

1 THE VALUE OF INNOVATION IN CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

INNOVATION INSIGHTS FROM CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE

Learning from the Children's Social Care Innovation Programme



What do we mean by innovation?

Innovation describes a new practice, model or service that transforms mainstream ways of doing things. While improvement focuses on achieving better outcomes through more efficient use of the same resources, innovation looks to achieve better, *different* outcomes using new resources (or using existing resources in new ways).

The choice in children's social care is not one of improvement or innovation: both are essential. Achieving the scale of transformation needed to give all children the life chances they deserve cannot be achieved through steady improvement or step-change innovation alone. This is often called a 'split screen' approach: striking a balance between improving services for young people in the system now and enabling the radical shifts that will achieve dramatically different, better outcomes in the future. New approaches need to be tried at every level, in big and small ways: **practice innovation** that rethinks what happens at the interface between practitioners and families; **service innovation** that rethinks provision and pathways; and **system innovation** that rethinks how organisations in a system operate as a whole.

The most powerful innovations in the programme are rooted in a clear vision and principles that set a shared purpose for the work. These include **high aspirations for every child** that are long-term and set ambition as high as possible; **putting people and relationships first**, ahead of structures, systems or processes; and **working and learning together** in open and honest ways.

Insights from the sector

Practice Innovation

DOING WHAT COUNTS AND MEASURING WHAT MATTERS

Islington Council is transforming its social work practice to make it more skilled, purposeful and collaborative. Two strands of work are key to this vision: 'Doing What Counts' by embedding Motivational Social Work (MSW) to ensure social workers are focused on supporting change; and using values-based tools to make sure practitioners and heads of service are 'Measuring What Matters' to children and families. Growing this work has meant embedding MSW principles in everything from working with families to supervision and meetings, supported by monitoring and evaluation frameworks that include families themselves in the assessment of practice.

Read more in the project storyboard springconsortium.com/isling/story/ and Programme Directory springconsortium.com/isling/dir/

PROJECT CREWE: a 'pod' support model for children in need

Catch22 and Cheshire East have piloted a 'pod' model of support for families in Crewe. Led by a social work consultant who holds statutory responsibilities, differently qualified family practitioners provide day-to-day support alongside peer mentors and volunteers. All staff are trained in solution-focused, strengths-based interventions to provide flexible, personalised support, with the family's own approach to addressing risks and needs at the centre of each support plan.

Read more about Project Crewe in the Programme Directory springconsortium.com/crewe/dir/

Service Innovation

NO WRONG DOOR: flexible residential support for complex adolescents

North Yorkshire's No Wrong Door model aims for permanence in a family setting for all adolescents. It creates bespoke placements to support stability at home or in foster care under the principle of 'no move until it's the right move'. Two hubs bring together a variety of accommodation options, a range of services, specialist practitioners and outreach support under one management umbrella. A single team of multi-agency specialists and a committed residential team work together with a shared practice based on Signs of Safety. The team wraps around young people and stays with them throughout their journey, providing essential consistency and building trusting relationships.

Read more about No Wrong Door in the project storyboard springconsortium.com/nwd/story/ and Programme Directory springconsortium.com/nwd/dir/

RIGHT HOME: supporting young people at risk of homelessness

Calderdale's Right Home provides a tiered range of accommodation combining a short stay service (Sleep On It) for young people on the edge of care with supported housing options. All services are accessed through their 'one stop shop', the Vulnerable Young People's Panel, which develops and manages packages of support and creates alternative interventions.

Read more about Right Home at calderdale.gov.uk/socialcare/family/children-incare/right-home.html, in the Programme Directory springconsortium.com/cald/dir/ and evaluation summary springconsortium.com/cald/eval/

System Innovation

FAMILY VALUED: creating a restorative system

Leeds' Family Valued programme is embedding restorative practice as the ethos of children's services, while developing Family Group Conferencing as a core offer to families in circumstances including domestic violence. All families who are subject to an Initial Child Protection Conference are offered a Family Group Conference, with 660 conferences held in 2016. Leeds' restorative practice team has delivered training to over 5,000 practitioners across the children's workforce and beyond, including the NHS, police, schools, youth offending teams, housing, social work and in voluntary and community organisations. Weekly data on progress is displayed visibly across the council to inspire and motivate staff.

Read more about Family Valued in the project storyboard springconsortium.com/leeds/story/ and Programme Directory springconsortium.com/leeds/dir/

ACTIVE AGENTS FOR CHANGE: rethinking the system response

Hampshire and the Isle of Wight are developing a suite of approaches to early intervention, looked-after children and child protection, including multi-practitioner Family Intervention teams; developing 220 family support volunteers; specialist responses for missing young people; children's services surgeries to offer advice to agency partners; and developing a fast-track route to social work with the University of Winchester.

Read more about Active Agents for Change in the Programme Directory springconsortium.com/hamp/dir/ and evaluation summary springconsortium.com/hamp/eval/



High aspirations for every child

Services, practices and systems that are focused on long-term aspirations for children.

Service outcomes that balance attention to immediate risks and short-term needs with a holistic view of a child's assets, long-term wellbeing and future ambitions.

Asset-based and child-centred approaches to care planning, safeguarding and assessment.



People and relationships first

Innovations that recognise, enhance and strengthen the children's relationships.

Services and systems that enable professionals and service users to learn, relate and thrive.

Systemic approaches that reduce the complexity and multiplicity of relationships in children's lives.



Working and learning together

Approaches that bring professionals and families together using common practice and common language.

Collaboration across agencies, sectors, services and teams.

Co-designing services and co-producing outcomes with young people and families.

CORE PRINCIPLES OF INNOVATION IN CHILDREN'S SOCIAL CARE