

WWF Third Sector Synergy Spark: Summary of Progress

4th July 2025

Overview

The Angus Synergy Spark programme brings together 17 Third Sector organisations with external consultants to co-produce transformational solutions that meet the complex needs of families across Angus. With support from Voluntary Action Angus and Angus Council, this collaborative effort is reframing competitive funding into a shared, strengths-based model focused on outcomes, sustainability, and meaningful impact.

To date, **five co-production workshops** have been delivered. These have built strong consensus around values, highlighted system challenges, and generated practical ideas for whole-family wellbeing interventions.



Collective vision

- We believe that the voluntary sector in Angus is a powerful force for good. We all have valuable and unique expertise and perspectives, when we work together we are bigger than the sum of our individual organisations.
- Through collaboration we will have stronger relationships with each other and the families we work for. We will make better use of our resources, strengthen the outcomes we work towards, and have better understanding of our shared impact.
- Through our relationships, families in Angus will more easily access seamless support in the right place, at the right time.

Achievements Across Five Workshops

A. Shared Vision and Principles (Workshop 1)

Organisations agreed a collective vision:

"The voluntary sector in Angus is a powerful force for good. Through collaboration, we are more than the sum of our parts. Families will access seamless, timely support, informed by trusted relationships and lived experience."

Key themes from survey data helped frame this vision:

- Mental health and wellbeing (especially early intervention and trauma-informed practice)
- Financial/practical support
- Inclusive and holistic community services



Principles

How we'll treat each other	How we'll work together	How we'll improve together
Trust	Accountability – to ourselves and each other	Learning and growth mindset
Transparency	Efficiency and effectiveness- making the best use of what we have	Commitment to the bigger picture
Mutual respect	Open communication	

B. Mapping Strengths, Gaps and Opportunities (Workshop 2)

Participants mapped:

- Existing services across Angus (including for carers, CYP, domestic abuse survivors, neurodiverse individuals, and families with sensory needs)
- Peer support structures, therapeutic interventions, and advocacy services (e.g., DeafiniTAY, Angus Carers, Penumbra, Women's Aid)
- Gaps in provision and points of duplication

This session also explored how collaboration could overcome barriers and reduce fragmentation in family support.

High level mapping

What's happening	What's working
Social/support/activity groups Workshops and training Advocacy Family support, contact centres, mentoring Mediation, counselling, therapeutic support Employability	Partnerships/relationships across sector Strong relationships with communities Willingness to work differently
What's not working	What's missing
Macro – benefits, justice, legal aid, short-term funding Lack of lived experience voice/consultation fatigue Lack of deep understanding of orgs, sector, and community need Attitudes towards sector, and in particular towards early intervention	Earlier intervention services, signposting Face to face contact/walk-in services Social/activity groups in certain areas/for specific groups Support for complex needs, Autism, school refusal families Legal aid, resources, support with court <i>Joint referral pathways, joined-up support across projects</i>

C. Case Study Exploration and Project Prototyping (Workshop 3)

Mock case studies from organisations like Deaflinks, Women's Aid, and Relationship Scotland brought to life the complexity of family support needs, especially around:

- Transitions for carers and young people
- Support for children of neurodiverse or deaf parents
- Gaps in waiting times and post-crisis recovery
- The importance of family-centred, joined-up support

These informed the development of early project ideas and helped shape what a transformational funding proposal could look like.

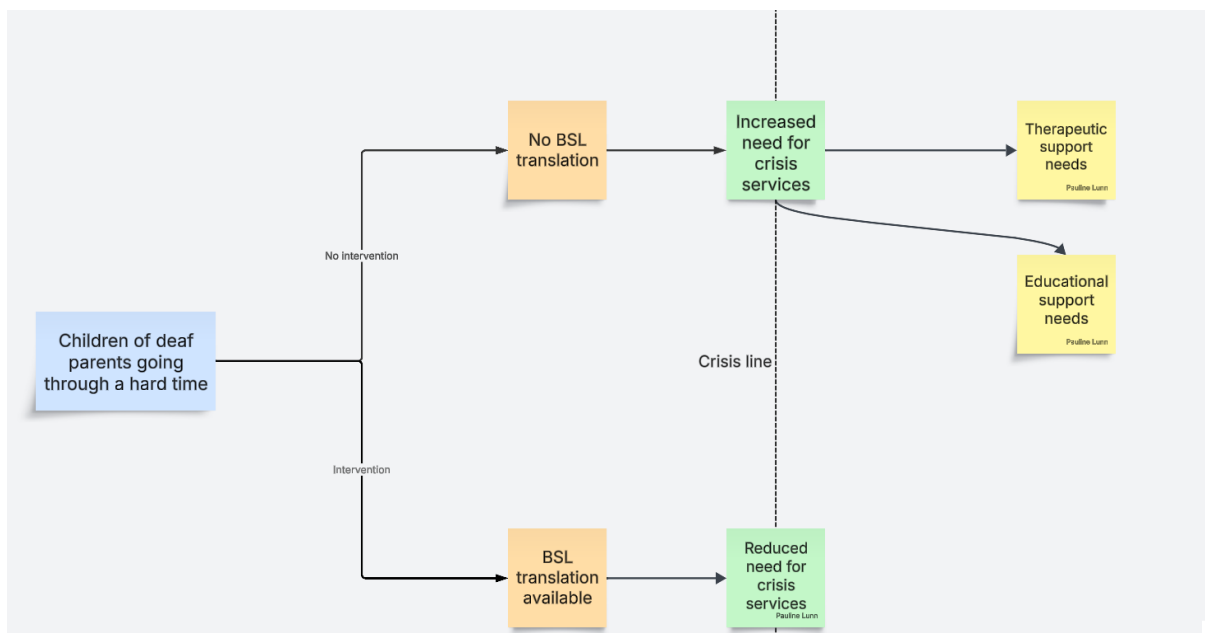
D. Prevention Pathways and Systems Mapping (Workshop 4)

Using system maps (e.g., children of deaf parents scenario), participants modelled how early intervention and BSL translation reduces reliance on crisis services and mitigates later therapeutic or educational support needs.

