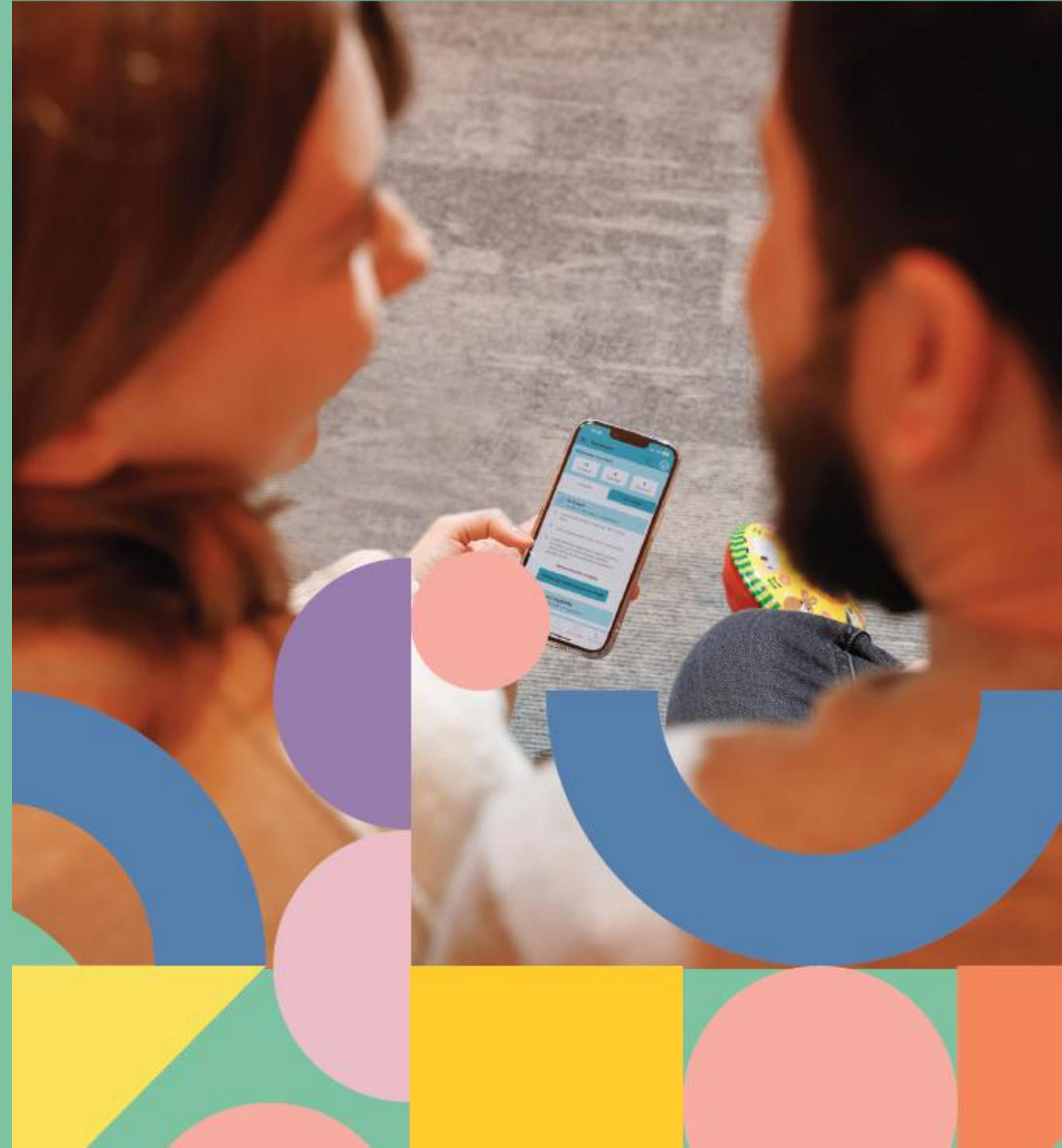


Parenting in a Digital Age: Launching the Playbook on Digital Innovation for Supporting Families



Time (CET)	Agenda Item & Talking Points	Speaker/Presenter
15:00 – 15:05	Welcome and framing: why parenting support must evolve in the digital world	Elizabeth Lule, ECDAN Chemba Raghavan, UNICEF
15:05 – 15:15	The reality of parenting in a digital world: changing needs and opportunities	Patricia Nunez, Early Years Expert, Van Leer Foundation
15:15 – 15:30	Launch of the Playbook on Digital Innovation for Supporting Families: framework, vision and pathways for action	Ivelina Borisova, Regional Advisor ECD, UNICEF Europe and Central Asia
15:30 – 15:55	Panel discussion: Bringing the Playbook to life	Derek McCormack, RCN Australia Sanja Budisavljevic, UNICEF Jo Aggarwal, WYSA Charlotte Michailidis, Parenthood Ventures Saurabh Agarwal, UNICEF
15:55 – 16:10	Q&A for panelists + Additional insight from the Working Group	Digital Expert Group
16:10 – 16:15	Closing reflections and call to action	Ivelina Borisova, UNICEF





Van Leer
FOUNDATION

The reality of parenting in a digital world: changing needs & opportunities

Patricia Núñez Zamora

Early Years Expert

Our mission is

To contribute to inclusive societies where all children and communities can flourish

Giving all children a good start in life sets the foundation for inclusive societies. We work globally to improve the wellbeing of babies, toddlers and their caregivers.

We provide investment and knowledge to help leaders develop and scale effective policies and services with a focus on the period from pregnancy to age 5.



**We know that
a good start
for children
shapes the
rest of their
lives**



But what about a good start for parents and other caregivers?



A photograph of a family of three. A pregnant woman in a pink ribbed dress stands on the left, smiling. A man in a dark polo shirt stands behind her with his hand on her shoulder. A young child in a colorful patterned shirt stands in front of the man, holding his hand. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

When a child is born, a parent is also born

A time of unique transformation.

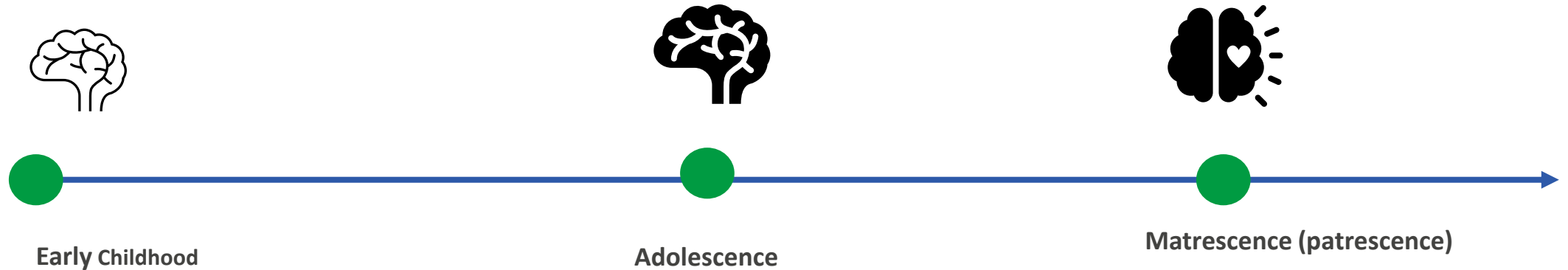
Becoming a parent is an experience of immense growth and transition, the world can suddenly feel really different



Three stages of significant transformation

Within the last decade we have discovered that the transition to parenthood completely reshapes our brains

Parenthood will soon be seen as a critical third window of human brain development after early childhood and adolescence.



What Parents Are Carrying Today

- A third of parents experience chronic loneliness
- Estimates suggest that 15–30% of women experience postpartum depression, depending on context
- The likelihood of depressive episodes doubles during pregnancy
- More than 40% of the world's children do not have access to affordable and high-quality childcare
- New parents are **sleep-deprived, stressed and time-poor**.
- Women carry the majority of unpaid care work globally





What do parents need?



Access to
mental health
care

Safe space to
recognise and
heal trauma

Be heard

Time to
connect

Safe and non-
violent
environments

Time to self-
care

Social support
and
community

More acts of
kindness

Childcare
support

Public spaces
designed for
children and
their parents

Cities and
housing that
cares and
promote
connections

Supportive
workplaces

Public Policies

But they don't do it alone...
it takes a village



What does the village look like in a world...?

...where the villages are so much bigger,

...some of us are hyper-connected, others are left out,
and some of us feel alone,

...parents struggle to balance work and care,

...because they know the early years matter,

...and don't want their kids to be left behind.



Key approaches:



Simplifying Life



Personalised Support



Supporting Connection



Van Leer
FOUNDATION

Thank you!

More info:

Vanleerfoundation.org

Patricia Nuñez, Early years Expert

PLAYBOOK ON DIGITAL INNOVATION FOR SUPPORTING FAMILIES

A framework for
transformative digital support
to parents



INNOVATE FOR PARENTS: EXPERT DIALOGUE ON DIGITAL SUPPORT FOR PARENTS

unicef
for every child



CONTEXT

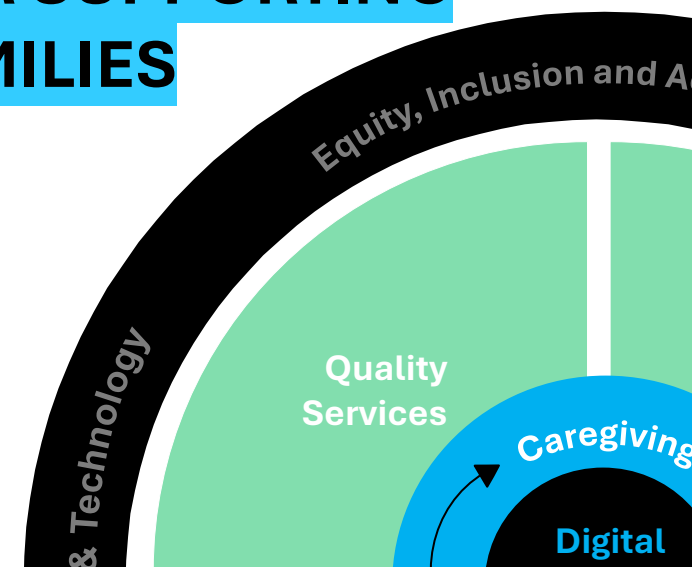
10–11 November 2025 | Geneva

Event organized by UNICEF Europe & Central Asia Regional Office
in collaboration with Van Leer Foundation

30 leading experts in digital support for parents from 20 organizations
(researchers, technologists, foundations, associations, private-
sector and media leaders, UNICEF, WHO, UNESCO, IRC)

