

**CORAM  
INNOVATION  
INCUBATOR  
PROJECTS**

**PREVENTATIVE  
APPROACHES**

**SYSTEM  
CHANGE**

**PRACTICE  
DEVELOPMENT**

**THERAPEUTIC  
SUPPORT**

**A CALL FOR  
CONTRIBUTIONS**

**CII INNOVATION  
COLLECTIVE**

## Preface

Across the sector, over the past few years, many services have been trialling new ways to meet the needs of those they support and keep pace with evolving risks and threats to young people's safety and security. This has led to the emergence of new approaches, products, services and system changes, many of which capitalise on the possibilities afforded by new technology, some of which were necessarily adopted when Covid-19 forced us to rethink practice to maintain services.

In this complex climate, innovation in children's social care is more important than ever before. It is a prerequisite to equipping ourselves to facilitate better outcomes for children, young people and families. Yet, until this point, there has been no immediate source of information and links to bring together the disparate initiatives and insights across the sector.

The **Coram Innovation Incubator's (CII) Innovation Collective** is a repository which aims to collate various projects and approaches that have been developed across the sector in a bid to tackle key challenges faced by children's services. In addition to sharing information about the projects emerging from the Coram Innovation Incubator, the categories straddle key priorities as identified by the annual CII survey including placement stability and sufficiency, child and adolescent mental health, adolescent and contextual safeguarding, child protection and the therapeutic offer for vulnerable children and young people.

The CII's research has especially highlighted the many innovative approaches which have emerged over recent years to offer more targeted therapeutic support. This possibly reflects the increasing complexity of cases presenting to services. Furthermore, there has been a clear incentive to improve social care systems, exploiting the new potential of technology, with a number of examples in this arena. There is also an increasingly evident recognition that collaboration beyond the border of the local authority and with the third sector provides the breadth of insight, capacity and resource which is fundamental to successful innovation.

This list of innovations outlined here is certainly not exhaustive. **The CII Innovation Collective** indeed intends to act as a fluid document which can gather, explore and report interesting approaches that Coram and partners have seen under a number of categories:

- Preventive approaches
- System change
- Practice development
- Therapeutic support

Whilst the CII Innovation Collective will reflect any existing evaluations, appraisals and evidence that exist we expect that, by definition, many new approaches will not yet have reported definitive evidence or proof of concept data and this will clearly not preclude them featuring. Where available, links to the innovations have also been provided.

Seeking to remain at the vanguard of innovation in the sector, a key mission of the CII is to highlight and disseminate good practice and promising examples of sectoral innovation. We also want to identify promising projects that ultimately may not have worked in quite the way anticipated so that we may take the learning from experience as well as successes.

The CII Innovation Collective assembles new, different and promising innovations, all of which we can learn from as we seek to improve practice going forward. The CII hopes this unique repository will inspire our partners and catalyse a desire to explore how we can do things differently and innovate in order to best serve children, young people, families and communities.

**We would welcome you to get in touch with us at [innovation@coram.org.uk](mailto:innovation@coram.org.uk) to tell us about promising innovations you have seen in the sector and add to our Innovation Collective.**

For more information about the Coram Innovation Incubator, see [coram-i.org.uk/coram-innovation-incubator](https://coram-i.org.uk/coram-innovation-incubator)

## Coram Innovation Incubator Projects

### Digital Outreach Tool

The Coram Innovation Incubator is pioneering a new approach to tackling youth crime and promoting safeguarding of young people through development of a new **Digital Outreach Tool**. Accessible as a mobile phone app and co-developed with young people, this will aim to cater to young people aged between 10-19 who have been identified through local authority networks as being in an at risk group.

The app will work by encouraging young people to engage with services by answering a series of questions about their current state and raising any concerns they may have about their safety. It will direct young people to resources and services that can offer them support and where necessary, escalate cases to local authority services for intervention. In return for engaging with the tool, young people can access a range of incentives, including vouchers and benefits from their favourite companies.

The app has the backing of the Prime Minister's Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparity, who promoted Coram's solution as a way to initiate a national digital strategy to identify and provide support to young people at risk of criminalisation in a way which accorded with contemporary patterns of youth behaviour. The global innovation and transformation consultancy, PA Consulting, is providing the technological infrastructure to create the product, and Hertfordshire County Council, the London Borough of Newham and Southend-on-Sea Borough Council are piloting local authorities for this project.

The development is in an early phase of workshop sessions with young people to ensure that the tool resonates with their priorities and appeals to them from both an aesthetic and practical point of view.

### Automated Relationship Mapping (for creating genograms, ecomaps and contextual safeguarding)

Social workers, technologically-savvy or otherwise, spend a fair amount of time trying to create relationship maps for the children they work with. These can be genograms that present information about the child's family; ecomaps to show the people and services involved in the child's life; or contextual safeguarding maps to help assess the level of risk of a child being exploited or harmed. These maps can take a lot of effort to put together, in both gathering and making sense of the information that underpins them; and in using software to draw them so that they are clear and accurate.

Coram is exploring with Microsoft how we could use knowledge mining technology, which can turn unstructured data into structured knowledge, presenting it as a web tool showing the relationships between the individual elements. This means that we could, for example, use the technology to scan a child's records and identify who their relatives are and then automatically build a genogram with this information. The genogram would be updated by the software as new information is captured. For ecomaps this could also mean that we can view how the child's relationship map changes over time, which could help with understanding how their interactions with different services evolved.

The idea for this came from work done to make sense of over 34,000 files released in 2017 relating to the JFK assassination. Microsoft used their technology to build a tool that mapped all of this information. The result can be seen at <https://jfk-demo.azurewebsites.net/#/> – when you search for a particular word there is the option to view the search results as a relationship map (press the button in the top right corner of the results page).

If you would like any more information about either of these projects or you would like to contribute to their development, please contact [innovation@coram.org.uk](mailto:innovation@coram.org.uk)

The CII is looking to initiate further innovation projects, which will be developed in collaboration with partners and service providers. So far, Innovation Lab sessions have been held on the topics of placement sufficiency and adolescent safeguarding and possible project areas are being explored.



# Preventative Approaches

## Creating Opportunities Forum

With a focus on skills and employment, the **Creating Opportunities Forum** is currently being developed by the Home Office. It aims to support young people at risk of serious violence through accessing employment support and opportunities to broaden their skills. The project will run in 12 areas across the UK, and is due to run until March 2023. The project is currently going through Home Office tendering processes.

[ersa.org.uk/media/news/pin-creating-opportunities-forum-programme](https://www.ersa.org.uk/media/news/pin-creating-opportunities-forum-programme)

## Disrupting Exploitation

The **Disrupting Exploitation** project was developed by the Children's Society to try and prevent young people from becoming victims of criminal exploitation. The programme works with young people in London, Birmingham and Manchester over six weeks and covers learning about exploitation, healthy relationships, building confidence, safety and gender. The work also includes advocacy, to ensure that professionals are able to see the vulnerability of these young people. There is a therapeutic element to the work, which draws from a trauma-informed approach, and the duration of the sessions can vary so that young people can access short or long-term support.

More than 350 young people have been referred to the project so far, and 45 received targeted group work in the first year. This is part of a broader project run by the Children's Society – which also includes components focusing on better training for professionals, engaging young people in positive activities and helping parents to support their children to avoid exploitation. A 2019 report found that 75% of young people claimed they felt safer as a result of the project. There is a short video explaining the project. The Children's Society has also developed proposals for legislative change.

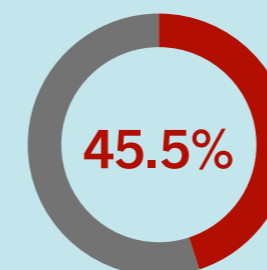
Disrupting Exploitation Annual Report | The Children's Society ([childrenssociety.org.uk](https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk))

# MORE THAN 350 YOUNG PEOPLE

have been part of the project to far

## Neglect Strategy – Hertfordshire County Council and the NSPCC

As part of an effort to eliminate child neglect, the NSPCC and Hertfordshire County Council are collaborating on a community-wide **Neglect Strategy** which was launched in February 2021. The project is responding to an increasingly pertinent issue: in Hertfordshire, 44.5% of the children and young people who were under child protection plans were on these on the grounds of neglect as of December 2020 and the NSPCC reported a lockdown induced spike in reports of neglect to its helpline. The project involves the development of a 'Neglect Matters' awareness campaign which will be carried out across community settings and over popular social media platforms. It will highlight the signs of neglect and equip the public with the knowledge to act upon them to protect children and young people. Seeking to build awareness that children from all kinds of backgrounds and social classes can experience neglect, the campaign will look to facilitate early intervention by making the neglect strategy an integral part of the work of Early Years and Early Help teams. It will also underline how older children can fall victim to neglect, and how this can impact on life chances, the transition to adulthood and relate to exploitation. As part of the project, the team have already surveyed local parents and carers in a bid to hone the strategy and have been running neglect awareness sessions for practitioners. The second project phase will specifically target parents and the wider community, and will also involve co-development sessions with young people to improve strategy. During the third phase, the campaign will work with children and young people to build awareness through sessions in schools, booklets and a social media campaign.



of Hertfordshire children and young people with child protection plans were under these plans on the grounds of neglect

## Prevent-Protect-Repair – London Borough of Lewisham

**Prevent-Protect-Repair** is a project looking at how to enhance staff capacity and ability to support families impacted by domestic abuse who are on child protection plans. There are four strands to the project – training for practitioners, a multi-disciplinary advice hub, new specialist roles within CSC, and access to external specialists. What Works for Children's Social Care (WWCSC) will be evaluating this project.

[www.lewishamcfc.org.uk/prof-page](https://www.lewishamcfc.org.uk/prof-page)



## See the Signs – Southend

The widely commended **See the Signs** campaign began in 2018 to help a range of stakeholders spot the indicators that children might be involved in county lines or suffering criminal exploitation. This initiative to promote child safeguarding involved a collaborative effort between Southend-on-Sea Borough Council and Essex Police. The campaign was comprehensive, from using social media to sharing posters across the community: in cinemas, bus stops, hospitals and tower blocks. It aimed to reach a variety of stakeholders, from parents to teachers to friends, taxi drivers and hotel staff.

There were a number of strands to the campaign. One element targeted secondary-aged children with a ‘Who’s controlling your friends?’ campaign to help young people to support friends they feel may be at risk. The team created video content illustrating the tactics gangs might deploy to recruit young people and directed stakeholders to anonymously report any concerns via the See the Signs website. The digital messages for this campaign have been viewed more than 1.6m times. Another element was a ‘Who’s controlling your child?’ campaign directed at parents; 75% of parents surveyed recalled seeing this and claimed to now know the signs of grooming and exploitation. The campaign morphed into a broader initiative, offering training and educational school workshops to embed a deeper understanding among professionals, parents, children and citizens more broadly about how criminal gangs operate and how young victims can be supported. Furthermore, Southend has launched a Merry Muletide Christmas campaign which intends to build awareness about the risks of recreational drug taking.

The campaign has been nominated for multiple awards including in categories at the 2020 MJ Awards and the National Children and Young People Awards. It was also the Campaign Award Winner 2020 at the National Working Group Unsung Hero Awards. It has had a broad reach; for example now in order to obtain a license, it is now a requirement for taxi drivers in Southend to take part in this training. Over 80% of local schools have also hosted **See the Signs** workshops. Overall, the digital campaign has had 2.5 million impressions, with 9,000 local people taking part in training and awareness workshops. The website platform has led to over 150 pieces of intelligence being uncovered and sent through to the local authority and police. Southend is now focusing a new ‘Who’s controlling your child’ campaign at a cohort they deem the ‘new vulnerables’, defined as younger adolescents transitioning to secondary school, as well as launching another campaign in collaboration with young people who were previously involved in gangs and county lines but have been able to move away from it.

