

Itla Children's Foundation Annual Report 2025





Itla Children's Foundation promotes and supports the wellbeing, equality, position and good future of children, young people and families in Finland. Itla refines and disseminates high-quality information and practical solutions to support decision-making and development, advances the renewal of growing environments and services for children and young people, and strengthens constructive discussion on a child- and family-friendly society and its future.

The annual report includes the activity report and financial statements for the period 1 January 2025–31 December 2025.

Itla Children's Foundation

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Young people's faith in the future requires action

Young people's faith in the future has declined by nearly 20% in recent surveys. This is not a surprising result. We are living in a time characterised by a shifting security environment, high youth unemployment, economic uncertainty and a news cycle that rarely inspires confidence in the future.

As uncertainty increases, many young people seek refuge in communities and the world of social media. This does not mean they are trying to escape reality; instead, it is a human way to seek meaning and a sense of belonging. The problem emerges when the tone of public discussion sharpens and there is a rise in polarisation. When this happens, hopelessness tends to increase. That is why young people do not need moralising; rather, they need support, genuine dialogue and concrete action that reinforces their sense that one's work or entrepreneurial efforts truly matter.

Statistics support the concerns about the situation faced by young people. According to Statistics Finland, the unemployment rate of people under the age of 25 is much higher than that of the population as a whole. The Bank of Finland has issued warnings about rising household indebtedness, and Suomen Asiakastieto reports that tens of thousands of young adults have payment defaults on their record. If a person loses their credit standing around the age of 20–25, it is not merely a financial setback. Its impacts extend to housing, employment and various opportunities in daily life for many years to come.

A young person who graduates and enters a job market that appears closed can easily feel that he or she has failed somehow. In reality, the problem is structural. Economic cycles, regional divergence and the fragmentation of working life often fall most heavily on those who are just starting their careers, which is why the solutions are also structural.

Youth employment should be strengthened through targeted and high-quality paid traineeship and apprenticeship positions and through preventing the unjustified use of fixed-term employment contracts. A person's first job is not just part of their CV; it is also the feeling that you can find your own place in society.

Indebtedness must be prevented at an earlier stage than is currently the case. New legislation has already been introduced to regulate the payday loan market, but the supervision of interest rate caps and marketing practices must be genuinely effective. Financial literacy must

A person's first job is not just part of their CV; it is also the feeling that you can find your own place in society.

be strengthened in schools, and people need to be referred to financial and debt counselling at a low threshold. Excessive debt is not merely an individual's choice; it is partly a structural phenomenon, the consequences of which we, as a society, must bear through growing social malaise and its side effects.

Wellbeing is the foundation for faith in the future, and that wellbeing is the sum of many parts. In educational institutions, sufficient study guidance and counselling, accessible mental health services and genuine opportunities for further studies help to reinforce the feeling that there are many possible paths to take. At home and in daily life, the most important thing is to feel heard and accepted. Every young person needs an adult who has time for them and for whom the young person is enough as they are, even if incomplete.

While the majority of young people are still doing well, there is growing divergence between those who are doing fine and those who need support. At the same time, young people are more educated, international and aware than before. They want to do well and they deserve to feel optimistic about the future. Young people's faith in the future is not naive optimism. It is trust that society will sustain them and that their actions make a difference. We need to nurture and strengthen that trust. When young people have faith in the future, the rest of us can have faith too.



Pia Hiltunen
Chairperson of Iitla's Delegation

Highlights of the year

We promote societal change by developing child-oriented growing environments and services, distributing information that considers children's perspective, and by strengthening constructive discussion on a child- and family-friendly society and its future.

We organised a national dialogue: Mental resources – How to strengthen young people's faith in the future?

Young people's trust in society is strengthened by engaging their participation in decision-making.



Evidence-based information to support the mental health of children and young people

Our concise Point Research Summaries help decision-makers promote the mental health of children and young people with the help of evidence-based solutions.

10 reviews of the effectiveness of psychosocial interventions

We published 10 new methodology evaluations that help decision-makers in wellbeing services counties put the therapy guarantee for children and young people into action effectively.



JANUARY

FEBRUARY

MARCH

APRIL

MAY

JUNE



Childhood Builders podcast 2.0

Our comprehensively revamped podcast is now even more focused on topical phenomena related to the wellbeing of children, young people and families in Finland.



The future of young people and the power of algorithms at the SuomiArena event

We participated in the SuomiArena event by organising discussions on young people's future opportunities and the impacts of social media on children and young people.

Family hotline helps families with children

Implemented through collective impact work, the Perhepuhelin family hotline provides comprehensive, low-threshold and early support for families with children in North Karelia.



Aiming for the world's best "First 1000 Days" for children

Under Itla's leadership, Finland held the presidency of the Nordic First 1000 Days network, which promotes wellbeing during pregnancy and infancy.

County and municipal elections 2025: A happy childhood is an intrinsic value – and a vital investment in the future

In our messaging related to the elections, we presented solutions for safeguarding the wellbeing of children and young people and their faith in the future, even in difficult economic circumstances.

Wellbeing through hobbies

The Equal Start for Everyone Oulu pilot project improved the wellbeing of children in low-income families through hobbies, and promoted multi-stakeholder cooperation.



Niilo's story demonstrates the importance of timely services

Participants in Childhood Builders leadership training made a video about Niilo which demonstrates the importance of early support when compared to expensive remedial services.



JULY

AUGUST

SEPTEMBER

OCTOBER

NOVEMBER

DECEMBER



Upgrade for the Kasvun tuki journal in the Publication Forum's classification

The Kasvun tuki journal achieved a Level 1 rating in the Publication Forum's classification. Published twice a year on the Journal.fi service,

Kasvun tuki is a scientific journal that focuses on the wellbeing of children, young people and families.



YOUNG programme Research Summary: the role of early childhood education and school in strengthening mental health

Supportive daily life in early childhood education and school is a key resource with regard to the mental health of children and young people, which makes it important to focus on wellbeing and resilience in early childhood education and school.

The renewal of services for families with children requires multidisciplinary leadership

We launched systemic change management training for leaders from wellbeing services counties and municipalities who promote collective impact in their respective regions.

We launched a leadership mentoring programme

Mentoring supports development as a leader and as a builder of a good childhood. The participants come from social and healthcare services, companies, non-governmental organisations, schools and educational institutions across Finland.



1

*Itla's year
2025*

1.1 CEO's review

During the past year, the security environment grew more volatile and the stability of the world order faltered. Uncertainty, intertwined crises and rapid changes were reflected in the daily lives of children and young people. In times like these, the need for long-term, knowledge-based and forward-looking multidisciplinary cooperation is emphasised, as is the need for actions to strengthen faith in the future among children, young people and families.

Our new strategy began to guide our work purposefully towards our vision of a child- and family-friendly welfare society. We strengthened our role as a societal change maker and bridge builder between high-quality information, practice and decision-making.

As societal polarisation increased, we focused particularly on strengthening constructive dialogue and the highlighting and utilisation of multi-perspective and reliable information in both decision-making and the development of practices.

Analysing the results of the stakeholder survey we carried out in the autumn, we were pleased to note how strongly our role as a bridge builder and developer of information and solutions is recognised and perceived as meaningful in the context of promoting the wellbeing of children and families.

Increasing poverty among families with children raised widespread concern and discussion. We provided evidence-based information and practical solution models to support discussion and decision-making. Every step that makes daily life easier for families with children strengthens hope and drives Finland towards a more child- and family-friendly future.

The mental health of children and young people was also a prominent topic, and the therapy guarantee for children and young people entered into effect. At Itila, we have worked to ensure that prevention and treatment are effective and equitably accessible, and that they become well-established as part of day-to-day services. This is not only humane but also sustainable from a societal perspective. Itila provided information on evidence-based interventions and ways to support children's mental health in early childhood education and in school.

The year 2025 was the final year of operation for Itila's project on strengthening national implementation competence, and we focused particularly on the implementation and broad dissemination of the operating models developed in the project. We engaged in active dialogue with stakeholders, brought experts together at various forums, and ensured that the competence and the developed tools are put into practice. The ultimate impact of our work arises when impactful information, competence and tools are successfully in use and produce better wellbeing for children, young people and their families.

Young people's faltering faith in the future emerged as a major topic of societal discussion during the year. We were involved in producing information, facilitating dialogues and looking for solutions through various events, podcasts and expert work. Confidence in the future is built on the experience that society cares, listens and takes action.

The past year again showed that, in a time of uncertainty, there is a need for bold cooperation, impactful information and a common direction. At the core of our work is a firm belief that investing in children, young people and families is the best possible investment in a sustainable and safe future. We will continue this work purposefully and together with our partners to strive towards the Finland of tomorrow, where everyone has the opportunity to grow, to dream and to have confidence in a good future.



Katri Vataja
Chief Executive Officer of Itila

Confidence in the future is built on the experience that society cares, listens and takes action.

1.2 Purpose and impact of activities

Isla promotes and supports the wellbeing, equality and position of children and families with children living in Finland, and contributes to building a good future for them. Isla also promotes and supports parenting and children's growth and education.

Isla's work is guided by its vision for the Finland of 2040: a child- and family-friendly welfare society where children, young people and families of all kinds dare to dream and trust in a good future. We believe that thriving children, young people and families lay the foundation for a successful democratic society and sustainable economy.

We promote three impact goals through our operations. They describe the changes that we pursue:

- **A child- and family-friendly Finland:** Children, young people and parents actively contribute to the future. Respect for children, young people, families and future generations is reflected in attitudes, public discourse, decision-making and concrete actions.
- **Child-oriented growing environments and services:** Child-oriented growing environments and services support the resilience of children, young people and families through cooperation, impacts and renewal.
- **Distributing information that considers children's perspective** High-quality and diverse information that accounts for children's perspective increases understanding in decision-making and promotes the wellbeing of children and young people in a changing world.



How we achieve social impact

Achieving our impact goals requires comprehensive and systemic changes, which we promote through our own activities, but which also call for wide-ranging cooperation and partnerships. Iita promotes the desired changes by **strengthening** constructive discussion on a child- and family-friendly society and its future, and by **refining and disseminating** information on current and future phenomena, related solutions and effective methods to support decision-making and practical development.

