



# ANTENATAL AND EARLY YEARS SERVICE IMPACT REPORT

2025 - 2026

## Message from the CEO



**Ethelinda Lashley-Scott,**  
**CEO**

**"...the true strength of the Multi-Cultural Family Base (MCFB)... is found in our people, our values, and the communities who continue to place their trust in us."**

As I reflect on the past year, the loss of Wendy Paterson, former social worker and trustee, has left a hole for all of us here at MCFB. I am reminded that the true strength of the Multi-Cultural Family Base (MCFB) has never been found in our building, our funding, or even the number of services we deliver. It is found in our people, our values, and the communities who continue to place their trust in us.

This has been a year of both challenge and transformation. Like many organisations across the third sector, we have faced increasing financial pressures, rising costs, uncertainty in funding, and difficult decisions about how best to sustain our services for the future. We also made the significant decision to leave our long-standing premises, marking the end of an important chapter in MCFB's history. While this was not an easy decision, it reflects our commitment to long-term sustainability and ensuring that every resource possible is directed towards supporting children, young people and families.

Throughout these changes, our mission has remained constant. Every day our staff, volunteers, students and partners have demonstrated extraordinary commitment, compassion and professionalism. Together they have continued to deliver culturally responsive, trauma-informed and anti-racist services that enable people to feel safe, valued and empowered.

Over the past year we have continued to support families experiencing multiple and complex disadvantages including poverty, displacement, trauma, racism and social isolation. Through our programme and schools-based work and community activities, we have helped people rebuild

confidence, improve wellbeing, strengthen relationships, access education and employment, and become active members of their communities.

I have been particularly inspired by the resilience of the individuals and families who engage with our services. Time and again they remind us that with the right support, opportunities and belief, people can overcome extraordinary barriers. Their courage continues to shape and influence how we develop our services.

This year has also reinforced the importance of collaboration. We have strengthened partnerships across education, health, social work, the voluntary sector and local communities. We recognise that no single organisation can address the inequalities faced by racialised communities alone. Lasting change requires collective leadership, shared learning and a commitment to tackling the structural barriers that continue to impact so many lives.

Alongside our direct services, we have continued to influence wider systems through our anti-racist training, mentoring, advocacy and participation in strategic partnerships. We remain committed to creating services that are not simply culturally aware, but actively anti-racist, anti-oppressive and rooted in equity and human rights.

I would like to express my sincere thanks to our dedicated staff team, Board of Trustees, volunteers, students, partners and funders. Your commitment, expertise and belief in our work have enabled MCFB to continue making a meaningful difference during a challenging year.

Most importantly, I want to thank the children, young people and families who allow us to walk alongside them. Their resilience, creativity and determination inspire everything we do.

As we look ahead, we know there will continue to be challenges. However, we also know that MCFB has always adapted, evolved and responded to the changing needs of our communities. We enter the coming year with renewed determination to strengthen our organisation, diversify our income, deepen our partnerships and continue creating opportunities where everyone can thrive, regardless of their background or circumstances.

For over twenty-five years MCFB has stood alongside communities experiencing inequality and exclusion. That commitment remains as strong today as it was when the organisation was founded. Together, we will continue to build communities where diversity is celebrated, voices are heard and everyone has the opportunity to belong and flourish.

Ethelinda Lashley-Scott

Chief Executive Officer

Multi-Cultural Family Base

# Antenatal and Early Years Service

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## Antenatal Project

The Antenatal Project provides emotional and practical support to ethnically diverse parents who are pregnant for the first time or experiencing their first pregnancy in the UK.

It offers one-to-one support, help with appointments, family and group support, and continued assistance after birth. The service is designed for families facing challenges such as recent migration, language barriers, asylum-seeking status, homelessness, or financial hardship, helping them navigate healthcare services, prepare for their baby's arrival, and create a positive environment for their child's early development and parent-infant relationship building.

## Early Years

The Early Years Service supports families, antenatally to 3 years. We work across the City of Edinburgh with ethnically diverse families.

We are a small multi-disciplinary team with experience of Social Work, Art Psychotherapy, Infant Mental Health and Early Years Education. We are also joined by Social Work students on placement with the team. We work in partnership with parents, health and social care practitioners to provide sensitive and practical support at this early stage.