[www.seethesigns.org.uk](http://www.seethesigns.org.uk)

## Talk to Me – NSPCC and Attensi

With the help of an Innovate UK funding pot assigned to the pandemic response, the NSPCC and gamified simulation specialists Attensi have teamed up to create **Talk to Me**, a 3D interactive learning tool which looks to support practitioners to recognise and respond to signs of abuse in children and enhance their safeguarding skills. It comes on the back of research conducted by the NSPCC in 2019, which found that children and young people were keen to know that adults were listening and taking them seriously when they disclosed sensitive information.

Transporting users to a simulated school setting where they are positioned as the teacher, the tool uses fictional characters and scenarios to provide direction and guidance to practitioners on appropriate responses to children who may be suffering domestic and sexual abuse. It seeks to help them to build trust with young people and become more attuned to their needs.

An evaluation of the pilot of this tool showed promising results: 95% of respondents either ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ that this training had boosted their confidence in discussing abuse with children. Respondents acknowledged the potential for the tool to support practice among a broad range of professionals, especially those working in education, noting the added opportunity to adapt the content to advise practitioners on how to engage with children with disabilities or those affected by mental health issues or online bullying, for example. Encouragingly, 98% of respondents also suggested that they would recommend the tool. A novel addition to the safeguarding toolkit of practitioners, **Talk to Me** is freely accessible until December 2021.

[attensi.com/talk-to-me](http://attensi.com/talk-to-me)

## YourPolice.UK – National Police Chiefs’ Council (NPCC)

Engaging with young people can be challenging for professionals, particularly when working with a ‘digital native’ generation. The NPCC’s Children and Young Persons Policy Portfolio has started **YourPolice.uk**, which uses Instagram as a platform to engage with young people around crime, the law and safety. It can be used to promote national police campaigns, improve knowledge and awareness, and offers an accessible way for young people to report crime. The Instagram page has 7,000 followers, and has had 227,000 video views. The project has also led to more than 500 crime reports, with the national youth engagement team hoping to broaden this digital strategy.

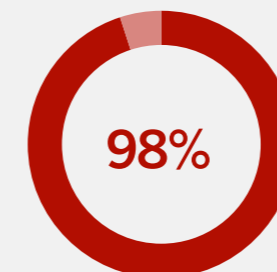
[www.safe4me.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/YourPolice\\_UK\\_Infographic\\_June2020.pdf](http://www.safe4me.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/YourPolice_UK_Infographic_June2020.pdf)

# 1.6m

The digital messages for this campaign have been viewed more than 1.6m times

# 9,000

local people took part in See the Signs training and awareness workshops



of respondents also suggested that they would recommend the Talk to Me 3D interactive tool



The YourPolice.uk Instagram page has 7,000 followers, and has had 227,000 video views

## System Change

### Assure App – Salford City Council

Salford City Council is utilising **Assure**, a web-based dynamic tool, to facilitate multi-lateral inter-agency information sharing in order to optimise identification of and support to vulnerable children, young people and families. Operating across education, early years, social care, early help, health, Connexions, shielding and young carers systems, the tool targets children who do not qualify as a safeguarding concern, but who have been deemed a 'cause for concern'. A platform enabling agencies to reflect evolving levels of need and risk, Assure also provides individual agencies with an overview of other professionals and agencies involved with the child, and allows them to, where necessary, call for families to be 'triangulated' for multi-agency support discussions. At Locality Triangulation Meetings, multi-disciplinary teams are able to then consider cases and decide on a plan of action.



### CHARMS Fostering Portal – Social Care Network

The Social Care Network oversees **CHARMS**, a secure cloud based case management system which has been increasingly utilised across social care. The **CHARMS Fostering Portal** is now employed by more than 250 independent fostering providers and local authority fostering services. It is an effective and easy way to organise relevant information in one place for stakeholders who need it, from social workers to foster carers to panel members and assessors. Through this system, foster carer recruitment, training, assessment and approval can be administered. Foster carers also able to use the system to collate daily logs and to contact link workers, with social workers using the platform to document supervisions. Furthermore, CHARMS Live Search offers a mechanism for authorities to freely search for live vacancies and provides the information and links relevant for a match to be explored. When a child is placed in independent provision, commissioners can use the platform to review cases. The tool has not been formally evaluated.

[socialcarenetwork.com](http://socialcarenetwork.com)

**250**

The Charms Fostering Portal is now employed by more than 250 independent fostering providers and local authority fostering services

### The Darlington Academy and Shadow Academy – Darlington Council

Darlington Council has adapted the local authority academy model to establish a model which supports both staff development across social care services and local people. Darlington staff are enrolled in the **Darlington Academy**, and given opportunities to enhance their training and work on their professional development across their career. The approach is individualised with the pace dictated by the needs of the staff member and the authority. The Academy has five tiers, and each tier covers each level of the service hierarchy. The academy also connects with emerging service innovation projects. The Darlington Academy is supplemented by the **Shadow Academy**, through which local children, young people, adults and families can also undertake training and development programmes.



**5**

The Darlington Academy has five tiers, and each tier covers each level of the service hierarchy

### Demand Modelling for Children's Social Care

As the pandemic took hold, a central **Demand Modelling Tool for Children's Social Care** was developed as part of a project spearheaded by East Sussex County Council to monitor the impact of Covid and lockdowns on child protection and looked after children.

Assisted by analysts at Social Finance and Data to Insight, the tool looked to gauge the impact of lockdown on the children's social care system, and look ahead to predict future demands on children's services and ascertain the nature and timing of increased pressures. For example, bearing in mind a temporary drop in referrals during lockdown and a sense of growing case complexity, predictions could be made about the repercussions of the re-opening of schools on the number of child protection plans and looked after children.

The model grew from initially considering school referrals to encompassing all social care referrals, modelling expected increase in demand to inform the timing and extent of the uplift required to meet the demand. The process was designed to feed into resourcing and planning considerations and create the capacity for when the influx of referrals began; for example it had a bearing on things like staff annual leave. It assisted with risk management processes and imperatives to maintain stability and sustainability of service provision. The intention was for this model to be easily adopted and assimilated across local authorities, facilitated by the alignment with standard Annex A datasets which are created by all local authorities in anticipation of Ofsted inspections. The process thus also had the added benefit of embedding inter-authority collaboration.

Partly due to innovative financial coordination with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the strength of coordination between partners, the tool was created in two months, trialled by two local authorities, who were 'regular testers', with 10 further authorities contributing additional feedback. The tool was then instituted in 151 local authorities within the Data to Insight network. Now the core model has been created by a central analyst team, it can be adjusted by individual local authority teams to account for the local context. It is hoped that this tool will be able to contribute to ongoing demand predictions, drawing upon previous data. The process was instructive on the value of coming together on a project beyond the boundaries of the individual local authority and approaching service improvement in an expansive way.

[i-network.org.uk/collaborative-demand-modelling-for-childrens-social-care](http://i-network.org.uk/collaborative-demand-modelling-for-childrens-social-care)

## Education Protocol – Hampshire and Isle of Wight Councils

The councils were keen to put in place a system to enable the monitoring of vulnerable children who were not attending school and pinpoint the reasons for their absence. In addition to schools communicating the attendance data to the Department for Education (DfE) and the local education service, social care teams carried out non-school attendance risk assessments to garner from the 500 schools across the regions the risks resulting from absences for individual children. Moreover, schools were directed to try and encourage children to come into school and coordinate with the social care team. Initially, only 10% of vulnerable children attended school and by the end of lockdown, this had increased to 50-60%. Schools, social workers and the council education team were able to work collaboratively to find solutions to issues raised, coordinated by a designated council point of contact.

## Impact Assessment Framework – Salford City Council

In the wake of the pandemic, Salford City Council created a robust mechanism, the **Impact Assessment Framework**, to closely monitor, measure and understand key Covid-related data, outcomes and potential impacts relating to children. The system is adapted from a model originally developed in Wales to gauge the impact of pandemic control measures and the stay at home mandate.

This dynamic document considers three key measures: likelihood of impact, intensity or severity of impact and duration of impact. For each identified area, the positive and/or negative impacts are designated in these terms, shaping subsequent strategy. In Salford, the data is categorised as 'Health', which includes measures of activity in CAMHS and adult mental health services, emergency department presentations, delayed operations, speech, language and communication needs; 'Social care', covering numbers and types of referrals, domestic abuse activity and youth justice referrals; 'Education', pertaining to the number of children with an Education Health and Care Plan, those eligible for free school meals, those categorised as not in education, employment or training; and 'Early help measures' related to level of development, school readiness and speech and language. During bi-weekly multi-agency meetings, the data is surveyed, with the framework allowing them to pinpoint specific 'pressure points' and devise solutions and interventions to overcome them. It has enabled them to swiftly determine problem areas, which have included non-accidental injuries in babies under one, domestic abuse, mental health in children and adults, the specific needs of children with SEND and rising poverty.

## Link Coordinator Team – Portsmouth City Council

In the absence of formal in-person schooling for all children during lockdown, Portsmouth City Council were keen to ensure they had the infrastructure to be able to continue to support vulnerable children, and monitor any emerging Covid-specific problems. Thus they established a **Link Coordinator Team** to assist schools to continue safeguarding children during the pandemic. Through this initiative, a weekly information sharing process was enshrined to support those children known to social care and early help, and a team was deployed to work with schools and provide guidance on how best to support children and families locally.

Now funded through the Troubled Families programme, three workers are now full-time Link Coordinators. A key success of the project has been the development of a protocol to extract data from social care and from schools in order to develop a coherent and unified view of the children of concern. The provision of **Link Coordinators** in Portsmouth has likely helped to stem a rising number of safeguarding referrals in the area, through facilitating regular dialogue and coordination between schools and social care services, enhancing multi-agency working and improving the service provided to families. The council now has ambitions to further strengthen data use across key metrics, and work with schools to improve early help assessments.

## LinkMaker

Recommended in the 2016 Narey Report on Residential Care, **LinkMaker** is a social enterprise which developed a virtual platform to synthesise and compile placement vacancy information across social care. It enables services and commissioners to obtain updated information on vacancies across adoption, fostering and residential care which in turn informs placement decisions, matching and family finding. It aims to make the placement process more efficient and effective and obtain appropriate matches for children and young people. The platform is free to placement providers with authorities required to pay a fee to access the full offer. At the time of writing, according to the **LinkMaker** website, 67 children had been matched with 47 new families in the previous 30 days using the platform.

The software clearly has benefits, with local authorities easily able to sign up and paying a low licensing fee. It also provided the chance to standardise processes across authorities, outline important strategic information, and supported data sharing. However, the platform has not been consistently successfully embedded in services according to a DfE evaluation report published in July 2020, with a pilot in Croydon and Southwark identifying problems with the software. Questions were raised about the suitability of the platform for the pace needed for commissioning residential and foster placements. It was also critiqued for requiring additional steps to make placements and there was a lack of information on the system about the reasons for rejecting referrals. The fact that the coordination took place via this system was said to stall the development of relationships between providers and boroughs. There was also a sense that it would not be fruitful unless it was used by all providers, commissioners and placement teams.