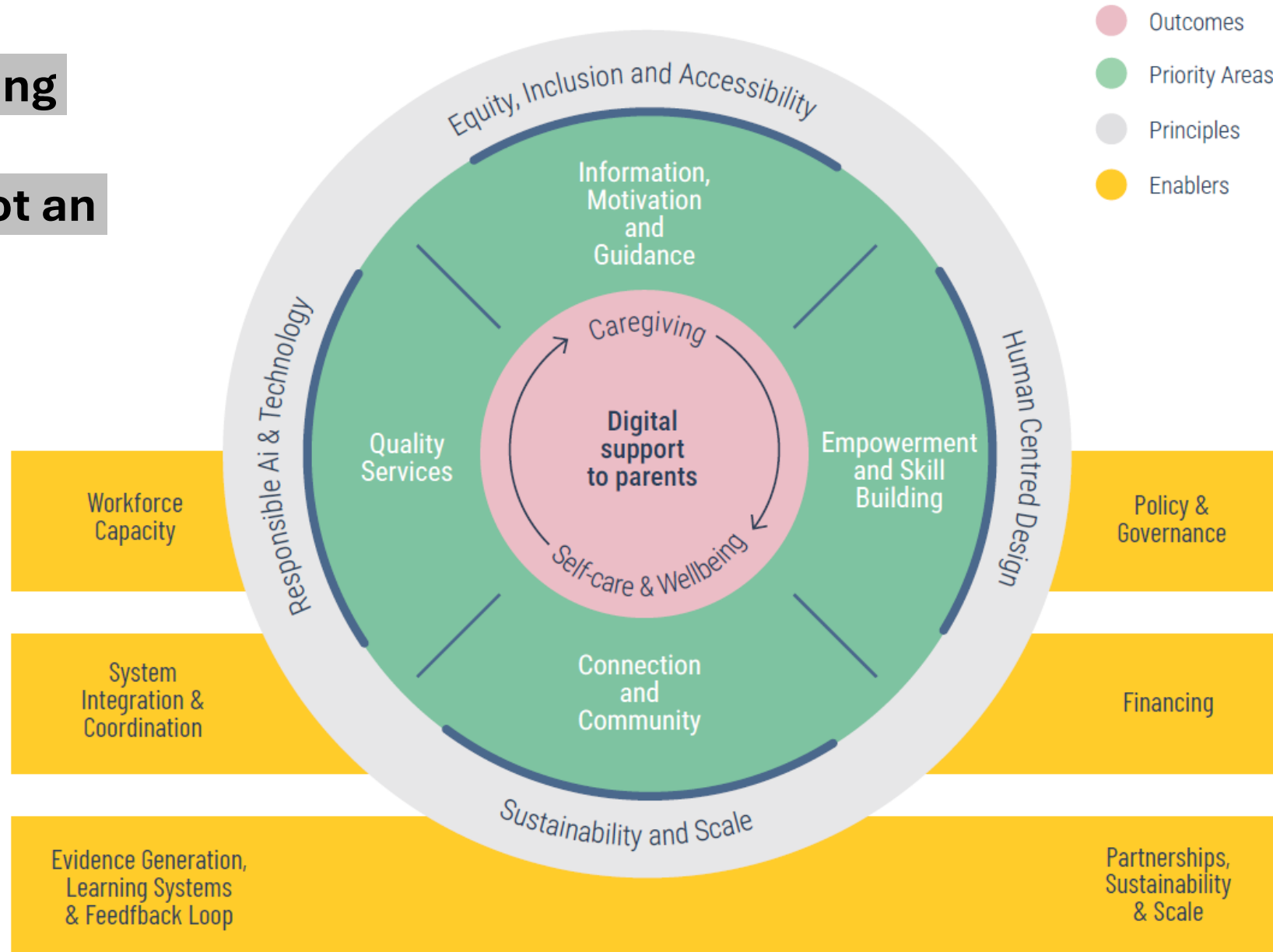
Digital support to parents is
a massive accelerator and
most powerful pathway to
reach and empower 1
billion parents globally

PLAYBOOK ON
DIGITAL INNOVATION
FOR SUPPORTING
FAMILIES



PLAYBOOK ON DIGITAL INNOVATION FOR SUPPORTING FAMILIES

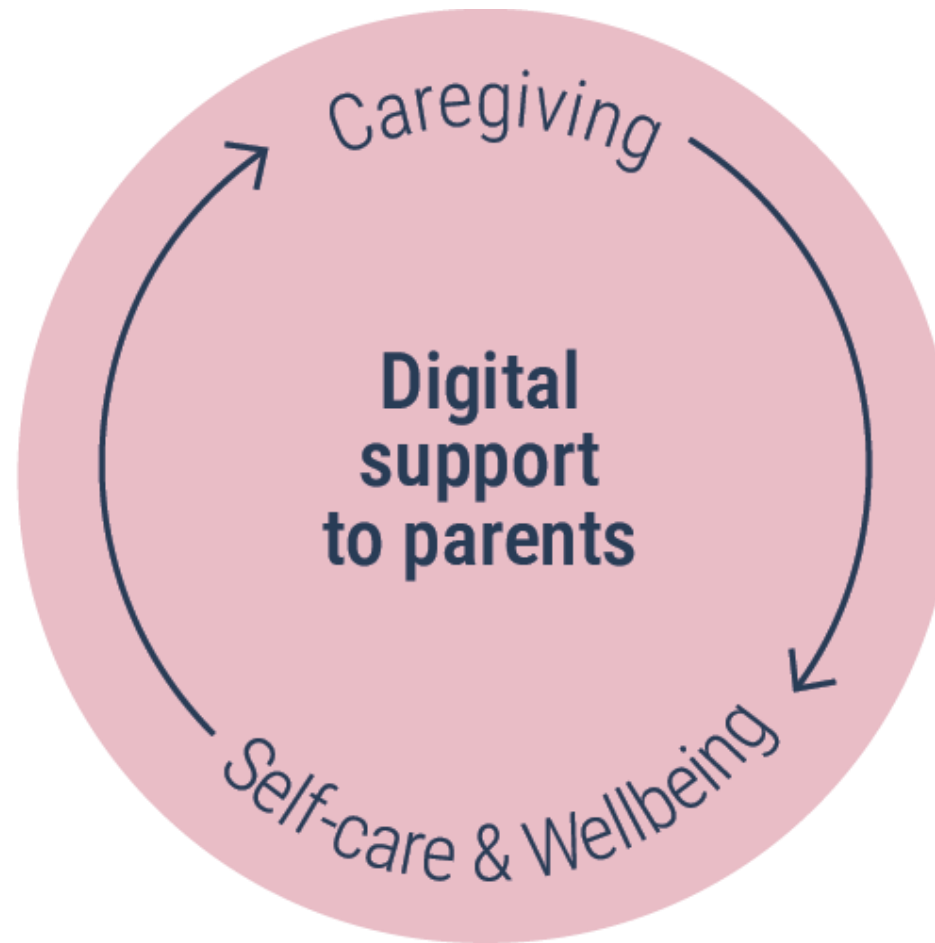
Digital parenting support is an ecosystem, not an app.



PLAYBOOK ON DIGITAL INNOVATION FOR SUPPORTING FAMILIES

Parenting Behaviours

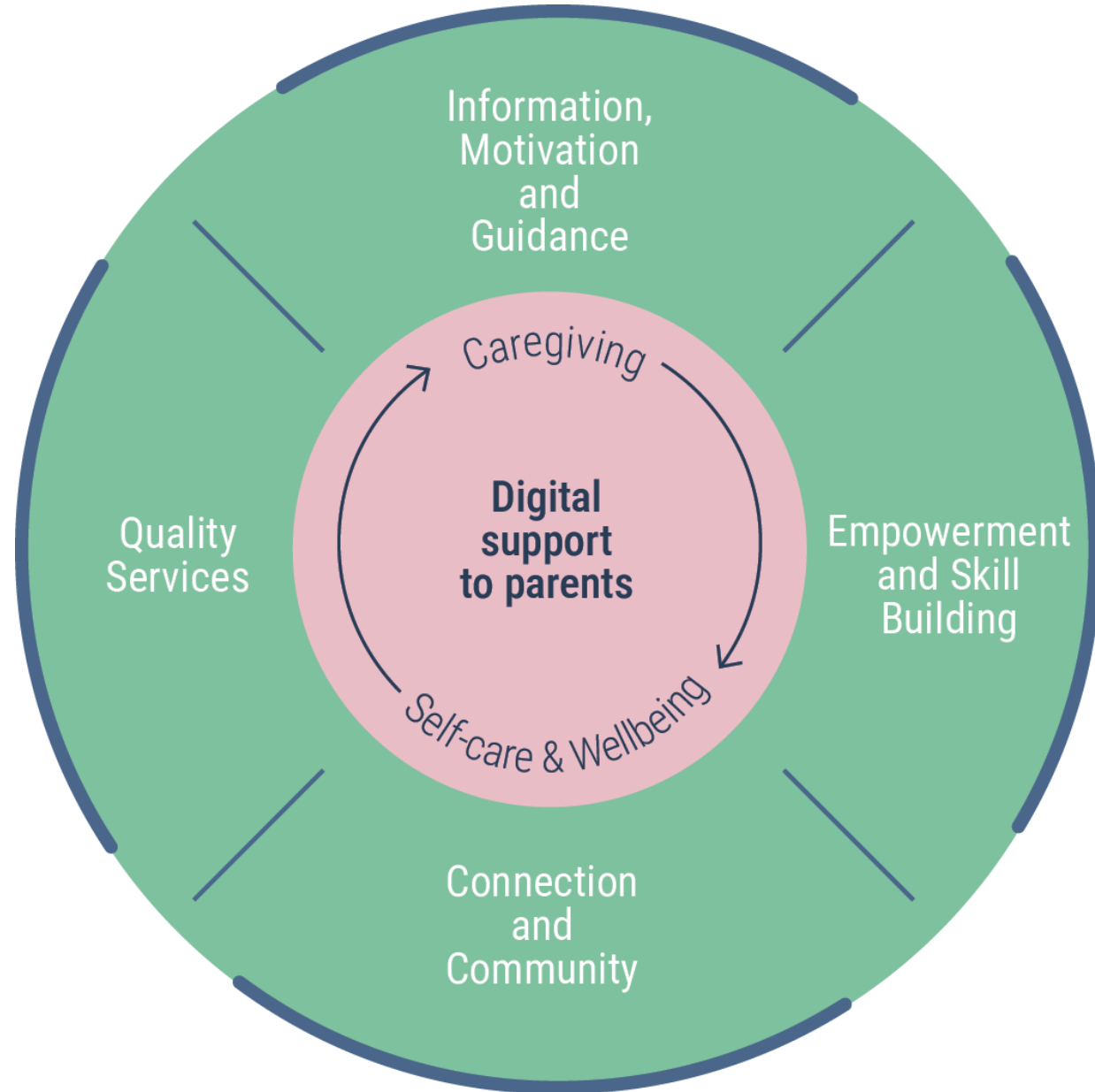
Self-care & wellbeing -
acknowledges that self-care
and well-being considerations
must be woven across digital
experiences so parents can
show up fully for their children



