

# Effective leadership to improve children's mental health

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## **Acknowledgement of Country**

We recognise the land on which we meet today and pay respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Peoples, their ancestors, the elders past, present and future from the different First Nations across this Country.

We acknowledge the importance of connection to land, culture, spirituality, ancestry, family and community for the wellbeing of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their families.

# Overview

- Understanding infant & child mental health
- Understand system influences on infant & child mental health
- Identify strategies for supporting infant & child mental health across organisations
- Strengthening workforce competence, confidence and practice

We will be using Mentimeter today: [www.menti.com](http://www.menti.com)



# About

## Emerging Minds

- Leads the National Workforce Centre for Child Mental Health with key partners
- Funded by the Department of Health and Aged Care
- Assists and resources organisations and workforces to:
  - understand their role in promoting infant and child mental health
  - implement structures, policies and practices that promote infant and child mental health
  - identify continuous improvement opportunities





# Mentimeter

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**Which organisation / program are you joining us from and what is your role?**

## **Child and family partners, practitioners, researchers acknowledgement**

Emerging Minds acknowledges the contribution of the many family members, practitioners and researchers involved in the development of our resources. We thank them for their time, wisdom and guidance.

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## Section 1

# Understanding infant and child mental health



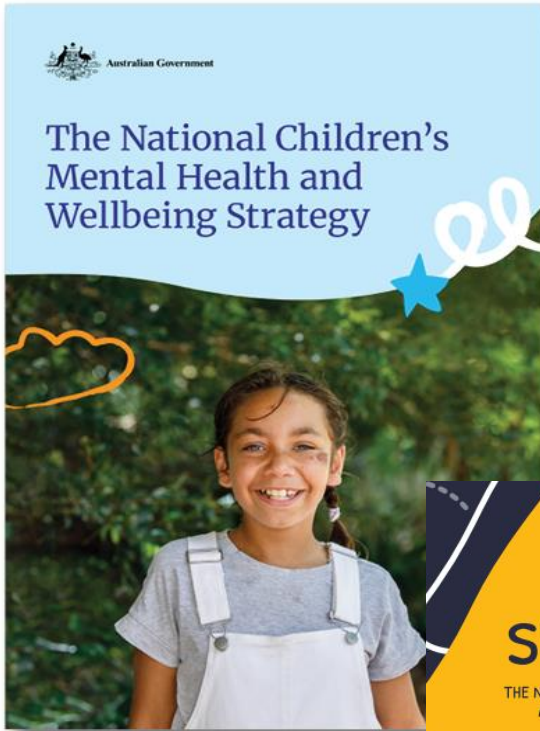
# Mentimeter

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**What comes to mind when you hear the term  
'child mental health'?**





## Child mental health is a National priority

- The ***National Children's Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy*** proposes a shift in the way we think about mental health and wellbeing for children including:
  - A **change in language and in the collective understanding** of who is responsible for supporting infant and child mental health.
  - A **greater focus on early access** to preventative and early intervention services and supports children and families, which is **also a key focus area of the *Safe and Supported First Action Plan***.



# Why is it important?

**50% of all lifetime mental health conditions emerge in childhood**  
(NCMHWS, 2021)

**Community and service system context can have a cascading influence on infant and child mental health**

The Australian workforce is **more confident in knowledge and theory than in interacting with children and parents**  
(EMERGING MINDS, 2022)

