Foundation, MELC ran a series of co-design workshops, reaching out to professionals and families within Margate to gather their thoughts on the priorities for the local area, the direction MELC should take and the support it should focus on enabling. In response to low attendance of families at initial co-design sessions, MELC adapted their approach by going to where families were, for example, at school gates or libraries, and discussed their priorities there, ensuring parents' voices were represented.
- **Re-designed engagement approaches:** MELC has increased the opportunities for others to engage with its work, including launching an Early Years network and delivering the co-design process. These approaches have been able to increase the reach and profile of MELC and offer variety to suit different people's availability and resources.
- **New project delivery:** Between June and October 2022, MELC issued two rounds of innovation funding, informed by the findings of the co-design work. This has funded the piloting of 12 new projects, including three new providers/delivery partners spoken to as part of this evaluation. This round of funding had more of a strategic focus than previous rounds. It addressed some of the key areas of MELC's Theory of Change and specifically encouraged partners to consider the sustainability of their projects.

In terms of delivery, the following organisations and projects have received funding to provide support to families in Margate and were covered by this evaluation:

#### **Thanet Community Churches – 'Parenting Together Margate'**

- The Parenting Together Margate project provides several play groups and support to parents and children within Margate, extending their offer that had been successfully delivered in Ramsgate.
- Four of the play groups provide opportunities for local children and families to play and engage in outdoor spaces. The funding also covered the development of a new community garden including an outdoor classroom, a valuable and sustainable social asset.

#### **Beyond The Page - 'United Mothers' & participatory action research**

- Support for mothers who speak English as a second language (ESOL) to access wider services in the local area by providing free ESOL classes, peer support programmes and digital skills. The funding will also support a peer research activity involving some of the ESOL women who are being trained to gather evidence into the challenges ESOL women in Margate (and their children) face in accessing Early Years services.

### **Turner Contemporary – ‘Turnips’ events and ‘Playground’ sessions**

- ‘Turnips’ events are art workshops for local families delivered within the gallery, with an emphasis on activities that can be replicated at home. Each event is based on the current exhibition at the gallery and both promotion and delivery are supported by the local children centres.
- ‘Playground’ is a creative play programme developed by Kent County Council (KCC) and delivered by artists. Sessions held at the gallery are aimed at babies aged 0-18 months.

### **Cliftonville Primary School – cultural trips**

- The school is using the funding to purchase a vehicle that will be used to take children and families on trips within Margate, who otherwise would be unable to afford to access these experiences. The project aims to improve early years’ overall wellbeing, as well as opportunities to play and learn, engaging pre-school aged children through parents with children already attending the school. It will also provide a much needed asset for the school that can be used to support families in other ways as the need arises.

The investment in infrastructure through the cultural trips and community garden improves the social assets available to services and families in Margate. Beyond the Page supports those who are more marginalised in society to get support and engage better with parts of the system, and the work with the Turner Contemporary brings in an organisation that isn’t a direct part of the Early Years system, but nonetheless is able to support the aims of the ELC and offer further opportunities for play in the local area.

With this round of funding, greater emphasis was placed on ensuring that families in the community had a say on what work was funded. This is important learning for the ELC and the wider system in Margate about how to engage families on their terms and with methods that work for them. Decision making on the innovation funding was also more distributed, with members of the project board highlighting that they had greater oversight and involvement in deciding how the funding was spent, when compared with previous years where they felt it was led by SCUK, further demonstrating the commitment of the ELC to have collective governance and decision making.

The ELC has increased its staffing. It now employs a Data, Evaluation and Impact Advisor who has supported the ELC to conduct more evaluation of all its work, including its innovation funding, increasing the insight available to support decision making. A Partnership Lead has been appointed, to oversee several of the ELC’s projects (including Early Years Grants and the newly created Early Years network), support the ELC’s working group and build deeper partnerships with relevant Early Years stakeholders, including Early Years settings and health services. A Family Engagement Officer has also been appointed, seconded from the Local Authority for one day a week. Drawing on their existing connections and knowledge of the local area, The Family Engagement Officer has helped the ELC better coordinate and engage with families, including through co-design and the Working Group.

In our November 2021 report, we highlighted that there had been some limitations in the focus on MELC at the time, with its work more focused on children aged 4-5 rather than children aged 0-3. Through the creation of the Early Years network, the work of the new Partnership Lead and Family Engagement Officer and the co-design work, the ELC has been able to address this, bringing its work back in line with its original aims and vision to prioritise support for children aged 0-3 and their families.