Caregiving –
acknowledges the
importance of digital
solutions to support care
that parents provide to
their children to enable
their holistic development

PLAYBOOK ON DIGITAL INNOVATION FOR SUPPORTING FAMILIES

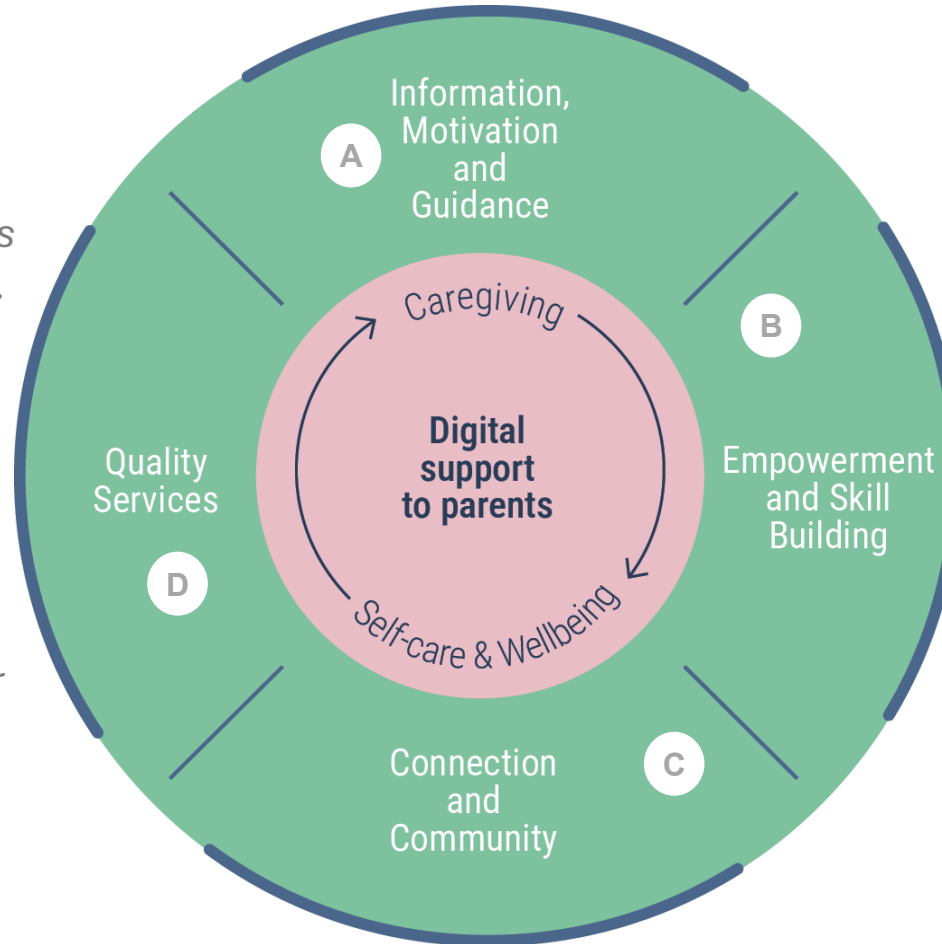
Four Strategic Areas



Strategic Areas

D Linking families to **health, education, and social protection systems** through digital tools - appointment scheduling, reminders, e-referrals, and service directories. This pillar connects the digital and physical worlds.

C Digital spaces that **connect parents to each other** for peer learning, solidarity, and belonging. This can include moderated social networks, online parent groups, or hybrid community platforms linked to local services.



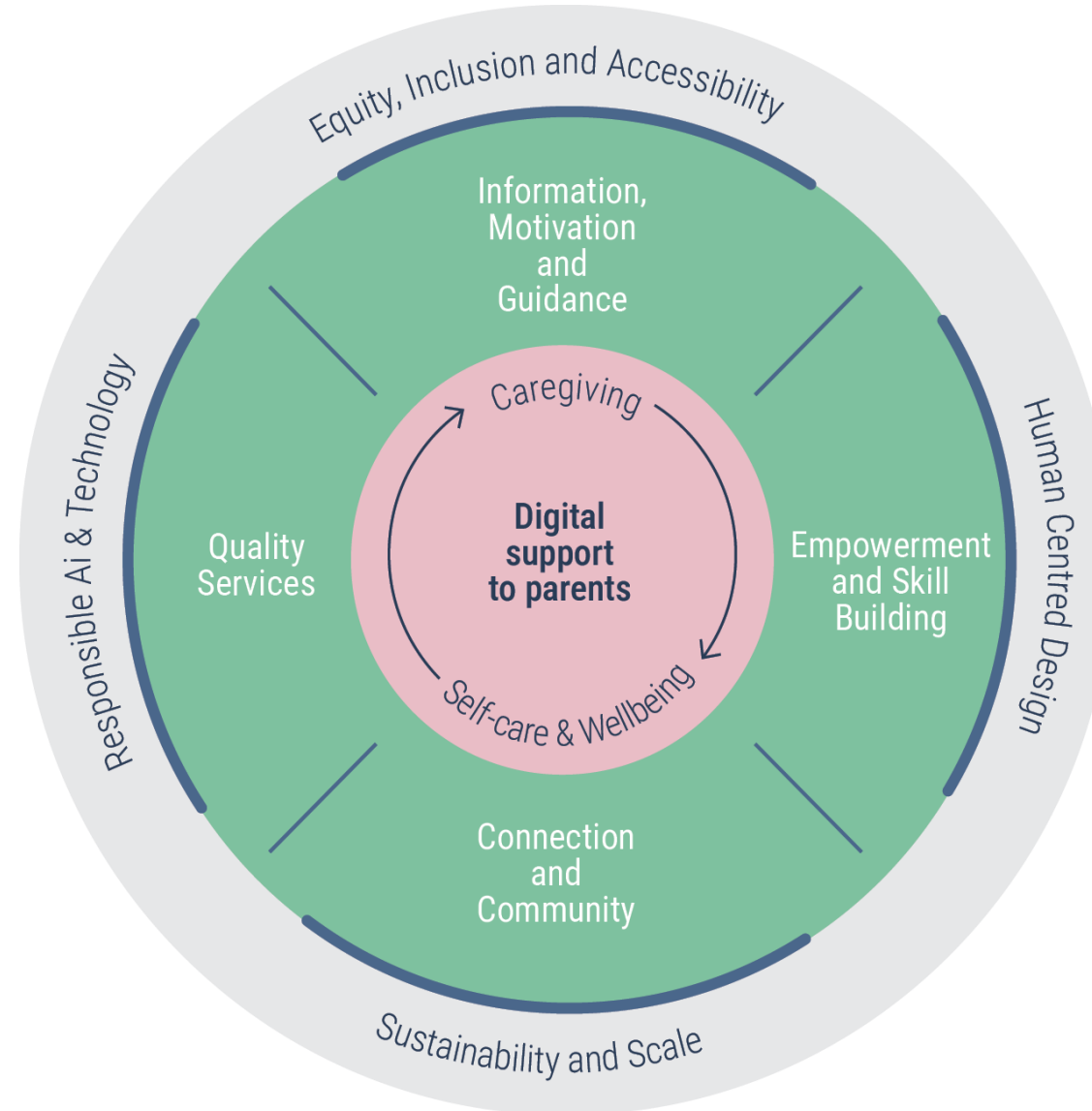
A Providing parents with **trustworthy, evidence-based information** - from pregnancy through ...adolescence - in accessible and engaging formats. It includes parenting apps, chatbots, digital libraries, and curated multimedia content.

B Equipping parents with **skills, confidence, and agency** - from positive parenting practices to digital literacy and financial planning. This can include gamified learning, online courses, interactive coaching, and tailored feedback.

Design digital solutions to work for all families by addressing access, language, literacy, culture, and low-tech realities from the start

Guiding Principles: Innovation with Integrity

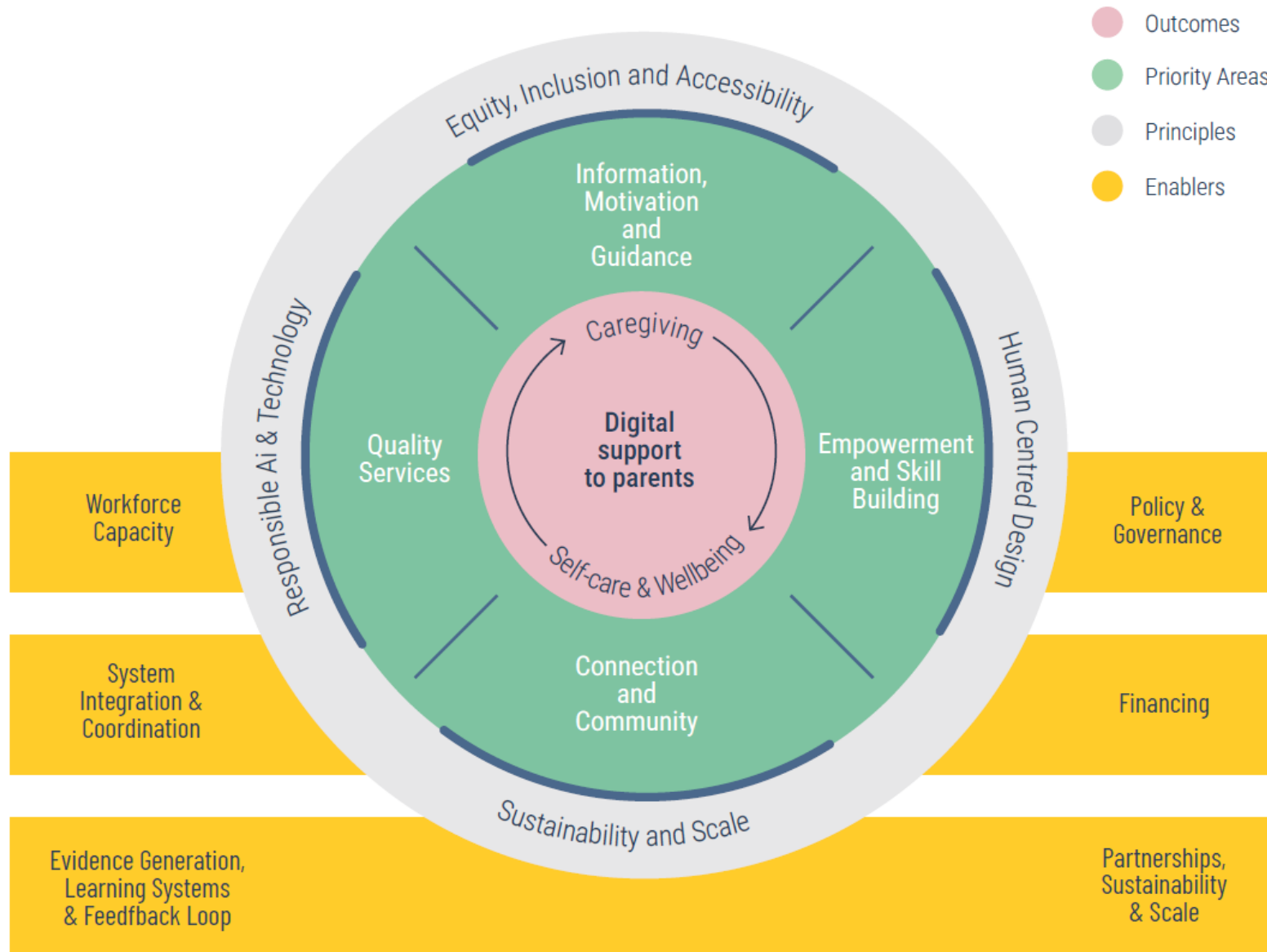
Use AI to support, not replace, human judgment with strong guardrails for trust, privacy, fairness, and simplicity