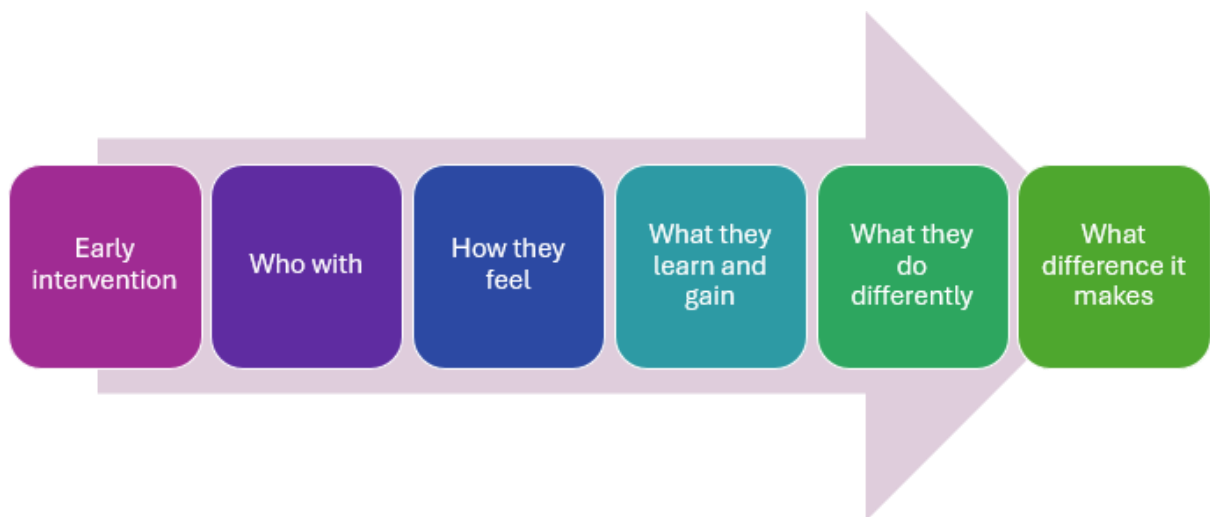
This type of mapping illustrated:

- How lack of communication support escalates issues
- The value of preventative, accessible services
- The need for upstream investment to reduce costly downstream interventions

Many of the supports on the map are for families who are in crisis, and WFW Fund has a clear aim to intervene earlier and more effectively. Participants used a simple model to map out what earlier effective interventions could look like for the families the projects already support.



Traditional monitoring and evaluation tend to focus on counting tangible outputs such as number of sessions delivered, or referrals received, rather than offering an opportunity to fully explore outcomes meaningfully. To aid with planning in a way that will allow for deeper learning a set of logic models were created. It was proposed that this could form the basis of how grant holders carry out collective learning throughout the lifespan of the projects.



An example of this is:

For who	How they feel	What they learn and gain	What they do differently	What difference it makes
Parents	Confident	Skills	Effectively manage situations	Families are more resilient
Children	Optimistic	Trust	Engage in school	
Education	Supported	Better use of resources	Fewer exclusions	Children have improved life chances
Community orgs	Empowered	Autonomy/choice	Peer advocates/champions	Statutory and community supports are more efficiently and effectively engaged
Social work	Connected	Earlier interventions	Less gatekeeping	

E. Project Development and Refinement (Workshop 5)

Organisations were invited to revisit the values, gaps, and system priorities identified in earlier sessions and begin shaping concrete project ideas. During this session, several organisations shared early-stage concepts in an open discussion format, allowing for collaborative feedback and cross-organisational learning.

Example of emerging Project Ideas:

- **Angus Independent Advocacy (AIA):** Peer-Led Family Support Groups facilitated by a dedicated staff member and sustained by trained volunteers with lived experience. Aims to reduce crises through early intervention and foster inclusive, community-led spaces.
- **Barnardo's:** A school-based buddy system to support CYP with additional support needs during key transitions. The project will work in partnership with Penumbra and prioritise families without requiring a clinical diagnosis of any Neurodevelopmental condition.
- **Aberlour:** Enhancing existing informal community-based support for new and expectant mums, including coffee mornings, transport assistance, and practical essentials, all aimed at improving wellbeing and reducing isolation.
- **Safe Families:** Volunteer-based family support model offering host families, family friends, and resource volunteers. Focuses on strengthening relationships and providing flexible, non-statutory support—especially for larger families and those with ND needs.
- **Family Mediation:** Standalone mediation service to support partner organisations in resolving family conflict and reducing staff burden. Seen as an enabler for the success of other projects.

Identified Gaps and Opportunities:

- Informal, fun community activities to complement formal interventions
- Targeted support for fathers
- Help with early transitions, such as from nursery to primary school
- Enhancements to existing services (not just new provision)
- Engagement and funding access for grassroots community groups

This session demonstrated the growing readiness of organisations to move from values and systems thinking into co-designed, collaborative proposals. Ideas shared reflected strong alignment with Whole Family Wellbeing principles and an emphasis on sustainable, trauma-informed early intervention.

Hayley Mearns
CEO VAA

Consultant Support

All participating Third Sector organisations, regardless of grant size, are receiving dedicated support from the consultants to:

- Develop robust, collaborative proposals
- Ensure equity in access to funding opportunities
- Strengthen monitoring and evaluation approaches
- Align ideas with the wider system needs of Angus families