Through our activities, we promote the use of high-quality child-focused information that consists of multiple sources in decision-making. These sources include research, predictive information, assessments and experience-based data. We operate as part of ecosystems where we develop impactful ways of compiling and using information. **We advance** the renewal of local, regional and national growing environments and services to make them child- and family-oriented. We work with actors who affect the wellbeing of children, young people and families to support the actors' willingness to change and their ability to evolve as well as their cooperation, co-development and learning. Our work focuses on proactive and early-stage support for wellbeing.

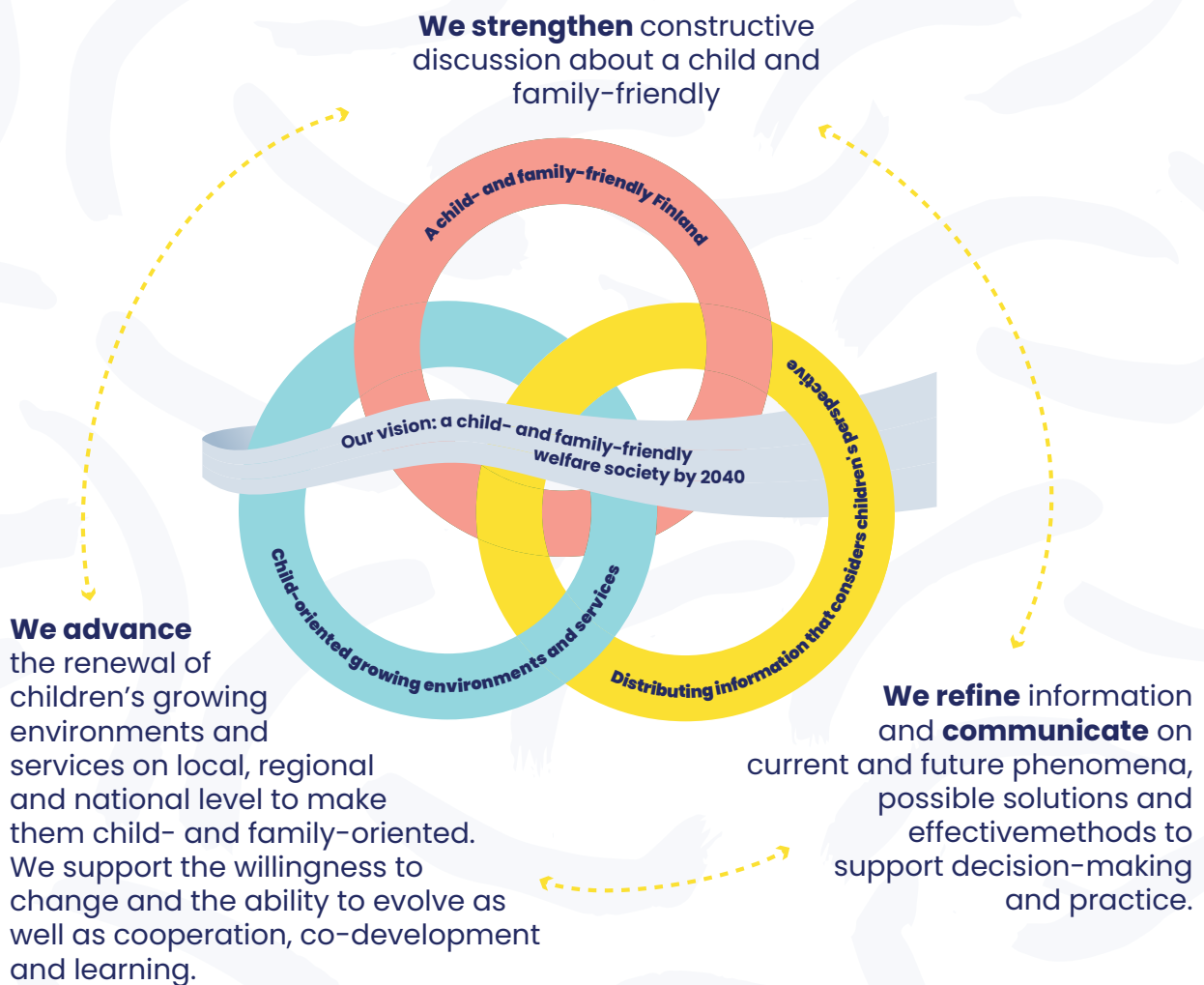


Figure 1. Iita's impact goals

Activities in a nutshell

Kasvun tuki (Early Interventions)

Itla's Early Interventions produced and disseminated information on psychosocial interventions that support the mental health of children, young people and families and treat related problems, as well as the context-fit of such interventions with child and family services. We supported the systematic implementation of interventions by providing evidence-based information, support and tools, and we launched an evaluation of indicators used to assess the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people.

Collective impact

Itla acted as the national background support organisation for collective impact work. This means that we provided training, consulting and facilitation, as well as opportunities for co-development and collective learning in the 10 participating wellbeing services counties and 117 municipalities. We advanced the renewal of support for children, young people and families in accordance with the "early-together-long enough" principles and with the help of the collective impact learning path website and the digital Näkymä tool for creating a situational picture.

Development of leadership skills

We promoted the strengthening of a child- and family-friendly Finland by training leaders from wellbeing services counties, municipalities, non-governmental organisations and companies so that they can promote child- and need-oriented public management and decision-making in their respective operating environments.

YOUNG programme: Children and young people – healthy, thriving and capable makers of the future

As part of our programme directorship of the Strategic Research Council's YOUNG programme, we advanced the utilisation of multidisciplinary and interactive research and its societal impact through stakeholder and network cooperation. Itla was granted programme directorship funding for the second programme period, from 2025 to 2028.

Child-centred future-oriented work and foresight

Child-centred foresight content and methods of future-oriented work were integrated into development efforts focused on the wellbeing of children and young people. We promoted future-oriented discussion relating to children and young people by organising dialogue events and seminars.

Project for national implementation competence to support the growth of children and young people (Early Interventions KI, 2023–2025)

The prevention and treatment of mental health problems should be effective and equitably accessible to all children and young people – this is not only humane but also sensible from an economic perspective. In the project for national implementation competence, we expanded the knowledge base of mental health support for children and young people, developed new operating models and tools, and strengthened the competence of professionals through training and materials that support practice. The information on the context-fit and implementation of psychosocial interventions is unique in Finland. It, along with other materials, is primarily available on Itla's website. The project was funded by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.

Therapy guarantee went into effect – where to find reliable data on the effectiveness of interventions?

The effectiveness of psychosocial interventions is currently the subject of particular interest, as the therapy guarantee for children and young people, which entered into effect in 2025, requires the use of effective interventions in social services and healthcare. The wellbeing services counties now have a real need for data on the effectiveness of interventions to support their decision-making. Itla's Early Interventions effectiveness assessments respond to this need.

Wellbeing services counties are responsible for the implementation of the therapy guarantee. Their range of services includes many psychosocial interventions whose effectiveness is not backed by research evidence, and which involve challenges related to their context-fit with the daily work of professionals. In many cases, the interventions have been implemented at high cost, but they have still not become well-established as part of the services provided.

This means that children and young people do not necessarily receive effective support for their mental health problems in spite of the investments made, and wellbeing services counties may waste both money and working hours. For this reason, the wellbeing services counties have a real need for data on the effectiveness of interventions to support their decision-making.

Itla's method bank makes it easier to find an effective intervention

Itla evaluates the effectiveness of psychosocial interventions that are used in Finland and aimed at children, young people under the age of 23, and their families. The therapy guarantee makes our evaluation work increasingly important, as wellbeing services counties need data on the

effectiveness of interventions for children and young people, and producing that data regionally would not be sensible. We have compiled methodology evaluations in Itla's Early Interventions method bank to support the decision-making of professionals and decision-makers in the wellbeing services counties.

In addition to effectiveness, the context-fit of interventions plays a significant role in their implementation and in effective interventions producing genuine benefits for children, young people and families. Taking these factors into consideration in the wellbeing services counties ensures that the objectives of the therapy guarantee are accomplished and helps to prevent wasted investments.



1. 3 Child- and family-friendly Finland and societal discussion

A child- and family-friendly Finland is not created through individual innovations, practices or policy programmes. It is a challenge in which all sectors and stakeholders in society have their role to play. In particular, decision-makers and leaders can influence the wellbeing of children and young people by placing its promotion at the heart of organisations, solutions and cooperation.

In 2025, we maintained the Childhood Builders peer network of leaders and decision-makers involved in child policy. The network provided decision-makers with the opportunity to discuss current topics affecting the development of the wellbeing of children, young people and families across sector boundaries, as well as share and maintain their expertise.

As part of their coursework, the participants in the fourth course of Childhood Builders leadership training created a video entitled "Niilo's story", which concerns the cost-effectiveness of ecosystemic and preventive work, and the "Tenets of Hope", which were prepared on the basis of answers received from young people on how to increase hope in daily life. The Niilo's story video and the related thought-provoking discussion framework were sent to all newly elected municipal and county-level decision-makers, and the Tenets of Hope were presented to Minister of Education Anders Adlercreutz. We also extensively distributed other materials prepared as coursework.

We participated in an expert group of the Ministry of Education and Culture that examines the factors contributing to declining faith in the future among young people, and prepares recommendations for improving the situation. The group's recommendations will be published in March 2026.

Internationally, we promoted constructive discussion about a child- and family-friendly society and its future in the First 1000 Days in the Nordic Countries network. Led by Iitla, Finland held the network's presidency in 2025. The network contributed to a greater understanding of the importance of the perinatal period for human health and promoted the use of effective interventions to support the mental health of parents and children. The network was launched at the initiative of the Nordic Council of Ministers. Iitla also had the presidency of the national First 1000 Days expert network.

In summer 2025, a joint one-year funding and development project between Iitla and Sitra was launched to support the dissemination of innovations to strengthen the wellbeing and agency of young people. Funding was granted to three solutions, each of which has a strong foundation in research data concerning the wellbeing of young people.

Events on topics ranging from faith in the future to digitalisation and from mental health to support for parenting

In 2025, we accelerated societal discussion related to children and young people through more than 30 online, hybrid or in-person events. The themes of the events were related to, for example, young people's faith in the future, a digital environment that supports the growth

and development of children and young people, support for parenting, and promoting mental health in early childhood education and in schools.