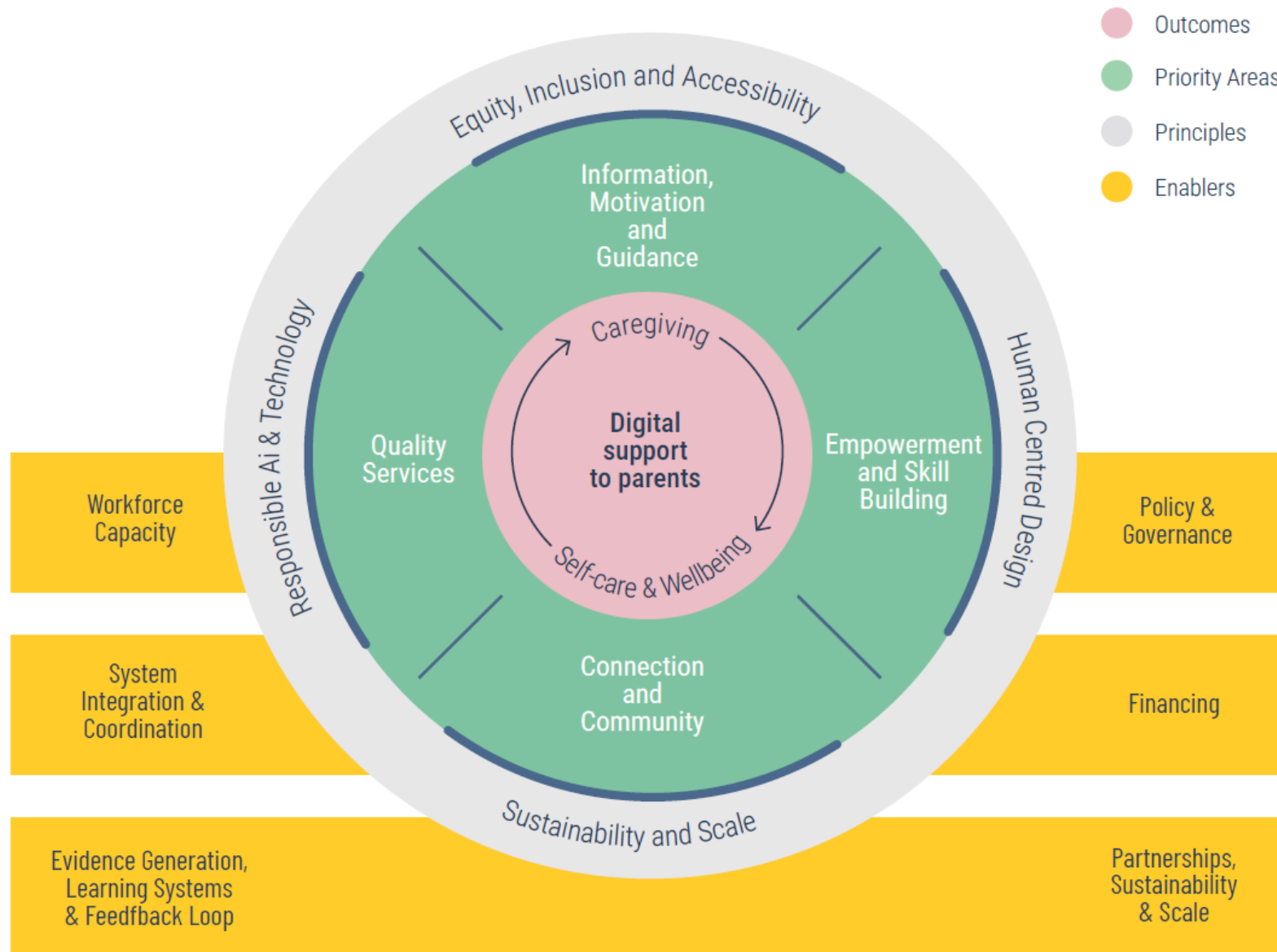
Build solutions around parents' real lives through co-design, empathy, and blending digital tools with human connection

Create systems that can grow from pilots to nationwide impact through government leadership, partnerships, and long-term financing

ENABLERS: The Foundation for Scale



PLAYBOOK ON DIGITAL INNOVATION FOR SUPPORTING FAMILIES



Call to Action

Governments: lead integration, governance, and scale

Donors: catalyze innovation, evidence, and learning

Private sector & technology: co-create responsibly, with safeguards together with us

Partners: align efforts, reduce fragmentation, build a strong digital support ecosystem

We can turn digital parenting support into a **public good at scale**

**Technology is the
water parents are
already swimming in.
Our responsibility is to
help them swim
safely,
confidently,
and with the right
support...**



PLAYBOOK ON DIGITAL INNOVATION FOR SUPPORTING FAMILIES



Playbook on Digital Innovation for Supporting Families

A framework for transformative digital
support to parents



1.Information, Motivation and Guidance

Derek McCormack, RCN Australia

How do we ensure families receive timely, evidence-based support?

2.Empowerment and Skill Building

Sanja Budisavljevic, UNICEF

How can digital tools strengthen parenting capabilities and self-efficacy?

3. Connection and Community

Jo Aggarwal, WYSA

How do we reduce isolation and create meaningful peer support?

4. Quality Services

Charlotte Michailidis, Parenthood Ventures

How can digital innovation improve access to and referral to services?

5. Responsible use of AI

Saurabh Agarwal, UNICEF

What principles should guide the use of AI in family-centred support systems?

PANEL DISCUSSION: Bringing the Playbook to life

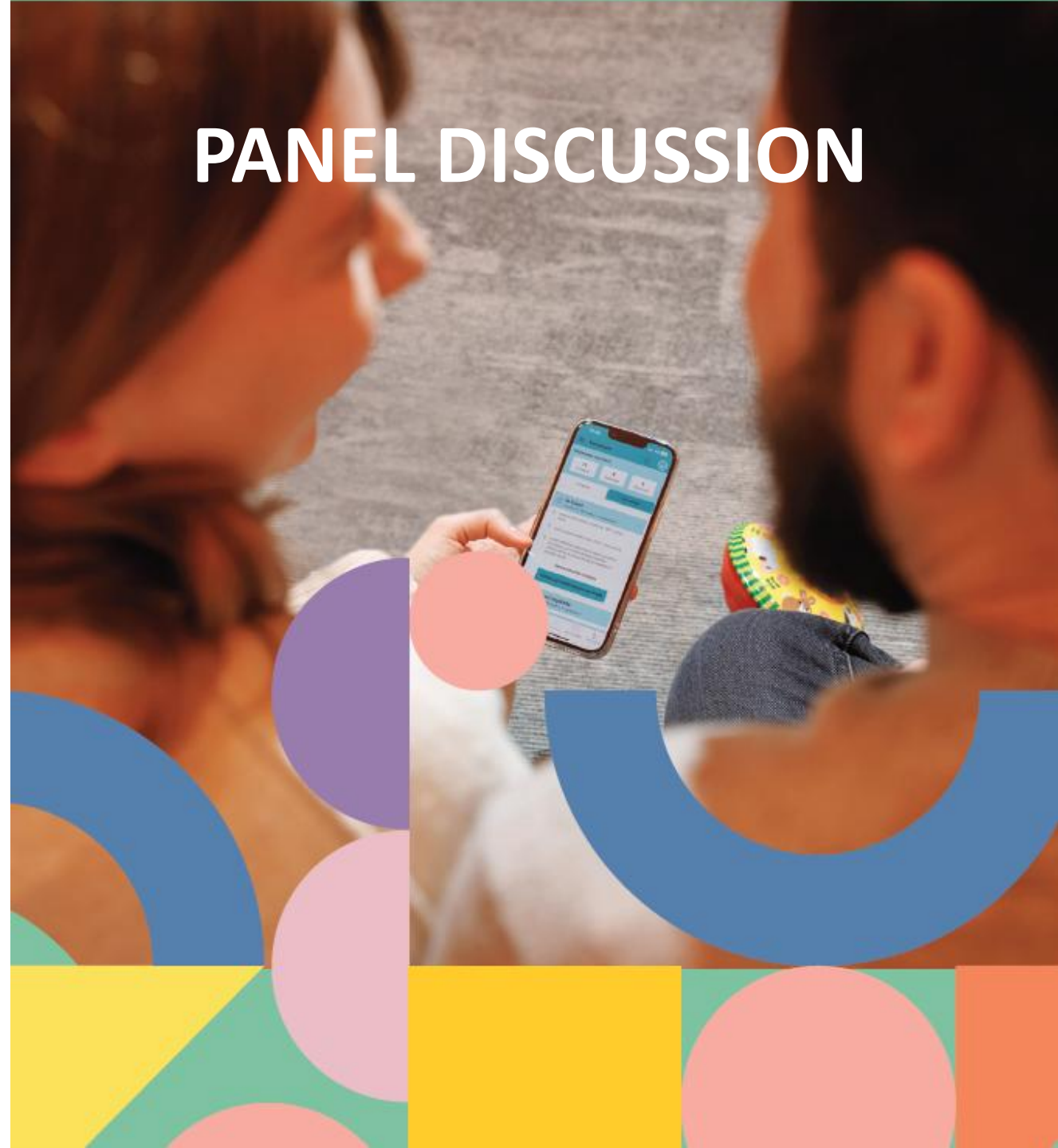


1. Information, Motivation & Guidance

Derek McCormack, RCN Australia

How do we ensure families receive timely, evidence-based support?