# Key mechanisms for systems change

This section presents the key insights identified through this evaluation, focusing on the key mechanisms that are enabling progress on the systems change conditions in the Maturity Model. The systems change conditions that are relevant to each mechanism are referenced throughout the text. We explored these mechanisms through interviews and conversations with participants from different roles within the ELC.

## Strengthening systems stewardship

### Activity

One of the key ways that the MELC's approach can change the way the system operates is through system stewardship. In contrast to traditional programme management with a primary focus on overseeing delivery of a specific programme, stewardship is a broader facilitative, enabling role. System stewards take responsibility for nurturing a 'healthy' system by developing the conditions for people to work and learn together more effectively on shared goals. The ELC Lead, acting on behalf of MELC, plays a stewardship role by bringing different organisations and aspects of the local system together and creating shared spaces in which partners can work on collective challenges and learn from each other. There are several different dimensions to this that the evaluation highlighted as effective in contributing to the aims of the ELC.

Firstly, lots of emphasis was placed on the way that the ELC Lead works with and engages partners. From the start of partners' engagement with the ELC, they valued how the ELC Lead took time to explain what the ELC is, what its aims were, and to understand what their own organisation offered. This process is important, as it helps organisations to know what common areas of work they share with others and what potential opportunities for collaboration might be available. By inviting others into the various ELC spaces and encouraging them to share their work and views in a supportive environment, the Lead has helped create a culture where people feel their contribution will be valued. This is one of the reasons that the Trusted, Collaborative Relationships condition has matured, as it demonstrates an ability to develop new relationships, not just maintain existing ones.

The spaces that the ELC creates and facilitates were recognised by participants as being unique. Participants felt that spaces were open and reflective, with all attendees' contributions being welcomed, valued and considered. Participants noted that this was different from their experience in other meetings/groups that they attended and spoke highly of the opportunity to be involved. In particular, those who attended the working group, both those who sat on it and those presenting as part of the project delivery, felt it was a productive space. There was some feedback from those delivering the projects that the meetings where they presented their progress could have been more interactive, with greater participation from other attendees. They felt that they didn't receive the level of questions and exploration they were expecting. While this doesn't necessarily indicate a pattern, it may be worth exploring ways to structure these conversations in ways that promotes more engagement and shared problem solving as the group matures.

## Learning

The role MELC plays as a system steward should be recognised and valued. It is a unique approach within Margate and has enabled the ELC to be successful, convening a wide array of partners under a shared vision. This is especially important given the upcoming introduction of Family Hubs in Margate and it is crucial that those delivering the new hubs have a strong understanding of how the ELC operates and the approaches it uses. This will allow the hubs to build on MELC's successes and benefit from its experience in creating and developing multi-agency partnerships and building conditions to improve the experience of families in Margate and the wider footprint of the hubs. MELC should consider this stewardship role as part of its sustainability planning and establish how more partners in the ELC can take part in this and learn from the SCUUK Lead's experience.

## Broadening partner engagement

### Activity

In the last year, MELC has diversified the methods and spaces it uses to engage with the wider system beyond formal ELC partners. It has also adapted and strengthened its existing structures. It has invited new members to the project board, re-focused its working group to oversee the innovation funding, and created an Early Years network.

The Early Years network brings together partners who operate within Margate to discuss topics and themes that arise in their work as well as providing an opportunity to network and share learning with each other. This creates a 'light touch' method for these stakeholders to engage with the work of the ELC, especially smaller organisations that may not be able to commit the time that might be required to be part of the project board or working group. This is distinct from other meetings of this type in the area, such as the Local Children's Partnership Group (LCPG), as the network has a more specific focus on partners setting the agenda and sharing insights. Having a number of different ways that local organisations with different levels of capacity and focus can engage with the ELC is important.

A good example of this is the partnership with Turner Contemporary. As an art gallery, Turner Contemporary is unlikely to be able to commit large amounts of its resource to being an active part of the ELC, e.g. sitting on the board or working group. However, though working with them to find common ground, the ELC has been able to support them to deliver programmes aimed at families and Early Years children in Margate. The ELC has also supported Turner Contemporary to form a working relationship with the three local children's centres who have been able to support the delivery of this work.