**Prevention and early intervention is key**

- **Early** in life
- **Early** in the problem
- **Early** in engagement

# Social and emotional wellbeing

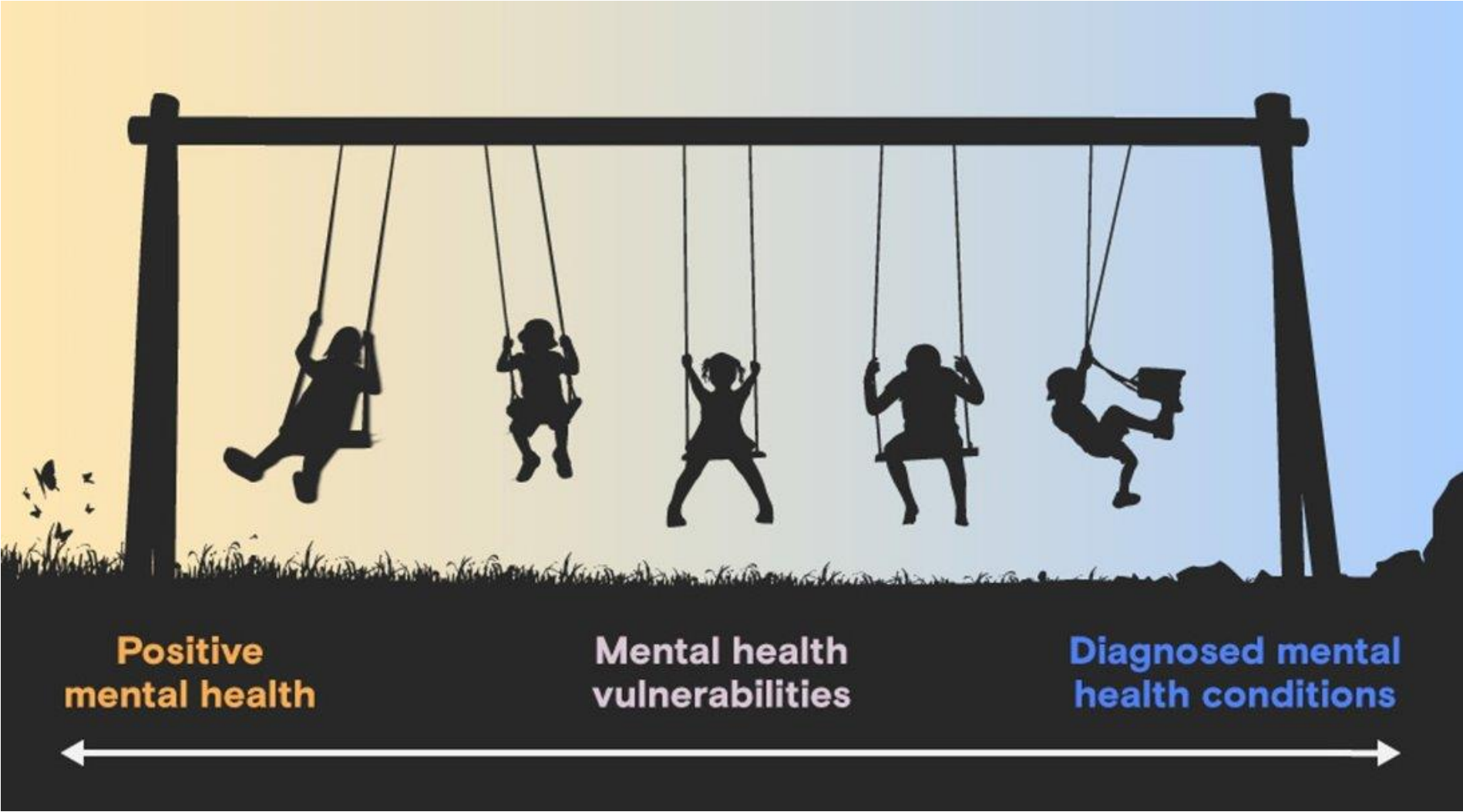
“In broad terms, social and emotional wellbeing is the foundation for physical and mental health for Aboriginal peoples. It is a holistic concept which results from a network of relationships between individuals, family, kin and community. It also recognises the importance of connection to land, culture, spirituality and ancestry, and how these affect the individual.”

*Commonwealth of Australia 2017. National Strategic Framework for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Mental Health and Social and Emotional Wellbeing. Canberra: Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.*





