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CII Innovation Collective

2022-23

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Preface

The **CII Innovation Collective** is the Coram Innovation Incubator's specialist repository, which collates and shares new, innovative projects from across the children's services sector and beyond.

It is a knowledge sharing hub, aiming to share learning and sector updates, and inspire new, innovative thinking about how we can redesign and improve services for children and young people.

Innovation has multiple forms and is typically seen to take place across three levels - the sustaining, the incremental and the game-changing or radical. All three levels are important to realising positive, sustainable change.

Although not exhaustive, the **CII Innovation Collective** seeks to capture the range of innovation taking place in the sector both at home and abroad - be it cutting edge technological innovation, a new approach to direct work with young people or a different model of care provision. This year, the **Collective** has been categorised in terms of the six priority areas of the Coram Innovation Incubator:

- Early Intervention and Early Help models
- Wellbeing, adolescent mental health and exploitation
- Workforce and organisational structures
- Achieving stability for children in care
- Cultural competence and disproportionality
- Technological innovation

"With the challenges for children and families continuing to grow, it is crucial that we embrace change and innovation in children's social care. Hertfordshire is delighted to be part of the Coram Innovation Incubator helping to drive the change we need, building on our strengths and learning from others."

Jo Fisher, Executive Director of Children's Services
Hertfordshire County Council

As the **CII Innovation Collective** shows, innovation is widespread across the sector and agencies are continuously finding creative and effective ways to ensure they can provide the best service to children, young people and families. Technology clearly plays a key role across multiple domains and the opportunity offered by technological innovation is something the CII and its partners are keen to exploit.

It is also evident that there has been a key focus on how services can proactively identify potential challenges and intervene earlier to help young people and families before they reach a crisis point. A number of therapeutic initiatives uncovered this year and [last year](#) demonstrate the continued focus of the sector on finding new ways to support young people's wellbeing, with mental health and exploitation still dominant issues for the sector.

One critical issue for the CII and its partners is around addressing the issues of disproportionality and cultural competence and their impact on young people and families. The case studies seen in the **Collective** especially highlight the crucial role of schools in creating the environment where diversity is celebrated and all young people can reach their academic potential. This area is also linked to workforce and organisational culture. There are comparatively fewer examples uncovered which tackle these issues and we want our colleagues to let us know about work they have seen in these areas. The CII is committed to helping the sector to find solutions to these issues.

Throughout the **Collective**, the role of the charity and community sector in this is clear, and many projects are tapping into the unique insight and empathy of those who have been through similar experiences and can mentor, support and advise families. Collaboration across borders is



clearly central to the success and sustainability of these projects. We hope the **Collective** can help you think about steps you can take locally and ideas that could be pursued as part of the collaborative CII model.

As part of the CII, our partners are progressing a number of projects related to our six priority areas. This year, we are running the Coram Innovation Inset, a specialist development programme to help practitioners develop their own pilot innovation projects. CII member projects include using technology to **improve the provision and maintenance of case records, a new model to support flexible working patterns, improving the foster carer recruitment offer and boosting the accessibility of early intervention services**. These are exciting developments, with the potential to have a transformative impact on services, children, young people and families.

We welcome others from across the sector to join us in our mission to create better outcomes for children and young people.

If you are interested in finding out more about any of the case studies included in the CII Innovation Collective or want to tell us about any promising innovations you have seen, please email innovation@coram.org.uk

About the Coram Innovation Incubator

The Coram Innovation Incubator (CII) is a specialist vehicle for children's services providers to work with the public, private and third sectors to generate, test and scale radical solutions to shared challenges facing the children's social care sector.

Our local authority members are London Borough of Bromley, City of London, Gloucestershire County Council, Hampshire County Council, London Borough of Harrow, London of Havering, Hertfordshire County Council, North Yorkshire County Council, London Borough of Redbridge, Together for Children Sunderland. Our three private sector partners are Microsoft, EY and PA Consulting.

For more information about the CII, see <https://coram-i.org.uk/coram-innovation-incubator>

Early Intervention and Early Help Models

Baby and Me – London Borough of Redbridge

In response to a growing number of newborn babies becoming subject to care proceedings post-birth, the London Borough of Redbridge created the **Baby and Me** service in August 2021. This early-intervention service assesses and provides support to families who are about to have their first child, or who have had children removed from their care in past, in an attempt to ensure

newborn babies have the best start in life and can live safely at home with their families. Traditionally, assessments and support to pregnant women had not been delivered until later on in the pregnancy at around 24 weeks gestation. However, the **Baby and Me** team works with women from a much earlier stage at around 12 weeks' gestation in order to try and mitigate escalation to a point of crisis, which often emerges later in

pregnancy for vulnerable women. In order to be able to offer comprehensive, multi-agency support to families, the service is also developing its strategic pathways with midwifery, health visiting, perinatal and other adult services. By engaging early and ensuring families are supported to work through any challenges they face, the hope is that fewer babies in Redbridge will enter the care system.

Brighton Streets – Trust for Developing Communities

The **Brighton Streets** project offers early relationship-based interventions to teenagers in an attempt to prevent them from getting involved in youth violence. Funded by the Brighton & Hove Violence Reduction Partnership, this programme operates across the city and is run by Trust for Developing Communities, alongside community development charities, the Hangleton and Knoll Project and the Tarnar Community Project. **Brighton Streets** is built around the idea that youth work should be detached and street-based, and proactively brought to young people where they are, in keeping with criminological theory. It focuses on developing trusted relationships and taking a person-centred approach to create a safe space for young people and empower

them as part of the community. Taking a preventative approach, detached youth workers are trained to support people across a number of issues related to mental health, sexual health, knife crime and substance misuse or provide referrals to other specialists, as well as being able to divert young people towards other positive projects.

Brighton Streets was evaluated by the Centre for Education and Youth in 2021, who emphasised the advantage and value to young people of being able to access help and support that comes to them, rather than requiring them to seek out specific services. The research suggested that the **Brighton Streets** approach to youth work helped young people to feel safe and to de-escalate potentially unsafe situations, as well as providing them with someone to talk to. The

evaluation also suggested that detached youth work did support a decline in crime and violence - this was due partly to the physical presence of youth workers on the street, but also because young people gained a greater understanding of the consequences of crime. The research did suggest improvements could be made in terms of youth workers advertising their location and facilitating links with other specific services, but this model of youth work appears to engage young people and help steer them away from criminality. The initiative won the 2021 CYPN Partnership Award.

[trustdevcom.org.uk/
what-we-do/young-people/
brighton-streets-2](https://trustdevcom.org.uk/what-we-do/young-people/brighton-streets-2)



Building My Future Programme – London Borough of Ealing

The **Building My Future programme (BMF)** is an early intervention model, originally funded by the DfE's children's social care innovation unit, in the London Borough of Ealing. Co-produced with carers and young people, the programme provides intensive, holistic, tailored support to young people aged 10-25 with complex additional needs, who are at risk of educational or social exclusion. By intervening early with this group, the intention was to facilitate better educational, wellbeing and participation outcomes, and reduce the need for special school provision and costs to the council. It came in the context of key council pressures including a high number of exclusions among SEN students. The model has a multi-disciplinary element, involving professionals from health, social care, education and youth work, who work

together to explore the specific challenges each young person may have which may be a barrier to them reaching their academic potential. Young people are supported over a 6-month period in multiple ways - for example, where there are mental health needs identified, the psychology team can offer CBT interventions, and there is also a focus on developing key life and social skills. The project worked with over 150 children and young people between 2018 and 2021.

The programme was evaluated in 2020. The multi-disciplinary, coordinated approach was praised, with suggestions that the programme helped to improve young people's personal wellbeing, participation in mainstream education and preparedness for adult life. It also helped parents and carers to improve their relationships with their child and school/college, as well as preparing

schools and colleges to better support children with additional needs. The quantitative data showed less obvious improvements, but there was a suggestion that it would contribute to long-term cost avoidance. The evaluation highlighted some key challenges to the programme's sustainability, related to funding, demand, workforce and complexity of need. The programme is no longer operating but with the model winning a CYPN award, there are clearly key lessons to be taken on the value of adopting a multi-agency approach to improving key outcomes for this cohort of young people.

There is a helpful BMF learning library accessible here: <https://www.egfl.org.uk/services-children/building-my-future-bmf-programme/building-my-future-bmf-learning-library>

Children's Initial Advice Team – Darlington Borough Council

Darlington Borough Council has a new integrated service, the **Children's Initial Advice Team (CIAT)**. Staffed by social workers, this service is a point of access for both the public and professionals, and offers advice and information to ensure families are directed to appropriate support services swiftly. This is part of Darlington's new front door which seeks to improve efficiency and ensure those working with families receive the guidance they need to make the right decision for and provide the best advice to families early on. Since implementing this new front door service, Darlington has seen a decrease in the number of re-referrals.

darlington.gov.uk/education-and-learning/childrens-social-care



Cluster Collaborative Model – Leeds City Council

Commended by Ofsted in 2018, Leeds City Council uses the **Cluster Collaborative** model to offer early help to local families. In Leeds, there are 23 'clusters' which are made up of schools and key partners in small localities. Clusters have combined funding from schools, with additional funding from health services and the local authority, to provide early help services for children aged 4 to 16 who go to one of the schools within the Cluster and have challenges within the remit of early help. Such challenges may be mental health (child or familial), housing related, to do with parental conflict, domestic abuse or substance misuse.