[www.linkmaker.co.uk](http://www.linkmaker.co.uk)



50-60%

of vulnerable children attended school thanks to Hampshire and Isle of Wight Councils' education protocol, compared to 10% previously

## TO ASSIST SCHOOLS

Portsmouth City Council established a Link Coordinator Team to assist schools to continue safeguarding children during the pandemic

67

At the time of writing, 67 children had been matched with 47 new families in the previous 30 days using LinkMaker

## Local Education System – West Berkshire

The West Berkshire Education Service developed a new way to ensure effective and consistent communication with headteachers and schools during the pandemic through creating a **Local Education System**. There was a desire to support the wellbeing of teaching staff and to start a network of inter-school mutual support that encompassed all types of schools. Creating a platform to share ideas and support was central to this novel vision, bringing together schools who had not worked with each other previously. For example, an independent school established online learning during the summer for disadvantaged children which was accessible to all schools across the region. The council education team also focused on how they were engaging with schools, instituting weekly catch-up calls with all schools and producing regular briefing documents covering evolving government guidelines. They could also assist schools in their dealings with parents, with imperatives to ensure schools received swift responses when they contacted the education team for assistance. There is a sense that maintaining these strong lines of communication between schools and the education team should be a key concern going forward.

## THE PAN-LONDON PLACEMENTS COMMISSIONING PROGRAMME

aims to improve placement sufficiency across London

## Pan-London Placements Commissioning Programme

Assembled by the London Innovation and Improvement Alliance (LIIA), the **Pan-London Placements Commissioning Programme** was initiated early on in the pandemic with the aim to improve placement sufficiency across London. The key focus was on tackling issues around high cost, low incidence placements and the challenges of placing those with complex needs. The new approach emerged in the context of a report by the Rees Centre at Oxford University, which elaborated upon the worth of cohesive planning and strengthening the pan-London approach to the market. The programme involves a number of projects, coordinated by a panel chaired by Barnet's Director of Children's Services and including sub-regional lead commissioners and other senior local authority commissioners.

Project strands include a London Accommodation Pathfinder, a Ministry of Justice/Youth Justice Board pathfinder project facilitated by the LIIA and operating via Camden council. This project seeks to tackle the high custodial youth population in London and lower repeat offending through the creation of new provision in London where psychological and trauma informed approaches are central. The first centre is based in Barnet. In the context of a deficit of 500 places for adolescents with complex needs in London and the hindrance of inter-authority competition on the ability to shape the market, there is a drive to enhance the quality, sufficiency and value for money of provision for this cohort. This will involve a more collaborative and integrated approach. There is also a call for a new approach to parenting assessments to lower the cost and enhance their quality, with a drive to explore creating community-based provision across the sub-region, with multi-authority block contracts possibly helping to increase efficiency. The group has also convened partners and commissioners in workshops considering ways to improve outcomes and secure better provision for those with autism and social, emotional and mental health needs. Creating welfare secure provision in London is also within the remit of this programme, supported by DfE funding. A Pan-London Vehicle will work on pan-London mechanisms to bolster sufficiency and exert more control over the market.

[liia.london/liia-programme/finance](http://liia.london/liia-programme/finance)

## Private Rental Scheme – Social and Sustainable Capital

Social investment fund Social and Sustainable Capital (SASC) has designed, in collaboration with the social enterprise Tide, a novel **private rental scheme** for foster carers in an attempt to address the ubiquitous shortfall in in-house foster carer provision felt across local authorities. The scheme has heeded the evidence that physical space and the high cost of housing act as fundamental and often prohibitive barriers to fostering. In addition, around 25-30% of the population live in privately rented properties with the accompanying uncertainty of short leases and periodic rent increases, meaning this market often precludes the stability needed to foster.

Taking into account the great demand on social housing and targeting a group for whom buying a property would be challenging, this SASC scheme presents a uniquely attractive offer to would-be foster carers and the local authority by creating a pool of large family homes to be expressly earmarked for foster carers within participating local authorities. In order to purchase these properties, councils have the option to either draw upon their own capital or utilise external capital provision. With no requirement to pay costs upfront or carry out property management, the sole responsibilities of local authorities are to make sure properties are let and assist the landlord in their dealings with carers, for example helping with rent recuperation. Moreover, it is expected that participating authorities will audit their foster carer population and identify carers who could take on additional children with financial or housing support. This bespoke property-based scheme has the added benefit of providing a compelling incentive to use in foster carer recruitment campaigns. It also offers the council a way to realise cost savings: creating just five properties might open up seven additional placements, saving the council approximately £150k annually. Should councils use their own capital, they may see a financial return of between 2% and 6%. SASC has assigned £3m to a pilot scheme and is calling for local authorities to partake in the trial to further refine and develop the offer. For more information, please contact

[ben@socialandsustainable.com](mailto:ben@socialandsustainable.com)

£3m

£3m has been assigned by SASC to pilot a private rental scheme for foster carers

## Rapid Response Working Groups – West Sussex Council

Highlighting a need to tightly coordinate and expedite responses when issues and risks pertaining to young people arose during the pandemic, West Sussex Council introduced **Rapid Response Working Groups**. These groups were made up of a range of experts from across the council and other agencies, and were developed to focus on efficiently solving specific challenges both pre-emptively and as they emerged. For example, when an asylum seeking young person with Covid arrived, the unaccompanied asylum-seeking children rapid response working group was assembled to ensure the young person would be safely housed. Other groups covered issues such as complex SEND children and young people, placements, domestic abuse provision, court provision and PLO issues and responding to family emergencies. Central to these groups was the notion of senior management devolving some decision-making authority to staff to enable them to act rapidly and efficiently, reducing bureaucratic obstacles, whilst ensuring senior leadership received well-rounded briefings to inform distribution of financial resources.

## RAPID RESPONSE WORKING GROUPS

aimed to coordinate and expedite the response to key issues during the pandemic

## Residential Strategy – Hertfordshire County Council

In 2019 Hertfordshire County Council conceived a three-year **Residential Strategy** in an effort to increase local capacity and boost sufficiency. As demand for placements has rocketed in the county, the council has often had to revert to making placements out of the borough in independent homes or in unregistered provision, placing financial strain on the council and creating instability for young people. In the year ending March 2020, 349 out of the 951 looked-after children were placed out of area, with 40 in homes 100 miles or more away from home. As part of the solution, 10 new children’s homes - designed in collaboration with young people - are being created in Hertfordshire through repurposing existing council property, growing from the four previously in place. The goal is to generate an extra 31 beds across in-house and independent provision in Hertfordshire. So far, three homes have been opened, two of which are in-house and one which is administered by an independent provider. Hertfordshire is also investing in foster carer recruitment and support to carers, and an ‘adolescent response team’ whose remit is to prevent children from entering care. It will also look to improve the support offer to residential staff, with new professional development tools and moves to develop a provider forum to facilitate collaboration between in-house and independent providers. There is a recognised imperative to improve the quality of care provided too, with collaboration with health care professionals to ensure appropriate educational, therapeutic and mental health support to meet the needs of children. The programme is predicted to yield £3.6 million yearly in cost savings for the council by 2023/4, giving credence to the model of services making investments in local provision as a solution to placement sufficiency issues.

[childrensservicesnews.hertscc.gov.uk/october-2020/news-from-the-services/the-residential-strategy-creating-new-childrens-homes-in-hertfordshire/print](https://childrensservicesnews.hertscc.gov.uk/october-2020/news-from-the-services/the-residential-strategy-creating-new-childrens-homes-in-hertfordshire/print)

## Single View of Adolescent Risk – London Borough of Waltham Forest

Acknowledging the need to develop new safeguarding models which take a holistic approach to considering risk, the London Borough of Waltham Forest is adopting a **Single View of Adolescent Risk**. In this model, key data, which covers school attendance and exclusions to youth offending, is compiled on a live, interactive database in an attempt to create a more coherent picture of the young person and effectively analyse and manage the risks around them. Such data also provides an important insight into adolescent risk across cohorts, helping to dictate commissioning and interventions.

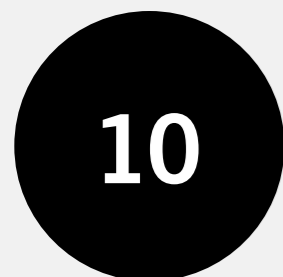


## South East Commissioning Group

This **South East Commissioning Group** was set up with funding from the South East Sector Led Improvement Programme and the support of two DfE grants intending to bolster efficiency and lower costs, especially for independent residential placements. The group looked to remedy a lack of knowledge about the regional use of homes, undertaking a broad strategic analysis across 18 months considering high cost placements across the authorities in the region. This involved an analysis of the needs, outcomes and costs of placements for 100 children and young people from each authority. With the analysis phase now completed and providing important intelligence, the group are working with four local authorities to create a new commissioning model. It is based on a desire to place children locally, reduce the use of unregistered care, develop a sufficiency model to galvanise the residential market and generate new placement options.

## Strategic Promoting Attendance Group – Surrey County Council

Initiated during lockdown, **Surrey’s Strategic Promoting Attendance Group** focused on implementing a mechanism to monitor and track those pupils who were eligible for in-person schooling but who may not be attending school. This necessitated an approach which took stock of what the data was suggesting, but also supported coordination with social care teams and the education service in order to institute plans to get children in school. In this vein, weekly group meetings were organised, involving social care senior managers, education and inclusion teams, voluntary sector and health representatives and headteachers and school staff. The group acted as a hub for strategic discussions, bolstering communication, accelerating the process of finding solutions to issues raised and enabling the team to keep track of the data to identify the areas of need requiring immediate action. Schools received advice on how to encourage attendance and also how to increase participation in learning for those students accessing school remotely. This strategy was supported by the creation of an online form to track pupil absences. When a child did not attend school, a rigorous feedback loop was put in place to notify the education team, the local authority, and social work team, who could then follow up with families on why children were not attending school. This information also fed into risk assessments for individual children. The process was productive in practice; during lockdown one, Surrey exceeded the national average for vulnerable children in school, with 32% attending against an average of 11%.



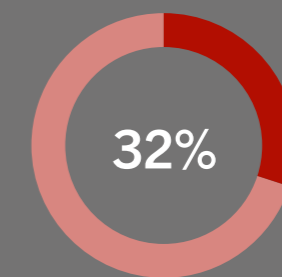
10 new children’s homes - designed in collaboration with young people - are being created in Hertfordshire

## KEY DATA

is compiled using the **Single View of Adolescent Risk** to create a coherent picture of the young person



The South East Commissioning Group analysed placement details of 100 children from each authority to inform their strategy



32% of Surrey children attended school during lockdown one against a national average of 11%



## West Midlands Commissioning Hub

The **West Midlands Commissioning Hub** was created in March 2020 to instil a joint approach to commissioning across 14 local authorities in the West Midlands in an attempt to improve efficiency and meet the needs of young people. The participating authorities are co-funding the initiative, with the help of start-up funding from LGA's efficiency programme and the Regional Innovation and Improvement Alliance. There are three staff members within the Hub who support commissioning, managing contracts and provider engagement, providing operational support and devising commissioning strategy. The Hub also considers strategic issues and processes to strengthen collaboration across the region and placement sufficiency. Systems are being created to enable regional data to be collected which will direct commissioning decision making. Recommissioned fostering and supported accommodation frameworks are also being developed. The advantage of this Hub approach is to facilitate knowledge sharing across the authorities and negate the issues of providers playing authorities off each other by creating a unitary regional voice. Birmingham Children's Trust also organises a regional Flexible Contract Arrangement to facilitate broader market access, which has supported a decline in spot purchasing of placements, helped to increase transparency in placement searches via a Placements Portal and boosted relationships. Models of 'soft block contracts' are also being considered to increase flexibility in block arrangements, where authorities would pay a small retainer fee in return for a designated number of beds from providers across different locations, paying the full fee post-placement.