# The child mental health continuum





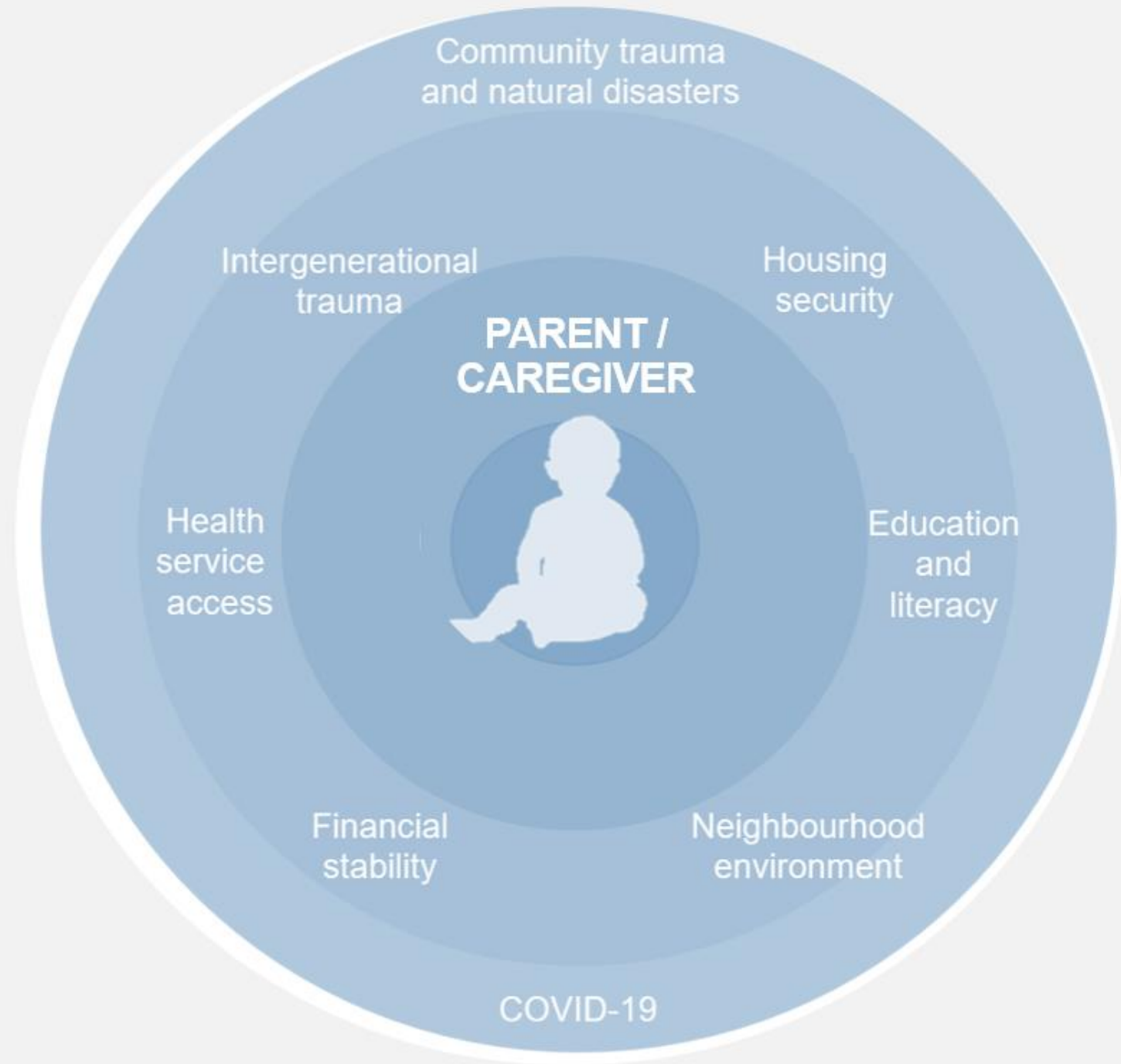
# A child's mental health is dynamic

## The Whole Child

- Infants and children are **shaped and influenced** by a range of social and environmental factors, all of which go into making the **'whole child'**
- What is going on in **one part of a child's life can affect many other areas.**
- Infants and children **should always be viewed in the context of their relationships and the environments** in which they live, play, learn and grow.

## Influences on parental wellbeing and child mental health

“Parental wellbeing impacts the parent-child relationship and the wellbeing of their child/ren.”  
(NCMHWS, 2021)



# Parent - child feedback loop





*Prevention and early intervention  
means a child **does not** need a  
diagnosis before help is available.*

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## How might the way we view child mental health influence:

- who responds?
- when we respond?
- how we respond?
- what we seek to measure?





## As a leader, you play a key role in **creating an enabling environment**

- **Promoting a child *and* family focus:** broadening the lens from an individual to the interconnected family context.
- **Visibility and awareness** of infant, children and their mental health and wellbeing.
- **Building staff capability, competence and confidence** in understanding child mental health.
- **Supporting staff to understand and integrate early intervention and prevention** into their practice.

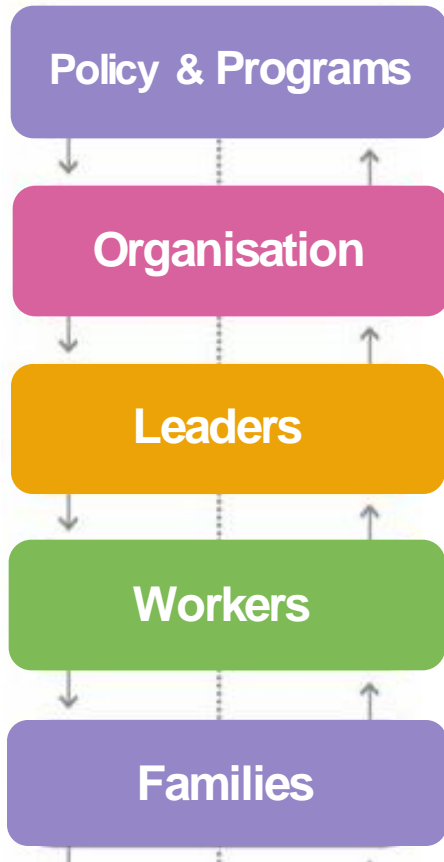
## Section 2

# How do systems influence infant and child mental health?

# Considering the ecology of a system



# Systems thinking: Keeping infant and child mental health in mind



Many things determine how a workforce responds to child mental health.

**How can we understand and engage in different ways that make a positive difference** to delivering support for infant and child mental health?

- How is the mental health of infant and children thought about and understood? How does this shape the support provided?
- Where can you as a leader influence this? What can you do to facilitate a shared understanding?



Within your organisation OR sector  
**What do you think is working well to support infant & child mental health?**

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Within your organisation OR sector  
**What might get in the way of supporting  
infant & child mental health?**

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# 10min Break

## Section 3

# How can leaders support infant and child mental health?

# Systems thinking & child mental health



What factors are in place creating an authorising environment across the system?

Do organisations have structures and policies in place to promote child and parent visibility and strategies enabling workforce capability?

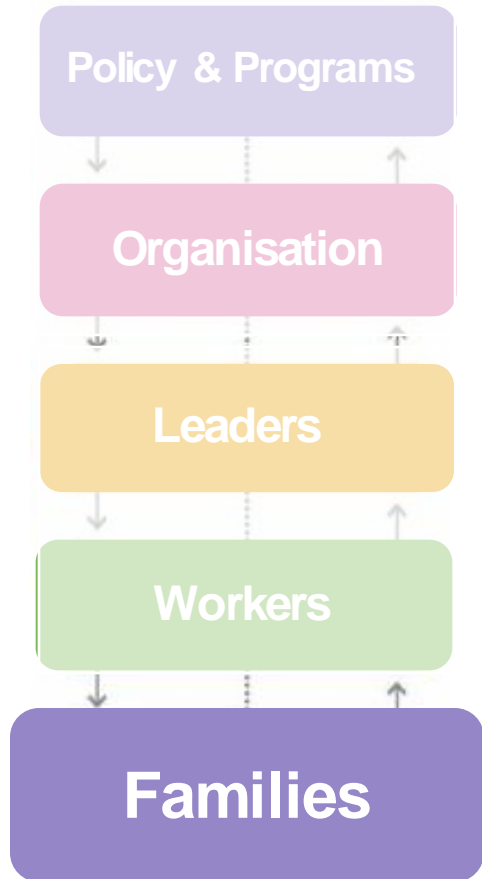
Do leaders have strategies and actions in place to enable workforce capabilities and confidence and continuous quality improvement?