### Learning

This kind of approach, that allows for those with different levels of capacity and resources to engage is vital for building equitable and inclusive partnerships. Having more opportunities through the Early Years network for partners and stakeholders within Margate to reflect on the different areas of their work has helped to develop the learning culture within the ELC, as there are more opportunities for partners to reflect on their work and take action based on these discussions, as well as further sharing of insight across the system. Those who attended the Early Years network spoke of the benefit these discussions have brought to their own work, for instance different partners referenced that discussions about engaging and working with the Roma community in Margate has enabled them to improve their practise and approach. In addition to this, the discussions and spaces held in the working group around



the project delivery helped build the knowledge of the ELC and enable them to support partners to adapt their approach as needed. Through developing these varied learning opportunities, this has shifted the 'Culture of Learning and Evaluation that enables adaptation' condition, as well as having positive effects on the 'Trusted, collaborative relationships' and 'Integrated Support' conditions as well.

## Strengthening participation through co-design with professionals and families

### Activity

Co-design with families was also highlighted as a good example of where the ELC is doing something different and adding value to the existing work of other organisations and initiatives in the area. This was the first time since the initial set-up of the ELC that MELC had reached out as widely across the sector and participants felt this was a positive step. Crucially, the co-design process enables families to discuss what issues are important to them and to direct the work of the ELC and how it should operate. Working out in the open and inviting views from a wide range of people is important, as it demonstrates to others how MELC's way of working brings others together around a shared agenda, rather than being determined solely by SCUUK.

### Learning

There was a further key piece of learning that was gained through the co-design process. The sessions that were initially held were not well attended by families and parents. To address this, MELC went out to where parents were, engaging residents in local hotspots, such as at the school gates and local libraries. By going to where parents were, the ELC was able to engage the number of parents they wanted but also to develop, test and refine a process that they can use to engage parents in future work. Participants spoken to as part of the evaluation highlighted the value of gathering these additional voices in ensuring their work is informed by what parents need. While the co-design process was successful, it is not a regular occurrence, meaning that there aren't current regular opportunities for families to feed in and shape the ELC's work, outside of the parent representatives on the working group. Developing more regular, structured methods of engaging parents should be a future priority of MELC and is discussed in further detail in the next section of the report.

## Innovation funding

### Activity

The funding that MELC provides through its innovation funding pot was highlighted by most of the participants interviewed as bringing a large benefit to the local area. The areas for funding were generated by the working group in response to the priorities highlighted by the co-design process. These were agreed by the board. Funding applications were then reviewed and agreed by the working group and the board. This ensured the board and working group were actively involved in the funding decision making. In several cases people felt that the money had been a key driver in them becoming involved in the ELC and viewed it as an important benefit that SCUUK bought as

part of their role within the ELC. They also highlighted the benefits of providing funding for priorities that are traditionally hard to fundraise for, such as the people carrier car for Cliftonville Primary School and the development of the community garden by Thanet Community Churches. In both cases the funding has supported the development of assets that will be used to support families within the local area. This is an important consideration given the backdrop of reduced statutory budgets and declining social assets in local communities. By supporting these, the ELC is creating opportunities for families to benefit for the long term.

## Learning

While money may have been a key driver for engaging initially with the ELC, all participants recognised the value of coming together and working collaboratively with other services as the key benefit of the ELC. This was further demonstrated by the fact that previous but not current recipients of funding are still actively involved with the ELC and those currently receiving funding intend to remain part of it once their funded work ends. This is an important takeaway for the role that the funding has played in Margate - it has been an important tool to engage organisations, but those involved have all also recognised the wider benefits of the way the ELC operates outside of this funding. Another key benefit of this funding is that it is supporting further collaboration between partners. For instance, the intention is that the community garden is available to other organisations in the area to use and to co-produce offers between Thanet Community Churches and other organisations, building relationships between partners and offering co-delivered services.

The funding to Beyond the Page is enabling them to conduct research on the barriers that mothers of Early Years children with English as a second language face within Margate. The research is being conducted by peer champions with local services, to ensure that the insight and evidence is gathered and analysed by those with who have also faced similar challenges, ensuring it will be grounded in their experiences. Having research conducted in this way will enable the ELC to have a clear understanding of the barriers that these women face within Margate so that they can collaboratively work on solutions to overcome these challenges. It is crucial that those marginalised in the current system are actively involved in helping shape an alternative vision and approach for the future, and this work will support the ELC to make this a reality.