# 14 LOCAL AUTHORITIES

are part of the West Midlands Commissioning Hub

## You've Got a Friend – Go To – Reading Brighter Futures for Children

Through the **You've Got a Friend – Go To** scheme, this Children's Services Trust intended to boost relationships with schools, school leaders and their multi-academy trust at the start of the pandemic by designating to each school a key contact to draw upon for advice, guidance, support and any staff wellbeing needs. There was also an incentive to enhance communication with schools, with weekly headteacher meetings and DfE guidance meetings, the facilitation of information and process sharing, and making available the Director of Education 7 days a week. This relationship helped Brighter Future for Children to target resources where schools saw a need and enabled heads to feel supported and confident in their own decision making to meet the best interests of their local communities. For example, prior to the national voucher scheme for school meals, one school was able to introduce its own scheme. There is now a clear intention to consider the lessons learned from Covid, as well as broader systemic changes.

## Practice Development

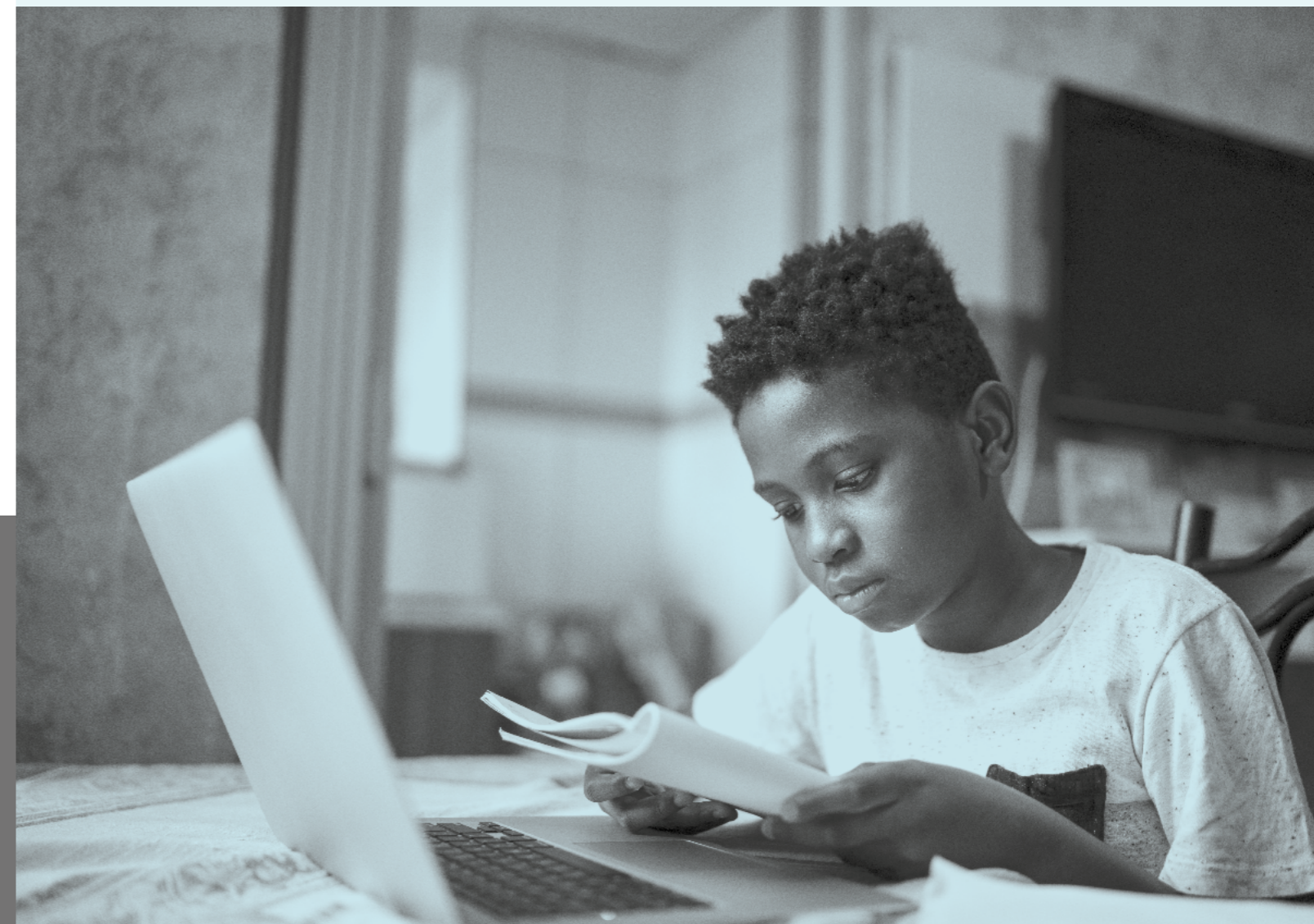
### Adopting Together Service – St David's Children Society, Wales

After identifying a specific need to secure more timely adoptive placements for children who are traditionally harder to place, St David's embarked on a Knowledge Transfer Partnership through innovation agency Innovate UK. Following the cultivation of a close and sustained collaborative relationship between voluntary and regional adoption agencies, supported by Cardiff University, the **Adopting Together Service** was developed. This service has a therapeutic placement strategy at its core, and intends to mitigate placement breakdown through early intervention and rigorous matching processes. Prior to matching and placement decisions, prospective adoptive parents are scrutinised by the team to ensure that they are best placed to support the specific needs of the child in question. Then, all relevant stakeholders convene for a 'team around the child' meeting, led by a clinical psychologist, to provide a holistic and comprehensive overview of the child. Foster carers are able to contribute to reflect their lived experience with the child, and the process ensures that parents are well versed in the specific needs of the child and how they can most beneficially parent them. A match can then be made. Thereafter, the child is

therapeutically transitioned from foster care to their adoptive family. Once placed, the clinical psychologist facilitates three consultation meetings in 12 months with the adopters to ensure the necessary support is in place.

The service has been deemed outstanding by Innovate UK, with 18 children successfully placed through the **Adopting Together Service** in the two years since its initiation. The feedback from those who have adopted through this service has been positive, with the transition process especially praised. The service has created stability and security for a larger cohort of children, but has also led to cost savings given the reduced dependency on fostering. The project has been successful in its own right, but it has also embedded and perpetuated collaboration between regions and between the voluntary and statutory sectors, setting a precedent for future joint- and child-centred-service development.

[www.adoptionwales.org/adoptingtogether/](http://www.adoptionwales.org/adoptingtogether/)



## Family Drug and Alcohol Courts – Tavistock and Portman NHS Foundation Trust

**Family Drug and Alcohol Courts (FDAC)** were first introduced in London in 2008 by the Tavistock in collaboration with Coram. Originally hosted on the Coram campus, FDAC aims to address issues around parental substance misuse, and provide an alternative process to try and work towards children and young people staying with their families, managing alternative arrangements fairly if this is not possible. **FDAC** uses a problem-solving approach, and seeks to instil a firm belief in parents of their capacity to change.

Parents on the **FDAC** programme benefit from seeing the same judge throughout proceedings, and are supported by a multi-disciplinary team- involving substance misuse specialists and social workers-, who can work to solve issues related to housing, finance or domestic violence. There is also a bi-weekly review hearing where progress is fed back to the **FDAC** judge, who can intervene in outstanding issues. **FDAC** now involves 35 local authorities, with 14 **FDAC** teams and 20 **FDAC** courts. The programme has supported 176 families in 10 local authorities between 2016 and 21.

An *evaluation* of the model in 2014 provided some indications of positive outcomes, with the programme helping to keep children with their parents. For more than half the families taking part in **FDAC**, there was less family disruption following reunification in the 3 years following proceedings. These findings were reinforced in a follow up *study* assessing families five years later. Another *evaluation* is being undertaken by NatCen, funded by WWCS. It will use a quasi-experimental design across 31 local authorities, to generate more evidence on the impact of the **FDAC** model. The primary outcome measure is family reunification, with additional secondary measures of impact on parents and their use of services. Final reporting is due in November 2022.

## Fostering Futures – Coram

Following the successful roll out focused on adoption, **Activity Days for Fostering** is a family finding service, enabling children and young people awaiting permanence to meet and interact with approved foster carers whilst enjoying a themed activity day. Convening professionals, families and children, this process helps families to get a more authentic sense of the child, their personality and needs and how they may fit in with family life, redressing some of the limits of traditional written profiles of children. It also gives children important agency and a degree of autonomy whilst finding a family. This is conducive to better matching and decreased likelihood of placement breakdown. With older children and those in residential care notoriously harder to place in family settings, this service tends to serve cohorts of 8-14 year olds and is open to those in residential care. Coram acts as the facilitator for the programme, working with one or more local authorities at a time. Local authorities are given discretion to dictate the involvement of IFA providers.

These days have been proven to support matching; over four events involving 44 children, 21 children were matched to carers. In the context of the increase in permanency plans through fostering, Coram is calling for further partners to co-develop an invest to save model through this programme. For more information, please contact

Sally.Beaumont@coram.org.uk  
www.coram.org.uk/activity-days

## Hybrid Provision – Hampshire and Isle of Wight Councils

Aided by previous preparation to develop and procure the technology needed to conduct services virtually and a strong safeguarding partnership, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Councils were equipped to swiftly adapt to the pandemic and continue to meet statutory requirements. **Hybrid Child Protection Conferences** were carried out, with an adaptive approach taken which embraced a mix of conferencing platforms, from Zoom to Teams to WhatsApp, to ensure all partners, including parents, could take part regardless of technological access. Good practice guides were developed to improve virtual service provision, with careful thought given to helping families to feel comfortable with the new set-up by, for example, entering the meetings before the other attendees. Online access in fact made it easier for some partners, including GPs, social workers and police to attend the meetings, and therefore an ongoing hybrid approach to child protection conferences, mixing in-person and virtual attendance, has been broached.

Furthermore, following initial risk assessments some children in the social care and early help systems could attend meetings through a range of video conferencing platforms. Many young people reflected on this change positively, feeling more adept at communicating with workers through their phones. Workers reported that young people were often more relaxed at home, enjoying the opportunities to show workers around their homes. Presentations by children in care at review meetings indicated that virtual meetings promoted a sense of agency among young people. This feedback has led to an acknowledgement that virtual meetings should be part of the ongoing offer to young people, where suitable.

The experience of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Councils has indicated the value of actively embracing the capabilities of technology; the teams were already well-prepared for the transition to virtual processes, with workers provided with laptops in 2017 to allow them to work on-the-go and increase the time spent with families. Thus when the pandemic hit, staff were able to offer a continuity of service to their communities.

## Innovate Project

In the safeguarding arena, the Economic and Social Research Council is committing £1.9 million in funding to the **Innovate Project**, which is considering how we can mitigate safeguarding risks to young people occurring outside of the home, including sexual and criminal exploitation and gang affiliation. The research project is spearheaded by researchers from the University of Sussex, with support from experts at the universities of Oxford and Bedfordshire, Research in Practice and Innovation Unit. Now, fieldwork is underway to analyse the impact of three different safeguarding frameworks - pertaining to contextual safeguarding, trauma-informed practice and transitional safeguarding - which are being applied at six case study sites across the country. The fieldwork process will take place from 2021/22, where researchers will examine meetings and practice, interview young people, parents and professionals and assess broader organisational processes.

Aside from gauging the impact of such models on service improvement, the **Innovate Project** intends to specifically consider the context needed to galvanise innovation in social care, supporting initiatives involving a broader Learning and Development Network domestically and internationally. In its final year in 2023, the project will work alongside key stakeholders to- on the basis of the study's findings- devise policy recommendations, practice guidance and resources on innovation practice and ways in which social care delivery can be bettered in order to realise positive outcomes for young people. The project demonstrates a clear acknowledgement that innovation and novel models are essential if we are to tackle the complex challenges impacting young people.