PANEL DISCUSSION





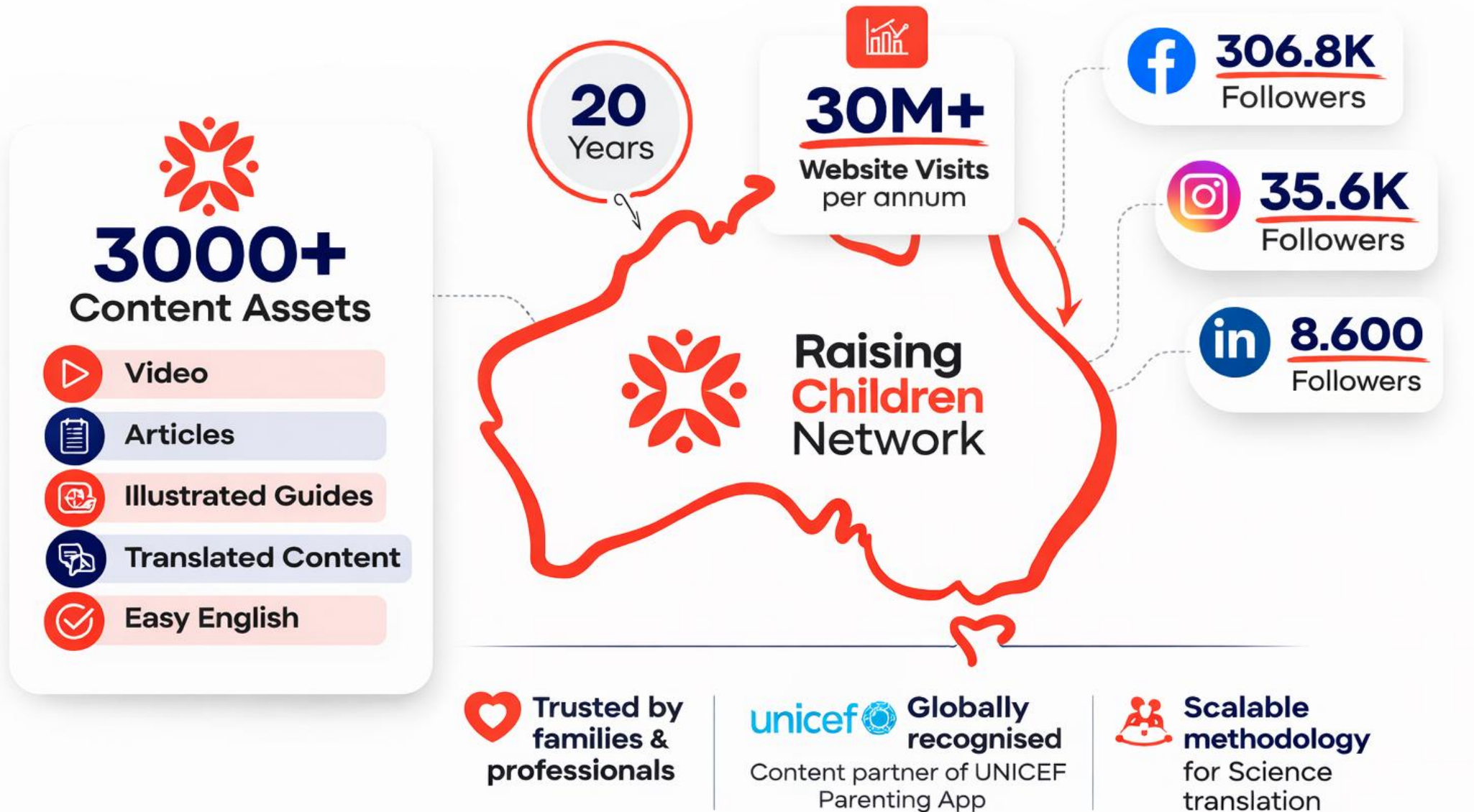
20 years of strong foundations



Australian Government
Department of Social Services

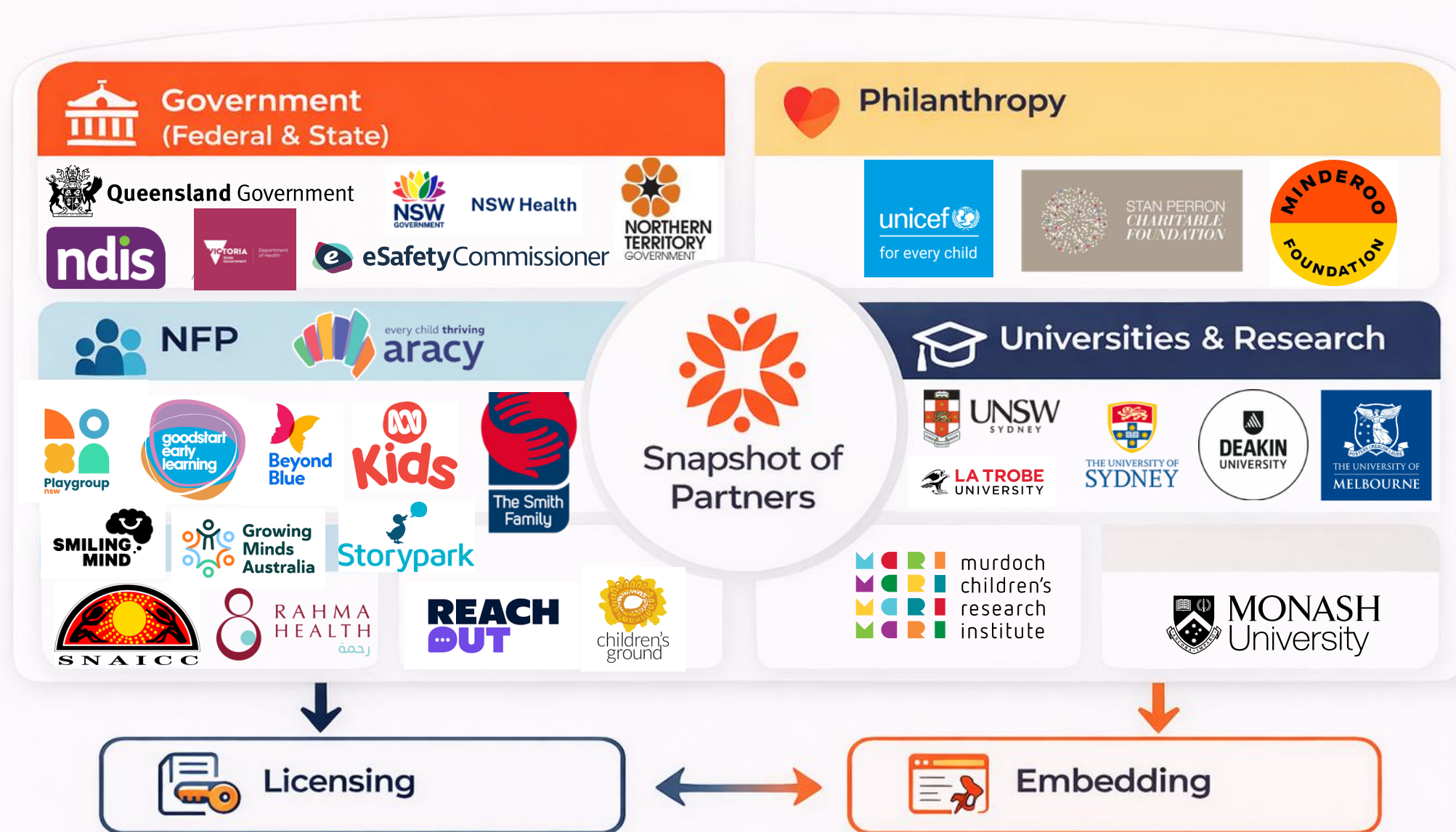


Where we are today





Partnering with others (snapshot)





1. Potential: Why do digital technologies hold strong potential compared to traditional approaches?





1. Potential: Why do digital technologies hold strong potential compared to traditional approaches?

1. Currency of information
2. Supporting equity and access
3. Supporting tech-enabled practice

Content currency

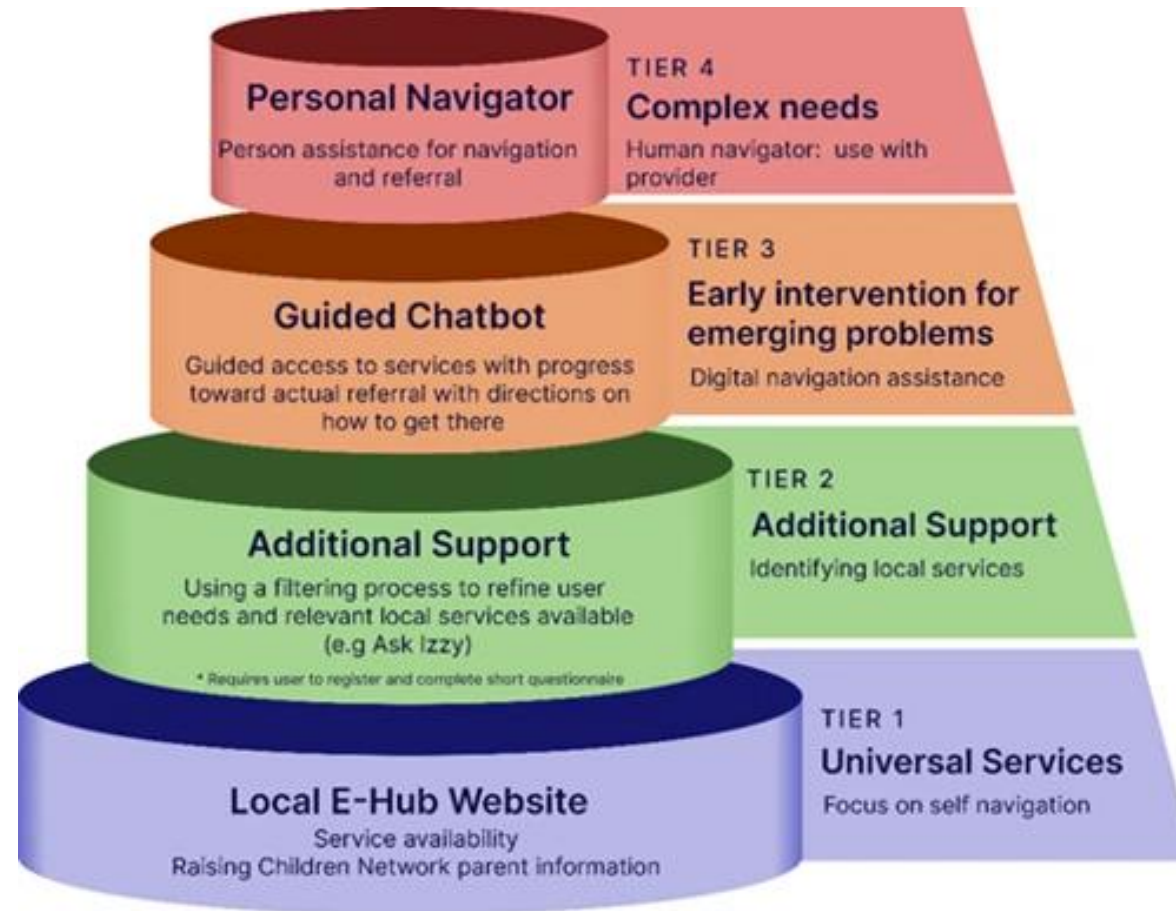




Online information	Online programs and interventions	Face to face
a) Websites and directories (e.g., Raising Children Network) b) Apps, podcasts, webinars, blogs c) Decision making supports	a. Self-directed learning, courses and classes b. Programs and interactive interventions – individual c. Programs and interactive interventions – group d. Innovations for learning and ‘edutainment’.	a. In person support for individuals b. In person support groups