The innovation funding is clearly resulting in valuable support for families in Margate, however there are some challenges to consider alongside this. The funding is quite short-term, which means there's a possibility that those services won't be provided in the same way following the end of the funding. Short-term funding like this can provide challenges for families, especially if services must change and adapt to changing funding requirements, so it would be important for the ELC to consider if there are ways it can limit this kind of impact. The funding also comes with reporting requirements which some of the partners have found challenging to provide information on and found the reporting burden challenging to manage alongside other priorities. For funding under £10,000 the ELC doesn't require reporting, while larger grants require reporting on progress. Given the partners' view that some of this reporting can add additional burden, it may be useful for the ELC to review and ensure that this reporting is useful and meeting its aim of developing the ELC's learning. The ELC could also consider if there are other approaches that might be beneficial, for instance holding a joint learning session across all funding recipients to replace some of the required monitoring which some partners may find easier to engage with.

## Future priorities

In this section we identify a number of key priorities for the future that cut across multiple conditions in the maturity model. These priorities were initially identified through the evaluation and shared in a draft report on the basis they would be most likely to support the ELC's continued development and sustainability. The priorities were then explored with representatives of MELC at an ELC learning event in February 2023. Here we share the refined priorities based on the input of MELC. The priorities have been written in the same voice as the rest of the report to maintain consistency, but they incorporate MELC's own views on which aspects of the priority areas they feel are most important and how to take these forward, including alignment with the ELC's existing plans.

### Developing ways for learning to influence overall strategic direction

Given the challenges facing families in Margate, it is important that MELC is able to influence the strategic direction within the area, demonstrating the benefit for families in Margate in adopting MELC's approach and ways of working as part of how the system in Margate operates.

MELC has worked to embed learning approaches in how it manages and reflects on the progress of its innovation projects. While there are potential areas for development around creating more structured spaces for this reflection, there are opportunities for members of the ELC and delivery partners to discuss their work in holistic ways and think about potential adaptations and improvements. However, this learning is largely focused on delivery, and is less focused on what it tells the ELC about the system in Margate and the challenges that need to be addressed. Several of the participants felt that this could be a more intentional focus of the ELC, as it aligns its delivery with its strategic aims. For instance, participants from KCC felt that this would be beneficial to the LCPG and ensure that what the ELC are learning about the system is able to be incorporated into the council's own planning and strategy.

This is also true of the co-design approach. The co-design work has demonstrated a valuable method to engage families, but it would also be beneficial for the ELC to also consider what it has learnt about the barriers across the system to 'Shifting Power to Families'. The ELC could play a crucial role in using its learning about effective approaches to engagement and barriers to help partners work together to embed effective parent engagement across Margate. This would help connect MELC's delivery on the ground with the strategic aims set out in its Theory of Change. Working on this would develop the 'Systems Mindset', 'Culture of learning and evaluation that enables adaptation' and 'Shifting Power to Families' conditions.

Given the acute funding challenges within the Thanet and the wider Kent area, ensuring that the ELC is able to highlight the challenges within the system for families within Margate will enable the local authority to make better informed decisions about where the limited funding should go. MELC plays an important role in that, using the learning from its innovation funded projects to highlight approaches that would likely have a large impact from families if adopted more widely, while also highlighting the deeper mechanics in their approach that made the project successful.

MELC could consider what avenues of influencing might exist to share this insight to a wider set of stakeholders. For instance, this could include working with other parts of the local authority such as Early Years Commissioners to ensure they understand the challenges that families are facing in Margate, bringing the insight from the frontline to senior decision makers.

## Improved communications about the ELC

MELC is unique within Early Years system in Kent, with no other programme operating in the same way. This is something that MELC should celebrate, but that it also needs to communicate with a wider audience.

The collaborative approaches within the ELC, both through its governance and its delivery are fundamentally different to how other services in Margate are run, as well as its efforts to enable families to shape the direction of its work. MELC should create time to specifically reflect on the aspects of how it operates that are only found within the ELC, many of which are highlighted in this report, so that they can build a clear understanding of why MELC is different and the key practices that enable this. This will help demonstrate the unique value of MELC and enable others to learn from and embed similar approaches.

Developing a communications approach should be done in line with reviewing the previous priority on using learning to inform the strategic direction of the ELC. The ELC will need to gain an understanding of the needs of the different audiences it is working to influence, in order to tailor its communications. For example, some audiences will need general information about what the ELC does and how to engage with it. This kind of information is best held on a widely accessible repository. Having an online presence is important to this, so that those with aligned purposes can easily find and access information on the ELC. This could also improve how others view the transparency of the ELC e.g. knowing what organisations are currently involved, what their current activity is, how their governance structures operates and what opportunities there are to get involved.