[theinnovateproject.co.uk/](http://theinnovateproject.co.uk/)

# 21 CHILDREN

were matched to carers over 4 Activity Days for Fostering events

# £1.9m

In the safeguarding arena, the Economic and Social Research Council is committing £1.9 million in funding to the Innovate Project

## Lighthouse Children's Home

Former teacher Emmanuel Akpan-Inwang is setting up the **Lighthouse Children's Home** in an attempt to reverse the trajectory of poor outcomes for children who have been in residential care in the UK. The model was moulded by research into international care systems, notably in Germany and Denmark, which were found to be more beneficial to children in the longer term.

It is founded around theories of people, place, purpose and pedagogy. The people aspect reflects the desire to ensure the staff feel well supported in their work, with the salary and professional development opportunities reflecting the importance of the support they provide to young people. In this vein, Lighthouse is looking to develop a bespoke degree-level training programme for their staff to undertake. In terms of place, the homes are intended to depart from an institutional feel. They are explicitly designed in the style of an authentic family home both aesthetically and in terms of location, culture and the relationships developed with staff, with the hope that this will galvanise recovery. Staff receive training in therapeutic practices so they can cater to the needs of the young people and there is a fundamental imperative to keep young people in high-quality mainstream schools. The final key theme is pedagogy, with social pedagogy principles governing practice across the homes.

The homes have been funded through collaboration with charitable trusts and foundations and the first home is located in South London, in response to the dearth of children's homes in London and the South East. It will house six young people aged between 12-18, retaining links to the local community and network. The Lighthouse ambition is to subsequently create local accommodation for care leavers so that they can maintain relationships with staff akin to traditional family set-ups as they embark upon their independent adult lives.

[lighthousechildrenshomes.org.uk](http://lighthousechildrenshomes.org.uk)

# LIGHTHOUSE CHILDREN'S HOMES

intend to reverse the trajectory of poor outcomes for children

## Listening Project – Innovation Unit

The impact of Covid on young people has been the focus of much work over the past 18 months, as services swiftly adapted to supporting young people and families during the pandemic. The Innovation Unit ran a **listening project** with young people aged between 16 and 21 in Lambeth in December 2020 to capture their experiences of the pandemic, the impact on their wellbeing, and what could be established to support them. As a result of this they developed five recommendations for local authorities including: safe spaces and groups; a networked peer offer; a networked mentoring offer; practical help with transitions; and the provision of digital and supporting resources for those who lack them. 'As a standalone piece of research, there has not been a comprehensive evaluation of the recommendations, but it provides an interesting overview of how to engage with young people, and try and authentically capture their experiences.

[www.innovationunit.org/thoughts/talking-to-young-people-in-lambeth](http://www.innovationunit.org/thoughts/talking-to-young-people-in-lambeth)

**16-21**

The Innovation Unit ran a listening project with Lambeth young people aged between 16 and 21 to capture their experiences of the pandemic

## No Recourse Early Action Model (NOREAM)

**NOREAM** is a project being trialled in Hackney, evaluated by the University of Wolverhampton, and funded by **WWCSC**. The model aims to intervene early to support young people and families with no recourse to public funds, who do not qualify for support through the existing system. The programme adopts a multi-agency approach, and is a response to the lack of statutory guidance around working with children and young people with no recourse to public funds. It involves a series of sessions working with families across 7 support domains: immigration status; health and wellbeing; housing; food security; income and employment; education, training and leisure; and support network. Looking to specifically assess the impact of the model on the number of families requiring section 17 support, the pilot will run for 12 months, having started in January 2021.

[www.noream.org](http://www.noream.org)

## Safe Steps – St Christopher's

Originally funded by the DfE Innovation Programme and seeking to meet the needs of a growing number of children at risk of sexual exploitation who were having to move to out of area placements or to secure children's home, **Safe Steps** is a model of placing girls aged between 12-17 who are at risk of child sexual exploitation in children's homes based in the local community. It is founded on social pedagogy principles, building trust with young people, forging positive and healthy relationships and enabling them to think through their past, as well as offering therapeutic support where necessary. Proximity to their local community also allows girls to also sustain existing relationships and minimise disruption to their education. The model was developed intending to maintain a balance between instituting intensive support and aligning to guidance on liberty in order to keep young women safe beyond a secure setting.

The home was praised in a DfE commissioned analysis of a pilot involving two children's homes for its focus on social pedagogy, success in embedding positive relationships and for leading to a reduction in incidents of harm. However, it was noted that due to the complexity of cases, 8 out of 12 young women who were living in the homes in 2016 had transferred to other placements. There was also dispute about the extent to which the intervention could adequately safeguard young women in the context of a need to preserve liberty, and the process of developing stakeholder confidence in managing risk was reported to be complicated. A later **Ofsted** report in 2019 on the Safe Steps home in West London hinted at positive progress, commending safeguarding arrangements and pointing out that despite the complexity of cases, there were no children missing from the home. It also noted that the young people in the home were well supported in their employment and educational ventures, 'thriving educationally, emotionally and socially'. The home was therefore rated outstanding. It was also identified as a good practice model in a report by the APPG for Runaway and Missing Children and Adults.

[www.stchris.org.uk/services/safe-steps-home-cse](http://www.stchris.org.uk/services/safe-steps-home-cse)



## Sleep, Diet, Exercise – City of London and Coram

Coram were commissioned by the City of London to develop a mental health intervention for unaccompanied asylum seeking young people. The aim of the intervention was to support young people to develop their understanding of the importance of sleep, diet and exercise for good mental health. Coram developed a four module online training programme for social workers, residential workers and others supporting young people. The training focused on the relationships between **sleep, diet, exercise**, and mental health. In particular there was a focus on the link between diet, gut health and mental health. The training introduced some of the research concerning the impacts of poor sleep and diet, and limited exercise on health and wellbeing, and showed how sleep, diet and exercise interact together. The training was delivered to two cohorts in the City, consisting of support workers, social workers, managers, and IROs. Coram also offered supervision and consultation to a team of residential staff caring for young people. In addition, the project team met with residential workers to discuss particular young people in their care, supporting the staff to assess young people's sleep, diet and exercise needs and to develop care plans with young people that focus on making positive changes.

The project was independently evaluated, with participants interviewed. The project is currently being further developed, working with foster carers, IROs, and looked after children's medical services. There are potentially wider implications for this work, beyond the relatively small group of asylum seeking young people in the care system. While these young people often have particular difficulties maintaining good sleep, diet and exercise - for reasons connected with their traumatic journeys from their place of birth to the UK - the mental health benefits of a focused intervention to support good sleep, diet and exercise, are likely to be an important contribution to the wellbeing of other groups of vulnerable children.

For more information, please contact  
richard.mckenny@coram.org.uk

## SLEEP, DIET, EXERCISE

is a new intervention looking to support unaccompanied asylum seeking young people

## We Can Talk About Domestic Abuse – Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council

The WWCSC are also evaluating a project which seeks to facilitate better social care experiences for parents and children who are impacted by domestic abuse, **We Can Talk About Domestic Abuse**. With the assistance of subject matter experts with lived experience of the issue, the imperative is to enhance understanding and communication between professionals and service users, whilst preserving adequate safeguarding protocols. The project was prompted by an acknowledgement that services in Wirral were not providing sufficient support to domestic abuse survivors, and that those children referred to social care due to domestic abuse had detrimental outcomes. Three key elements to the project are co-production and active participation of survivors and families, professional reflective practice and promoting broader system change. The pilot will aim to reach 216 families and the professionals working with them. The final evaluation report is due to be published in March 2022.

[whatworks-csc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Wirral\\_WCTADA\\_Manchester-Metropolitan-University\\_WWCSC-pilot-protocol.pdf](https://whatworks-csc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Wirral_WCTADA_Manchester-Metropolitan-University_WWCSC-pilot-protocol.pdf)

# 216

The We Can Talk About Domestic Abuse pilot will aim to reach 216 families and the professionals working with them

## Therapeutic Support

### Allichat

In Scotland, technology company Voxsio have collaborated with NHS Forth Valley, young people from Stirlingshire and the Scottish government to create **Allichat**, a chatbot driven by AI, which provides a safe, accessible platform for young people to air mental health concerns. The chatbot uses Natural Language Understanding and Machine Learning AI as a means to enable interactive conversations, with the application able to learn patterns from the data which enhances performance. From the comfort of their own devices, young people are able to receive personalised advice and support and take part in activities to support their mental health and resilience. In the context of ever-increasing CAMHS waiting lists, Allichat acts as a preliminary intervention tool prior to the young person accessing formal mental health support. The app is evolving to be relevant in the COVID era and the specific challenges that brings, and the conversational tone is being carefully curated in collaboration with a conversational designer in order to enhance its quality. Content is reviewed by

educational and clinical psychologists. Part of Nesta's AI for Good programme, **Allichat** is a promising example of harnessing the capabilities of technology to tackle broader societal issues and intervene in efforts to allay a rising epidemic of mental health issues, especially prevalent among young people. There is currently no evaluation data on this product.

[www.voxsio.com](http://www.voxsio.com)



## ARCBOX

Voluntary adoption agency ARC Adoption North East has developed a child-centred and therapeutic digital life story platform, **ARCBOX**. Aiming to create a 'living chronology', **ARCBOX** allows children to compile, maintain and access an ongoing and evolving life story record, differing from traditional finite life story tools. This tool enables children to record key life events themselves, as well as facilitating approved contributions from those involved in the child's life, from a birth family member to a social worker. **ARCBOX** also includes a diary, a space for children to document their feelings and key moments in their lives, the ability to generate a family tree, access to a photo gallery, as well as allowing them a release through a gaming feature.

The product has been widely commended, used with both those looked-after as well as those with an adoption plan. The tool is currently being employed by two local authorities specifically for life story work, 1:1 work around transitions, and to manage heightened anxiety in the context of Covid through a communication feature. There are also ongoing attempts to build upon the existing product by creating a two-way 'post-box communication system' to support authorities to facilitate contact with birth families. The team is developing a secure, flexible Digital Communications Management Application to be integrated into **ARCBOX**. It is hoped that this will boost the online safety of looked-after children and allow secure communication between children and those in their lives.

[www.arcadoptionne.org.uk/life-story](http://www.arcadoptionne.org.uk/life-story)

## AutonoMe

There are a number of projects which aim to harness new technology, and **AutonoMe** has been developed in collaboration with the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham to support young adults with learning disabilities. Through offering direct digital support to people to help them to develop independence, skills for the activities of daily living, and increase employability, it is hoped that better outcomes and improved confidence and independence will follow. The instructional content is accessible via an app and tailored to the needs of the individual. There appears to be limited evaluation of the app currently, but it is now being rolled out across seven local authorities, and has over 300 users. There are also a series of case study videos on their website which provide further insight into the app and how it works.

[www.autono.me.uk](http://www.autono.me.uk)



## Better Outcomes New Delivery – Salford City Council

Salford have established the **Better Outcomes New Delivery (BOND)** programme as a system-wide approach to offer support to families. There are a number of different strands to the project, and it has involved the creation of new teams, and the introduction of new models, the main strand of which is Route 29, based on the No Wrong Door model. Another strand is Transforming Care Salford, which provides specialist support to young people with autism or learning disabilities, to prevent entry to care or hospital. In addition, Salford have introduced the Achieving Change Together model, which uses a relationship-based model to prevent placement breakdown or entry into care, and is delivered by specialist workers who work with a young person for at least a year. Finally, Harbour is a trauma-informed service which supports children who have experienced domestic abuse, as well as running a perpetrator programme, and training for staff.