Together with the Miina Sillanpää Foundation and the Foundation for Municipal Development, we organised an event entitled *Raikkaita suuntia* ("Fresh Directions"), which brought nearly 400 people together to think about the next chapter of the welfare society. We participated in organising the event *Vauvat valloittavat eduskunnan* ("Babies take over Parliament") and a public event at the Parliament House as part of the Participants' Finland programme, which aims to reduce loneliness and ostracism experienced by people in Finland. In June, we invited a diverse group of stakeholders to a workshop to discuss what kind of future we are creating for families with babies and, at the same time, for the entire Finland of the future. Together with the Strategic Research Council's YOUNG programme, we organised a national dialogue entitled "Mental resources - How to strengthen young people's faith in the future?". The dialogue participants included young people, researchers in the fields of health sciences, security and social psychiatry, senior officials from four ministries, and representatives of non-governmental organisations and foundations.

Young people's faith in the future was also a topic of discussion on Iitla's podcast, our panel at the SuomiAreena event, and at the Futures Dialogues event organised in Hanasaari. Our other panel discussion at the SuomiAreena event was focused on the digital growing environment of children and young people and the use of social media.

Childhood Builders podcast

Iitla's updated Childhood Builders podcast returned in 2025. During the year, we produced nine episodes focusing on young people's opportunities to exercise influence, faith in the future, violence, restoring enthusiasm for reading, and social media and digital media in families with children.



What do children think about hope?

The participants of Iitla's Childhood Builders leadership training asked children what brings hope to their life. The thoughts of nearly 200 children and young people were distilled into the Tenets of Hope.

The Kipinä Company leadership training group surveyed children's thoughts about hope to find out what gives them hope. The group distilled the responses into the Tenets of Hope. Consciously maintaining and increasing hope is important, especially when there are challenges in life. The building of resilience during childhood and adolescence can be influenced in both daily life and societal decision-making.

The children's answers convey a wish for an ordinary life: safety in daily life, opportunities for learning, and meaningful leisure time. Hope in the minds of children is also built by climate action, which is very much needed right now. The spark of hope comes from small actions, and it needs to be supported by dreams.

"It is our job as adults to create an environment where children feel safe, heard and appreciated," point out the group members Noora Ahokangas-Jore, Juha Ahvenainen, Minna Lumme, Saija Ohtonen-Jones and Jari Pulkkinen.

Kipinä Company also organised the Toivon kipinöitä (Sparks of Hope) concert in cooperation with the City of Vantaa's cultural services for children and young people and El Sistema Finland ry, and presented the Tenets of Hope to Minister of Education Anders Adlercreutz.

Tenets of Hope

- Every child and young person has the right to safe daily life
- Decisions must also be made from the heart
- Climate action and nature conservation are needed now
- Dreams need space
- Studying, learning and successes are the keys to a good future
- All children and young people have the right to meaningful leisure time
- Ordinary life is best
- The future is built on values
- Thriving children and young people create the wellbeing of the future
- The spark of hope comes from small actions



Figure 2. From left: Noora Ahokangas, Jari Pulkkinen, Minister Anders Adlercreutz, Juha Ahvenainen.

Supporting parents is key to overcoming the mental health crisis

Finland has comprehensive legislation and many clinical practice guidelines for the provision of early support and mental health services for families. However, studies show that families do not receive sufficient mental health support during pregnancy and throughout infancy and early childhood.

Maternity and child health clinics' extensive legally stipulated health examinations and various forms of support are not always implemented as planned, there are deficiencies in the availability and continuity of mental health and social services, the services are siloed, and the party responsible for the treatment of mental health problems during pregnancy and early childhood has not been clearly designated. The recent austerity measures affecting families with children have further exacerbated the plight of expectant mothers and families with infants.

Saving Finland's economic and psychosocial resources

Mental health problems often have their roots in early childhood. One of the most important environmental factors affecting a child's development is the care and upbringing provided by the guardians. Appropriate and timely support provided by maternity and child health clinics can break the cycles of intergenerational problems and support both mental health and parenting. Indeed, investing resources in services during pregnancy and infancy has been found to be cost-effective for society in the long term.

Effective support for parenting requires a well-functioning maternity and child health clinic system

The mental health and functional capacity of family members must be supported by maternity and child health clinics early and equitably. In addition to a well-functioning maternity and child health clinic system, Finland needs units responsible for the prevention and treatment of perinatal mental health problems. This is one of the most significant solutions needed to overcome the mental health crisis in our society.

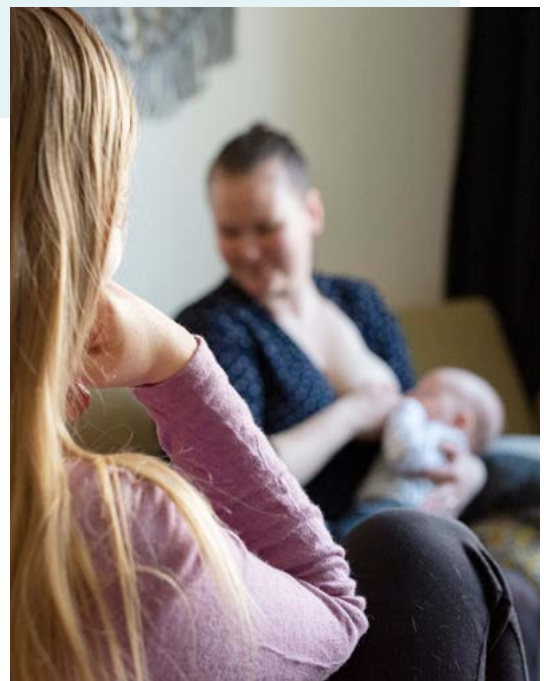
This article is an abridged version of a blog post by the same authors, originally published on Ibla's website on 18 March 2025. Authors:

Kaija Puura, Professor of Child Psychiatry, Tampere University and Tampere University Hospital

Tiina Riekk, MD, Specialist in Psychiatry, University of Oulu, Wellbeing Services County of North Ostrobothnia and the Finnish Perinatal Mental Health Association

Under Ibla's leadership, Finland participates in the Nordic First 1000 Days network

Ibla's goal is to comprehensively promote wellbeing during the perinatal period by strengthening evidence-based understanding of the significance of the period, supporting the development of service paths and engaging in active advocacy efforts in cooperation with networks. This work promotes the development of support related to parenting and the early stages of life towards multidisciplinary, accessible and evidence-based services.



1.4 Distributing information that considers children's perspective

Promoting the wellbeing of children, young people and families requires that research-based knowledge is translated into practice. It also requires a deeper overall understanding of the foundations for healthy development and current wellbeing-related challenges, the renewal of the operating methods used in practice, and expertise in change management.

Evaluation of, and implementation support for, psychosocial interventions

In 2025, we expanded our Early Interventions activities from assessing the effectiveness of interventions to also assessing their usability and context-fit. The information was compiled in a redesigned method bank that provides multi-perspective information and enables easier decision-making for those who choose interventions in wellbeing services counties and municipalities. Our independent and reliable assessment data has been available for utilisation in the implementation of the therapy guarantee that entered into effect in May.

We participated in the recommendation activities of the Council for Choices in Health Care in Finland (COHERE Finland), which works in conjunction with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. The recommendation activities concern psychosocial interventions used for children and young people at the basic level. As a new form of information production, we developed and piloted a system for the assessment of psychosocial indicators of children and young people, which is unique in Finland. We implemented new concepts for the dissemination of information, including Menetelmän ytimessä ("At the core of the intervention") events and Adaptation Clinics. This resulted in closer cooperation with universities, non-governmental organisations and the Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organisations (STEA).

Itla's Kasvun tuki journal aims to expand the knowledge base concerning the wellbeing of children, young people and families, and it promotes research-based decision-making and evidence-based practices by professionals in the provision of services for children, young people and families. In 2025, we published a thematic issue of the journal, focusing on implementation. To support knowledge-based management in wellbeing services counties and municipalities, we also published three Research Summaries on evidence-based interventions for supporting mental health. In addition, we were responsible for the implementation of the University of Helsinki's five-credit course unit "Psychosocial interventions and models with strong documented effects in research-based decision-making".

We promoted assessment competence concerning interventions and indicators through NordicDataPrev and PsychTestBarn network cooperation and in the network of European register operators. We developed the assessment of intervention context-fit and the adapta-



tion of interventions by strengthening our international cooperation with the Implementation Research Network at the University of North Carolina, and with Cardiff University and Karolinska Institutet. We highlighted the importance of assessing the effectiveness of interventions and knowledge-based management at two different events and, in the autumn, we invited Swedish researchers from the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare to share experiences of the use of effective interventions in social work.

Situational picture of mental health services

The first version of the national situational picture of mental health services, developed in collaboration with the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare, was completed during the year under review. It is a website that compiles data based on the procedure codes of mental health and substance abuse services, thereby enabling the monitoring of the content, targeting and effectiveness of services in different regions and age groups.

Support for promoting mental health in schools

We produced information on the effective promotion of mental health for children and young people in schools: the handbook *Hyvinvoiva mieli oppii – oppiva mieli voi hyvin* ("A thriving mind is a learning mind, and a learning mind is a thriving mind"), published in Finnish and Swedish, to promote and support mental health in school communities, and our online course on behavioural support, aimed at education professionals in early childhood education and schools. Approximately 2,000 people have participated in the courses. We also produced a training module to support group management and positive behaviour in lower secondary schools. The handbook and courses provide practical methods for the wellbeing-related efforts of schools and for promoting mental health and desired behaviours among children and young people.

Research data on loneliness prevention, mental health support, and family and child poverty

During the year, a research project led by Itla under the Strategic Research Council's Right to Belong consortium produced research articles on the topic of loneliness and ostracism among children and young people, and ways to prevent them.

We were actively involved in the implementation of the Participants' Finland network and action plan. Itla, the YOUNG programme and the Participants' Finland network together organised a seminar in November entitled "The early childhood education and school of the future in promoting the mental health of children and young people". With a strong foundation in research data, the seminar examined how the strengthening of interaction, participation and mental health skills can support the wellbeing of children and young people in learning environments, and an operating culture that promotes mental health in the school community.

We updated the "Family and child poverty as data" website and added the regional distribution of family and child poverty as a new section. Our research articles produced in the family and child poverty programme were published in international journals.

Development of leadership skills

In 2025, we promoted the development of skills related to multi-perspective and ecosystemic implementation through leadership training, expert lectures and workshops.