However other forms of communication are likely to be needed to inform to audiences like commissioners, who may be more interested in specific project summaries and delivery methods. Through all of this, MELC should aim to demonstrate the mechanisms that make their projects successful – focusing on how as well as what they deliver e.g. the methods of recruitment and partnership working that are crucial enablers.

With Kent being one of the local authorities adopting the Family Hubs approach, it is important that the learning from the MELC is shared and understood by those responsible for its implementation, so that the specifics of why and how MELC operates is recognised and can support the running of the Family Hubs. Even though the Family Hub will be operating at a Kent level, the ELC has demonstrated a way of working that could be adopted at that level, including how smaller more localised work can feed in to wider and higher-level governance, e.g. how MELC operates within the LCPG.

## Further embedding family voice

The co-design process demonstrated that when parents and families are engaged in ways that work for them, they can meaningfully share their opinions and views, supporting the ELC to be led by what families need. For the ELC to be family-led, the ELC needs to have a variety of opportunities for families to shape the work that it does. The ELC does have parents who are members of the working group, and their voices are valued, but the ELC needs to continue to further their engagement with families in a way that meets their specific needs, interests, and capacity. For some families this might be a role in shaping the overall direction of the ELC e.g. through representation on the project board, while for other families it may be about sharing their views to co-produce the support they receive. As the co-design process is not a regular activity, the ELC should take the learning from what worked in the co-design process to engage families and adopt these practices on a more on-going basis, so that families' voices are consistently being engaged with the work of the ELC.

In service delivery, this involves families being able to co-produce the support they receive with practitioners. A good example of this is the Health Visiting Project and the 'Roma family support group' the ELC Lead chairs. This will help the ELC to ensure that families voices shape the support they receive as well as providing MELC with timely insight into what is affecting families in Margate currently. The Early Years network can play an important role in this going forward, giving time and space for family insights to be shared and discussed with a wide range of stakeholders.

# Systems change conditions

The table in this section summarises progress against each system condition in the Maturity Model. This builds on the mechanisms section, by summarising how the mechanisms have contributed to change in the systems change conditions since the last evaluation. The table also summarises the level of maturity for each condition in previous rounds of evaluation.

System Conditions	Reason for current level	Further development
<p><b>1. Shared vision and purpose</b></p> <p><i>Evaluation 1 – Developing</i></p> <p><i>Evaluation 2 – Developing</i></p> <p><i>Evaluation 3 – Maturing</i></p>	<p>This condition has moved to Maturing</p> <p>There has been significant progress in this condition. Many partners understood what the ELC was trying to achieve and their role within in that and the value working as a collective brings. There are clear links between the work of the ELC and the wider strategy for Early Years within the local area. Those spoken to from KCC in particular recognised the value the ELC brings to the strategic direction and objectives for the local area and see the ELC as part of the governance structure for the area, sitting below the LCPG. Since the last evaluation, the ELC has had ongoing conversations with partners on the board about the long-term vision and sustainability of the ELC, as well as building sustainability criteria into their innovation funding. These discussions are in the early stages but show a progression from the first and second evaluations.</p> <p>Over the past year, the ELC has returned to its focus on 0-3 year olds (as opposed to older children) through the set-up of the Early Years network and by engaging further Early Years partners. This has further strengthened this condition from the initial evaluation, where some Early Years representation was lacking.</p>	<p>To continue developing this condition, the ELC should continue to work to influence and support initiatives and developments outside of its direct control that align with its purpose, such as the new Family Hubs.</p> <p>The ELC should also continue to develop its sustainability plan and focus on how it can embed the processes that MELC has developed into how the Early years system in Margate operates in the long term.</p>
<p><b>2. Systems mindset</b></p>	<p>This condition has moved to Developing with elements of Maturing</p>	<p>The next step is to embed and solidify some of these approaches into the business as usual of the ELC. It will be important that the</p>