Each individual, multi-agency model is specific to the local needs of the Cluster and combines universal, targeted and specialist services across schools, health, police, social work, the third sector and housing. The rationale is to identify and provide appropriate support for families early on so that children can do better at school and foster positive relationships with peers and trusted adults, and parents can develop self-efficacy. In turn, it also looks to mitigate statutory



involvement and children entering the care system, also leading to cost savings for the council. Children can be referred by their schools, Children's Services or by local health professionals through a Single Point of Access, or families can self-refer. As part of the intervention, which follows the relationship-based Leeds Practice Principles, each family works on a family plan of goals decided on with a practitioner. Families have a lead worker, who regularly reviews goals in meetings but is also a contact for the family outside weekly meetings. Family plans are also discussed as part of group supervision. The way the support is delivered

varies with different therapeutic models and there are six Restorative Early Support Teams in Leeds which can provide more intensive, specialist support and three Early Help Hubs offering short-term intervention. The Cluster provides support for a maximum of six months, with weekly meetings, but there are also specific therapy offers for parents and children within this.

A pilot looking at the effectiveness of this model is being funded by the WWC Spark Grant scheme and is due to report imminently.

leeds.gov.uk/one-minute-guides/

EY Outreach – EY

Whilst working as an apprentice for EY, Yeshua Carter, now a Consultant at Ernst and Young (EY) set up EY Outreach, alongside West Midlands Police. **EY Outreach** is an intervention and prevention programme, which focuses on supporting at-risk young people out of/away from the school to prison pipeline. The programme was launched in collaboration with West Midlands Police, Birmingham's Grove Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) and other stakeholders and focuses on reducing youth violence, reoffending and helping marginalised young people to return to mainstream education. It intends to help vulnerable young people develop their self-belief and self-confidence through mentoring, coaching and creative work. As part of

the programme, young people between the ages of 11-16 are coached by a Young Future Leader with a history of similar life experiences, and an EY Professional, who will help them to reflect and develop a personal development plan, and guide them to support services. This is delivered in combination with a 7-week creative intervention programme, which is interspersed with employment skills, mental wellbeing support and 'dangers of crime' focused curricula.

The programme has had a positive impact on the young people who have been through it, sparking behaviour improvement and reintegration into mainstream school, and helping young people to identify and pursue future career opportunities e.g. in coaching or acting. This is

followed by six months of coaching, with their mentor and a coach from EY. Six out of ten pupils are now attending other support programmes. Due to the success of the programme remit of this youth engagement programme is now broadening to other at-risk groups. A number of national/local authorities and public sector organisations are now involved in the programme, including the Government of Jersey, West Midlands Police, Birmingham City Council and HMP Brinsford. These organisations are all using EY Outreaches model to meet the needs of young people within the school to prison pipeline. **EY Outreach** has also gained international validation from the US Embassy, who have expressed a keen interest in the programme.

Family by Family – Stoke-on-Trent City Council

Stoke-on-Trent council, working with charity Shared Lives Plus, run the **Family by Family** project, a whole-family peer support model. Based on the approach pioneered by The Australian Centre for Social Innovation, the project matches 'seeking families', who are going through challenges with 'sharing families', who have been through a similar situation or have a similar background. Families meet up via Link Ups, helping to build social

connections and networks and offering practical help too. The model is based on the fundamental principles of choice, relationships and strength, with families working together on a bespoke set of goals of the family's choice. Children are empowered to play a central role in helping positive changes materialise for the family. In addition, family and children's coaches on hand to help facilitate the goals. The hope is that this type of intervention can reduce escalation to crisis and negate the need for referral to statutory

services. This intervention was shown to be beneficial to families in Australia and the pilot currently taking place in Stoke.

Family by Family Stoke-on-Trent pilot project - Shared Lives Plus



Infant and Family Team – NSPCC

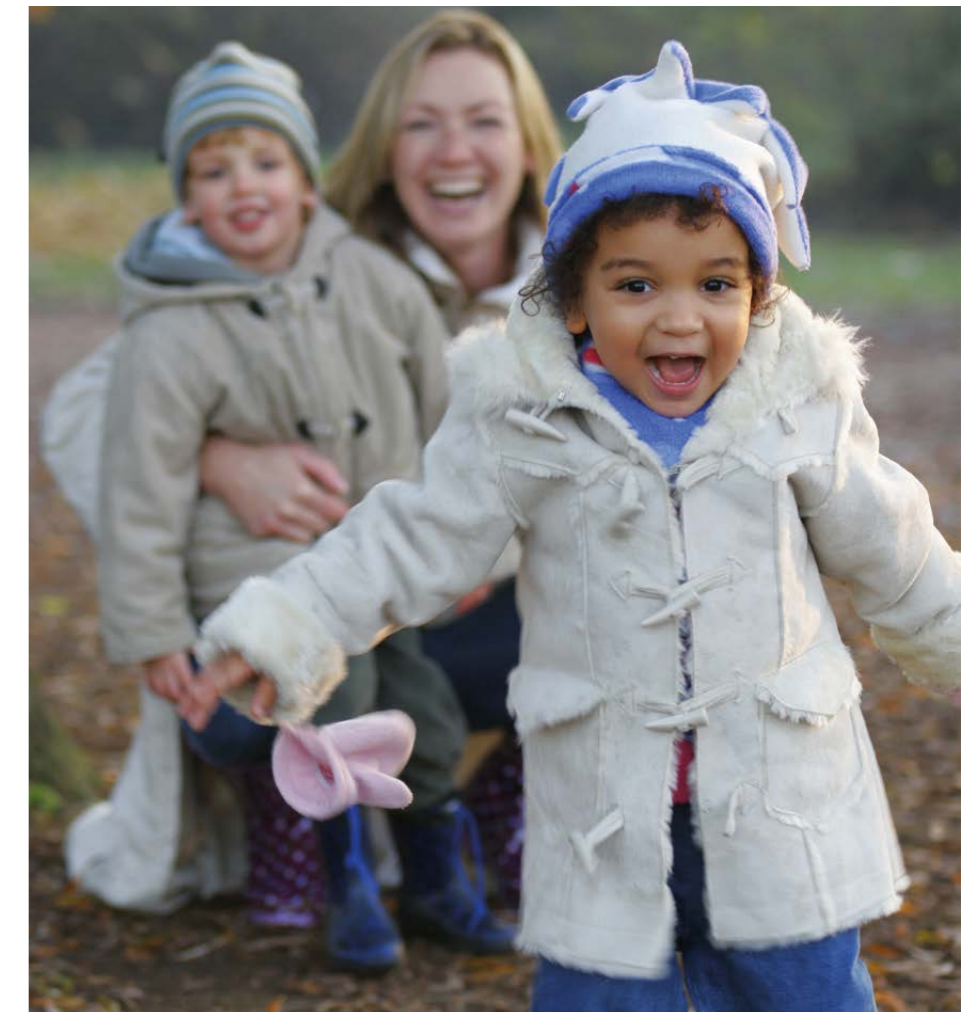
The NSPCC's **Infant and Family Team** was inspired by the New Orleans Intervention Model. This multi-disciplinary specialist team aims to support reunification by working with fostered infants and young children aged between 0-5 years, who are in care due to abuse or neglect, and their birth and foster families.

The programme runs over 9-15 months and works to assess the child and parent's health and wellbeing, and deliver tailored support to build the child-parent relationship, promote infant mental health and deal with key issues. The Infant and Family Team is able to contribute to decisions about a child's care plan via reports to social work and legal teams. In cases where the parent has changed positively after the treatment programme and demonstrated a capacity to care for the child, children are able to return to their birth families. This is an early-intervention programme, which seeks to negate detrimental impacts on infant development and mental health. An initial case audit looking at the impact of the Glasgow Infant and Family Team indicated that those participating endorsed the focus on infant mental health and felt the assessment process was comprehensive and thorough. It was said that the evidence produced by

the team was also helpful to decision-making, although there was a debate about the timescale of the programme and the potential for this to lead to delays for children. The NSPCC is currently working in partnership with a number of local authorities and other organisations on a randomised

controlled trial to look at the impact of Infant and Family Teams and the findings are expected in 2023.

<https://learning.nspcc.org.uk/services-children-families/infant-and-family-teams>



New Beginnings

Founded in 2018 with Stockport Council, **New Beginnings** works with families involved in the child protection system. The programme recognises the past trauma many of these parents have experienced, which can contribute to mental health, alcohol and drug difficulties. It is based on a holistic approach to working with parents, which was evident in family centres in Flanders, Belgium.