Do workforces *hold* the knowledge, confidence & skills required?

Are early & effective supports for infants, children and/or parents who are struggling available and delivered (before *and* alongside referrals)?

Child mental health and family resilience is promoted and supported

# Systems thinking: Keeping infant and child mental health in mind



## Examples

- Adult services consider parenting, and the impact of stressors and adversities on parenting and the child and family.
- Core practices for supporting the parent-child relationship and infant and child mental health are embedded within program/service delivery guidelines/models.
- Evaluation processes that capture the voices and experiences of children and families are embedded within

## Questions for leaders

- What percentage of our adult clients are parents?
- How is the parent-child relationship and family resilience supported? How do we know?
- How are children supported to have input into decisions that affect their lives.
- How are the voices of families, including children, embedded/captured in service design, delivery and evaluation?

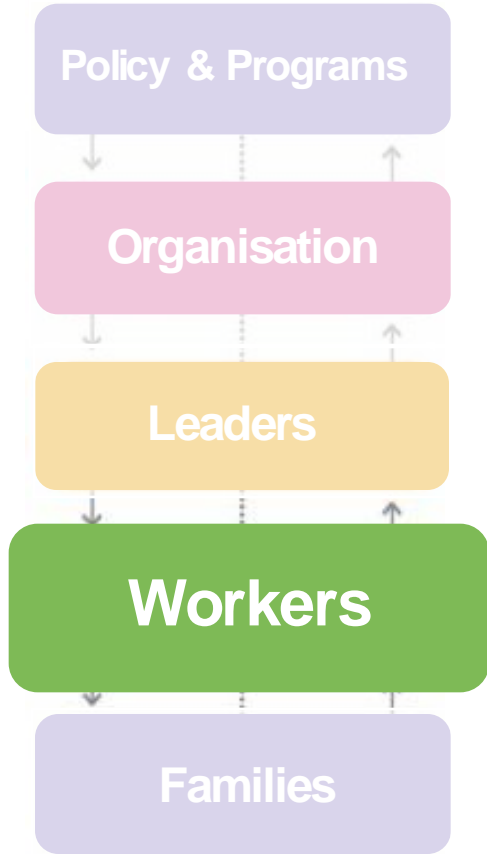
# Systems thinking: Keeping infant and child mental health in mind

## Examples

- Workforce holds a shared, consistent understanding of the role they play in supporting infant and child mental health and what this looks like in practice.
- Workforce is able to recognise early signs of difficulties and provide support to improve child mental health and family resilience.
- Workforce is able to recognise when families need support.

## Questions for leaders

- How confident and competent are our workforce in working with infants and children?
- How confident and competent are our workforce in identifying infants and children who may be at risk of experiencing mental health challenges?
- What percentage of your workforce feels confident and competent in respond to trauma in ways that promote child mental health and family resilience?
- How confident and competent are our workforce in working with parents, including holding conversations that respectfully explore the impact of adult stressors on parenting?



# Systems thinking: Keeping infant and child mental health in mind



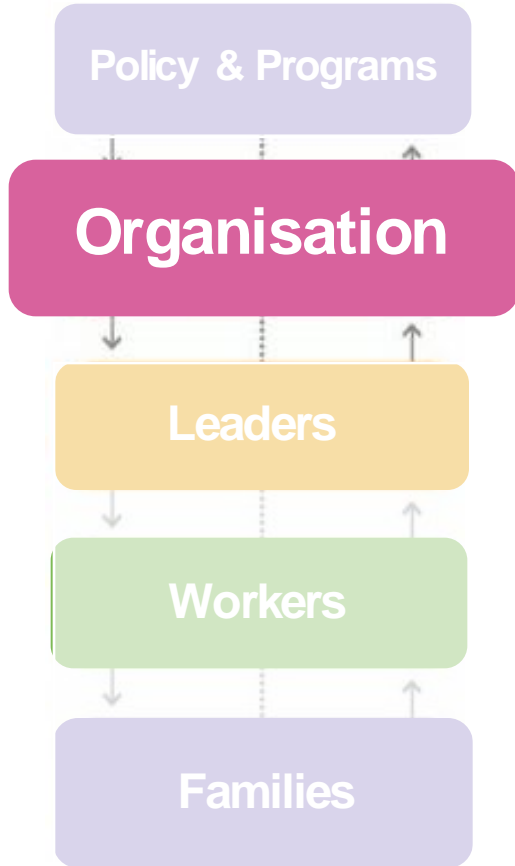
## Examples

- An induction package/process is in place to provide core child-centred / parent-sensitive practice knowledge.
- Leaders receive training for working with staff to improve child-centred and parent-sensitive practice and staff are supported through reflective supervision and practice development structures and processes.
- Case note audit processes are in place and demonstrate parents being asked about their relationships with their children and their children's mental health and wellbeing.