## Creative Life Story

Three local authorities in the North East have utilised WWCS funding to trial a new model for undertaking life story work with care-experienced children and young people aged between five and seventeen: the **Creative Life Story**. Looking to support 270 looked-after children and young people, the programme merges therapeutic life story work with creative activities devised and facilitated by professional artists. Its purpose is to allow children to better understand their life story, and stimulate conversations about their past and future with their care-giver. The six session programme, led by community interest company Blue Cabin and supported by Therapeutic Life Story International, sees children undertake fun activities with an associate artist, covering themes including family, friendship, future aspirations and past memories.

The programme was initially successfully developed in South Tyneside under the auspices of a DfE programme, and has also been taken up by Darlington Borough Council and Gateshead Council. This 2021 phase of the project is being evaluated by Coram and Ipsos MORI; a randomised controlled trial will assess the effect of the project on outcomes, seek to undertake a process evaluation looking at experiences of those involved, and conduct a cost analysis. The effect will be measured in terms of Endline Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire scores, assessed against a control group, and impact on placement and school stability. The full report will be published in June 2022.

[whatworks-csc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/CLSW-RCT-protocol-Coram-Ipsos-MORI\\_March-2021\\_Final.pdf](http://whatworks-csc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/CLSW-RCT-protocol-Coram-Ipsos-MORI_March-2021_Final.pdf)

## CHILD-CENTRED

ARCBOX is a child-centred, therapeutic digital life story platform

300

More than 300 vulnerable people are using AutonoMe

## THE BOND

programme is a system-wide approach to supporting families

6

Blue Cabin is offering a six session Creative Life Story programme across three local authorities

## Creative Mentoring Programme – The Mighty Creatives

There are a number of new projects which aim to use the principles of creative therapies to engage and support young people. **The Creative Mentoring Programme** has been established in Leicester by the Mighty Creatives. Offered to care experienced young people aged between 4 and 19 who are deemed at risk of detrimental educational outcomes, the programme provides one-to-one support during sessions focused on a range of creative activities. The programme tends to last between 3-9 months and aims to broaden skill-sets, stimulate personal development and greater confidence, and enhance communication and relationship skills. It is intended to create better educational prospects for those involved. The project is still quite new, with limited evaluation of outcomes available. There are a number of similar project, such as the Blue Cabin project in Darlington.

[themightycreatives.com](http://themightycreatives.com)

## Families Functional Therapy G-Service – London Borough of Redbridge

Sponsored via the Youth Endowment Fund, **Families Functional Therapy G-Service or Families Are Forever** is a pioneering project based on a US model offering bespoke family therapy to young people on the cusp of gang involvement. Partnering with Family Psychology Mutual, the team at Redbridge assigns a specialist clinical therapist to young people (aged between 10 and 14) and their families for a period of 3-5 months. The sessions follow 4 stages: engaging the family in the process; a 'motivation' stage to deepen understanding of the family's difficulties, communication and behaviour and create an optimism that this can change; the behaviour change phase involving tailored interventions to develop skills and family cohesion; and the generalisation phase which supports families to apply and sustain new skills and changes. Often targeting cases where family conflict has been reported, the overarching aim is to improve familial relationships and communication in order to halt problematic behaviour and criminal involvement, supporting contextual safeguarding initiatives.

The service has had 130 referrals; 18 families have so far completed the work, with a further five currently going through the process. Despite the challenges, young people have generally engaged well with the process. Redbridge is currently working on an official report of the impact, but suggest the therapy contributes to decreased number of Merlins and better educational engagement.

## Futures for Families project – Middlesbrough

The **Futures for Families** service in Middlesbrough aims to avoid family breakdown by working with young people and families deemed to be in crisis. The programme derives from the '**No Wrong Door**' model developed by North Yorkshire County Council. Young people are offered a support worker, and there is a focus on relationship-building, which attempts to improve family relationships, and prevent entry into care. The project is funded through the DfE. There appears to be limited evaluation of the approach so far, although the **No Wrong Door** model itself is more established.

[Futures for Families | Middlesbrough Council](#)



# THE FUTURES FOR FAMILIES PROJECT FOCUSES ON RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

## Halliwell's Restorative Parenting Recovery Programme

The **Halliwell Restorative Parenting Recovery Programme** is aimed at accelerating recovery in trauma-experienced children aged between 5 and 12. Founded on psychological and neurological theories around the impact of trauma, children's homes teams, registered schools, clinical and learning and development professionals all have a role to play. Lasting between 18-24 months, during this individually-tailored programme children receive key work support and therapy to help them to forge therapeutic and trusting relationships, improve their social skills, sustain healthy attachments and make positive lifestyle choices. This helps them to build a resilience which supports a transition to mainstream education and potential move to a stable fostering placement.

The team measures progress using the Restorative Parenting Recovery Index which is based on notions of self-care, forming relationships and attachments, self-perception, self-management and self-awareness and emotional competence. In 2020, on average, children completed the programme in 2 years and were able to transfer to mainstream education after 12 months, where attendance throughout the year was at 99% on average. Every child was able to successfully move to a fostering or kinship placement by the end of the programme. Another analysis of this method published in March 2021 found that it benefitted children in terms of relationships, self-perception and self-care, with more modest improvements in self-awareness and emotional competence.

[www.halliwellhomes.co.uk/our\\_practice\\_model.php](http://www.halliwellhomes.co.uk/our_practice_model.php)

# 10-14

10-14 year olds are supported by the Families Functional Therapy G-Service

# 130 REFERRALS

have been made to Redbridge's services and 18 families have so far completed the work

# 100%

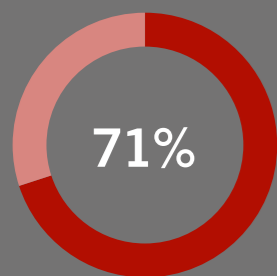
of children were able to successfully move to a fostering or kinship placement by the end of the Restorative Parenting Recovery Programme

## Harmony Groups – Coram

The needs of infants and their parents/carers can sometimes be overlooked. **Harmony Groups** have been pioneered to enable early signs of emergent needs and issues to be identified and addressed. A Comic Relief funded programme for those aged five and under who have been through care proceedings, the programme uses therapeutic group sessions to improve readiness for engagement with statutory education through facilitating activities and observations conducted by a music therapist and a IAPT trained infant health practitioner. The 30-minute sessions involve music, movement and sensory storytelling, helping children to build stronger relationships with their carers, express themselves and learn new skills that support their development. Any needs identified during these sessions can then be dealt with through individual sessions outside the group, with the programme also offering one-to-one sessions with parents.

For 71% of the children involved in the first phase of the project, which ended in February 2021, behaviour change was noted. This included improved confidence, focus and attention and better verbal communication skills. Taking part in the sessions also seemed to be conducive to improved social interactions. Feedback from parents was generally positive, and there were outward signs to practitioners that children derived enjoyment from the sessions. With the Covid context having proscribed many support groups for infants, **Harmony Groups** have crucially been able to operate online. Going forward, the team plans to use a blended approach, with a specific pilot focused on Special Guardianship Order (SGO) families in train.

For more information, please email [claire.everest@coram.org.uk](mailto:claire.everest@coram.org.uk)



For 71% of the children involved in the first phase of the Harmony Groups project, behaviour change was noted

## Redthread

Aiming to embed a more trauma-informed approach to engaging with young people within the health system, **Redthread** deploys youth workers to hospitals to support vulnerable young people in London, Birmingham and Nottingham. There are a few strands to the work – workers based in A&E working with young victims of violence as part of a Youth Violence Intervention Programme, the Well Centre for accessing health services, and a service at King's College Hospital working with adolescent inpatients.

Between January 2018 and December 2020, **Redthread** supported a total of 5,045 young people, and is now equipped to engage with young people presenting with issues related to mental health, domestic or sexual violence, exploitation or gang violence. A 2020 cost benefit analysis found that for every £1 spent on the Youth Violence Intervention Programme in emergency departments, £4.90 in cost savings accrue. According to this report from 2017, 74% of young people they worked with had seen a reduction in their total risk score, 15% had remained the same, and 11% had increased as a result of this innovative programme. Further evaluations are ongoing.

[www.redthread.org.uk](http://www.redthread.org.uk)

# 5,045 YOUNG PEOPLE

Redthread supported 5,045 young people between January 2018 and December 2020

## Innovate Therapeutic Care – Innovate Services

Innovate Services is delivering a solution to dependency on high-cost placements through a 16-week programme, **Innovate Therapeutic Care**. This service provides holistic, child-focused therapeutic care to young people to help them to transfer from high-cost residential care to foster care, supported living or back to their families. Deploying an experienced multi-disciplinary team involving therapists, educational psychologists, mental health and social care professionals, the programme involves therapeutic resilience-building interventions with young people, parents and carers. Comprehensive individual step-down plans help to support the young person and equip carers to meet the emotional, learning and mental health needs of the young person. The aim is to facilitate stable placements and negate future placement breakdown. The team will also work to achieve sustainable and suitable matching with foster carers, who are primed to offer sustained therapeutic support. Following matching, therapeutic work is conducted with the young person and foster carer, focusing on care needs, delivering specialist support and building an understanding of child's lived experiences. More broadly, the service can support authorities to broaden their pool of local foster carers, assisting with recruitment and assessment initiatives. In cases of planned family reunification, the service helps to build the resilience and capacity of parents to best support a seamless reunification. The team is also accessible to the child and their families/foster carers after they leave residential care, with regular outreach support sessions available.

[innovateservices.com/high-cost-placement](http://innovateservices.com/high-cost-placement)



The Inside Out project provides a coach to young people for 25 hours a week

## Inside Out Project

The Children's Society has been operating as a lead provider on a DfE-funded programme, **Inside Out**, to deliver intensive, targeted coaching support to young people (aged between 14 and 17) with a history of multiple placement moves and compromised placement stability across Essex, Hertfordshire and Norfolk. The intended aims of this project are to create a wrap-around support package to enable young people to step down to less intensive and costly care, attain placement stability and benefit from better wellbeing, relationships and security. Looking to foster resilience, each young person is designated a coach to work with for 25 hours a week (including at the weekend and in the evenings) over the course of 18 months. The fact that the worker is independent of the placement provider allows for a continuity of care regardless of the placement status. The support can be flexibly applied depending on the preference of the young person; in the community, at home or within the placement and through face to face contact or virtual means. It can involve one to one support, engagement with families/carers, group or individual activities.

The Tavistock report commissioned by the DfE and published in March 2020 suggested that the scheme had a positive impact on most young people who took part. Many experienced supportive relationships with their coaches, which helped to improve stability and contributed to a decrease in missing incidents. There was also a sense that taking part in this programme could support better wellbeing and a decline in risky behaviours, and help young people with their educational and employment ambitions, at least in the short-term. Owing to the case complexity, sustaining involvement in education and employment could still be difficult. Some young people reported improvements in relationships with families following the intervention. Fiscally, the programme was reported to generate £2.50 in benefit for the local authority or sector for every £1 put into the programme. In order to maximise benefit, the report reinforced a need to ensure recruitment of coaches with the right skills and the ability to offer a continuity of support, as well as securing buy in and support from other key services.