A 24-week programme, **New Beginnings** supports parents to understand their past and identity and develop their strength, knowledge, skills and ability to improve their parenting via weekly group sessions and support other parents. The sessions are delivered by therapeutic social work practitioners and act as a safe space for parents to share challenges together. **New Beginnings** also run 1:1 key work sessions with parents, and

key workers are able to support parents through child protection meetings and help them navigate the complex process. The strength-based Video Interaction Guidance approach helps parents to better connect with their children. In addition, parents who have previously worked through the **New Beginnings** programme are able to become peer mentors to other parents, harnessing the value of support from those with lived experience.

An initial evaluation of New Beginnings' pilot cohort highlighted a meaningful, positive change in parents' involvement with children's social care, as well as a better understanding of safety and risk and how to create a safe home environment. It was noted that risk to children involved in the pilot were related to emotional harm, educational attainment, neglect and protection from domestic abuse. The evaluation also emphasised the

importance of the relationship developed between **New Beginnings** staff and parents, which were sensitive and trusting. Stockport Council indicated that the programme could lead to cost savings of around £219,000. The peer mentoring element of the project was also analysed, with reports from peer mentors that participating in this project had been 'life changing' for them and mentees reflected on the availability and value of their peer mentors positively, helping them to better engage with social work teams. The programme was highlighted in the Care Review as a positive approach to better parental engagement in the child protection system.

newbeginningsfoundationcio.com

Small Steps, Big Changes - Nottingham City Council

Funded by the National Lottery Community *A Better Start* programme, **Small Steps, Big Changes** is an activity programme aimed at children aged 4 and under in Nottingham. The programme helps children to develop their speech, language and communication skills and confidence, understand their emotions and behaviour and promotes a healthy lifestyle. Activities offered as part of the programme range from

sensory play sessions to singing, speech and language and cooking sessions to wellbeing and employability sessions for parents. As well as building skills, such sessions have been an important step in helping young children who spent much of their life in lockdown to develop crucial social skills and enable their parents to meet and interact with other parents and families. In addition, support is given to new parents in their homes via Family Mentors as part of the free Small

Steps At Home programme. An interim report on the programme suggested that the Small Steps at Home programme helped to narrow the gap in terms of development of skills measured via the Ages and Stages questionnaire between children in more deprived areas receiving the intervention and those in more affluent areas. It also suggested an initiative to provide age-appropriate books to children as part of the programme may help parents to interact with their children whilst reading and encourage children to ask their parents to read with them and look at books, although they were not necessarily more likely to read with their child. Engaging both parents and young children at a crucial time of their development, programmes such as this are important to early years development and helping to ease the transition into a school environment.

smallstepsbigchanges.org.uk



Our Skills

What Works for Children's Social Care recently released its evaluation of Our Skills, an intervention offered to parents of Reception and Year 1 children who have had a social worker, to help their children to read and learn at home. This course is delivered over 20 sessions, 10 of which are for parents and carers only and 10 where children take part. Specialist tutors support children and families with phonics, reading strategies, story-telling, and learning through play. Across the trial period, 100 parents and 103 children from 33 schools across the country took part, with Covid a barrier to recruitment of schools, parents and carers. Covid also meant the course was delivered online, having originally been conceived as a face-to-face programme. The evaluation highlighted these challenges, but among those parents and carers who

did attend the majority of the sessions, and the schools involved, feedback was positive. Where the programme was delivered as intended, it demonstrated evidence of promise, boosting confidence of parents and carers and understanding of how phonics is taught as well as impacting enjoyment of reading with children and among children. There was a suggestion that these changes could impact on behaviour and reading attainment. It recommended a review of the delivery model to improve the offer.

<https://whatworks-csc.org.uk/research-report/pilot-evaluation-of-our-skills/>



Small Steps Together - Ormiston Families

In Cambridgeshire, Ormiston Families' **Small Steps Together** team supports new and expectant mothers presenting with low to moderate mental health needs during their pregnancy and up until their children are 2. The specialist team is made up both of staff and volunteers, including specialist perinatal mental health workers and those with lived experience. The team offers a range of interventions, also involving partners and other family members. These interventions include 1:1 counselling, support to access community

services, fitness and wellbeing activities and innovative use of Video Interactive Guidance (VIG), which focuses on supporting parents to develop their own strengths and foster nurturing relationships with their children. Since the service launched in September 2017, the team has worked with 315 families in Cambridgeshire, as well as undertaking a pilot project in West Norfolk. The team aims to work with 165 families each year, including those families who stay engaged over a number of years.

The impact on families has been positive: 98% of parents have said that the programme supported

increased attachment to their children, with 96% saying the support helped to improve their mental health. 100% of families contacted after three months continue to access community wellbeing support and activities, and feel their children experience improved wellbeing and reach development milestones earlier. The service has also been widely commended externally and won the Early Years Award at the CYPN Awards in 2021.

ormiston.org/what-we-do/mental-health-and-wellbeing/small-steps-together

Squirrel Groups – The Scouts

In response to wider focus on enhancing early years provision, the Scouts have started **Squirrel Groups**, a new offer for 4 to 6 year olds to help them develop key life skills. The pandemic saw young children isolated from friends, peers and communities at a crucial stage in their development

and such initiatives aim to help to rebuild confidence and improve knowledge and skills through a programme of games and activities delivered in a safe and supportive environment. The children are able to collect badges and learn practical skills. The programme is supported by volunteers and available in 200 UK

locations, with a specific focus on areas of deprivation or areas hard hit by the pandemic.

scouts.org.uk/squirrels



Team around the School – Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council

In a bid to provide better, earlier support to children in Stockport, Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council offers the **Team Around the School (TAS)** model. Originally developed in 2016, the model follows restorative practice principles and embeds partnership working between the key agencies and people in a child's life, including parents/carers, schools, local authorities and other agencies. It acknowledges the unique day-to-day insight into children afforded to school staff and includes the school safeguarding team, social workers, school nurses and a school age plus worker. By convening this multi-agency team regularly and providing a broader picture of a family's circumstances, the model facilitates timely information sharing to the relevant professionals to ensure any issues can be raised and dealt with at an early stage for a child before the situation escalates. It also supports better engagement with families by involving them in a child's care plan and social care by the daily support and advice offered by the social worker. This reduces demand on MASH services by mitigating the need for social care referrals and dealing with issues locally; in one year, Stockport saw 650 less contacts to their MASH team from schools.

stockport.gov.uk/team-around-the-school



TESSA-UK – Adoption UK

Funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, Adoption UK's TESSA-UK service seeks to promote wellbeing and positive relationships among adoptive families to enable children and families to thrive. This approach looks to help adoptive parents to understand and support a child with early childhood trauma and in turn improve their longer-term development and stability. It is offered as an early intervention tool with families within the first three years of adoption, where early childhood trauma has been identified as having the potential to cause issues. Through TESSA, adopters are paired with a Parent Partner, offering peer support on specific issues and goals. They are also given access to a

clinical psychologist, a preventative approach which addresses the issue where often adoptive families are not able to access clinical support until crisis necessitates it. In addition, there is a reflective parenting group, which runs fortnightly for six sessions and is facilitated by an adopter and a clinical professional.

A [pilot evaluation](#) of the impact was conducted by the University of Strathclyde in anticipation of a larger evaluation that will run between 2021 and 2023. Among the pilot cohort, 85% of adopters said that the clinical consultation offered had improved their understanding of and their ability to articulate the needs of their child, with the production of a clinical consultation report which detailed the child's strengths and needs and

could be shared with professionals - 99% said the clinical consultation report was helpful. 85% of adopters also agreed that having a Parent Partner had been beneficial. According to SDQ measures, children's total difficulty scores also decreased. Other reported benefits of engaging with TESSA were an improved confidence in dealing with challenges, and anticipating stressful triggers, as well as feeling better able to cope and less isolated. The findings indicate that a proactive approach to post-adoption support, which encompasses peer support, is important to helping adopters meet the needs of their children.

adoptionuk.org/tessa

Thriving Babies: Confident Parents Pilot – Manchester City Council

In Manchester, the council are piloting the **Thriving Babies: Confident Parents** programme, which looks to provide early support to potentially vulnerable parents before and after their babies are born. Those eligible for support include parents with complex vulnerabilities, including learning disability, those with mental health or substance misuse issues, those who have been subject to domestic abuse, those who have had a child removed or have experienced the care system. The intervention, which takes place in the family home and in children's centres, is being piloted with 60 families over a 12 month period, with targeted outreach to BAME families. It focuses on proactively supporting parents to develop their skills, strengths, resilience and wellbeing, as well as helping them to understand the needs of babies and children. The involvement with the family is coordinated by a key worker assigned to each family, and the programme aims to ensure support is holistic, joined up and caters to the needs of

the families at that time. There is engagement with both the voluntary sector and adult services, and families are provided with a Think Family Co-Ordinator.

The pilot is looking at whether this process enables services to provide better, more culturally attuned and coordinated support to families and the knock on effect this has on outcomes for children e.g. better parenting, fewer risk factors, greater permanency for infants. The Institute of Public Care at Oxford Brookes University will be producing an

evaluation report later in 2022. Acknowledging the fundamental importance of the early years of a child's life to their life chances, this multi-agency approach is showing promise in facilitating a reduction in escalation to statutory services, better early permanence decision making and overall ensuring parents can be better supported to navigate a crucial time in their lives and the lives of their children.