FUNDED BY
Ministry of
Social Affairs and Health

Project for national implementation competence to support the growth of children and young people (Early Interventions KI)

Better mental health support for children and young people

The prevention and treatment of mental health problems should be effective and equitably accessible to all children and young people. This is not only humane but also sensible from an economic perspective.

In Itla's project for national implementation competence to support the growth of children and young people, we promoted the mental health of children and young people through three approaches:

- more systematic implementation of psychosocial interventions in services for children and young people
- evidence-based methods for supporting mental health and behaviour in schools
- effective psychosocial support in crisis situations encountered by children, young people and families.

We expanded the knowledge base of mental health support for children and young people, developed new operating models and tools, and strengthened the competence of professionals through training and materials that support practice.

Resources to support the mental health of children and young people, also available in Swedish

Forskningsbaserad kunskap, stöd och verktyg som hjälper att lyckas med implementeringen och anpassningen.

- Hur lyckas jag med implementering? En handbok i effektiv implementering av psykosociala metoder (2023)
- Webbplatser Implementering av psykosociala metoder och implementeringsväg med verktyg och Anpassning av metoder

Konkreta och forskningsbaserade metoder för att stärka önskat beteende och psykiskt välbefinnande hos barn och unga

- Webbplats [Metoder för att stödja psykisk hälsa och beteende i småbarnspedagogik och skolor](#)
- Ett välmående sinne lär sig – ett lärande sinne mår bra. En handbok för att främja och stödja psykisk hälsa i skolgemenskapen (2025)
- Grupphantering och stöd för positivt beteende för årkurserna 7–9-. Arbetsbok (2025)

3,000

participants in online courses

600

participants in instructor training on the TRT intervention

60

training activities and events

600

registered participants for a series of webinars on the implementation of interventions

25

publications and articles

1

thematic issue of the Kasvun tuki journal focusing on implementation

Ways to strengthen the effectiveness of mental health support for children and young people

- Evidence-based psychosocial interventions support the mental health of children and young people and prevent serious problems
- Extensive online content on the implementation of interventions
- Website on the systematic adaptation of interventions
- Kuusio tool for evaluating the context-fit of interventions
- Report on the tasks and division of responsibilities of first aid organisations by "bases", of interventions
- Situational picture of mental health and substance use in schools and the implementation of psychosocial interventions
- Towards conscious choices – a report on experiences of the implementation of psychosocial interventions
- Collaboration with the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare

New solutions to support mental health and behaviour in schools and early childhood education

- Hyvinvoiva mieli oppii – oppiva mieli voi hyvin ("A thriving mind is a learning mind, and a learning mind is a thriving mind") handbook
- Online courses on behavioural support for teachers in schools and teachers and practitioners in early childhood education and care
- Training on group management and supporting positive behaviour in lower secondary schools

Support for families facing a serious illness or crisis

- "Serious illness in the family" operating model for professionals
- A national structure for the Teaching Recovery Technique (TRT) to support the recovery of children exposed to trauma
- Adapting the TRT method for the aftercare of serious incidents of school violence

Policy recommendations

- The cost of mental health support for a young person is measured in the hundreds, but the lack of support can cost hundreds of thousands
- A thriving mind is a learning mind, and a learning mind is a thriving mind – the systematic promotion of wellbeing throughout the school community is the key to improving learning outcomes

Research summaries

- Evidence-based interventions support the wellbeing of children and young people in early education and schools
- Evidence-based interventions that support the mental health of children and young people are a sound investment for wellbeing services counties

”

Participating in the implementation workshop has reinforced the importance of the implementation process in making an intervention well-established. During the process, we also created an implementation team structure for our wellbeing services county.

- Implementation workshop participant -

The course on behavioural support was interesting, through-provoking and informative. This course is a useful tool for everyone working in the field of childcare and education.

- Teaching assistant -

We organised a webinar on knowledge-based management and taking a systemic approach. The event provided information on new trends and tools related to knowledge-based management and focused on how knowledge-based management can be used to solve seemingly impossible current and future challenges related to the wellbeing of children, young people and families, for example.

Statements related to the drafting of national recommendations and legislation

We issued statements related to legislative preparation and the drafting of national recommendations on topics such as digital recommendations concerning children's leisure time, a draft Government proposal for amending the Health Care Act and certain related legislation, a draft Government Decree regarding certain surgeries and medical procedures, as well as drafts for amending the decree on the centralisation of specialised medical care and the decree on urgent care.

Collective impact work has helped to identify service overlap, service gaps and fragmented service transitions, and build shared operating models to address these issues.

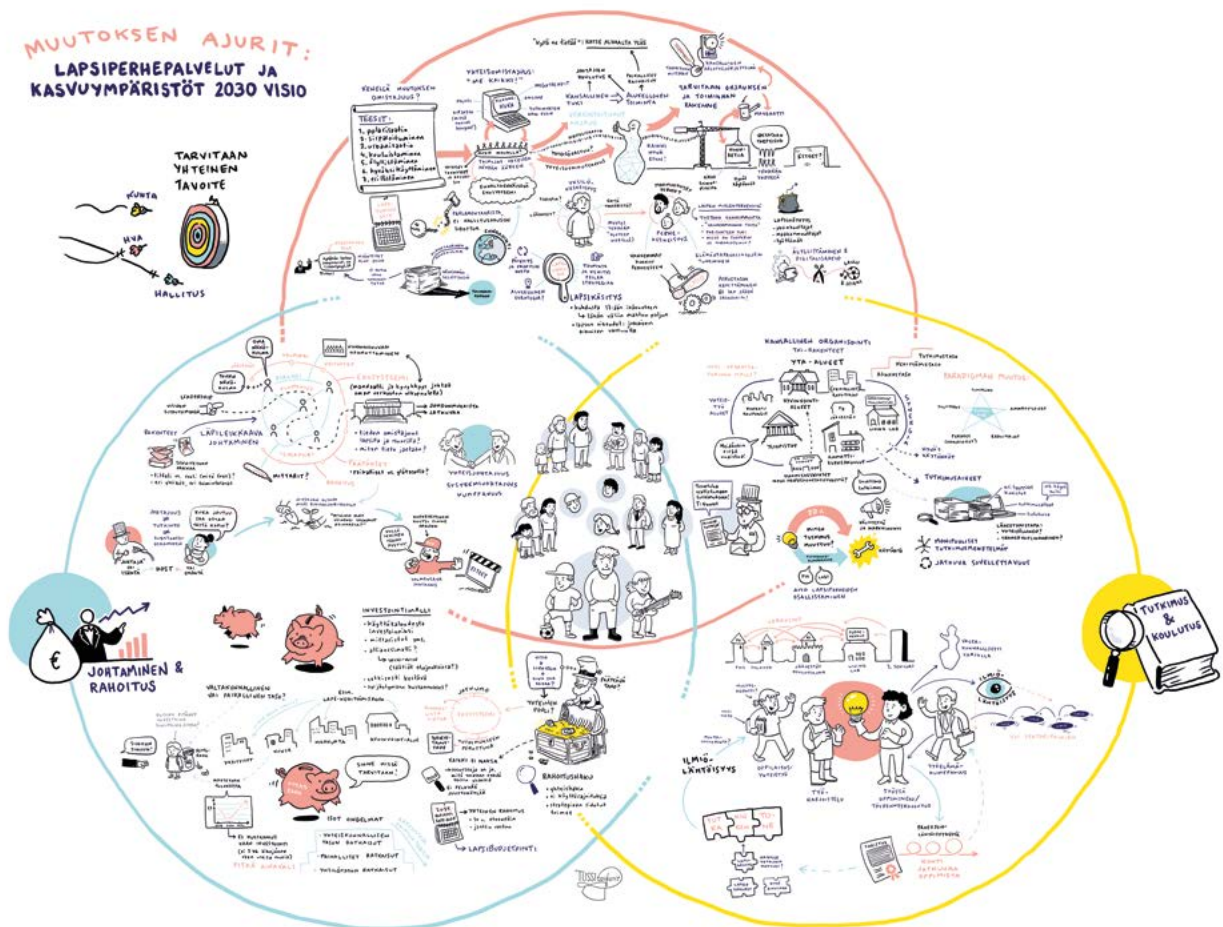


Figure 3. Vision for the healthy development of children and young people

1.5 Child-oriented growing environments and services

At the turn of the year 2024–2025, we developed a vision statement concerning the healthy development of children and young people in cooperation with nearly 100 researchers, leaders, third-sector representatives and practical professionals. The vision statement was published in the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health publication "Healthcare and social welfare 2040 – paths to the future". Inspired by the work on the vision statement and as part of our collective impact work, we implemented extensive vision statement processes in Central Finland and North Ostrobothnia. In these processes, regional stakeholders accelerated local discussion and established a shared vision for what the wellbeing of children, young people and families will look like in the regions in the future.

Ita's collective impact work was expanded, strengthened and deepened in various regions of Finland, primarily as part of the broader strengthening of family centre activities. While the work was only in its initial stages in some regions, the direction is the same across the board: strengthening collaborative leadership and development, integrating services in accordance with the "early-together-long enough" principles, and implementing jointly agreed operating models in such a way that they support the daily life of families with children.

Our background support strengthened the collaborative management structures of the regions, multidisciplinary cooperation in customer-facing work and the continuous improvement of the service system. Family centre structures were extensively renewed. Collective impact work is needed especially now that municipalities and wellbeing services counties are building a shared view of what problems will be solved, how, and within what time frame. This is particularly important in services for children, young people and families, where the responsibilities are divided between several stakeholders under the applicable legislation. Collective impact work has helped to identify service overlap, service gaps and fragmented service transitions, and build shared operating models to address these issues.

Research and development cooperation

In several wellbeing services counties, we were closely involved in the development of a "family hotline" and other single point of contact services through which children, young people, families and professionals can access the support they need. Some of the new services were opened in 2025, and some in early 2026. At the same time, many wellbeing services counties developed or adopted a general multidisciplinary networked approach, or prepared for its adoption.

The use of the Näkymä digital tool for knowledge-based management, developed by Iita, was expanded and strengthened in the Oulu region, for example. In research cooperation under our collective impact work, the topics emerge from everyday life, the research results are used to support practical work, and the results are an integral part of the development of operations. Local pilot projects — such as family centre teams' outreach activities in residential areas and phenomenon-oriented collective impact working groups — deepened multidisciplinary activities, brought new continuity to development efforts and supported preventive work.