[www.childrensociety.org.uk/information/young-people/east/inside-out](http://www.childrensociety.org.uk/information/young-people/east/inside-out)

## Kitbags International Futures Forum'

**Kitbag** has been developed by the International Futures Forum, and is being evaluated by the University of Sussex, funded by WWCS. Social workers are given a 'kitbag' of resources for direct work with children and young people, including puppets and toys, as well as tools to support a calm and safe space for the child – with items such as a timer or 'calming oil'. The Kitbags have a number of aims – to make direct work more child-centred, and to focus on the voice of the child, to bring mindfulness into work with children, and to encourage social workers to think creatively about the work they do with children and young people.

The evaluation funding was granted in October 2020, and the project is currently being trialled across 4 local authorities. The estimated date of completion is July/August 2022.

Putting Kitbags to Work: a Randomised Controlled Trial - What Works for Children's Social Care (whatworks-csc.org.uk)

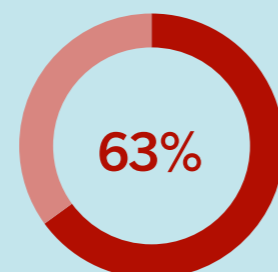


## Kooth App

Originally inaugurated in 2004, **Kooth** seeks to deliver personalised and anonymous mental health support online to children and young people through a mixture of direct and self-directed therapeutic support. During this NHS year, **Kooth** has submitted Mental Health Services Data Sets for 90 CCGs. Aligned to NICE guidelines and using rigorous risk profiling protocols, the platform can provide young people with advice, ongoing support via booked or drop in sessions with experienced practitioners or direct young people to immediate help should they require it. The young people are given the discretion to choose from a menu of options to access support, including magazines, forums, activity centres, messaging or live counselling. It is also a way to circumvent the challenges of waiting lists and referral requirements, enabling young people to access more timely support.

Having long operated a virtual system of practice, staff were well equipped to continue as normal when the pandemic struck. Other face to face services in fact referred to **Kooth** during the pandemic to ensure patients could continue to receive support. During 2020, over 170,000 children and young people used the service. The service measures progress in terms of goal based outcomes; so far in 2021, 63% of children and young people who set goals reached their goal based outcome. The platform has received positive feedback from users: 94% of children and young people questioned claimed that they would recommend it to a friend.

[www.kooth.com](http://www.kooth.com)



of children who set goals using Kooth achieved these goals

## Lighthouse Parenting Programme – Bath and North East Somerset Council and Oxford Health NHA Trust

With a focus on working with families with a child on a child protection plan, or those in pre-proceedings, Bath and North East Somerset Council and Oxford Health NHS Trust are piloting the **Lighthouse Parenting Programme**. The project is based on Mentalisation Based Treatment (MBT), which works with parents to try and improve their capacity to mentalise for their child, understanding their experiences and thoughts, and then improving their ability to effectively respond to their child's needs. The service can either be delivered through group or individual sessions. It is hoped that this will lead to improved parenting capacity, a decline in maltreatment and fewer families being kept on child protection plans or advancing to the pre-proceedings stage. The project is still relatively new, and WWCS are undertaking a randomised controlled trial across 5 local authorities. The evaluation should be completed by September 2022.

[lighthouseparenting.net](http://lighthouseparenting.net)

## THE LIGHTHOUSE PARENTING PROGRAMME

looks to help parents effectively respond to their child's needs

## LYFT Team – London Borough of Lewisham

Part of the Youth Offending Service, the **Lewisham Youth Offending Service Family Team (LYFT)** works with children with chronic emotional and behavioural problems and their families. Looking to mitigate harmful behaviours, the team conducts a Family Works therapeutic intervention programme, with weekly family sessions across a period of 5-8 months delivered to adolescents who are offending or at risk of offending. The approach seeks to improve familial relationships, and involves 4 phases. The first phase, 'Engage', considers specific worries and concerns in an attempt to understand the issues. The second phase, 'Motivate', encourages the family to commit to change and looks at familial strengths. During the third phase, 'Change and Practice', the family decides on SMART behaviour change goals and focuses on learning skills to achieve these goals, such as problem solving, positive communication and conflict resolution. The final phase, 'Sustain and Maintain', seeks to support the family to use these skills in a range of contexts.

The LYFT/ARTS therapeutic hub is also now providing a multi-agency perspective to work up the specific therapeutic, emotional and mental health intervention offered to young people in more complicated situations. Taking into account the needs of the individual in question, this process of 'case formulation' also encompasses the family to ensure there is consensus about the way forward and the specificities of the intervention. Evaluation data has not yet been published, but this serves as a promising example of a collaborative approach to adolescent safeguarding.



LYFT Team – The approach seeks to improve familial relationships, and involves 4 phases



## Managing My Child's Anxiety Programme- Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead

There has been an increasing focus on children and young peoples' mental health and wellbeing over the past few years, and the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead (RBWM) established the 'Managing My Child's Anxiety' programme a few years before the pandemic. The project aims to support parents to support their child, and is founded on a self-help guide based on CBT. Using the CBT model, it is recommended that parents access one of the videos each week: each video provides the introduction to a module, and worksheets and resources are available for parents to then use with their child between videos. The videos are available on the RBWM website, and provide an overview of the content of the programme. There appears to be limited evaluation of the programme currently.

[rbwm.afcinfo.org.uk/pages/community-information/information-and-advice/training-and-support/online-parent-course-2020](http://rbwm.afcinfo.org.uk/pages/community-information/information-and-advice/training-and-support/online-parent-course-2020)



# 119

carer resignations were mitigated through Mockingbird between May 2018 and March 2020

## The Mockingbird Programme – The Fostering Network

Founded on an extended family model established in the USA, the **Mockingbird Programme** aims to bolster placement stability through creating a fostering hub, where one set of experienced foster carers are able to provide short break care, training and support to a number of satellite fostering households. Sibling groups in separate fostering placements are also sometimes able to convene through **Mockingbird** for constellation events or sleepovers. The model looks to create a resilient community of fostering families, who are able to draw upon each other for support and resolve issues when they arise, reducing the likelihood of placement breakdown. The programme was part of the DfE's Innovation Programme and was broadened as part of a WWCS evaluation in 2019. In October 2020, 39 partners were taking part and providing support to more than 1,953 children and adults in 491 hub and satellite homes.

According to data from the Fostering Network, in the period between May 2018 and March 2020, participating services reported that 119 carer resignations had been mitigated and 216 children and young people were able to enhance their placement stability. Across the same period, there was an estimated cost avoidance of £3 million. In September 2020, the report on a DfE commissioned evaluation steered by the Rees Centre at the University of Oxford was published. It concerned 12 **Mockingbird** sites. The programme was seen to benefit children in care and foster families by building relationships and harbouring a sense of community, with children provided with an added opportunity to undertake novel activities. The data supported an improvement in foster carer retention. Qualitative evidence suggested that the programme positively impacted placement stability and wellbeing, with the possibility that **Mockingbird** might build carers' readiness to take on a broader range of placements. The report did recognise the time and thought required for effective implementation and the need to consider sustainability. With a sense that the model would allow services to break even, a more in depth analysis of value for money and impact across a greater time period and with bigger sample sizes was recommended. However, the findings are instructive on the benefits of affording foster carers and children supportive networks and peer support, and facilitating consistent sleepover and respite care.

[www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/policy-practice/projects-and-programmes/mockingbird-programme](http://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/policy-practice/projects-and-programmes/mockingbird-programme)

## More than Mentors

The **More Than Mentors** peer mentoring scheme, which was originally piloted in East London by charity Community Links and co-developed by University College London Partners, seeks to embed early intervention as a central tactic for stalling deteriorating mental health by acknowledging and tackling the early signs and bolstering emotional resilience. With a 'train the trainers' model, young mentors (aged between 11 and 21) are trained and supported across core competencies by specialists, with the opportunity to gain a Level 2 qualification in peer mentoring. Each mentor is assigned a young person aged between 8 to 17, with low level mental health issues, to whom they deliver up to ten mentoring sessions, supported by youth workers who have access to CAMHS professionals. The sessions may cover issues like school, home, confidence, behaviour and peers. Participants are often identified through schools either by self-referral or teacher recommendations. The matching process is done by the youth worker, school and clinical team. The impact appears promising: the Anna Freud Centre evaluation identified an improvement in the mental health and resilience of mentees. They also found that the programme helped mentors at home and in school. Migrating online during the pandemic, 1,294 mentors and mentees have been matched since 2016.

# 1,294

Around 1,294 mentors and mentees have been matched through the More than Mentors scheme since 2016

## No Wrong Door

Pioneered by North Yorkshire County Council as part of the DfE Innovation Programme, the **No Wrong Door** model uses a multi-disciplinary approach to support young people with complex needs who are either within the care system, are on the edge of care or have moved into supported or independent accommodation. **No Wrong Door** employs a hub model, where an integrated hub team of clinical psychologists, police, speech therapists and family circle workers and other professionals sit and utilise the Signs of Safety framework. It provides a platform for the young person to benefit from holistic support and set out a comprehensive plan of action with a key worker to advance their life chances. The model offers short-term placements or outreach support to young people. Continuity of support is a central tenet of this programme, avoiding young people having to contend with an ever-changing cohort of professionals. The aim of the model is to provide stability for the young person across their life, whilst reducing dependency on high cost placements.

The model has proved fruitful in contributing to better outcomes for vulnerable young people: a report conducted by Loughborough University suggested that the model helped young people to stay out of care and had contributed to a reduction in the number of placement moves and greater stability. Among the young people involved in the programme, there were also fewer missing incidents thanks to the multi-disciplinary support available through the **No Wrong Door** hubs, and overall improvements in SDQ scores and engagement in education, employment and training. Such has been the success of the model that it has been replicated across a number of councils and in other areas, such as leaving care and social, emotional and mental health services.

[www.northyorks.gov.uk/no-wrong-door](http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/no-wrong-door)

## Pause programme

Originally initiated by two colleagues in Hackney, **Pause** is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) which runs an 18-month programme looking to provide support to women with a history of or at risk of multiple removals of children from their care. Intending to break destructive cycles and stimulate positive change, the project was given funding by the DfE in the first round of the Innovation Programme and a second round, where the programme was broadened to 9 new areas with a pilot involving care-leavers, was started. Pause utilises a relationship and trauma based approach where specialist Pause Practitioners each support a small number of women to regain control over their lives and access necessary support from professional services. The programme also gives women the opportunity to revisit their childhood and past traumas, as well as facilitating and supporting contact sessions with their children who are in care. The intention is to provide a platform for women to work through their feelings, improve relationships with children and move towards recovery. Efforts are made to sustain positive progress, with a tailored Next Steps programme offered to women at the end of the core programme.

There are presently 30 Pause Practices, which work across 39 boroughs and run in partnership with the local authority or third sector organisations. The findings of a DfE-commissioned *evaluation* were published in November 2020. The **Pause Programme** was commended for improving women's lives by enhancing wellbeing and life satisfaction. It was said to help to facilitate housing and financial stability, engender better relationships with children, and contribute to a decrease in the number of infants coming into care by an average of 14.4 annually per local authority. It also promoted cost savings locally of £4.50 for every £1 spent on **Pause** over 4 years. The evaluation made recommendations that the programme should be offered to all women who have had a child removed. It demonstrates the value of pursuing a joined up approach across sectors, encompassing child and adult services.

[www.pause.org.uk](http://www.pause.org.uk)

14.4

fewer infants came into care annually on average per local authority utilising Pause

## Ripplez – Catch 22

With a specific focus on working with vulnerable young mothers and families, **Ripplez** is a project now run by charity **Catch 22**. This early intervention programme aims to support women with their health and social needs, increase wellbeing and self-efficacy, and help them back into work through training and volunteering opportunities. The original model of **Ripplez** included the Family First programme, offering a series of home visits to young new mothers to encourage good parenting and outcomes for mother and child. In addition, the Family Nurse Partnership, which focuses on supporting new mothers who are under 19, was part of the programme. As part of **Ripplez**, the Pause programme now operates in Derbyshire, Northamptonshire, and Worcestershire. Pause delivers holistic targeted support to mothers at risk of having children removed to help them to break negative cycles and work through their challenges.