## Questions for leaders

- How is your workforce supported to keep infant and child health in mind?
- What processes are in place to support new staff to embed child focused practices?
- How are data collection and evaluation findings used to inform continuous service improvement?

# Systems thinking: Keeping infant and child mental health in mind



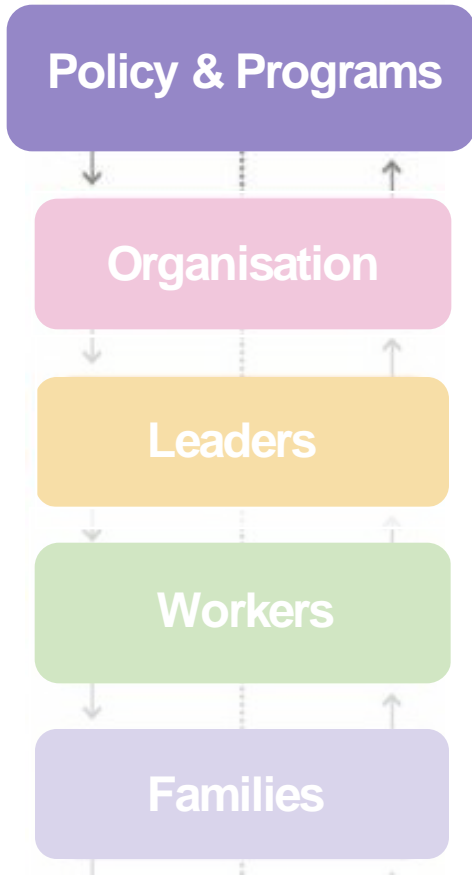
## Examples

- This involves considering the structures and policies that are in place to support parenting and the needs of infants and children so that the child becomes more 'visible',
- Recruitment processes acknowledge and reinforce the understanding that a focus on infants, children and families is central to the organisation.
- A culture of genuine and safe connection and collaboration with children and families is visible across the organisation.
- A values and/or a mission statement that aligns with family focused practice is in place.

## Questions for leaders

- How do families know this is a child focused and parent sensitive organisation?
- What child, parent and family-centred principles are reflected in the organisational culture and service delivery?
- How do we evaluate the effectiveness of our services in meeting the needs of children and families?

# Systems thinking: Keeping infant and child mental health in mind



This involves **considering the broader factors and environment that can promote and support child mental health**, including:

- Stakeholder relationships
- Policy, frameworks, guidelines (e.g. the National Children’s Mental Health & Wellbeing Strategy)
- Funding arrangements
- Contracts and tendering
- Sector commitments and data reporting
- Interagency coordination
- Activity work plans and progress reports
- Communities of Practice.





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## What stood out to you?

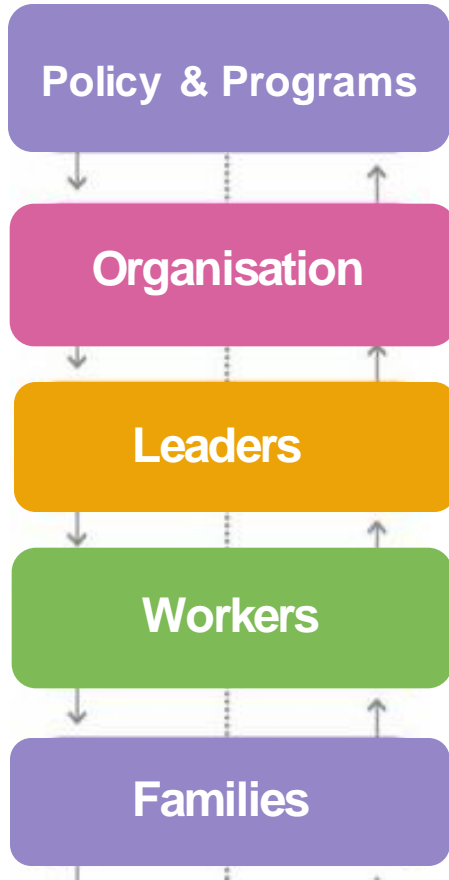
- **Areas of strength**
- **Opportunities**