We published a video targeted at families and professionals on the protective factors that support a child's everyday life. The aim was to increase understanding of the role of adults in strengthening the resilience of children and young people.

Long-term national support is the key to successful change

The assessment study on collective impact work indicated that the renewal of child and family services requires long-term national and regional support for wellbeing services counties and municipalities.

The assessment study on collective impact work indicated that the renewal of child and family services requires long-term national and regional support for wellbeing services counties and municipalities.

Collective impact work, which aims at the comprehensive renewal of child and family services, took significant strides in 2025 and resulted in changes in thinking and operating practices in the participating wellbeing services counties. This has required not only structural reforms but also the establishment of mutual interaction and trust between different organisations and professionals.

The evolution of child and family services is accelerated by the participating organisations having a shared understanding of the goals of the work and the way it is implemented, and achieving successes together. The complexity of putting changes and reforms into practice and differences between organisations, in turn, make the work more difficult. The challenges can be tackled if the wellbeing services county, municipalities and the third sector work together to solve the challenges associated with day-to-day cooperation and streamline management.

An assessment study conducted in 2025 showed that the support provided by Itla for collective impact work plays a key role in the progress of changes. Wellbeing services counties' and municipalities' own developers also play a very important role.

The challenges can be resolved, but it requires concrete action

The complexity of putting changes and reforms into practice and differences between municipalities and wellbeing services counties have made collective impact work less straightforward. However, these issues can be resolved if day-to-day challenges are addressed together.

Wellbeing services counties and municipalities should continue the discussion and the formation of concrete operating structures to enable collective solutions. Clear agreements between different organisations are also essential. Their aim is to ensure that, when a family's life situation changes, the operators in the municipality and the wellbeing services county actors support the daily life of the child in a cooperative, preventive and long-term manner.



The challenges can be tackled if the wellbeing services county, municipalities and the third sector work together to solve the challenges associated with day-to-day cooperation and streamline management.

Itla supports collective impact work in Finland

We support the comprehensive renewal of the service system for children, young people and families through collective impact work. We support regions carrying out collective impact work and promote the dissemination of the approach throughout Finland.

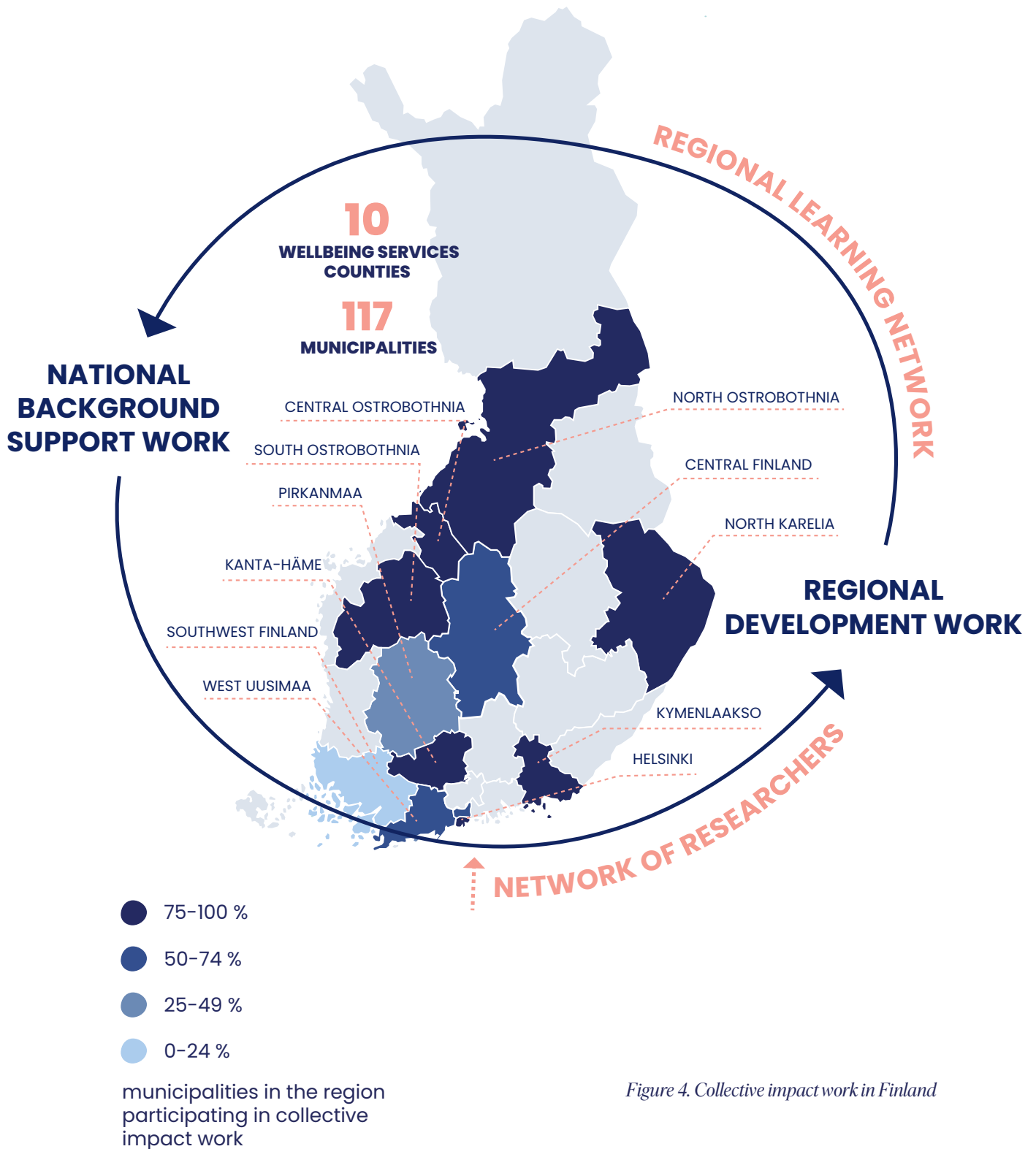


Figure 4. Collective impact work in Finland

Yhteisövaikuttavuustyö perhekeskuksissa

Pirkanmaa

Yhteisövaikuttavuustyö toteutuu perhekeskusrakenteissa ja kehittämällä ero- ja vauvaperheiden palveluita ja muita palvelupolkuja. Tampere on uudistanut alueellisia perhekeskusjohtoryhmiä ja vahvistanut tiedolla johtamista laajentamalla Näkömä-työkalun käyttöä. Vuonna 2025 kuudessa kunnassa toteutettiin valmennukset, joiden myötä paikalliset perhekeskusohjausryhmät liittyivät mukaan yhteisövaikuttavuustyöhön. Tavoitteena on saada jokaiseen kuntaan yhteisövaikuttavuuden periaattein toimiva aktiivinen perhekeskusohjausryhmä.

Pohjois-Karjala

Yhteisövaikuttavuustyö ohjaa vahvaa perhekeskusverkostoa, sitä tukevia rakenteita ja laajaa lasten, nuorten ja perheiden palvelujen yhteensovittamista. Strategisia painopisteitä tässä työssä olivat muun muassa yhteisjohtamisen vahvistaminen ja yhden kontaktin periaatteen mukaisen ”perhepuhelimen” avaamisen valmistelu. Lisäksi toteutettiin pilotti, jossa perhekeskustiimit valmennettiin yhteisövaikuttavuustyöhön ja vahvistettiin eri asuinalueiden monialaista yhteistyötä. Iltan rahoituksella kehitettiin tiedolla johtamista tukevaa palautejärjestelmää, ja taustatutkimimmme osallistui tiiviisti kehittämiseen ja tutkimusyhteistyöhön Itä-Suomen yliopiston kanssa.

Keski-Pohjanmaa

Yhteisövaikuttavuustyötä vauhditettiin vuonna 2025 hyvinvointialueen organisaatiomuutosten vuoksi. Hyvinvointialue aloitti lasten, nuorten ja perheiden palveluiden yhteensovittamisen, minkä tavoitteena on uudistaa sosiaali- ja terveydenhuollon palveluohjaus yhden kontaktin periaatteella toimivaksi ja ottaa käyttöön varhaisen monialaisen verkostotyön malli kaikissa palveluissa. Perhekeskusrakenteita ja yhteisövaikuttavuustyön mukaisia ohjausryhmiä uudistettiin Iltan valmennuksien avulla.

Keski-Suomi

Keski-Suomi liittyi yhteisövaikuttavuustyöhön alkuvuodesta 2025. Painopisteinä olivat lasten, nuorten ja perheiden vision sekä maakunnallisen ohjausryhmän luominen, perhekeskusverkoston vahvistaminen muun muassa uudistamalla Jyväskylän perhekeskuksen rakenteita ja yhden kontaktin periaatteella toimivaa sosiaali- ja terveystalveluiden palveluohjausta, joka avataan keväällä 2026.

Kanta-Häme

Kanta-Hämeessä jatkettiin palvelujärjestelmän kehittämistä muun muassa vahvistamalla perhekeskuksen johtamisen rakenteita. Hyvinvointialue avasi yhden kontaktin mukaisen palveluohjauksen, sosiaali- ja terveydenhuollon ensilinjan. Alue otti käyttöön yhteisövaikuttavuuden periaattein toteutetun Omatimi-mallin syksyllä 2025.

Pohjois-Pohjanmaa

Pohjois-Pohjanmaalla Itila oli mukana fasilitoimassa alueen toimijoiden kanssa yhteistyössä lasten ja nuorten hyvän kasvun visiota 2030. Vuonna 2025 koko Pohjois-Pohjanmaan hyvinvointialueella otettiin käyttöön lapsiperhepalveluiden palveluohjaus, ja Oulussa valmisteltiin Näkömän käytön laajentumista koko Oulun alueelle.

Länsi-Uusimaa

Yhteisövaikuttavuustyö käynnistettiin Hangon, Inkoon, Raaseporin, Siuntion ja Kirkkonummen muodostamalla pilottialueella.

Varsinais-Suomi

Varsinais-Suomessa kehitettiin Läntisen perhekeskusalueen johtamista yhteistyössä pilottikuntien Naantalin, Ruskon ja Raision kanssa. Turun Pansion alueen yhteisövaikuttavuusryhmän työskentely käynnistyi ilmiölähtöisesti vanhemmuuden tuen ja turvallisuuden tunteen vahvistamisen teemoissa. Alueen järjestöt ovat olleet vahvasti mukana yhteisövaikuttavuustyössä.