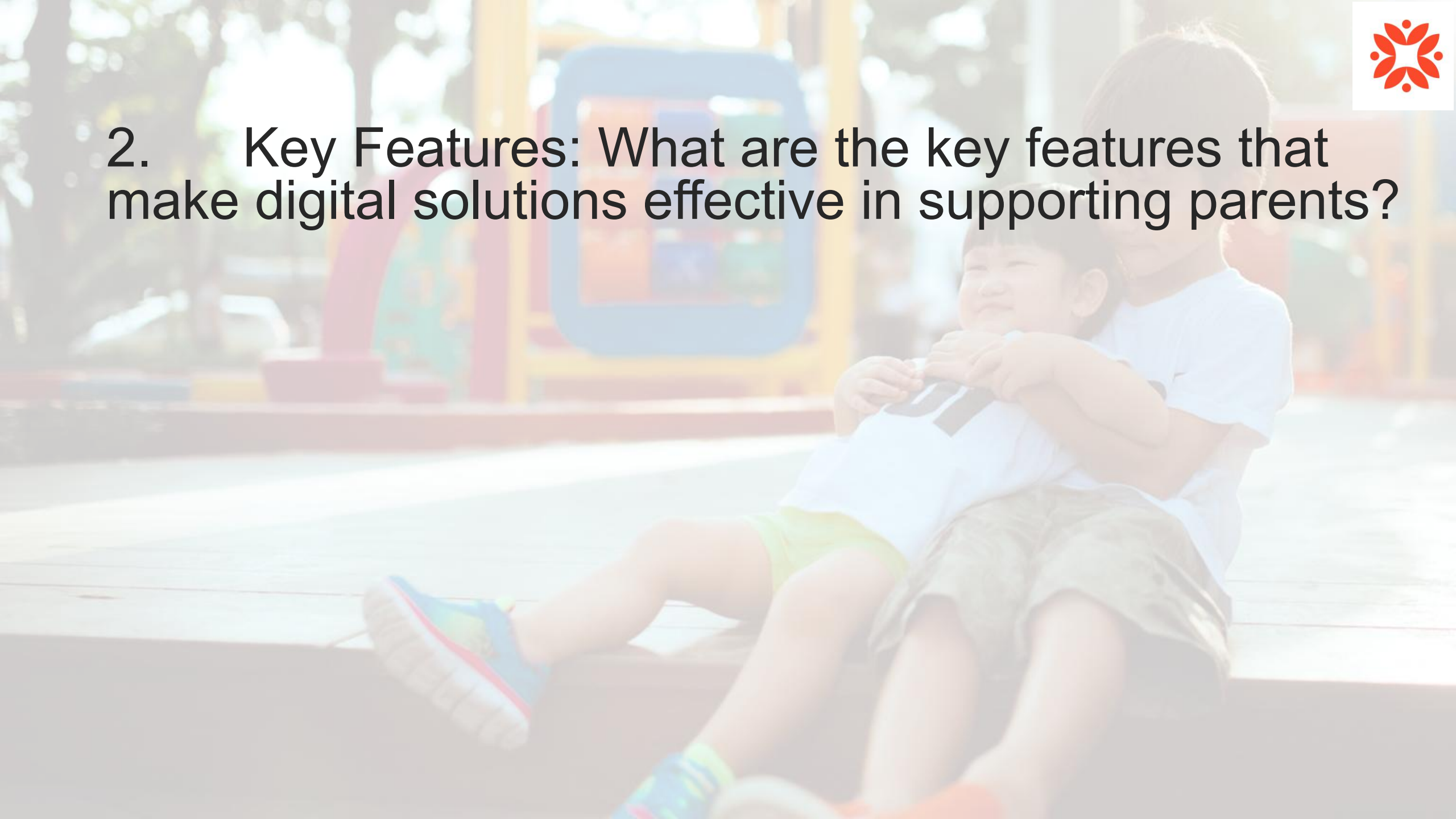
Note: These categories are part of a broader continuum of parenting support, which includes face to face, telepractice and blended models that use digital tools to complement in-person practice.

Place-based meets digital (eHubs)





2. Key Features: What are the key features that make digital solutions effective in supporting parents?





2. Key Features: What are the key features that make digital solutions effective in supporting parents?

1. Multi-format for different learning needs
2. Tailoring and personalisation
3. 'Just in time' support



Multi-format

Created playlists



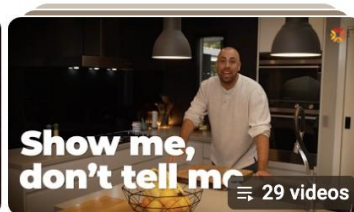
Ad campaign 2026

[View full playlist](#)



Late Night Notes

[View full playlist](#)



Show me, don't tell me

[View full playlist](#)



Scroll Busters

[View full playlist](#)

Raising Healthy Minds [▶ Play all](#)

The Raising Healthy Minds app is a free, personalised, pocket resource to help you raise confident, resilient children. [👁️](#) Watch a selection of animations from the app here on our channel...



Turning emotions into words



The gift of gratitude



Being present with your baby

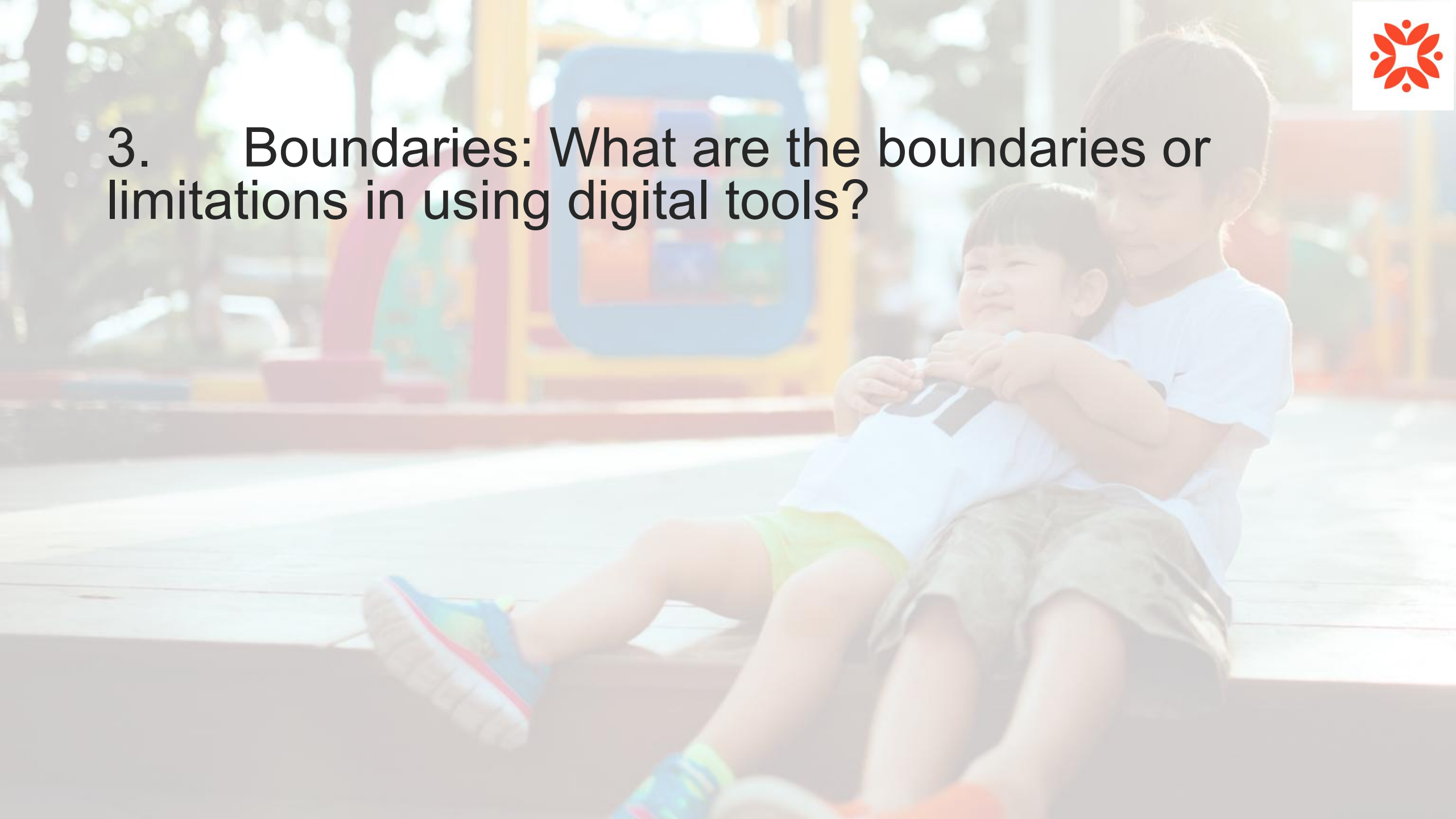


Children's stress and how to





3. Boundaries: What are the boundaries or limitations in using digital tools?





3. Boundaries: What are the boundaries or limitations in using digital tools?

1. Mis-information in digital channels
2. May require local adaptation (beyond translation)
3. Don't replace relational support (AI?)



A new era of parenting education.

1. Algorithms deciding what gets seen, how content travels is just as important as what it says.
2. A distribution-first approach.