Tiny Tots College Programme

Affinity 2020 CIC and Unravel piloted the **Tiny Tots College Programme**. This programme combines theoretical and practical elements and is delivered to care-experienced young parents aged 25 and under across two interventions: Tiny Tots – Care Informed Parenting (pre-birth for expectant parents) and Tiny Tots – Toddlers (post-birth for children aged 0-2). The former element was created by Unravel, a specialist support company, with the involvement of psychology professionals. The latter was developed by Affinity 2020 CIC, a social enterprise which is focused on the care experience. The premise of

the programme is to use play and communication to help build skills, understanding, knowledge and confidence around child development among care-experienced parents. The aim is to support the development of positive relationships and enable positive emotional attachment between the parent and child. It is delivered via weekly sessions over 8 weeks and includes a peer support and staff support offer.

What Works for Children's Social Care evaluated a pilot programme with nine families which took place virtually in 2021. The findings suggested that both staff and parents benefited from the

interventions, with it helping to improve knowledge and confidence around parenting, pregnancy and childbirth as staff and parents developed positive, non-judgemental relationships. It highlighted the importance of parents having a safe space to air key issues and seek advice outside of statutory services. Another positive element emphasised was the peer support offer. It did acknowledge the small sample size, the reduced number of referrals to the programme and the short-term impact measure which limits the ability to attribute a causal impact. Nonetheless, there were clearly positive gains for families via this approach.

Transition Support – Hartlepool Borough Council

Hartlepool Borough Council has piloted a **Transition Support** programme for children transitioning from primary to secondary schools who are on a Child in Need or Child Protection Plan. Recognising the often disruptive nature of transition to secondary school, especially for children with a social worker, and the challenges of education attainment among this cohort, the pilot programme focuses on children in Years 5 and 6 and involves a number of elements. These include creating Transition Leads for each school, as well as facilitating whole-school and targeted training for both school staff and social worker. The Transitioning Planning Profile Tool (TPPT) was also developed as an administrative tool for schools as part of this project. Up to three Person-Centred Planning (PCP) meetings are also offered to each child, with parents/carers, pupils, social workers and primary and secondary school staff attending. In addition, the children receive interventions, including being enrolled on a resilience programme and having one-to-one therapeutic support. Each child also has a Transition Passport detailing their situation. The programme looks to

provide schools with a fuller insight into a child's needs to inform a personalised support plan to help them manage the transition to secondary school and in turn positively contribute to their educational attainment. It should be noted that in Hartlepool there is a broader transition support programme for year 6 pupils, but not all elements of the pilot are included. The National Centre for Social Research evaluated the pilot and the impact on 55 year 6 pupils from 21 schools. The evaluation indicated that the development of the TPPT had enhanced information sharing between schools to some extent, with PCP meetings helpful in bringing people together. There is some sense from qualitative findings that these children

settled well in secondary school, with slight improvements in attainment and attendance. However, there were also some issues noted including attendance, sustainability and ability to share information via PCP meetings.

There were also some delivery challenges, partly attributable to Covid. There are suggestions that the model needs to be refined before it is more widely rolled out to improve its impact and ensure it works better for schools and children, acknowledging the iterative process of innovation.



Wellbeing, adolescent mental health and exploitation

BeeWell – Greater Manchester

The **BeeWell** programme aims to improve the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people across Greater Manchester. It began in Autumn 2021 and is a collaboration between a number of agencies, the University of Manchester and the Anna Freud Centre, with support from philanthropist David Gregson.

Working with 150 young people across schools in Manchester, they have co-developed a wellbeing survey for secondary school pupils, which has had more than 40,000 responses in its first year. Alongside this the project has developed a dashboard to easily visualise data at the neighbourhood level to help professionals and agencies in delivering a tailored and informed

response to local issues. The project also provides information for those at school, and school leavers, and arranges a number of promotions and events. The project is due to run for at least three years, with the aim of providing support and informing policy.

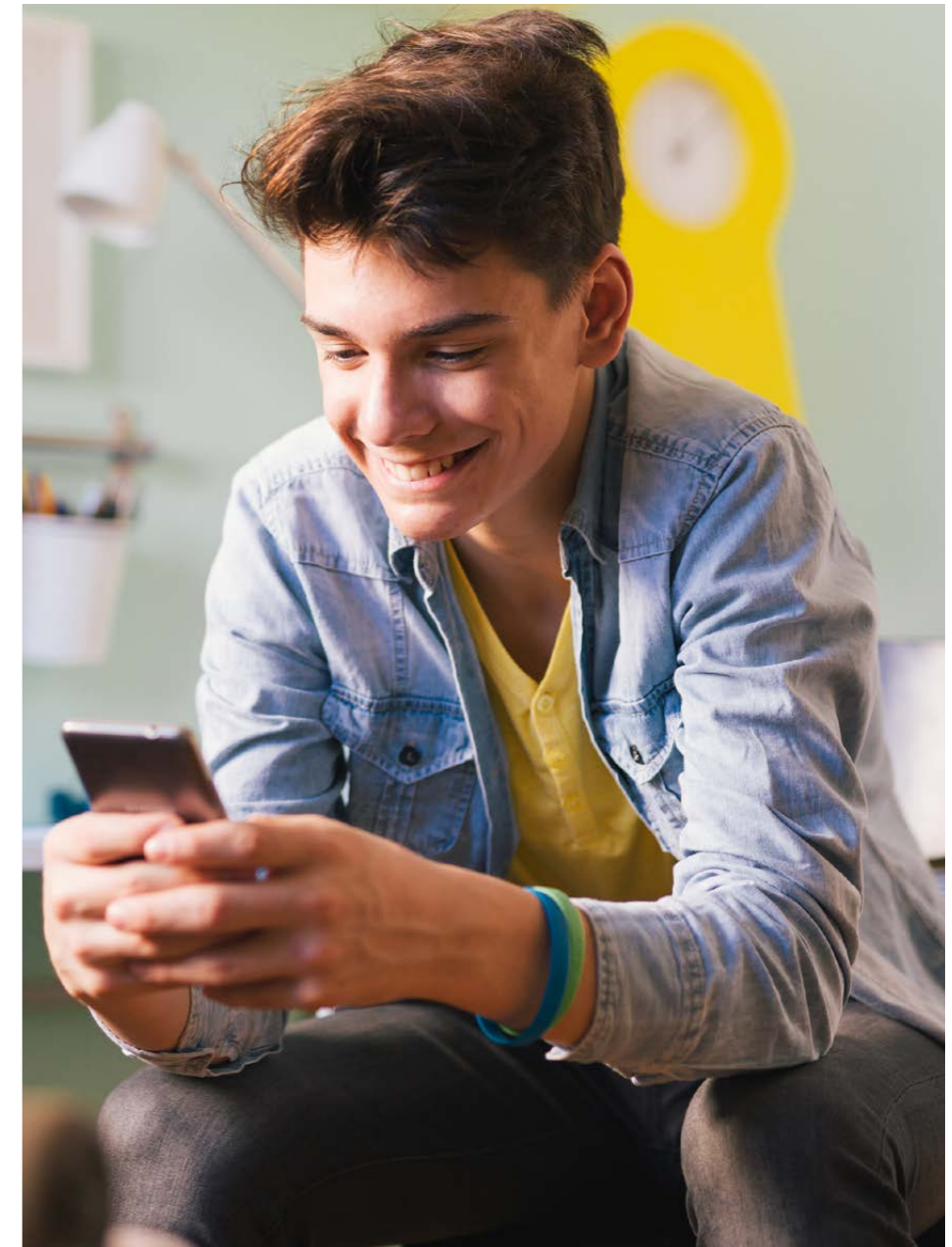
[Home - #BeeWell \(gmbeewell.org\)](https://www.gmbeewell.org)

CAHMS Redesign – Hertfordshire County Council

Hertfordshire have been **redesigning their CAMHS** offer and services to try and better meet the needs of children and young people experiencing mental health difficulties. The project has been built around the THRIVE framework for system change, and Hertfordshire are an accelerator site for the I-THRIVE model. Alongside this Hertfordshire believe in taking an approach which underlines how mental health and wellbeing is the responsibility of all professionals, and are working towards improving their digital offer to reduce duplication, give clear information about available support, and ensuring the young people can track what is happening with their referral.

There has been a significant focus on collaboration across the continuum of emotional and mental wellbeing, from prevention through to Acute and specialist support, and ongoing work to develop a system of shared responsibility and accountability to improve the outcomes and customer journey of the children and young people that they collectively serve.

[Hertfordshire | i-THRIVE \(implementingthrive.org\)](https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/i-thrive)



Face It - Khulisa

Face It is a six-week programme aimed at pupils in schools and Pupil Referral Units who are at risk of offending, exploitation and exclusion.

Face It uses a range of therapeutic approaches, including art and music therapy and storytelling to help young people to understand and reflect on the root causes and triggers for their behaviour.