Etelä-Pohjanmaa

Etelä-Pohjanmaan kanssa sovittiin vuonna 2025 yhteisövaikuttavuustyön käynnistymisestä, ja työ alkoi alueellisten tarpeiden tilannekartoituksella.

Kymenlaakso

Maakunnan lapsiperhepalveluiden yhteisjohtamista ja sen rakenteita, yhden kontaktin periaatteen mukaista palveluihin ohjautumista ja monialaista, varhaista verkostotyötä yhteiskehitettiin.

Helsinki

Helsinki haki ja sai ESR+-rahoituksen yhteisövaikuttavuustyön mukaiseen Vanhemmuuden vahvistajat -hankkeeseen. Työ käynnistyy vuoden 2026 alusta.

Assessment study on collective impact

An assessment study was carried out on collective impact work in early 2025. The study showed that success in collective impact work requires that the targeted change is consistently managed regionally, the participating divisions commit to shared goals, cooperation between municipalities and wellbeing services counties is smooth, and collective impact work is successfully implemented in practice in all of the participating organisations.

Collective impact work in Finland is now in its initial or development stage. It has taken significant strides and resulted in changes in thinking and operating practices in the participating wellbeing services counties. This has required not only structural reforms but also the establishment of mutual interaction and trust between different organisations and professionals.

The background support provided by Itla for collective impact work and the related enabling of peer support and peer learning between wellbeing services counties have been essential in promoting the work. Continuing the background support and peer support is necessary in all of the participating counties alongside local support, i.e. the development personnel of the municipalities and wellbeing services counties themselves. The success of collective impact work is currently hindered particularly by challenges in the implementation of cooperation structures and joint meeting practices between municipalities and wellbeing services counties.

The background support provided by Itla for collective impact work and the related enabling of peer support and peer learning between wellbeing services counties have been essential in promoting the work.

Promoting practical change management skills

The renewal of services for children and young people and their growing environments — namely early childhood education, school and leisure time — to meet the needs of children, young people and families requires wellbeing leadership that approaches challenges in a people-oriented manner, utilises multi-stakeholder cooperation at all levels of operations, is capable of cross-sectoral co-development, and creates opportunities for professionals to be successful in their work.

In 2025, we continued to develop wellbeing leadership competence through process training that promotes practical change management skills, as well as development workshops and expert lectures. We launched a new Childhood Builders leadership mentoring programme, in which leadership training alumni shared their expertise with other key leaders representing children's growing environments and services.

As a new initiative, we launched systemic change management training in autumn 2025 for leaders from wellbeing services counties and municipalities who promote collective impact in their respective regions.

Scotland, England, the Netherlands and Queensland, Australia, are pioneers in people-oriented and learning-based renewal. We took advantage of the lessons learned by these international partners of ours to support the development of thinking and operating practices in Finland.

Support for the implementation of interventions in wellbeing services counties

In our Early Interventions work, we promoted child-oriented services by providing expert support to wellbeing services counties, municipal operators in the field of education and non-governmental organisations, and by developing new methods for the implementation of effective psychosocial interventions. We use the Kuusio tool we have developed to assess interventions already used or to be implemented by wellbeing services counties with regard to their context-fit with children, young people and services.

We produced new information, support and tools for the implementation and adaptation of interventions and the assessment of their context-fit. We published an implementation website that contains information on implementation, practical tools and an implementation team model, as well as a website on the adaptation of interventions and the assessment of context-fit. Both of the new websites are groundbreaking: the implementation website is the first of its kind in Finland, and the website focused on adaptation and context-fit is internationally unique. The information supports wellbeing services counties in the implementation of psychosocial interventions for children and young people, as well as in the effectiveness-based development of mental health services and the implementation of the therapy guarantee.

Models and methods for dealing with crises

We developed a multidisciplinary operating model for situations where a family faces a serious illness. The operating model, which makes services more child- and family-oriented, supports families in a comprehensive manner and can be applied in all wellbeing services counties. To support the implementation of the operating model, we produced a video for professionals in Finnish and Swedish.

We continued our efforts to expand the use of Teaching Recovery Techniques (TRT) in Finland. TRT is targeted at children and young people exposed to trauma in connection with war, natural disasters or unaccompanied immigration, for example. We trained TRT practitioners, organised support meetings and produced different language versions and updates of guidance and support materials. We also supported national development efforts and implementation by coordinating network cooperation. TRT was also adapted for use in supporting recovery after serious incidents of school violence.



1.6 Communication, publishing activities and advocacy

Our communication activities are guided by Ibla's impact goals and the communication strategy completed in spring 2025. The strategic goals of communication activities are to encourage decision-makers to utilise Ibla's expertise and make decisions that take into account the best interests of the child, promote child- and family-friendly societal discussion, and strengthen awareness of Ibla.

In 2025, we updated our websites by moving the contents of the Kasvuntuki.fi website to the Ibla website and by publishing new extensive content sections. The new content sections deal with the context-fit, implementation and adaptation of psychosocial interventions that support the mental health of children and young people, as well as mental health support in schools. Following the changes, all of Ibla's content is available at one address, except for the online courses on behavioural support aimed at education professionals, which are on a separate platform.

We communicate our activities, publications and events in three newsletters: News about Ibla, News about collective impact work, and News about Early Interventions. We also publish the newsletters of the YOUNG programme and the Participants' Finland programme on participation and inclusion. The subscriber bases for all of our newsletters grew during the year.

Ibla was mentioned in the media on 76 occasions in 2025. The news coverage concerned the increase in family and child poverty and its impacts, among other topics. The "Serious illness in the family" operating model and service guidance for families with children in the wellbeing services county of North Ostrobothnia were also featured in the news.

In social media, LinkedIn remained Ibla's most important channel. The number of followers increased by 1,216 and stood at 4,083 at the end of 2025. The second-largest increase in followers was seen on Instagram, where the number of followers was 1,598 at the end of the year. In the project for national implementation competence, we engaged in successful social media cooperation with two Instagram influencers, Openaali and Opehommia, in relation to the Hyvinvoiva mieli oppii – oppiva mieli voi hyvin ("A thriving mind is a learning mind, and a learning mind is a thriving mind") handbook and the online course on behavioural support at school. The Opehommia account made a post about the online course that garnered 26,838 views, and Openaali's post about the handbook has been viewed over 190,000 times.

Publishing activities

With our publications, we encourage decision-makers to promote the wellbeing of children and young people through evidence-based solutions, and we accelerate the practical use of information.

A total of 14 publications came out in 2025: policy recommendations, Point-Research Summaries, reports, and guides and manuals. Examples of the topics of the publications include promoting the therapy guarantee for children and young people through effective methods, supporting wellbeing and learning in schools, strengthening parenthood, and an assessment study on collective impact work.

Kasvun tuki journal

As a result of our long-term efforts, the Kasvun tuki journal achieved a Level 1 rating in the Publication Forum's classification. The Publication Forum (JUFO) is a classification system that supports the quality assessment of scientific publications. The classification covers the most important foreign and domestic publication channels in all scientific disciplines. The highest level in the classification system is Level 2, which is only awarded to a small number of publication channels. The achievement of Level 1 classification made the journal more respected in the scientific community.

We published two issues of the Kasvun tuki journal, one of which was a thematic issue on the systematic implementation of interventions and operating models.

Societal influence

We built and maintained relationships with policy-makers and other key stakeholders to promote our impact goals. We supported the achievement of our goals through policy recommendations and information summaries, as well as active communications online and on social media. Our message in connection with the county and municipal elections was focused on the theme "A happy childhood is an intrinsic value—and a vital investment in the future".

During the run-up to the county and municipal elections, we organised a background event for journalists in cooperation with Talentia and the Mannerheim League for Child Welfare. The title of the event was "Will social care be overshadowed by healthcare in the county elections?".

We sent an information package to the municipal and county representatives elected in spring 2025 regarding our solutions for supporting the mental health and wellbeing of children, young people and families. We also sent our latest materials to Iitla's Delegation and our networks on three occasions during the year.

An opinion piece by CEO Katri Vataja and Development Manager Piia Karjalainen, entitled "Hyvinvoiva mieli oppii paremmin" ("A healthy mind learns better"), was published in the Turun Sanomat newspaper on 14 November 2025, and an opinion piece by Development Manager Elina Tolonen, entitled "Vakavan sairauden kohdatessa koko perhe tarvitsee tukea" ("When faced with a serious illness, the whole family needs support") was published in the Kaleva newspaper on 4 December 2025.

To support decision-making we published policy recommendations on support for expectant mothers and parents of infants, as well as the promotion of mental health in schools. We published Point Research Summaries on supporting the mental health of children and young people and preventing serious problems by means of evidence-based interventions and the assessment of a wellbeing service county's range of available interventions by means of Iitla's new tool. Research Summaries were also published on preventing the negative impacts of poverty among families with children through leisure time activities and the assessment study on collective impact work.

We reported 43 contacts with decision-makers in Parliament and government ministries to the Finnish Transparency Register. Our advocacy efforts were related to strengthening faith in the future among children and young people, promoting mental health, advancing the use of evidence-based psychosocial interventions, the renewal of leadership competence that promotes wellbeing, wellbeing in schools, and regional and local renewal efforts to support the wellbeing of children and families, i.e. collective impact work.



1.7 Assessing our performance

Isla's operations are monitored, supervised and systematically developed with the help of internal monitoring, external assessments and independent audits. We collect feedback on events, training activities, publications and other materials, and monitor the reach of our communications on a regular basis. We conduct a personnel survey twice a year.

Our performance in terms of finances and governance is monitored by an independent auditor (Oy Tuokko Ltd). SFR Advisors supports the supervision of asset management. In 2025, we conducted assessment studies on collective impact and the Equal Start for Everyone Oulu pilot project. In addition, Owl Group carried out the Foundation's stakeholder survey.

Independence and building bridges between practice and decision-making are Isla's strengths

A stakeholder survey was carried out to examine Isla's image and awareness, relevance and perceived benefit, as well as communications and changes achieved.

According to the survey, Isla is regarded as an expert, knowledge-based, independent and reliable organisation that promotes the wellbeing of children, young people and families, as well as their faith in the future. Isla's activities at the interfaces of research, development and decision-making generate information that can be utilised in both strategic decision-making and practical work. Isla is also seen as a pioneer and trendsetter as well as a facilitator of networks and a bridge builder when it comes to collective impact and implementation expertise.