Our service aims at improving perinatal and infant mental health through evidence-informed parenting support short-term or intensive intervention to support parent-infant attachment through play, therapeutic relationship, and advocacy/practical support when needed. The work can take place at home or within one of our supported Early Years groups, one of which is delivered bilingually in both Mandarin and English.



***Strawberry (Mother and Toddler) Group***

## Our Groups

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Our group programme provides regular opportunities for parents, carers, and children to come together in a supportive and welcoming environment. Through shared activities, peer support, and early learning experiences, our groups help reduce isolation, strengthen family relationships, and support children's development and wellbeing.

Over the past year we delivered three core groups: Chinese Flower Group, Katakeet Babies Group, and Strawberry Toddlers Group. We also partnered with Edinburgh Council to facilitate a Play and Chat group, extending opportunities for families to connect with local services and their wider community.



***Katakeet (Mother and Baby) group set-up.***

## Outings and Events

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Our outings and events bring families together in welcoming and enjoyable environments, creating opportunities for learning, social connection, and shared experiences. From community visits to seasonal celebrations, these activities help strengthen relationships, support children's development, and build a sense of belonging for parents and carers.



***Summer outing to the National Museum of Scotland 2026***



***Summer outing to Edinburgh Zoo 2025***

The Early Years team also organised a trip to the Talbot Rice Gallery to participate in the exhibition *The Children are Now* at the Talbot Rice Gallery <https://trg.ed.ac.uk/exhibition/children-are-now>. This was in collaboration with Sarah Leal

(Talbot Rice Gallery), Dr Kristina Konstantoni and MCFB antenatal project worker and funded by the Talbot Rice Gallery, which is part of the University of Edinburgh.



**Talbot Rice Gallery**

### Infant Feeding Workshop



**Preparing for Breastfeeding**  
For pregnant mothers and fathers  
Families with newborn babies welcome to join!

**Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> June 10-11pm**

Join us for a friendly breastfeeding preparation workshop  
With Karla Napier, La Leche Infant Feeding Consultant

**Benefits of breastfeeding**  
What babies do when in skin to skin contact in the first hour after birth  
How to help your baby attach well  
Practice a variety of comfortable positions for feeding

Lunch included  
Let us know if you need childcare for

Meet at MCFB office  
50 Coburg Street  
EH6 6HE



In June 2025, as part of a series of antenatal events, we hosted an infant feeding workshop in collaboration with La Leche League (LLL).

Families were welcomed to our MCFB office to be guided by an Infant Feeding Consultant from LLL on Breastfeeding and infant feeding preparation. Interpretation was offered by our staff team and a beautiful meal was shared together afterwards.

All the families who attended continued to successfully breastfeed their children for over six months,

***“... the workshop was useful and informative, and gave me the confidence to persevere through what was a really tough breastfeeding process...”***

As part of our Antenatal event series we took families for a guided tour of the Birth Centre and Labour ward at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh.

Families were collected from their homes in the MCFB car and taken to the hospital. This allowed families to familiarise themselves with the route and understand where best to be dropped off and where to park.

***"..I was worried about getting to the hospital. But after making that trip (with MCFB) I felt a lot more calm about it."***

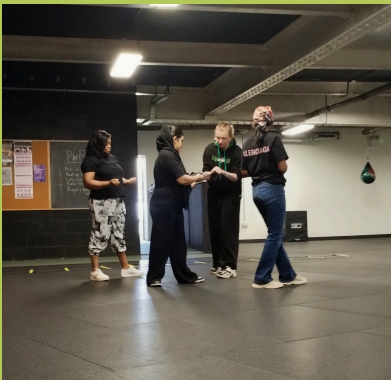
The tour was facilitated by the Charge Midwife of the Birth Centre, Fiona Lumber.

## Birth Centre and Labour ward visit



## Port O Leith Boxing Club

### Postnatal Punchers



Mothers and babies from the Katakeet group attended a 'Postnatal Punchers' trial session at a local boxing gym.

Families were coached by the Clubs Inclusion Coach, Kez who welcomed them and ensured they got a good session in while the in-house creche (alongside MCFB staff) looked after the babies so the Mothers could focus on their training.