<p><b>Evaluation 1 –</b> <i>Emerging</i></p> <p><b>Evaluation 2 –</b> <i>Developing</i></p> <p><b>Evaluation 3 –</b> <i>Developing with elements of Maturing</i></p>	<p>The co-design activity was a good example of reaching out to the wider system of both professionals and parents. MELC was able to involve a wider group of professionals and included more parents' voices in their work through the set-up of the Early Years Network and the co-design work. At the first evaluation point, there were limited examples of reaching further into the system, which the co-design process has addressed to an extent. MELC has further developed its governance approaches and membership of its board, further engaging partners from different parts of the system.</p>	<p>ELC increase their focus on learning about and shifting the underlying conditions within the system alongside their project delivery.</p> <p>This includes continuing to expand the role others in the ELC play in its coordination, building on its governance development over the last year and support of regular engagement work with families, as well as ensuring that the systemic challenges are identified and worked on.</p>
<p><b>3. Shifting power to families</b></p> <p><b>Evaluation 1 –</b> <i>Emerging</i></p> <p><b>Evaluation 2 –</b> <i>Emerging</i></p> <p><b>Evaluation 3 –</b> <i>Developing</i></p>	<p>This condition has moved to Developing</p> <p>The work that MELC has done through the co-design process, going to places where parents are and engaging them, are important steps to developing this condition. The ELC has also expanded the working group membership to include 2 new family representatives, with families now making up a quarter of the membership. This is a marked difference from the first evaluation, where there was limited involvement from families other than one parent who sat on the working group. There is now also a regular parent newsletter to further encourage engagement and keep parents informed of the ELC's work. The ELC is also working with partners to improve how they involve families with the projects they are running as part of the innovation funding, further involving families in the support they receive.</p>	<p>It will be important that this process is embedded within the ELC and that the ELC is developing a range of ways for parents to engage with the ELC in a way that works for them, from representing on the board through to co-producing the support they receive.</p>
<p><b>4. Trusted, collaborative relationships</b></p> <p><b>Evaluation 1 –</b> <i>Developing</i></p>	<p>This condition has moved to Maturing</p> <p>The relationships within the ELC have always been highlighted as a positive. Partners speak highly of the trust they have between each other and their ability to work together to address challenges. The</p>	<p>To further this condition, the ELC could start to consider how it works to tackle to natural power imbalances that exist among different partners in the ELC, and crucially families within the local</p>

<p><b>Evaluation 2 –</b> <i>Developing</i></p> <p><b>Evaluation 3 –</b> <i>Maturing</i></p>	<p>ELC has developed multiple spaces for relationships to be formed and maintained, such as the governance infrastructure of the project board and the working group, alongside spaces with wider reach in the form of the Early Years network. The progression from the first evaluation is due to partners forming relationships between their organisations that don't require active facilitation from the ELC. Partners also recognise the value that relationships have in addressing challenges in their local system. New partners have been onboarded effectively in a short time, and been able develop their own relationships, increasing the network and reach of the ELC.</p>	<p>area. They should also consider how they can deepen relationships not just with individuals but with other staff in partners organisations, creating a deeper reach for the ELC, and supporting sustainability.</p>
<p><b>5. Coordinated and integrated support</b></p> <p><b>Evaluation 1 –</b> <i>Developing</i></p> <p><b>Evaluation 2 –</b> <i>Developing</i></p> <p><b>Evaluation 3 –</b> <i>Developing with elements of Maturing</i></p>	<p>This condition has moved to Developing with elements of Maturing</p> <p>This condition has progressed a little and there are strong foundations and several elements of work that can help enable potential further progress in this area. When we first conducted the evaluation, the opportunities for partners to work together came mainly through the pandemic response, whereas now the ELC is building its own opportunities for organisations to deliver integrated support.</p> <p>Partners highlighted the ELC's work with the Roma population as a positive example of shared learning. The community garden project, part of the Parenting Together Margate project, has also involved partners coordinating their activities and resources and could be a good opportunity to build partners' experience and exposure to jointly delivering services. The ELC should look at what support partners might need to enable this.</p>	<p>To continue developing this condition, MELC should continue to facilitate opportunities for cross-organisation working and help partners develop ways to create the internal changes within their organisation to enable more collaboration. MELC should continue to build two-way communication between families and practitioners so that all families feel encouraged to continuously shape the support they receive and how it is delivered.</p>
<p><b>6. Shared governance &amp; accountability</b></p>	<p>This condition has moved to Maturing</p> <p>MELC has worked on its governance approach in the last year, with several examples that highlight development in this area. The integration with</p>	<p>The ELC should continue to focus on how it can develop its governance approaches so that partners are able to share</p>