The programme teaches young people new skills and coping mechanisms, and aims to improve their ability to concentrate during school time, as well as feelings of self-worth and confidence. 91% of pupils involved so far have shown a significant improvement in their behaviour.

[Our work in schools \(khulisa.co.uk\)](http://khulisa.co.uk)



Let's Connect – Fostering Communities – Barnardo's and Hull City Council

Barnardo's is working to support Hull City Council on a project to develop a whole community approach to emotional wellbeing and mental health within the fostering community. The Let's Connect – Fostering Communities project is based on the [WRAP model](#), which aims to boost wellbeing, resilience and mental health via a simple, group model. With mental health challenges particularly common among looked-after children, this project, focused on the fostering community, looks to create a shared language around wellness and help to improve communication and understanding across those involved in fostering. This in turn is hoped to lead to better relationships within fostering households and support greater placement stability. Delivered to groups in different youth and community settings, in order to increase the sustainability of this project, the project will train those in the fostering community to co-



facilitate WRAP groups. The evidence suggests that this approach will reduce the need for formal mental health interventions and lead to improved hopefulness and quality of life among recipients of the intervention. In Hull, 2000 children and young people and 120 adults have so

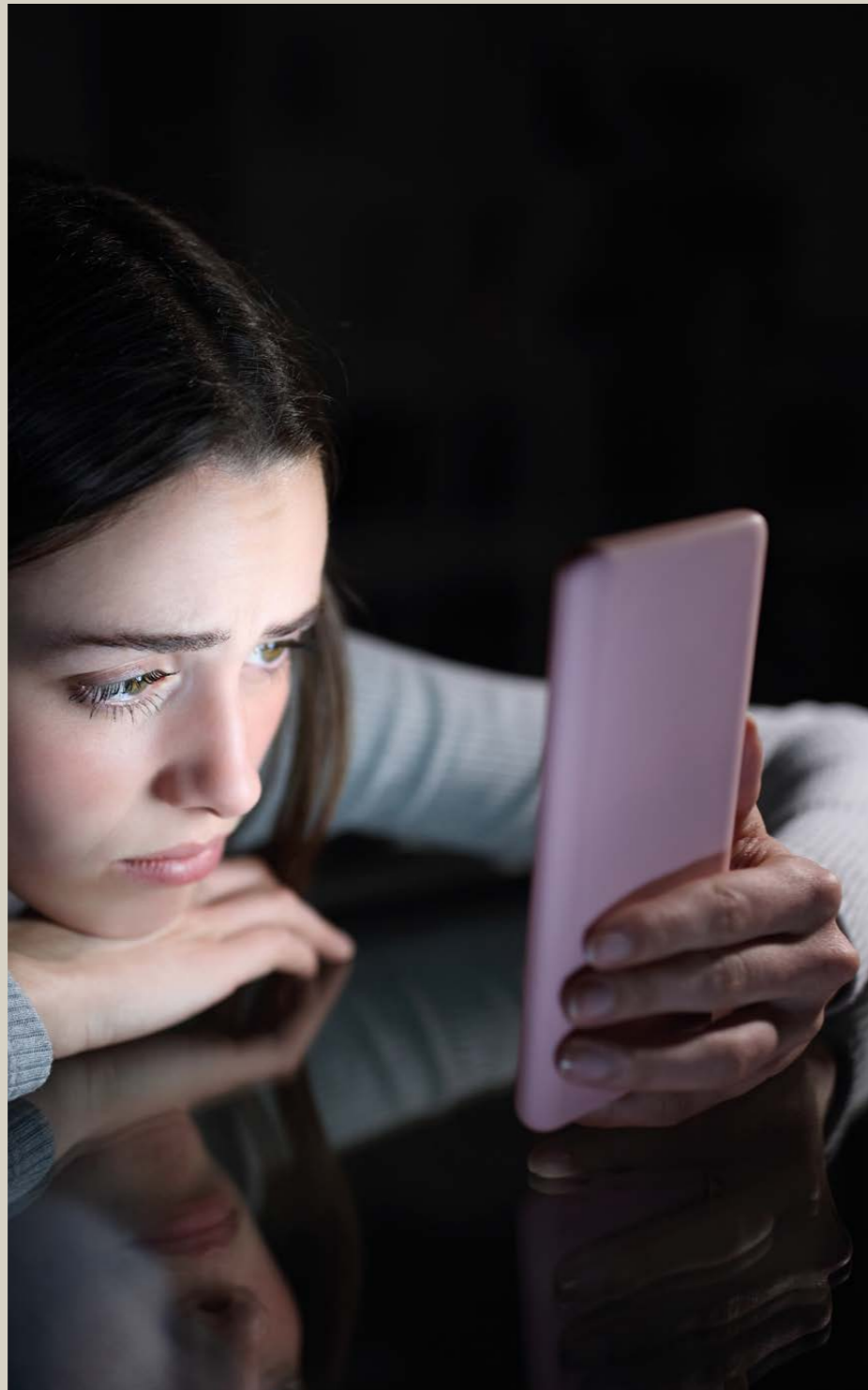
far received WRAP through primary and secondary schools and results have been positive.

Is This OK? - Runaway Helpline and Childline

Is This OK? was established in 2019, and is a chat service that allows young people (13-18 years old) to communicate anonymously, either with a bot or a trained advisor, if they are worried about something or would like advice. It is a collaboration between Runaway Helpline and Childline, and was initially developed as a response to the organised and longstanding child sexual abuse and exploitation in areas in the North of England, where the victims had shared that they didn't feel they had anywhere to turn, or anyone who would listen to them.

Is This OK? was developed through a co-design process, and is currently being trialled in two local authority areas, with a grounding in trauma-informed practice, and young people being involved in developing the chatbot functionality.

isthisok.org.uk



Link Programme – Anna Freud Centre and the NHS

The **Link Programme** is led by the Anna Freud Centre, with support from the NHS, and funding from the Department for Education. This national project aims to bring together health and education professionals to work collaboratively and better meet the needs of children and young people. All CCGs are expected to take part, and it will be offered to all schools.

The project began in 2019 and was expected to run for four years. Due to Covid sessions were run online to bring together health and education colleagues.

The programme is structured around two initial workshops to explore joint working, understanding the mental health conditions that are most commonly seen, reflect on how these issues are managed, and how to measure wellbeing.

There have been two initial pilot evaluations conducted by an independent evaluation team. These found better communication between services, increased knowledge of mental health conditions and treatment pathways, and has acted as a catalyst for wider change with a better understanding of evidence-based practice.

The offer was adapted and pivoted to become a free, bespoke facilitation for local strategic leaders, to be delivered completely online from May 2021, until the project ended in March 2022.

[NHS England » Mental health support in schools and colleges](#)

Making a Change Service – East Riding of Yorkshire Council

With a growing number of children falling victim to exploitation and rising missing incidents, East Riding of Yorkshire Council has introduced a new dedicated multi-agency support service to provide those at risk with somewhere to turn to. The **Making a Change Service** is accessible 7-days a week into the evening and is staffed by skilled practitioners, who follow the trauma-informed, relationship based Trauma Recovery Model with the young people they support. The service seeks to engage the whole family network, taking the principles of the family group conferencing model to create an appropriate, sustainable plan for those children with a contextual safeguarding concern.

The service draws on a broad range of expertise, acknowledging the complexities facing many vulnerable young people and the need for inter-related services to effectively collaborate to protect them. It includes Intensive Family Coordinators, dedicated missing coordinators, a health nurse, a specialist substance misuse social

worker and police colleagues, who keep in regular dialogue.

There is a specific focus on responding to missing children, with police and cross-regional specialist teams meeting to track key information about vulnerable children and enable information to be shared in a timely manner. The service is also piloting a new way to engage young people in Return Home Interviews, with young people able to open up via an accessible chat tool. 78% of young people are engaging with this tool and all missing young people are being contacted within 72 hours, allowing support to be swiftly implemented.

East Riding has also refined the structures around the Multi-Agency Child Exploitation Group (MACE) more broadly to boost their efficiency and enable better oversight on high-risk cases, with MACE now led by the **Making a Change** area manager. They have also introduced fortnightly locality Vulnerable Adolescent Risk Panels involving multi-agency partners to keep track of risks pertaining to specific children, facilitate

information sharing and put in place action plans. A crucial cross-border perspective is granted through the involvement of the Vulnerable, Exploited Missing and Trafficked Team, acknowledging the fact that children's lives operate beyond local authority boundaries.

The **Making a Change** model is already showing promising results. It has contributed to a decrease in the number of children going missing in the area: when the service was first set up in July 21, there were 45 children missing, but by January 2022 this had declined to 24. In addition to this, more children are engaging in the Return Home Interviews enabling children to be referred quickly for support where needed. For children supported by the service, outcomes have included a lower exploitation risk level, the provision of stable accommodation, support back to education and a reduction in drug and alcohol use. It shows that a targeted multi-agency approach to engaging directly with young people in a manner that feels accessible to them can make a tangible difference to those at risk.