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# Systems thinking



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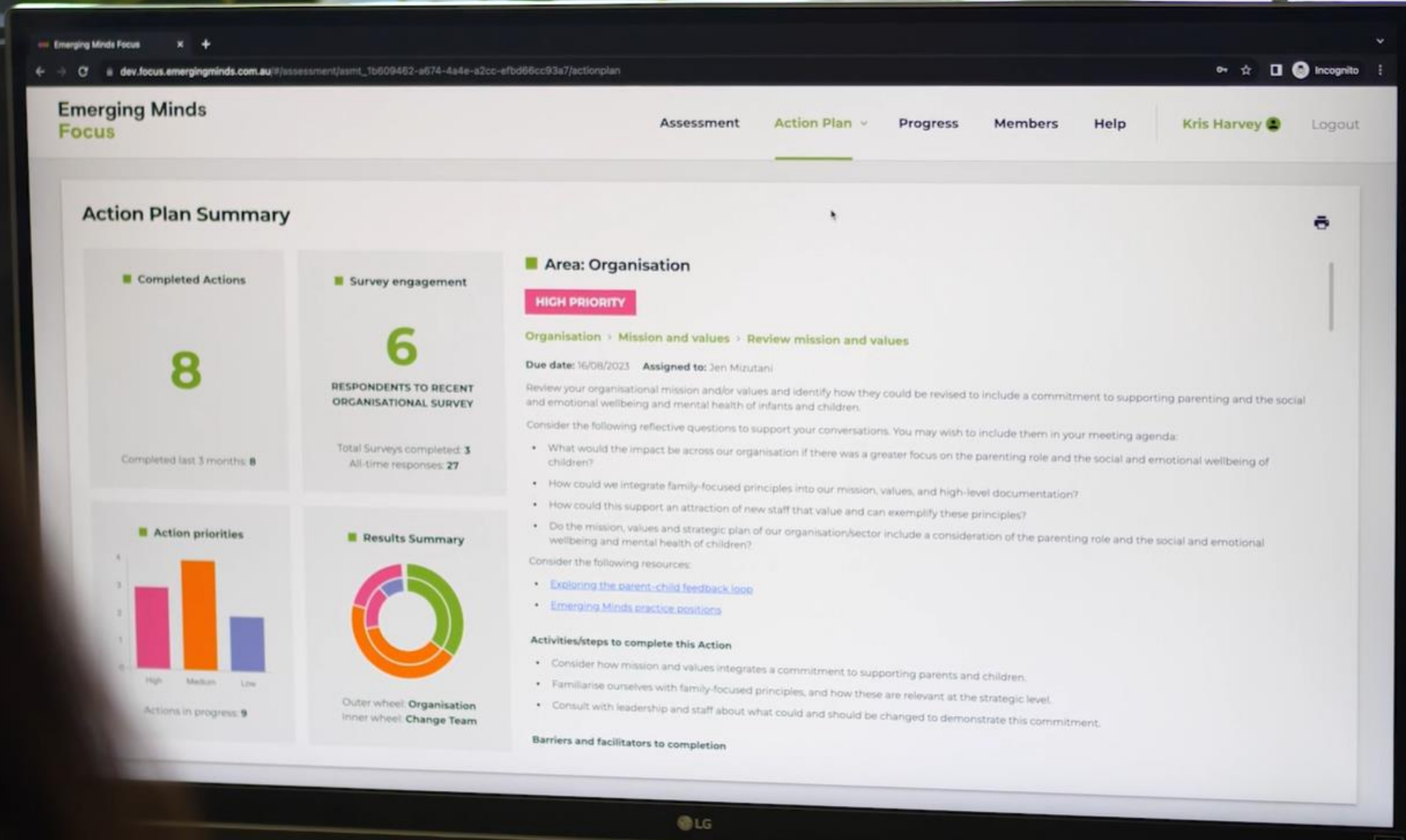
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When considering the opportunities you identified:  
**What support would you need to  
make this happen?**