Isla's communications are considered to be high-quality, resonant, interesting in content, and visually strong. Some of the stakeholders expressed the view that the communications have become more interactive and diverse in recent years, and that Isla has been successful, to some extent, in making societal discussion more child- and family-friendly. The content of, or language used in, our communication is still considered challenging or complex at times.

Independence emerged very strongly as a strategic strength for Isla and a source of added value when compared to the previous survey carried out in 2023. Independence enables Isla to act as a knowledge-based change-maker and facilitator of networks. Isla was characterised as an organisation that is not subject to administrative or political steering, which enables it to maintain an independent and bold role.

Isla's role as a bridge builder between research and practice has also deepened. Isla is perceived as successful in building bridges between evidence-based information and impact assessments of psychosocial interventions with practical development work. Isla is also recognised as a pioneer in implementation work in Finland. The stakeholders indicated that Isla has taken implementation work "to a completely new level" and significantly developed the service system for children, young people and families.

Independence enables Isla to act as a knowledge-based change-maker and facilitator of networks.

STAKEHOLDER EXPERIENCES

- Several stakeholder representatives had participated in collective impact work. The perception was that work in the wellbeing services counties had progressed well, with support from Iitla, and our experts' concrete participation and presence in the wellbeing services counties has played an important role in the effort to bring about change.
- Childhood Builders leadership training was characterised as proof of Iitla's professionalism and pioneering spirit.
- Cooperation with implementation support was considered important, including tailored support for the wellbeing services county in question, as well as support for the adaptation of psychosocial interventions.
- Iitla has increased its visibility among professionals, including those employed by wellbeing services counties, municipalities and third-sector operators.

Iitla in figures

10

wellbeing services counties participating in collective impact work

117

municipalities participating in collective impact work

100

leadership training alumni

46

leaders in the Childhood Builders mentoring programme

6

wellbeing services counties in collective impact leadership training

34

students completed the course unit "Psychosocial interventions and models with strong documented effects in research-based decision-making" at the University of Helsinki

32

Events

2

published issues of the Kasvun tuki journal

10

methodology evaluations published: ENGAGE, MDFT, Finnish Strongest Families, Families First, Stronger as a parent, FHille, Vertti, Trappan. Voikukkia, Family School POP

14

evaluations started: Strategy, Friends for life, Theraplay, TRT, Walk in, Family Group Conference, Incredible Years parenting groups, Vakautta vanhemmuuteen, A-ART, ABC, Holding Tight, Let's Talk About Children discussion, SISUKAS Foster Child at School, KiVa anti-bullying programme

5

statements related to the drafting of recommendations and legislation

1.8 Grants and donations

Grants for scientific research

No grants were awarded in 2025.

Endowed professorships

Itila has contributed two endowed professorships: a professorship of practice in intervention and implementation research to the University of Oulu, and a professorship in family and child poverty research to Tampere University.

- University of Oulu (decision 12/2019; started in spring 2020; three-year endowment and an option; part-time 50%). In October 2022, the Board of Trustees approved the exercise of the two-year extension option on the endowed professorship of practice with an 80% time allocation from 1 May 2023 to 30 April 2025. The professorship was held by Mika Niemelä.
- Tampere University (decision 9/2021, started in spring 2022; three-year endowment and an option, 100%). The endowed professorship ended on 30 June 2025. The professorship was held by Mia Tammelin.

Other funding granted by Itila

- Wellbeing services county of Pirkanmaa (Pirha), EUR 25,000. Modelling of multidisciplinary work related to separation situations in families with children, funding period 1 January–31 December 2025
- Wellbeing services county of North Karelia (Siun sote), EUR 30,000. Creating a networked family centre's feedback system and structures for knowledge-based management, 1 January 2025–1 April 2026
- Wellbeing services county of Pirkanmaa (Pirha), EUR 20,000. The work of a network development professional in demanding collective impact work, funding period 1 January–31 December 2026.



Research initiated by professorships funded by Itla to continue in Oulu and Tampere

Itla funded a professorship focused on family and child poverty at Tampere University and a professorship of practice focused on collective impact at the University of Oulu. The professorships advanced research related to family and child poverty, the wellbeing of children and young people, and services for families with children, and supported the renewal of services across Finland. The research will continue at both universities.

Associate Professorship in Family and Child Poverty at Tampere University 2022–2025

Funded by Itla, the Associate Professorship was established in the Centre for Childhood, Youth and Family Research (Perla) at Tampere University in spring 2022. The aim was to strengthen multidisciplinary research on family and child poverty and to promote scientific and societal discussion on the subject. The Associate Professorship was held by docent, PhD, social worker **Mia Tammelin**.

New research projects on poverty and economic disadvantage

Associate Professor Tammelin launched research activities focusing on family and child poverty, as well as a research team. The research was focused particularly on the daily life of families, parenting, the wellbeing of children and families, participation, and the social factors behind poverty. Itla's funding enabled the launch of several externally funded research projects.

The results have been published extensively in both scientific journals and publications intended for a general audience, and they have been presented to thousands of people in wellbeing services counties, for example, and in cooperation with non-governmental organisations. Mia Tammelin has also served as the editor for four edited volumes in which research results have been published.



Mia Tammelin

Research data on parenting in economically disadvantaged life situations

The research undertaken during the professorship produced new information, particularly on parenting and wellbeing in economically disadvantaged life situations and the service needs and participation of young adults. Through its unique multidisciplinary perspective, the research carried out during the professorship enriched Finnish and international research on family and child poverty.

Mia Tammelin's research team included doctoral and post-doc researchers, and several master's theses were also written in connection with the research team. Tammelin also participates in teaching at the university level and serves as an adviser on doctoral dissertations on themes related to early childhood education, family relationships, family services, and working life, among other themes.

With the help of Itla's funding, family and child poverty was established as a permanent research subject at Tampere University, and the research will continue through extensive cooperation with various parties. Tampere University will fund the associate professorship in family and child poverty until 2027, after which time the position will become a permanent professorship valid until further notice. The decision on the professorial position will be made during 2026 on the basis of an international assessment.

Research on family and child poverty was strengthened in Finland and internationally.



Professorship of practice at the University of Oulu 2020–2025

A professorship of practice in intervention and implementation research, funded by Iitla, was established in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Oulu in 2020 with the aim of strengthening the link between research and practice in services for families with children. The professorship was held by PhD, docent **Mika Niemelä**.

The professorship of practice created the structures for collective impact work, which began in four wellbeing services counties and became established as part of the national development of services. With close support from Iitla and the professor of practice, and with the help of research, wellbeing services counties and municipalities built regional structures in which municipalities, non-governmental organisations, social services and healthcare were committed to shared goals.

During the professorship of practice, a network of researchers was launched, several doctoral dissertations were started, and results were published extensively on topics including children's wellbeing, child protection, collective impact, and the systematic implementation and management of service models for families with children. In addition, the data- and AI-driven Näkymä tool was developed to help resolve challenges related to children and young people.



Mika Niemelä
Photo: Mikko Törmänen

Research results provided the foundation for collective impact work

Research results were used as the basis for creating a change management model that is based on collective impact and has a good fit with the Finnish service system. An indicator to assess the model's implementation and an approach to the multidisciplinary management of the change were also developed. In addition, protective factors and risk factors related to the development of children and young people were identified, and the service use of risk group members was assessed.

Following the end of the professorship of practice, the University of Oulu has made a commitment to continue research activities related to collective impact work. The University has established a new research team and initiated strategic partnerships and cooperation agreements with, for example, Iitla and the ODL Foundation to promote the wellbeing of children, young people and families.

The research results created a new way to change the service system for families with children.



2

Administration and personnel

Isla comprises the following bodies: delegation, Board of Trustees, Asset Management Committee and CEO. The Foundation also includes the editorial board of the Kasvun tuki journal. We comply with good governance in our operations and are a member of the Association of Finnish Foundations.

2.1 Delegation

Isla's delegation is tasked with monitoring, supporting and promoting Isla's activities. The appointment, composition and term of office of the Delegation is regulated by an Act (1004/2017). Isla's Delegation convened twice in 2025.

Members of the Delegation in 2025

Members:

Pia Hiltunen (Social Democratic Party) (Chairperson)
Hilkka Kemppi (Centre Party) (Vice Chairperson)
Noora Fagerström (National Coalition Party)
Juha Hänninen (National Coalition Party)
Maaret Castrén (National Coalition Party)
Kaisa Garedeu (Finns Party)
Ari Koponen (Finns Party)
Pia Sillanpää (Finns Party)
Helena Marttila (Social Democratic Party)

Deputy members:

Tarja Filatov (Social Democratic Party)
Olga Oinas-Panuma (Centre Party)
Terhi Koulumies (National Coalition Party)
Sinuhe Wallinheimo (National Coalition Party)
Hanna Holopainen (Greens)
Anne Rintamäki (Finns Party)
Laura Meriluoto (Left Alliance)
Henrik Wickström (Swedish People's Party of Finland)
Matias Mäkynen (Social Democratic Party)

2.2 Board of Trustees

In accordance with the Foundations Act (2015/487), Isla's Board of Trustees sees to the Foundation's administration and ensures that the Foundation's operations are arranged as appropriate in order to realise the Foundation's objectives. Furthermore, the Board of Trustees is responsible for the appropriate monitoring of the Foundation's accounting and asset management. In accordance with the Foundation's by-laws, the Board of Trustees prepares matters for consideration by the delegation, apart from selecting the members of the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees also decides on the Foundation's strategy, resource planning and policy outlines. Isla's Board of Trustees convened seven times in 2025.

Members of the Board of Trustees in 2025:

Members:

Petri Pohjonen (Chairperson)
Maria Kaisa Aula (Vice Chairperson)
Tuomas Kurttila
Sanna Vesikansa
Mirjam Kalland (until 3 June), Alekski Neuvonen
Riitta Särkelä
Juho Romakkaniemi

Deputy members:

Arto Willman
Minna Kelhä
Olli Joensuu
Mikko Mäkelä
Liisa Keltikangas-Järvinen
Eila Kauppinen
Tuija Åstedt

2.3 Asset Management Committee

The Asset Management Committee is tasked with supporting the Foundation in responsible investing. The Foundation's asset management must be systematic, secure, profitable, considered and sustained. The Asset Management Committee evaluates the profit development and risks of invested assets, the functionality of our investment strategy and the operations of external asset managers. The Committee provides the Board of Trustees with a report on investment activities at least twice a year and prepares changes to the investment strategy for the Board as necessary.