Mental Health Support Teams - NHS

Mental Health Support Teams (MHST) were developed as part of the government's £79m fund to improve the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people established in 2019. MHSTs are based within schools, employing a whole-school approach to deliver interventions for low-level mental health difficulties, and provide advice to school staff, whilst acting as a liaison for other services.

There are 287 teams already established across England, with the hope that over 500 will be running by 2024. Evaluation is being completed by the University of Birmingham. Initial [reports](#) on the role of MHSTs within 25

Trailblazer sites are already available. Although delivery was significantly impacted by Covid, the findings suggest that those who have received support from a MHST felt positive about it, with the teams helping to create a more informed, positive culture around mental health in school. It did highlight some key challenges around the ability for this framework to meet the needs of some groups of children, including those with special education needs and younger children. Co-production of the approach with children, young people and families, collaboration with other local mental health services, MHSTs being adaptive, workforce stability, adopting a system-wide approach to implementation and

sharing learning were highlighted as key preconditions to the approach working in practice.

[NHS England » Mental health support in schools and colleges](#)



NCL Waiting Room- The Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust

The Tavistock and Portman NHS Trust set up the **NCL Waiting Room** to try and improve access to mental health support in the context of ever-increasing levels of demand and the resulting long waiting lists. The **NCL Waiting Room** is an online resource where young people are able to track their mood, and develop

self-care strategies. This 'check-in' process allows young people to specify what they would like support with, as well as sharing information with a therapist ahead of their first session.

The **NCL Waiting Room** launched in April 2022, and also includes links to other resources, both online and locally.

[New online waiting room helps children and young people manage their mental health while they wait for NHS therapy \(tavistockandportman.nhs.uk\)](#)

Objects and Their Stories - Coram

Coram have continued to develop the pioneering Objects and Their Stories project, which is based around the work of Prof Mark Doel who developed using Objects as a direct work tool, and also as a means of self-reflection for practitioners and carers. After the trials in three pilot sites in London, Sheffield and New York in 2021, Coram ran the first cohort of training for Social Workers and Foster Carers earlier in 2022. Building on this, there has been subsequent training to train additional trainers this summer, and the next cohort of training will run from September 2022, with additional sessions beginning in 2023.

The work uses Objects as a way of opening up conversations and building relationships – this can really help to develop an organic and safe way of communicating. The objects around us are intertwined with our

feelings and experiences. Exploring our relationship with objects can help us tell our stories and give us a greater understanding of other people and ourselves. The course demonstrates how objects can be used as an accessible tool to evoke, release and relieve emotions, how objects can become a safe home for these feelings, and how a focus on objects can free the imagination and promote creative practices and relationships.

Objects and Their Stories is designed for foster carers, social workers, and others, to build on their initial training and is a natural progression and development of life story work. The training focuses on the individual, their story, and how to incorporate this into the work they do with children and young people. The course is structured as a reflective space for practitioners and carers, with significant time given to

attendees to reflect on their own work and experiences, as well as the children and young people they support. The group is encouraged to try the skills and approaches between sessions, with communication within the group facilitated to support implementation in practice, and build a kind and reflective network for support in the longer-term.

The goal for the coming year is to grow the offer, run additional cohorts, and develop additional specialised courses applying the approach to other areas of practice.

[You can hear from a practitioner who participated in the course last year here: https://coram-i.org.uk/everybody-should-do-this-course](#)

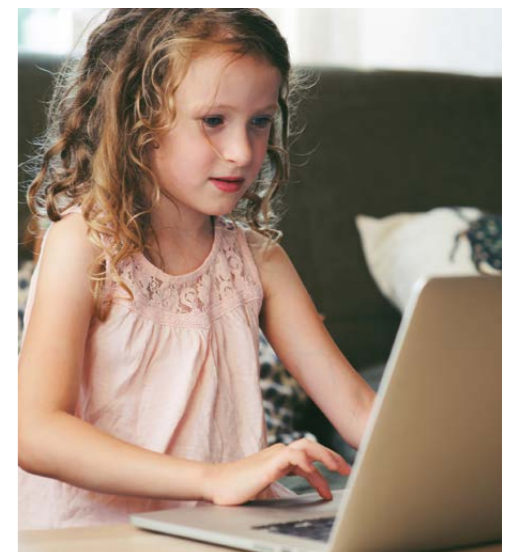
For more information, please contact Daniel.Kearns@coram.org.uk

Online Safety in Fostering – St Christopher's Fellowship

Online Safety in Fostering is a project led by St Christopher's and funded by Nominet. It is aiming to support young people in foster care to develop a better understanding of keeping safe online and resources to support this. There are a number of strands to the work, with an emphasis on co-development, and covering topics such as forming adolescent identity online in a safe way, supporting foster carers with addressing issues of online safety, and facilitating better

communication between foster carers and young people to help both better understand differing views on issues around keeping safe online.

[Care-experienced young people lead digital safety work | St Christopher's Fellowship](#)



Power2 Rediscover

Power2 are an organisation who run a number of different programmes with children and young people to support wellbeing and boost confidence and self-esteem. For example, the Power2 Advance programme works with 16-25 year-olds, often with care experience, to support them to manage the transition into further and higher education and employment. The programme is based around mentoring, 1:1 support, group workshops and external opportunities. Power2 also run a range of other programmes, many involving mentoring – including their ‘Teens and Toddlers’ programme, which offers teenagers the chance to mentor a child in a nursery over the course of 16 weeks, to help them to develop skills and confidence, and improving outcomes for the child. There is also the Power2 progress project, which matches those in Year 8 with children in Year 6, to benefit both through the process of mentoring, and the transition to secondary school.

Benefits of Power2 programmes include an improvement in self-confidence among 91% of young people taking part in the Teens and Toddlers programme. In the wake of the pandemic, the organisation has been working on a pilot project, Power 2 Rediscover Aiming to intervene early to prevent deterioration in mental health, the project engages young people aged



11-19 via an asset-based early help model. It involves the provision of 10 weekly 1:1 sessions with a therapeutically trained, salaried facilitator. The piloting local authorities are Rochdale, Trafford, Wigan, Oldham and Bury. In the pilot year, the project worked with 256 young people, many of whom had low mental wellbeing, were disengaged from education and/

or were shy/withdrawn. The evaluation showed an improvement across all of these areas. The model is now being expanded and focusing on supporting the mental health of looked after children via an RCT.

power2.org

Project Backpack – Barnardo’s and Nominet

Project Backpack is a collaboration between Barnardo’s and Nominet, which hopes to provide professionals with the resources to confidently work with children and young people around online safety. Although the vast majority of children and young people (94%) feel that they are safe online, parents and professionals are often worried and unsure about how

to best support children and young people to stay safe online. The project began in December 2021, with an initial plan to conduct research, co-develop their offering and begin prototyping and piloting the project, with a commitment to then scaling this in the longer-term.

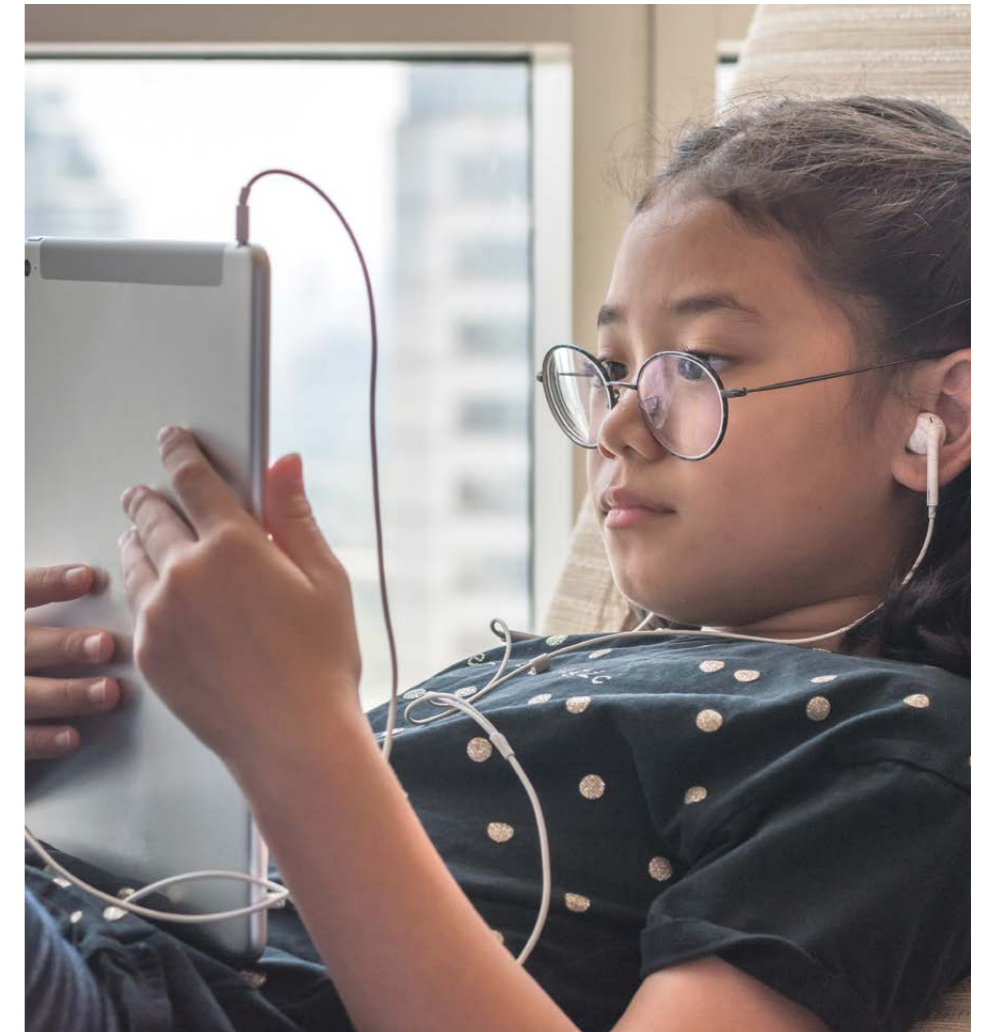
Barnardo’s to help professionals keep children safe online in new programme funded by Nominet - Nominet