## Section 4

# Strengthening workforce competence, confidence and practice

# What supports the integration of knowledge and skill into practice?



# Tools to help strengthen workforce confidence and capacity to support infant & child mental health

Guide

## PERCS Conversation Guide

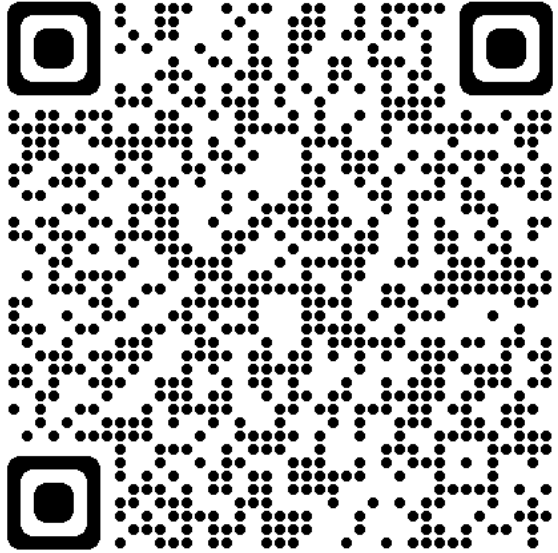


Practice paper

## Supporting staff to work with children and families with complex needs: A checklist for organisations



## Child and family partnerships toolkit





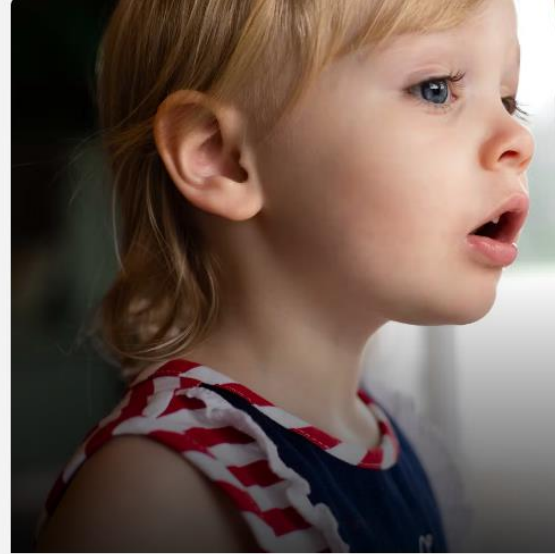
**Adult mental health**

3 COURSES



**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander social and emotional wellbeing**

9 COURSES



**Interpersonal trauma**

3 COURSES



**Engaging children**

7 COURSES

## Emerging Minds Learning Pathways



**Alcohol and other drugs (AOD)**

2 COURSES



**Practice strategies for working with children**

4 COURSES



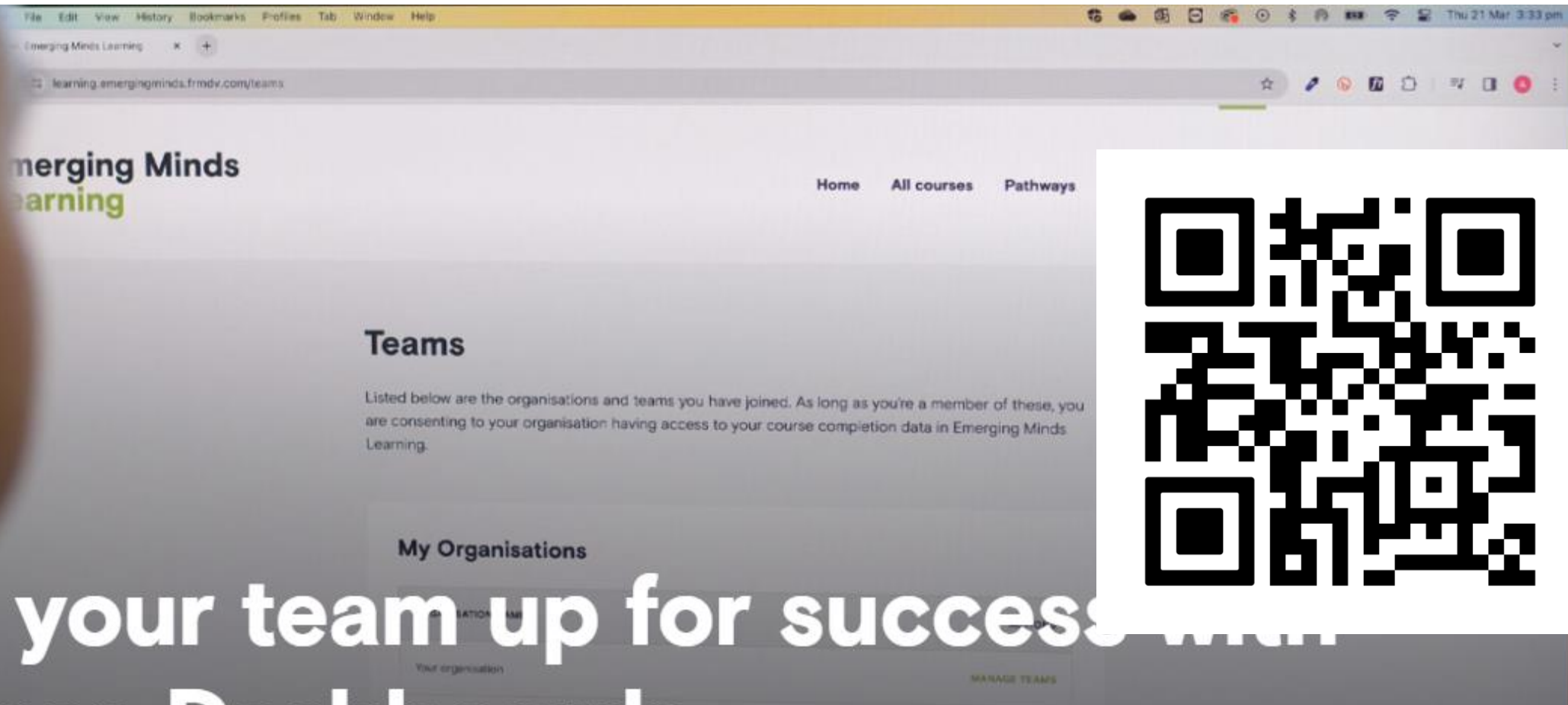
**Family and domestic violence (FDV)**

3 COURSES



**Bullying**

2 COURSES



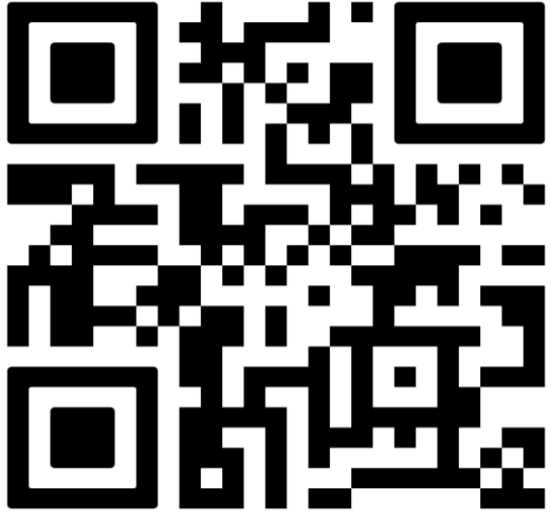
# Setting your team up for success with Workplace Dashboards