The Asset Management Committee convened five times in 2025.

Members of the Asset Management Committee in 2025:

Mikko Mikkola (Chairperson)

Petri Pohjonen

Annika Ekman

Lauri Kajanoja

2.4 CEO

The Foundation's CEO is Katri Vataja.

2.5 Personnel

The total number of staff employed by Ibla at the end of 2025 was 35. At the end of the financial year, 45% of the personnel were employed on permanent contracts. The average age of the personnel was 42.4 years. Of the personnel, 15% had a job description that included management responsibility for the management of operations and/or personnel, 11% worked as team leads, 57% were in senior specialist or specialist positions, and 17% worked in coordinating or support roles.

During the year under review, a total of 10 new employees joined Ibla on fixed-term contracts. One permanent employment relationship and 24 fixed-term employment relationships ended during the year. The majority of the employment relationships that ended were related to the project for national implementation competence funded by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, which concluded at the end of 2025.

Employee wellbeing and work ability are surveyed by means of workplace community surveys conducted twice a year. The average score of the workplace community surveys conducted in 2025 was 3.8 on a scale of 1 to 5.

2.6 Auditing

Oy Tuokko Ltd continued as Ibla's audit firm, with Terhi Latvala, Authorised Public Accountant, as the auditor in charge.

An audit was carried out in November during the financial year.

2.7 Other expert groups

The editorial board of the Kasvun tuki journal

The editorial board of the Kasvun tuki journal is tasked with ensuring the quality of evaluations of the effectiveness of psychosocial interventions and approving updates to methodology evaluations. The evaluations of effectiveness are published as systematic literature reviews and in the Early Interventions method bank.

The editorial board of the Kasvun tuki journal also directs the work of the journal's editorial staff. It develops the content of the journal and promotes the journal's evidence-based foundation. The editorial board convened four times during the year.

Members of the editorial board of the Kasvun tuki journal in 2025:

Taina Laajasalo (Chairperson)

Kirsi Peltonen

Jorma Komulainen

Riittakerttu Kaltiala

Susanna Hinkka-Yli-Salomäki

Maija Jäppinen

2.8 Related party transactions

The Foundation is not known to have provided grants, financial support, donations or gratuitous subsidies to persons or entities related to the Foundation during the financial period.

The Foundation is aware of the following financial transactions between the Foundation and its related parties during the financial period:

- The Foundation has paid a total of EUR 157,460.11 (EUR 162,817.87 in 2024) in remuneration to the members of the Board of Trustees and the CEO.
- The Foundation has paid a total of EUR 23,970.50 (EUR 15,294.22 in 2024) to the auditor.
- The Foundation has paid a total of EUR 3,024.94 (EUR 763.22 in 2024) in travel allowances to members of the Board of Trustees.

The Foundation is not aware of any other related party transactions during the reporting year.

3

Funding of activities

Isla primarily funds its operations with returns from its investment activities. Operational activities can also be financed with external funding.

In the Foundation's investment strategy, the long-term strategic goal for the Foundation's investment assets is an annual real rate of return of 4%. The time frame of investments is long and investments must be systematic and responsible. The investment strategy ensures the management of investment-related risks and uncertainties related to the market environment. For this reason, the investments must be efficiently distributed across different asset classes, geographical areas, sectors, asset managers and investment types. Intelligibility and transparency are important principles in implementing Isla's investments.

External funding

External funding was sought for the implementation of operations in line with the strategy and the expansion of Isla's impact. The starting point for the Foundation's financing strategy is to ensure the continuity of the Foundation's independent operations and the achievement of the impact goals set out in the strategy.

In 2025, we received funding from the Strategic Research Council under the Research Council of Finland for programme leadership of the YOUNG programme for the period 2025–2028, the Services to Belong work package and advocacy efforts under the Right to Belong project, and the "Systematic implementation of mental health interventions" work package under the Imagine project.

We also signed a strategic partnership agreement with the Brita Maria Renlund Memorial Foundation regarding collective impact work. The aim of the partnership is to strengthen collective impact work and expand it to new regions. The partnership will also enable the progress of collective impact work towards becoming a national development model.

3.1 Financial situation

On 31 December 2025, the market value of the Foundation's investment assets was EUR 63,124,062 (EUR 60,299,080 in 2024).

During the reporting year, the Foundation accrued EUR 233,431.91 in dividend income (EUR 537,226.99 in 2024), EUR 45,998.35 in interest income (EUR 130,639.68 in 2024) and EUR 13,868.83 in other financial income (EUR 50,058.80 in 2024).

At the end of the period, the Foundation's current account balances totalled EUR 2,152,650.09.

Isla's Board of Trustees set the operating budget for 2025 at EUR 2,461,852.71. The operating budget includes the costs of operations financed by investment income. The operating budget outturn in 2025 was EUR 2,067,392.47 in total (EUR 2,914,021.03 in 2024).

The share accounted for by external funding of the Foundation's actual activities in 2025 was EUR 2,634,724.94 in total (EUR 1,949,177.54 in 2024). The share accounted for by the expenses of externally funded projects of the Foundation's operating expenses was EUR 2,640,157.38 in total (EUR 1,949,177.54 in 2024).

The surplus for the financial period was EUR 5,955,064.79 (a deficit of EUR -16,794.93 in 2024).

4,705,184

Operating budget outturn

2,634,725

Financed with external funding

2,070,459

Financed by investment income

5,955,065

Profit/loss for the financial period



4

Outlook for 2026

In 2026, we will focus our operations even more heavily on the impact goals set out in our strategy.

In the renewal of child-oriented growing environments and services, we will focus particularly on making collective impact work well-established, and expanding it. We will continue to plan the scaling of collective impact work and model the core elements of collective impact and the Finnish model. We will become even more comprehensively integrated into national and regional family centre work. We will also create a new networked cooperation structure that brings together research, practical development and experience-based expertise.

We will also develop leadership competence in the growing environments and services of children, young people and families. Pilot training on systemic change management for leaders in collective impact work will continue in spring 2026, and a new group will start the training programme in autumn 2026. We will pilot a 24-hour workshop for the first time in Finland. The aim is to develop an operating model for the co-development and renewal of activities that support the wellbeing of children, young people and families. We will also partner with the South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences (Xamk) in the implementation of a master's degree on the multidisciplinary strengthening of childhood and adolescence.

We will promote the use of child-oriented information not only by producing data on the effectiveness of interventions but also by developing the context-fit and adaptation of psychosocial interventions aimed at children, young people, and families. Following the conclusion of our three-year project on national implementation competence at the end of 2025, we will continue to support and develop the implementation of psychosocial interventions as part of Iitla's Early Interventions activities and the Imagine project. The particular thematic priorities are support for parenting and mental health support and treatment aimed at young people. We will conduct at least 12 new assessments of psychosocial interventions. We will train new evaluators to conduct indicator evaluations. The selected indicators are symptom questionnaires commonly used in research and in mental health services for children and young people. We will expand the method bank by publishing information on the context-fit of interventions. We will build a new operating model that will integrate the production of evaluation data on interventions with collective impact work and into the implementation of interventions. This will be achieved by linking the Kuusio evaluation process and the collective impact process together.

We will strengthen **child- and youth-centred future-oriented work and foresight** with a new operating entity in which we will produce information and foresight on phenomena and trends affecting the future of children and young people. We will identify and pilot ways to strengthen the agency of children and young people. We will develop and support the implementation of decision-making processes and tools that provide long-term support for the wellbeing and agency of children and young people today and in the future. We will also enhance future-oriented thinking on a cross-cutting basis in Iitla's activities, thereby strengthening Iitla's role as an accelerator of societal change and a maker of the future.

Financial statements for the financial period 1 January 2025–31 December 2025

Itla Children's Foundation
1573913-1

INCOME STATEMENT

	1/2025–12/2025	1/2024–12/2024
Operating activities		
Income	2,634,724.94	2,088,092.25
Expenses		
Personnel expenses	-2,664,545.77	-2,935,212.93
Depreciation according to plan	-1,343.23	-1,790.97
Other expenses	-2,039,294.85	-2,065,109.38
	-4,705,183.85	-5,002,113.28
Surplus/deficit	-2,070,458.91	-2,914,021.03
Investment activities		
Income from investment activities	8,482,381.41	3,236,397.26
Expenses of investment activities	-456,857.71	-339,171.16
Investment activities total	8,025,523.70	2,897,226.10
Surplus (deficit) for the financial period	5,955,064.79	-16,794.93

BALANCE SHEET

	31 Dec 2025	31 Dec 2024
ASSETS		
NON-CURRENT ASSETS		
Tangible assets		
Machinery and equipment	4,029.69	5,372.92
Investments		
Other shares and participations	56,846,507.14	51,038,088.48
Total non-current assets	56,850,536.83	51,043,461.40
CURRENT ASSETS		
Receivables		
Non-current receivables		
Other receivables	0.00	2,275.69
Current receivables		
Accounts receivable	70,597.39	74,900.71
Other receivables	1,211,829.39	1,360,808.59
Accrued income	170,157.32	268,434.00
Total current receivables	1,452,584.10	1,704,143.30
Total receivables	1,452,584.10	1,706,418.99
Cash and cash equivalents	2,314,872.79	2,060,315.55
TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	3,767,456.89	3,766,734.54
TOTAL ASSETS	60,617,993.72	54,810,195.94
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES		
EQUITY		
Original own funds	50,456.38	50,456.38
Fund donated by the Finnish Government	49,999,949.00	49,999,949.00
Profit (loss) from previous financial periods	3,762,935.19	3,779,730.12
Profit/loss for the financial period	5,955,064.79	-16,794.93
TOTAL EQUITY	59,768,405.36	53,813,340.57
LIABILITIES		
Short-term liabilities		
Advances received	56,475.34	4.99
Accounts payable	508,227.24	612,473.59
Other liabilities	67,546.75	70,974.43
Accruals and deferred income	217,339.03	313,402.36
Total liabilities	849,588.36	996,855.37
TOTAL EQUITY AND LIABILITIES	60,617,993.72	54,810,195.94



itla Itsenäisyyden
juhlavuoden
lastensäätiö