Safety in Action Programme - Medway Task Force

The **Safety in Action Programme** is a collaboration between a wide range of agencies – led by Medway Community Safety Partnership (CSP) through funding from the Kent Police and Crime Commissioner. It teaches children aged 10 to 11 vital water, fire, road, internet and personal safety messages, and involved working alongside partners in Kent Fire and Rescue Service (KFRS), Kent Police, the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI), Her Majesty’s Coastguard, Kent & Medway Violence Reduction Unit and Crimestoppers.

1,300 pupils from across the area took part in the project, which was delivered online due to Covid, and all Year 6 pupils across Medway received a resource pack. A revised offer is being developed to trial this year, with new hour-long sessions being delivered.

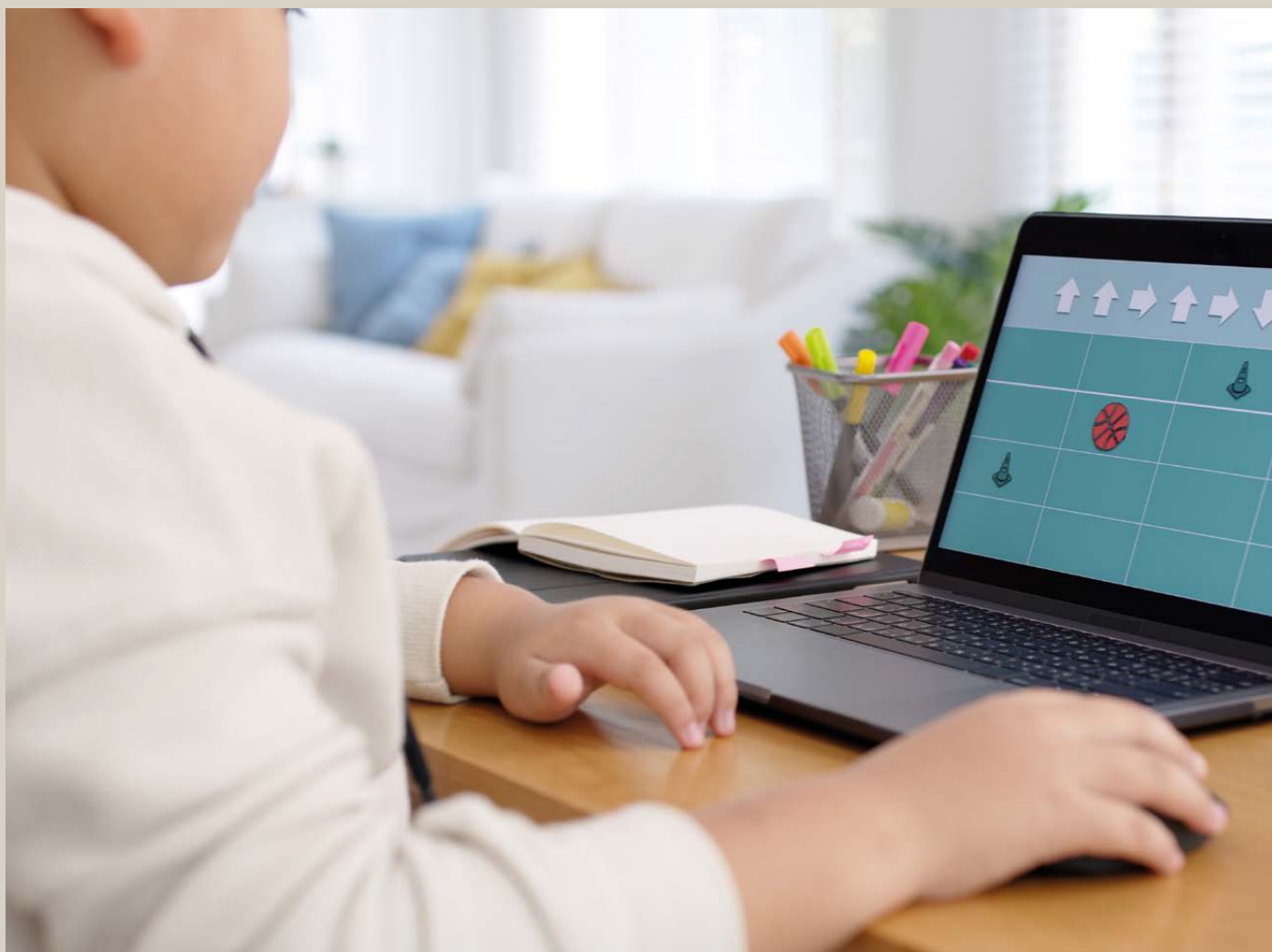
Safety initiative receives national award | Medway Council



Safe Zones – The Children’s Society and Local Manchester Charities

A partnership between The Children’s Society and a number of local charities in Manchester, **Safe Zones** are staffed by trained professionals, who work across four locations, or deliver support online. Aimed at 13-18 year olds who have recently experienced a mental health crisis, Safe Zones offer short-term interventions, based around improving wellbeing and ensuring that young people don’t have to wait to access support. Safe Zones is currently in a pilot phase.

Safe zones: Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust



Speak Out Stay Safe programme - NSPCC

Speak Out, Stay Safe is an NSPCC online safeguarding programme for children aged 5-11 that is available to all primary schools across the UK at no cost to the school. It uses assemblies featuring Ant and Dec to help children to understand abuse and the signs of abuse, know that

abuse is never their fault, and teaches them where to access support and resources, such as Childline. Accessible versions of the programme are available for a range of audiences.

[Speak out Stay safe programme | NSPCC Learning](#)



Specialist Adolescent Service Hertfordshire – Hertfordshire County Council

Launched in April 2020, the Specialist Adolescent Service Hertfordshire (SASH) offers support to 11-17 year olds who are at significant risk of exploitation or entering the care system. SASH joins up a number of

services, and has a service model based on a trauma-informed approach, motivational interviewing, and restorative practice.

[Children’s Services news \(hertscc.gov.uk\)](#)

Therapeutic practitioner for care leavers – Middlesbrough Council

Middlesbrough have employed a therapeutic practitioner in their leaving care service since January 2015. The role is shared between the local NHS Trust and Children’s Services, and is focused on supporting young people through the transition to adulthood, and providing specialist interventions tailored to the needs of young people

who have experienced trauma, as well as referring them on to other specialised services when needed.