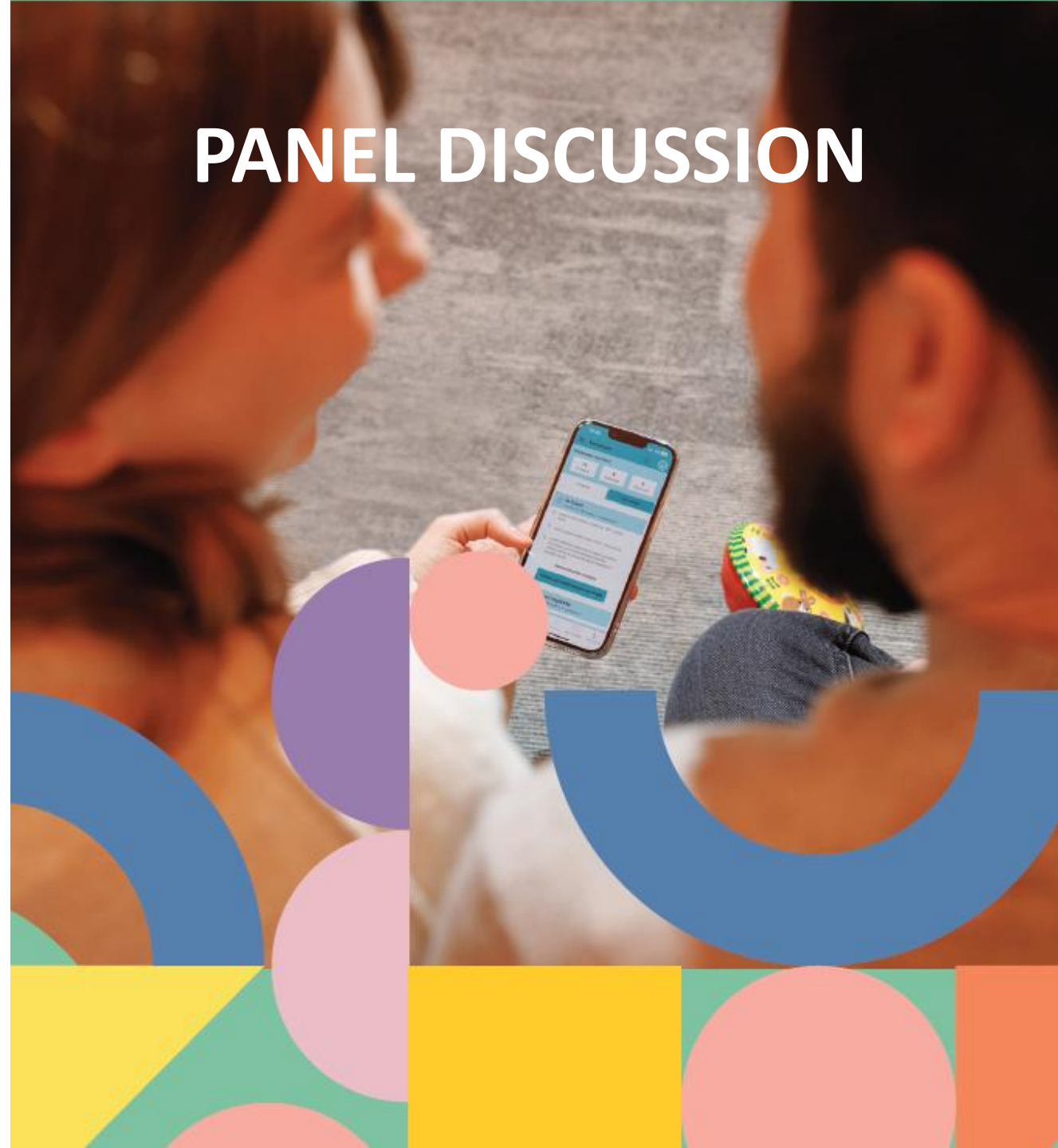


2. Empowerment and Skill Building

Sanja Budisavljevic, UNICEF

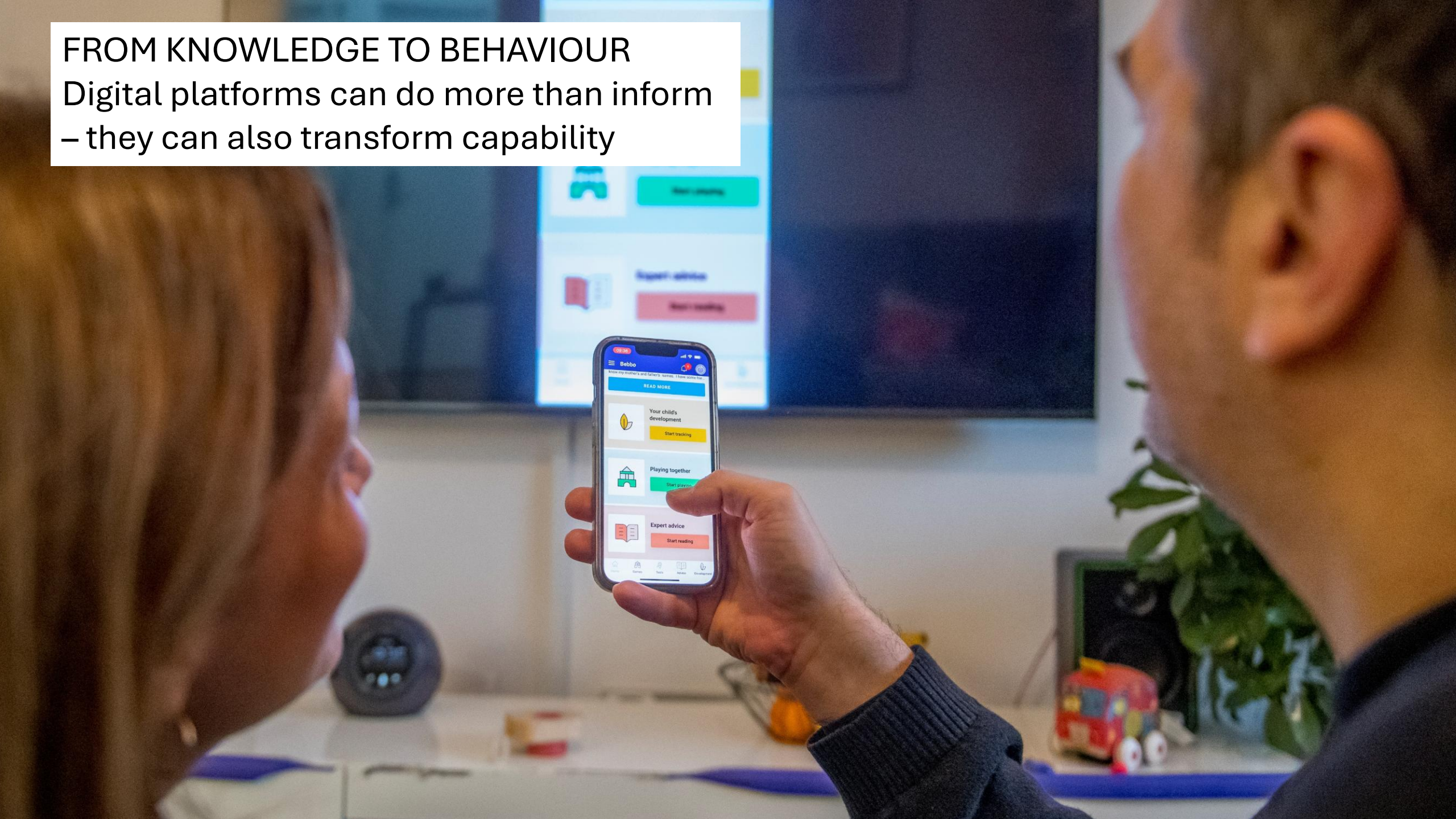
How can digital tools strengthen capabilities and self-efficacy?

PANEL DISCUSSION



FROM KNOWLEDGE TO BEHAVIOUR

Digital platforms can do more than inform
– they can also transform capability



HOW?

- Practice and interaction
- Focus on self-efficacy (confidence) and not just skills
- Just-in-time support
- Leverage social norms and peer influence





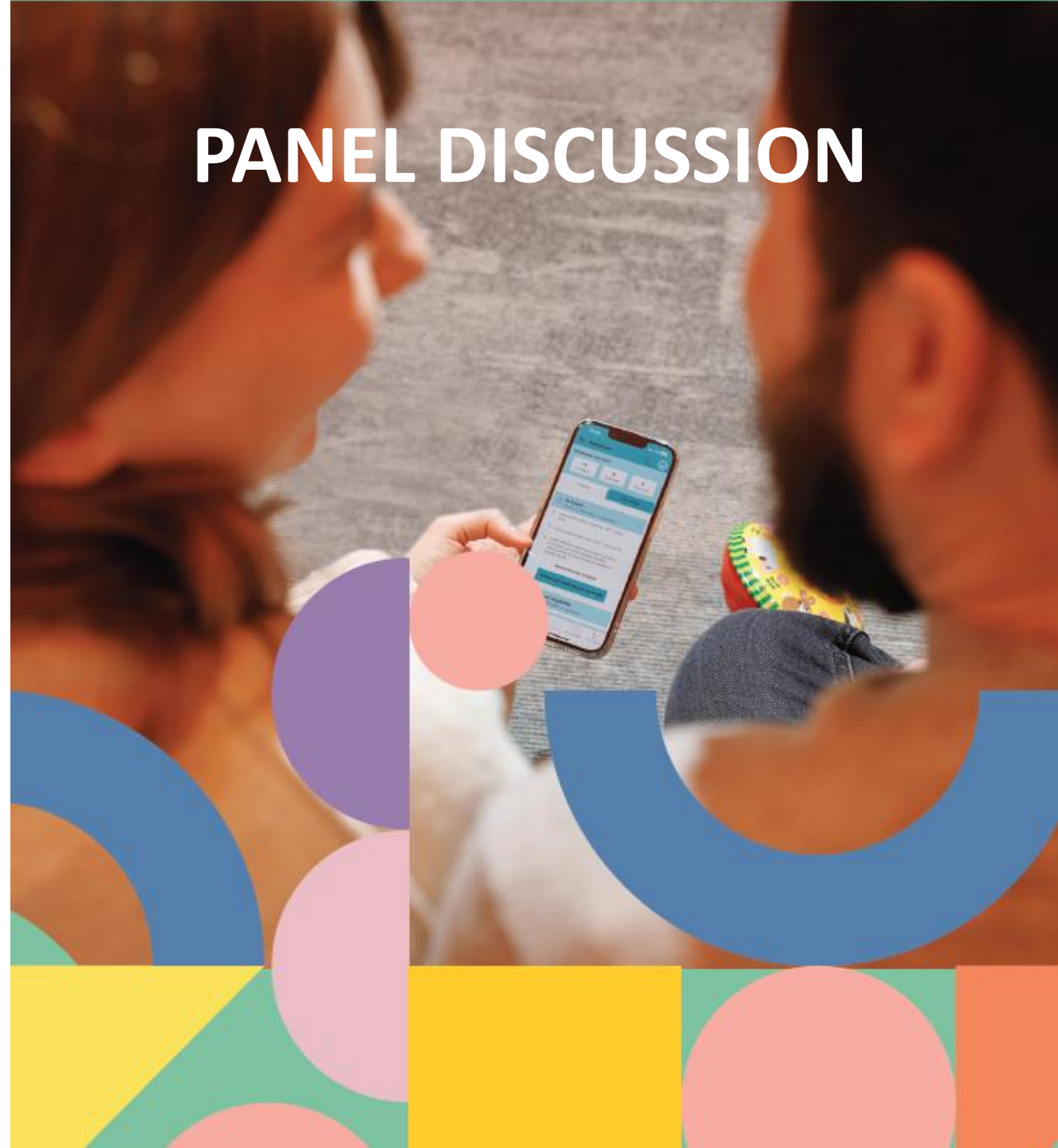
It is not just parents - it is the system around them ...