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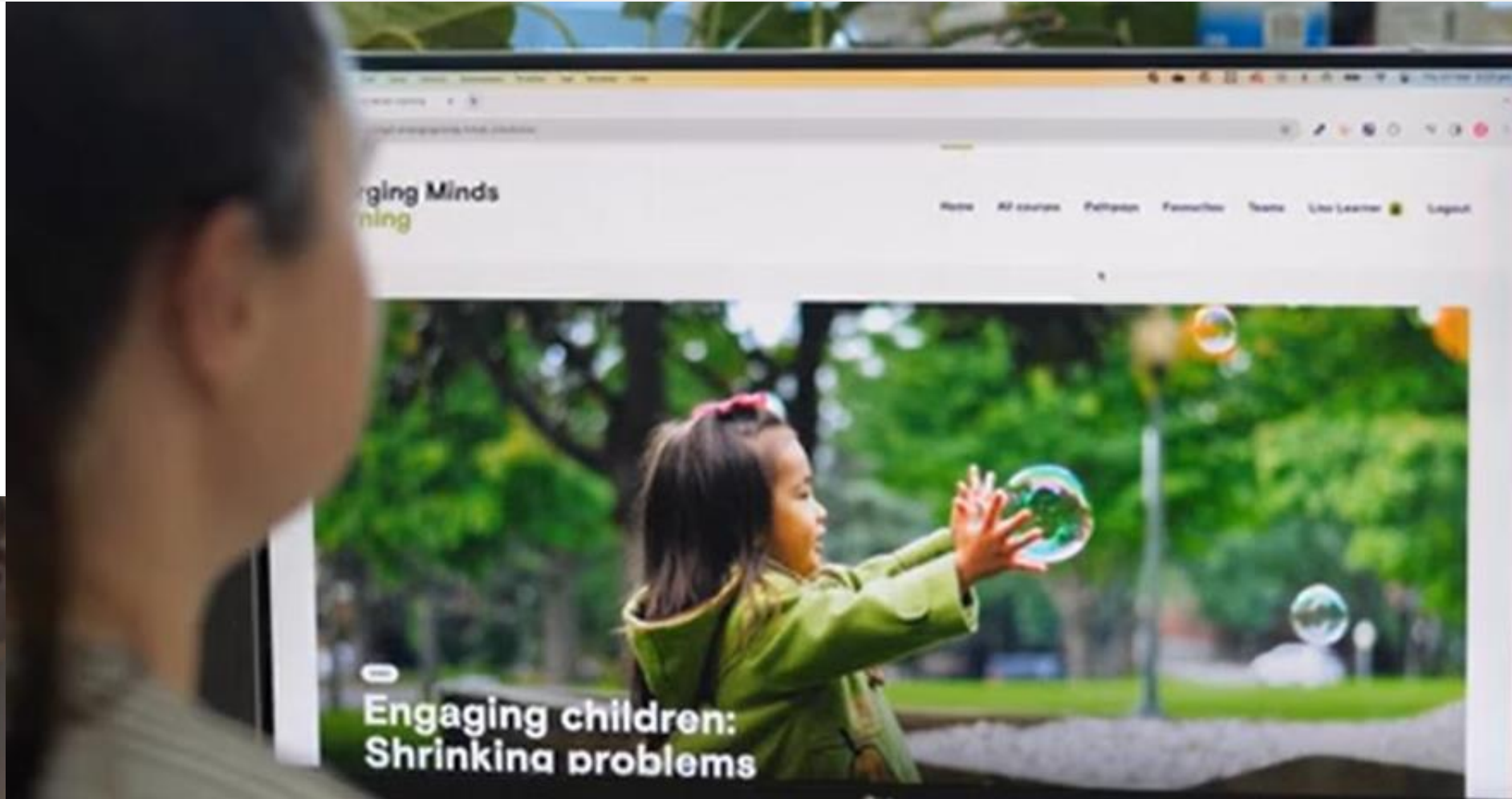
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# Emerging Minds Learning Workplace Dashboard



Create teams  
Assign or tailor pathways  
Track progress  
Generate reports



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## Resources for your organisation

Find Emerging Minds on





## Key messages

**Organisations and services that proactively support positive mental health for infants and children open the door to prevention and early intervention opportunities and to immediate and long-term benefits including:**

- **Improved service access, reach and choice**
- **Better outcomes for children**
- **More resilient families**
- **A more responsive service system**
- **Reduced demand on services into the future**



To promote positive mental health for infants and children across your organisation (or sector):

**What is one action you will take from here?**



## Upcoming webinars - PLACEHOLDER

Promoting children's mental health and wellbeing in the context of family and domestic violence

- **Thursday 22 August 2024**
- 12.30PM - 2.00PM

### Leaders workshop:

Supporting the mental health of infants and children – *Effective implementation within a family and domestic violence context*

- **Tuesday 3 September 2024**
- 12.30PM - 2.00PM

# Thank you.

Please let us know if you have any questions or comments on this workshop.

We appreciate your feedback.

For workplace support contact:

**[mcleank@emergingminds.com.au](mailto:mcleank@emergingminds.com.au)**

*The National Workforce Centre for Child Mental Health is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health under the National Support for Child and Youth Mental Health Program.*

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