**Ripplez** engaged with more than 500 families last year. By the time the programme finished for this cohort, all children of the participants had received their vaccinations and just over half of those women supported through Family Nurse Partnerships were able to access training, education or employment. This approach recognises the value in investing in early intervention through targeted parenting support as a way to facilitate better outcomes for children.

[www.catch-22.org.uk/services/ripplez](http://www.catch-22.org.uk/services/ripplez)

MORE THAN  
500 FAMILIES

engaged with Ripplez last year

## See, Hear, Respond Partnership

Launched in June 2020 as part of incentives to mitigate harm to young people during the pandemic, Barnardo's led the **See, Hear, Respond** Partnership, which sought to facilitate timely support to young people during the pandemic.

Backed by the DfE, Barnardo's coordinated 87 community-based voluntary and community sector organisations to provide targeted support to children, young people and families impacted by the pandemic. More than 100,000 children, young people and families were able to benefit from this initiative from its initiation until March 2021 when the project ended. Identifying wide-ranging pandemic impacts on children, the scheme's offer included therapeutic support, crisis work, group work, place-based work and back to school help. Funds in excess of £250,000 were also distributed to families in need so that they could access basic resources and amenities. Overall, more than 200,000 hours of support were delivered.

An *evaluation* of the project by Cordis Bright, published in March 2021, reported that the **See, Hear, Respond** exceeded its target for the number of support packages and children reached. The 3,000 families who submitted feedback to delivery partners indicated that support provided was of a high standard; 98% claimed that the support they received was helpful. For 84% of children, cases were closed because 'needs (were) met'. Feedback from children was also positive: 91% of children responding to an e-survey claimed the support they had been given was useful. Interventions had acted to reduce isolation and loneliness, with high numbers reporting feeling better about going to school as a result of the interventions.

In Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, the service is now being funded by the National Emergencies Trust. The service has a designated phone line, with children also able to make an online referral if they require support or advice on any given issue. Thereafter, virtual interventions like counselling can be delivered and the team are able to make recommendations to local agencies or services. Young people and families are also able to access free support materials and resources through an online hub, which houses blogs, articles, toolkits, podcasts and animations covering a range of topics; from emotional wellbeing to online life to the return to school and resources specific to young carers and those who SEND.

The programme is one that recognises the fact that the pandemic has only accelerated the need for collaboration across boundaries if we are to grant children, young people and families the help they need.

[www.barnardos.org.uk/see-hear-respond-impact](http://www.barnardos.org.uk/see-hear-respond-impact)

## SHiFT

A new not-for-profit organisation, **SHiFT** provides intensive and wide-reaching support to young people who are caught in a cycle of offending. Over the course of 18 months a **SHiFT** guide will work with the young person to bolster their confidence, build a positive identity and establish and work towards attaining key goals. **SHiFT**'s model follows the Breaking Cycles approach and takes some of the learning from the work of the charity Pause which has supported women at risk of having children removed. **SHiFT** guides are able to provide consistent support to the child, regardless of how their personal situation evolves, disregarding barriers like age limits, service thresholds and local authority borders. Guides work with a maximum of 5 young people each. To date, the project has launched two pilot sites in Kingston and Richmond and in Greenwich. The ambition for the rest of the year is to expand to a further 3 pilot sites.

Evaluation work is in its early stages, however over the first six months of the Kingston and Richmond project, there is a sense that the young people involved in the programme have made good progress. The working theory is that this is down to the strength and intensity of the relationship they are able to develop with the guide. The guides work across all areas of the child's life, helping them navigate familial relationships, friendships and relationships with statutory professionals, as well as their education and employment. The aim is also to change limiting perspectives on these young people and encourage the view that they can be productive members of society. **SHiFT**'s ambition is to change how services are provided and how these vulnerable young people are seen and supported across agencies, leading to broader cost savings across statutory services.

[www.shiftuk.org](http://www.shiftuk.org)

18

SHiFT guides work with young people over a period of 18 months

## Shout 85258

**Shout 85258** provides free mental health support via text message, and is available 24/7. First launching in 2019, the service has engaged in more than 750,000 conversations with those reporting anxiety, stress, depression suicidal thoughts or requiring immediate support. Their report published in early 2021 found many who used the service were getting support with their mental health for the first time; 38% had not yet sought help from anyone else. The report also looked at demographic data, and found that many young people utilised the service, with 65% of those texting in the under 25 age group and 7% aged 13 or under. 80% of texters identified as female, 7% as autistic, and 35% as LGBTQ+. The service became an especially crucial outlet during the pandemic as a substitute for in-person support accessible at all hours of the day. This supports the promotion of early intervention efforts in mental health.

[giveusashout.org](http://giveusashout.org)

## Social prescribers – Sheffield Futures

Another relatively recent addition to the landscape has been the deployment of **social prescribers** as an early-intervention mechanism. It involves the installing of 'link workers' in GPs and community settings to prescribe wellbeing support via a personalised plan to young people aged 13-25, aimed at boosting mood and reducing social isolation. It might cover a range of topics including financial or fitness advice or drug and alcohol support. The pilot in 2018 was funded by DfE and then Sheffield council, through the charity Sheffield futures. The team developed from one single link worker covering all of Sheffield to a team working across six PCNs, covering 29 GP surgeries in total. A total of 416 children and young people have been supported by the charity since 2018. An evaluation reported improvements on mental wellbeing scales. Further information is available in the Sheffield Futures annual report.

[www.sheffieldfutures.org.uk/projects/social-prescribing](http://www.sheffieldfutures.org.uk/projects/social-prescribing)

## Staying Close, Staying Connected – Break Charity

**Staying Close, Staying Connected** is a support service for care leavers – a collaboration between Break charity and a number of councils through DfE Innovation Fund, evaluated by the University of York. The offer included the provision of semi-independent houses shared with other young people involved in the initiative. Young people also had access to a support team as they navigated adulthood, consisting of a transition worker, housing worker, education, employment and training (EET) worker, emotional wellbeing support and participation workers. The evaluation reported that the project had enhanced wellbeing, life skills and contributed to a decline in risk behaviour. It was also said to potentially lead to cost savings. However, it also noted that there were some difficulties in implementing the project, particularly around matching young people to places, and the availability of rooms.

[www.break-charity.org/charity/our-work/staying-connected](http://www.break-charity.org/charity/our-work/staying-connected)

## Staying Together – London Borough of Bromley

The **Staying Together project** in Bromley was established to provide support to adolescents and prevent family breakdown, as well as working with homeless 16 and 17 year olds. The service is relationship-based, and support is usually offered by specialist practitioners for between 4 and 12 weeks. The model was developed through combining systemic and solution focused practice, and provides a structure for families to think through their issues, come up with goals and develop the skills to meet them.

Staying Together - support for young people at risk of entering care | Staying Together - support for young people at risk of entering care | London Borough of Bromley



**SOCIAL  
PRESCRIBERS  
WORK WITH  
YOUNG PEOPLE  
AGED 13-25**

**750k**

More than 750,000 people have had conversations about their mental health through Shout 85258

**STAYING CLOSE,  
STAYING  
CONNECTED**

is a support service for care leavers

**4-12**

Staying Together offers relationship based support to families over 4-12 weeks

## Step up, Step down Service – The Fostering Network

The **Step Up, Step Down** project aims to work with families to support them to keep their children out of care. A small pool of foster carers have been trained to provide short-term, preventative support to 120 families – working intensively with families to build their skills and capacity. In addition, the foster carer is able to temporarily ‘Step up’ if the family requires additional support, and potentially offer a place for the child to stay in the short-term if there is a crisis situation. This can be helpful in providing immediate support, and means that the child doesn’t have to be placed with foster carers they have not previously met. This [blog post](#) on the project has reported improvements in family life as a result of the initiative.

[www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/policy-practice/projects-and-programmes/step-step-down](http://www.thefosteringnetwork.org.uk/policy-practice/projects-and-programmes/step-step-down)



120

families are able to receive short-term preventative support through Step Up, Step down

## Trove

A collaboration between Studio Meineck and the University of Bristol, and co-designed with looked-after children, adoptive and foster parents and social workers, **Trove** is a digital memory box which looks to give children agency in controlling their own life story. The concept of **Trove** is linked to theories about narrative identity, the importance of telling and re-telling stories to understanding one’s self, and the link between ‘communicative openness’ and psychological adaptation of adopted children. Using a raspberry pi computer and radio-frequency identification technologies, **Trove** enables children to safely store important objects, and bring them to life through an electronic tagging system allowing children to use their voice to capture memories. They can then use their secure password to access these recordings at a later date. There is also a Trove app, which allows the child to input new memories on the go; they can instantly take a picture using the app and record an accompanying commentary, which they can later access on the digital archive.

An [analysis](#) of a small scale trial with a group of adopted children in 2018 found that children and carers were able to derive comfort from Trove’s voice recording mechanism and reported a positive impact from the ability to physically store objects in a place. It also enabled children to tell stories, ask key questions and initiate conversations to help them to understand and explore their past. Parents claimed that older children returned to birth objects and interrogated their meaning in a way which allowed them to process their adoption story, provoking a sense of acceptance. However, a [2019 evaluation](#) reported that some parents felt ambivalent about the idea of **trove** being a private, child-directed box, feeling that granting access to parents would help them support their children by deepening their understanding of their child’s thoughts and feelings. There was a tricky balance between allowing children to dictate the process, whilst ensuring that reflections were accurate. Moreover, some parents noted a difficulty in dealing with the emotional outputs which came from confronting the past in this way, with a recommendation that additional support materials and training should be given as part of the **Trove** offer.

[studiomeineck.com/trove](http://studiomeineck.com/trove)

## Use of objects in social work – Coram

Care-experienced children and young people need help to understand their life stories, but social workers and others often struggle to deliver high quality life story work. In 2020 Coram funded a pilot project led by Emeritus Professor Mark Doel, to improve services to children and families by introducing objects and object-based learning into social work. There is an [article](#) in Community Care which references Prof Mark Doel’s previous work on the **use of objects in social work**.

In 2020 Coram delivered pilot training and workshops, and presented some of the new insights at a Coram BAAF webinar ‘Kinship Care and Story Work: Learning from each other’. The pilot resources are being tested this year and have potential for being adapted for use with Leaving Care Workers, foster carers and others. The resources are currently being piloted with student social workers.

The project has been entirely designed and delivered online, with participants bringing objects that are meaningful to them to webinars and showing them to other attendees on-screen.

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2020

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## Wellbeing for Education Return – Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead

The Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead have also been part of the national ‘**Wellbeing for Education Return**’ DfE programme, which has been developed to provide additional support as a result of the pandemic. Resources are provided to schools and parents to support children and young people with their mental health and wellbeing. The project aims to provide early intervention, signpost to the right support, as well as skills and techniques to help people to maintain their wellbeing. In addition, there is also an online platform to share best practice, and which also provides an opportunity for engagement with the educational psychology team. There appears to have been a lack of evaluation of the project so far, but the programme was offered to 95% of schools in the borough.



# A CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS: TELL US WHAT YOU HAVE SEEN

We want our partners to take an active role in helping us to further develop the portal. If you have seen any promising innovations across the sector or in adjacent sectors, please do let us know by emailing

[innovation@coram.org.uk](mailto:innovation@coram.org.uk)

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