***"...I enjoyed the session so much. Thank you. It was nice to be able to focus on my fitness so I can be stronger for my baby..."***

# Reach and Impact

## Number of Families Supported

# 63

**Number of Group Sessions delivered/facilitated**

# 78

**Number of Home-Visits and Outreach sessions**

# 252

## **Evidence-Based Parenting Approaches**

Our parenting support programme strengthens children's social, emotional, cognitive and physical development by improving the quality of parent-child relationships and reducing the barriers faced by ethnically diverse, refugee, asylum-seeking and migrant families.

Through evidence-informed attachment-based practice, intensive home visiting and culturally responsive group programmes, families become more confident, less isolated and better able to support their children's healthy development. Alongside improved access to health, education and community services, these outcomes create stronger foundations for children's readiness to learn and long-term wellbeing.

Our work is grounded in established evidence from infant mental health and attachment-informed practice. Across all interventions project workers consistently used:

- reflective parenting approaches
- attachment-informed practice
- responsive caregiving
- modelling through play
- strengths-based parenting support
- relationship-based home visiting

Staff also undertake continuous professional development, including:

- Infant observation
- Baby massage

- Professional supervision
- Child Protection training
- Trauma-informed Care
- Birth companion training

Practice is supported through regular reflective supervision and partnership working with maternity, health visiting and early years services.

## Social and Emotional Development

Children developed secure attachments, increased opportunities for social interaction and improved emotional wellbeing through strengthened parent-child relationships.

### Parent-child relationships

**87%**

**Of parents reported improvements in the quality of their relationship with their child**

Parents described:

- spending more quality time together
- increased confidence in reading their baby's cues
- stronger emotional bonding
- using singing, sensory play and responsive play at home

***"I have bonded more with my baby."***

*-Katakeet Participant*

***"Activities like singing, playing and sensory sessions gave me new ways to engage with my baby, making our time together more meaningful."***

*- Katakeet Participant*

## Reflective Parenting

**85.9%**

### Parents demonstrated increased parental reflective functioning

Project workers consistently modelled infant mental health principles by encouraging parents to consider:

***"What might your child be thinking or feeling?"***

Parents reported:

- greater understanding of children's emotional needs
- increased confidence responding to behaviour
- improved sibling relationships
- using positive play techniques at home

## Reducing Isolation

**92.5%**

### Of participating families reported feeling less isolated

Social isolation is a major risk factor for poorer child development. Our programme reduced this by creating regular opportunities for connection.

- Families developed supportive peer networks.
- Parents, babies, and toddlers were supported in forming early social relationships.
- Parents became more confident attending community spaces independently.

Families received support accessing:

- midwives
- health visitors
- dentists
- nursery services

Children also accessed:

- museums
- galleries
- zoo visits
- community events

## Cognitive and Physical Development

Parents increased their confidence using play, singing and responsive communication to support children's early learning. Children experienced increased opportunities for healthy physical development through play, nutrition support and improved access to health services.

Project workers actively modelled:

- singing
- storytelling
- sensory play
- turn-taking
- responsive communication

Parents reported:

- singing songs from groups at home
- observing children's interests
- extending play opportunities
- increasing social experiences

Group sessions encouraged:

- shared attention
- early communication
- play-based learning
- peer interaction

Specialist sessions included:

- weaning support
- breastfeeding support
- paediatric first aid

Children benefited from:

- active play
- outdoor outings
- sensory exploration
- movement-based activities

These experiences broadened children's learning environments while strengthening parent-child interaction. Parents reported feeling more confident supporting children's health and development.

## Moving Forward

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Over the next year, we aim to maintain and strengthen our existing Katakeet Mother & Baby and Strawberry Mother & Toddler groups while expanding support across the perinatal journey. Key priorities include developing a new antenatal "Bump & Baby" group to help expectant parents build confidence, access information, and establish supportive connections before birth, creating a seamless pathway into postnatal support.

We also plan to explore a volunteer befriending programme to provide additional emotional and practical support for families experiencing isolation or limited support networks. Looking further ahead, we will investigate the feasibility of a volunteer doula programme, offering non-clinical support during pregnancy, birth, and the postnatal period to improve access to support and strengthen community-based care for families most at need.

## Contact

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For further information, please reach out to us at [hello@mcfb.org.uk](mailto:hello@mcfb.org.uk).

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