3. Connection and Community

Jo Aggarwal, WYSA

How do we reduce isolation and create meaningful peer support?

PANEL DISCUSSION

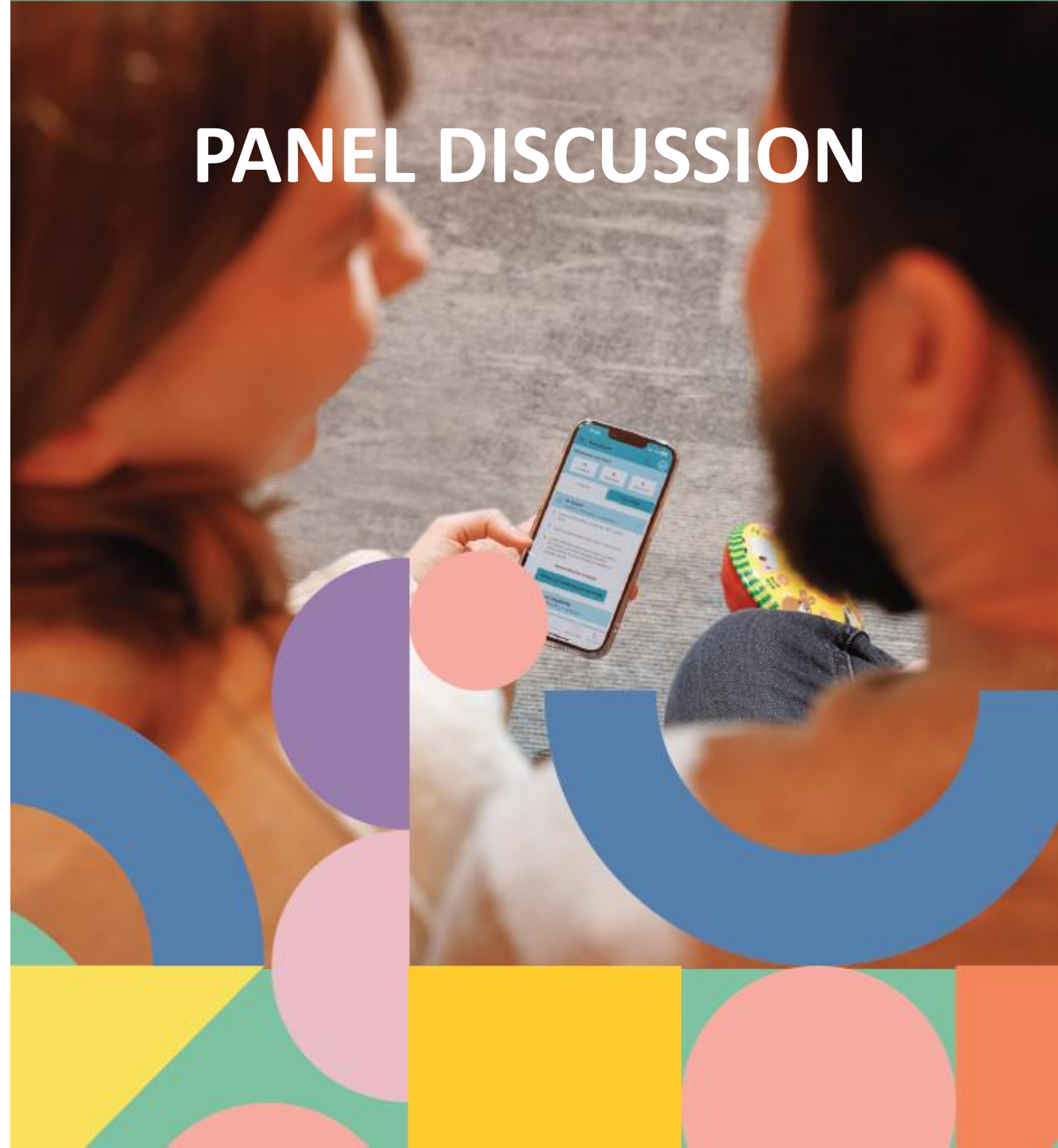


4. Quality Services

Charlotte Michailidis, Parenthood Ventures

How can digital innovation improve access to and referral to services?

PANEL DISCUSSION



Services Context



Innovation
landscape

Coral  Care

doco
kids

imagine
pediatrics™ 

SimpliFed

wysa

Bebbbo 

Parents as participants

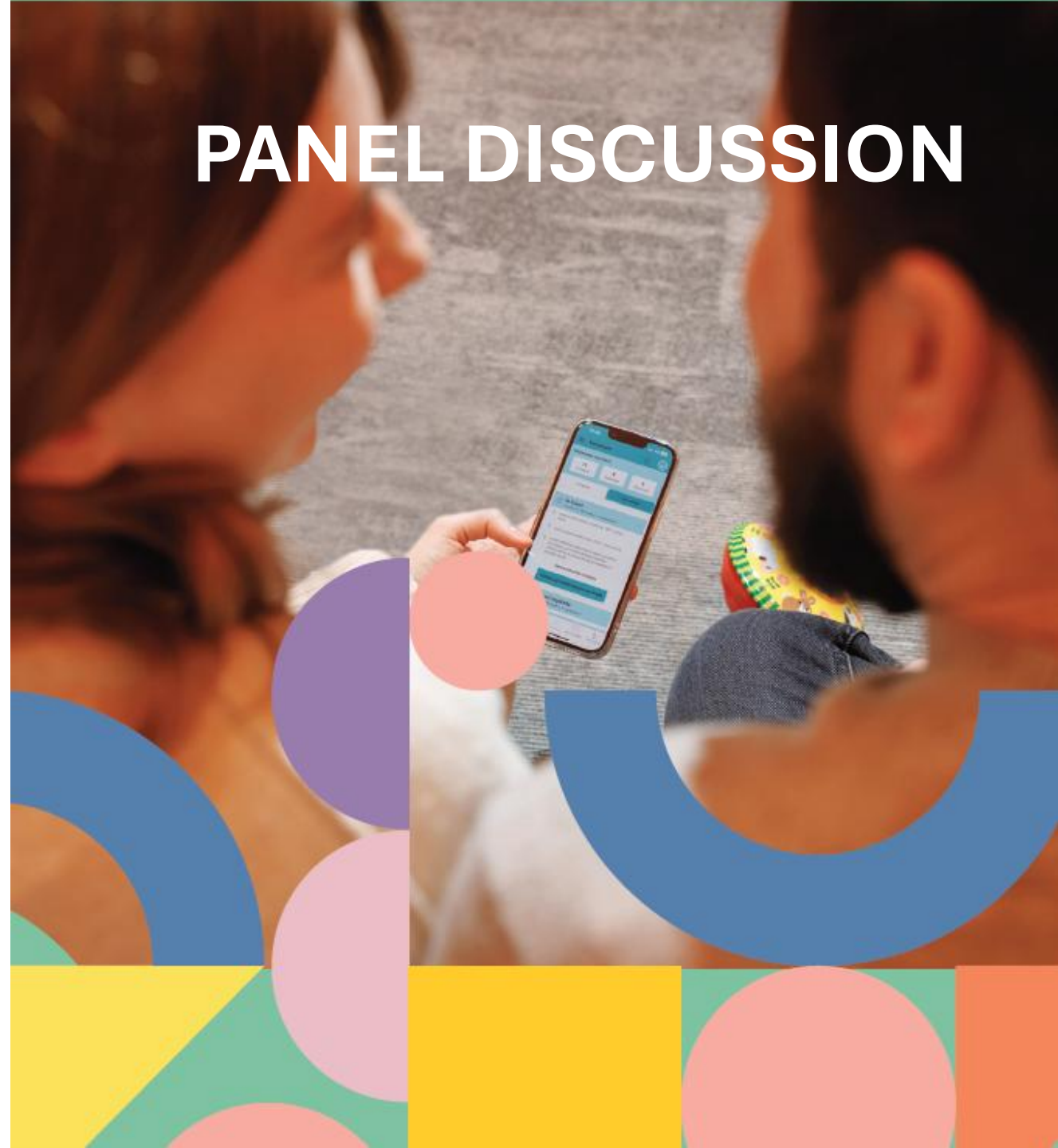


5. Responsible Artificial Intelligence

Saurabh Agarwal, UNICEF

AI as the New Village Assistant

PANEL DISCUSSION



The 2 AM moment

When the clinic is closed, the questions are still open.

“My baby has been crying for forty minutes. Is this normal? What should I do?”

Somewhere in the world, thousands of parents are asking similar questions everyday.



Parents do not need more noise

More information is not the same as more support.

Reassurance

Is this normal?

Clarity

What matters now?

Next step

What can I do today?

Connection

When do I need a person?

AI adds value only if it reduces confusion and gives parents usable support.

The worries with AI

These are not fears to dismiss.
They are design requirements.



**Will it tell me
something wrong?**



**Will it replace
the people I trust?**



**Will it make me
more dependent?**

Responsible AI starts by taking these
questions seriously.

Responsible AI knows when not to answer



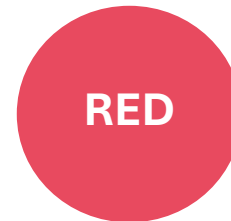
AI can answer

General parenting tips, play ideas,
routines, early learning activities.



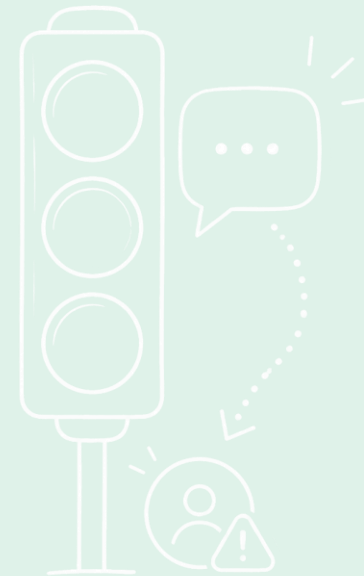
AI can guide carefully

Feeding concerns, development
questions, caregiver stress or behaviour
challenges, with clear boundaries and
referral prompts.



AI must escalate

Medical emergencies, violence,
abuse, self harm or severe distress.



The non-negotiables

Guardrails are the trust infrastructure.

01 — Evidence grounded

AI answers from trusted content, not random internet material.

02 — Privacy preserving

Collect the least data needed. Protect family and child information.

03 — Human supervised

Support parents and workers. Do not replace professional judgment.

04 — Equity focused

Design for language, literacy, disability, connectivity and low-tech realities.

05 — Escalation ready

High-risk moments need real service pathways, not polite reassurance.

Responsible AI: Right support. Right moment. Right safeguards.



PLAYBOOK ON DIGITAL INNOVATION FOR SUPPORTING FAMILIES



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A framework for transformative digital
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