<p><b>Evaluation 1 –</b> <i>Developing</i></p> <p><b>Evaluation 2 –</b> <i>Developing with elements of Maturing</i></p> <p><b>Evaluation 3 –</b> <i>Maturing</i></p>	<p>statutory processes (i.e. the CPC and LCPG) and MELC's ability to feed into and influence those structures is important and should be continued.</p> <p>MELC has matured its governance approach in the last year, adding 3 new board members, developing a Memorandum of Understanding, setting up annual reviews and producing a risk register.</p>	<p>accountability for the ELC's work and adapt the ELC as required.</p> <p>It will also be important to continue creating regular opportunities for families to discuss what their support needs are.</p>
<p><b>7. Aligning &amp; coordinating use of resources</b></p> <p><b>Evaluation 1 –</b> <i>Developing</i></p> <p><b>Evaluation 2 –</b> <i>Developing</i></p> <p><b>Evaluation 3 –</b> <i>Developing</i></p>	<p>This condition has remained at Developing</p> <p>There are indications of improvement in this condition, but not yet sufficiently to meet the description for Maturing. Partners are now discussing how the resources they have available to them could be used by others e.g. the garden developed as part of Parenting Together Margate. KCC have also indefinitely seconded a member staff to MELC, demonstrating that the focus on sustainability in the new round of innovation funding is important.</p>	<p>There are still challenges with how services are designed and commissioned in Margate by KCC, particularly how local practitioners and families, which were present in the first evaluation, are consulted.</p> <p>For example, a county-wide version of Families Supporting Families found it challenging to engage families in Thanet. The ELC should work to highlight the challenges that current commissioning practices bring, demonstrating how its learning from its own delivery can overcome these issues and work to address and influence these through its role in the LCPG.</p>
<p><b>8. Systems leadership</b></p> <p><b>Evaluation 1 –</b> <i>Emerging</i></p> <p><b>Evaluation 2 –</b> <i>Developing</i></p> <p><b>Evaluation 3 –</b> <i>Developing</i></p>	<p>This condition has remained at Developing</p> <p>While this condition hasn't shifted further, it's important to recognise that some of the behaviours highlighted previously have solidified. Those active in the ELC feel ownership of it, and see it as their collective responsibility, rather than SCUUK's. This is a definite shift from the first evaluation and participants see SCUUK in the intended convener role, rather than as a direct lead. Much of the activity is done by SCUUK due to the resource they provide, but there have been increased discussions and planning among the Board about the sustainability of</p>	<p>Continuing to explore what the future looks like for the ELC and what roles others can take outside of SCUUK in the day-to-day running of the ELC will be crucial for developing this condition further.</p>

	the ELC and the changing role SCUUK will play in that.	
<p><b>9. Culture of evaluation &amp; learning that enables adaptation</b></p> <p><i>Evaluation 1 – Emerging</i></p> <p><i>Evaluation 2 – Developing</i></p> <p><i>Evaluation 3 – Maturing</i></p>	<p>This condition has moved to Maturing</p> <p>There has been some development in this condition, with the ELC having more opportunities for partners to discuss and reflect on the work of the ELC as well as sharing the results of their evaluations and using those to inform further delivery in the system. There are opportunities to reflect on the work of the ELC, which could be made more purposeful to ensure that learning for the system is identified from the delivery. Since the first evaluation, partners have articulated a more developed learning culture that exists outside of specific project discussions.</p>	<p>The ELC should continue to reflect on its delivery, as well as ensuring learning spaces have an increased focus on considering what they are learning about the system they are working in and what further challenges need to be addressed.</p>
<p><b>10. Shared data &amp; information</b></p> <p><i>Evaluation 1 – Emerging</i></p> <p><i>Evaluation 2 – Developing</i></p> <p><i>Evaluation 3 – Developing</i></p>	<p>This condition has remained at Developing</p> <p>As in previous evaluations, data sharing remains a challenge. The ELC has access to some data based on existing relationships within KCC but does not yet have a complete data profile at the Margate level. The data from the local evaluations are shared more widely, and there are opportunities through the ELC's membership in KCC groups e.g. LCPG to engage wider parts of the system and local authority in the ELCs work. Partners have shown a greater appreciation for the importance of insight and the role evaluation can play in providing that.</p>	<p>This area has not been a direct area of focus for the ELC with capacity focused on other areas of the ELC. The ELC should continue to work with partners to share data that provides insight into the ELC that supports further learning and understanding about how it can achieve its vision in Margate.</p>