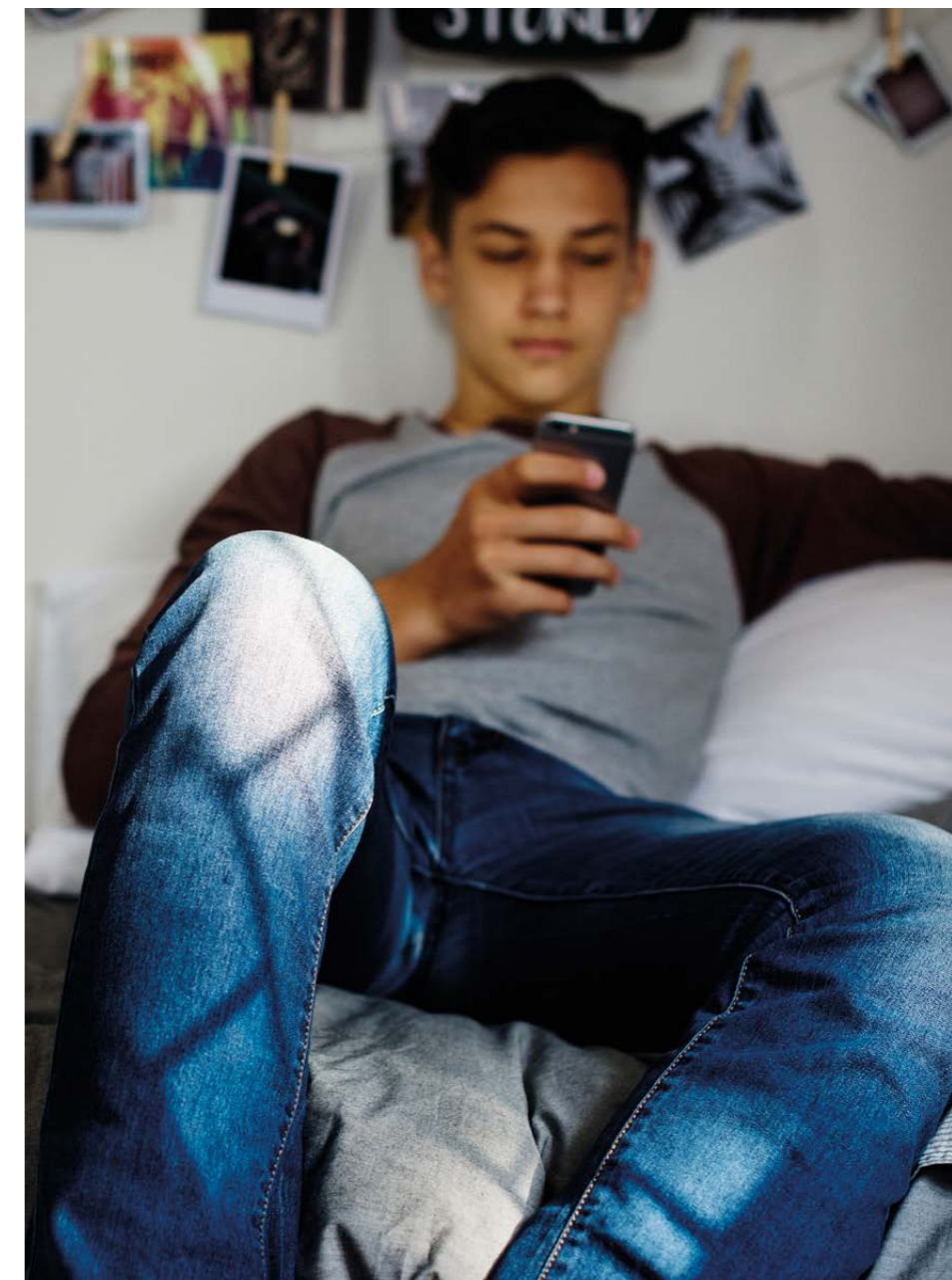
The role is outlined in the recent Care Review Report, available here [\(p.174\) The-independent-review-of-childrens-social-care-Final-report.pdf \(childrensocialcare.independent-review.uk\)](#)



TellMi

TellMi is a peer-support app for teenagers struggling with their mental health. It includes pre-moderation of content by staff, to ensure that the service is safe and effective. The app also includes signposting to other services and resources, to support young people in managing their mental health and wellbeing. In addition TellMi can provide some data and insights to help services to meet the needs of their young people, and TellMi appears to have had some success in addressing health inequalities, by engaging a wide range of young people, who may otherwise have experienced difficulties accessing services. An evaluation by UCL and the Anna Freud Centre found that 79% of young people felt less alone when using the app.

Tellmi



Think Ninja - Healios

Developed by experts with the help of children and young people, **ThinkNinja** is an app for 10 to 18 year olds that helps users to build resilience and manage their mental health through CBT-informed exercises. If your child is receiving care from Healios, they may be given a ThinkNinja login for additional on-demand support.

Some young people may also be suitable for the CBT Bytesize programme, where CBT is delivered in small, manageable blocks through text, chat and video. If your child is eligible and CBT Bytesize is available in your area, they'll have frequent check-ins with a clinician through a text messaging function on the **ThinkNinja** app, as well as their video sessions.



[ThinkNinja for epilepsy \(healios.org.uk\)](https://healios.org.uk)

Virtual Reality in Youth Justice – Antser with London Boroughs of Redbridge, Waltham Forest and Enfield

In a bid to reduce child exploitation, Redbridge, Waltham Forest, and Enfield Councils, partnered with Antser to implement the **virtual reality (VR) programme** with young people identified as at significant risk of extra-familial harm, and for parents, carers and the teams supporting them.

VR has allowed the boroughs to immerse users into 'real-life' scenarios, enabling young people, parents and practitioners to safely explore risks, and access support if needed.

In a case study with a 17-year-old young person who was showing signs of vulnerability towards gangs and violence, one of the immersive films showing a teenage boy (Joe) being exploited by a gang prompted a positive response: "I now see how young people can easily be groomed and then find themselves in difficult

situations. Even Joe's family could be threatened and become in debt to the drug dealers. Joe should have talked to his foster mother or the youth worker and asked for help before it became too late. Joe should have rejected the opportunity of a new phone by asking his foster mum to use her phone or asked a teacher to call his father."

Enfield Council's use of VR has been showcased in the recent Independent Review of Children's Social Care, highlighting the use of VR to run trauma-informed exploitation workshops for parents.

Feedback from parents who experienced VR as part of the Tri-Borough project has been very positive. Most said that they now have a better understanding of the experiences their child may be going through and better understanding of some of the dangers and risks their child may be exposed to. Parents said that they feel better able to speak to their child about what they are going through and crucially that they feel

better able to discuss with practitioners how to protect/support their child.

Results have shown VR improves engagement between Young People and agencies, empowering them to make positive decisions, have their voices heard, and their experiences understood by those supporting them.

antser.com



Workforce and organisational structures

Blackpool Families Rock – Blackpool Council

The **Blackpool Families Rock** project has co-developed a model of practice working with children and families to establish principles based around 'head, heart and hands'. This has led to a focus on relationship-based practice, and using restorative and systemic approaches to work with families in a strengths-based approach. The team have also developed an app to work as a directory of local services available to families, and information on a range of topics.

[family_time.pdf \(proceduresonline.com\)](https://proceduresonline.com/family_time.pdf)



Children's Innovation Partnership – Leicestershire County Council and Barnardo's

Following a review of the challenges facing Children's Services, Leicestershire sought a partner to work on a Care Placement Strategy, and Barnardo's were engaged to begin this work in December 2018 as part of a **Children's Innovation Partnership (CIP)**. This partnership involved co-designing, co-delivering, and co-investing in the care service, and was evaluated by the University of Bedfordshire.

The evaluation found that the partnership supported new ways of working and engaging with the market, as well as benefitting from

Barnardo's experience in securing bids to ensure that more funding was received for the project and services.

The [evaluation](#) was also positive about the leadership of the project, adequate commitment to funding, and the development of an open and honest culture. For the further rollout of the programme, there were recommendations for improved communications across the council, and sustaining the pace and culture of the innovation.

[Barnardos and LCC CIP Evaluation_ Final Report.pdf](#)



Crescendo - Frontline

Inspired by the Buurtzorg approach to community nursing in the Netherlands, the Crescendo project is hoping to empower social workers to make the changes they want to see in practice. It is hoped that by making these changes, social workers will be able to spend more time building effective relationships with the children and families they work with. The second strand to the project, is then working with leaders to embed and sustain this change, and work towards amending the structures and processes that currently frame social work practice. **Crescendo** is initially working with three local authorities, and hope to use this experience to collect feedback and then further refine their offer. The ultimate aim to develop the blueprint for relationship-based, flexible and sustainable practice in the longer-term.

[Crescendo | Frontline \(thefrontline.org.uk\)](https://thefrontline.org.uk)



Darlington Xtra- Darlington Borough Council

Darlington Xtra is a wide-ranging project centred on encouraging recruitment and retention in Darlington. As part of this project, the team has created a central website with a range of resources and information about the area and the local job offer. This is joined up with a revised training offer through the Darlington Academy, which is a 5-tier bespoke training and staff progression model to support the workforce in children's and adult's services.

The website also pulls together a large number of resources, and a toolkit, as well as linking to other

content such as their YouTube channel and podcast output to appeal to young people who may want to work in the sector in Darlington. This also promotes the work of other agencies and organisations outside of the council, and aims to create a cohesive community and supportive network. The programme has also created the Developing Darlington Care Collective to bring together different agencies to support the recruitment and retention of staff, especially in children's services. Through the Care Collective, people can register their interest in working with children and receive links to courses and training programmes instantaneously. With

workforce recruitment and retention a prevalent issue, **Darlington Xtra** is a proactive model to help to build the social care workforce.

[Darlington Borough Council Social Care Recruitment](#)

Innovation Programme - Frontline

Frontline runs a dedicated **Innovation Programme** for social work practitioners, providing a space and structure for idea generation and development. With a personal understanding of the day-to-day challenges facing practitioners, Frontline fellows are empowered to explore new ways to tackle the bureaucratic barriers social workers face and support them to find ways to provide better support to the families they work with. One

interesting innovation being explored within this programme is The Thrive App. The Thrive app will aim to support case management and staff wellbeing, providing an accessible structure for social workers to manage and track their cases, reflect on their wellbeing and manage work-related stresses and access a breadth of resources to use in their practice. It responds to social work wide challenges, including excessive bureaucracy brought on by the demands of growing caseloads, and

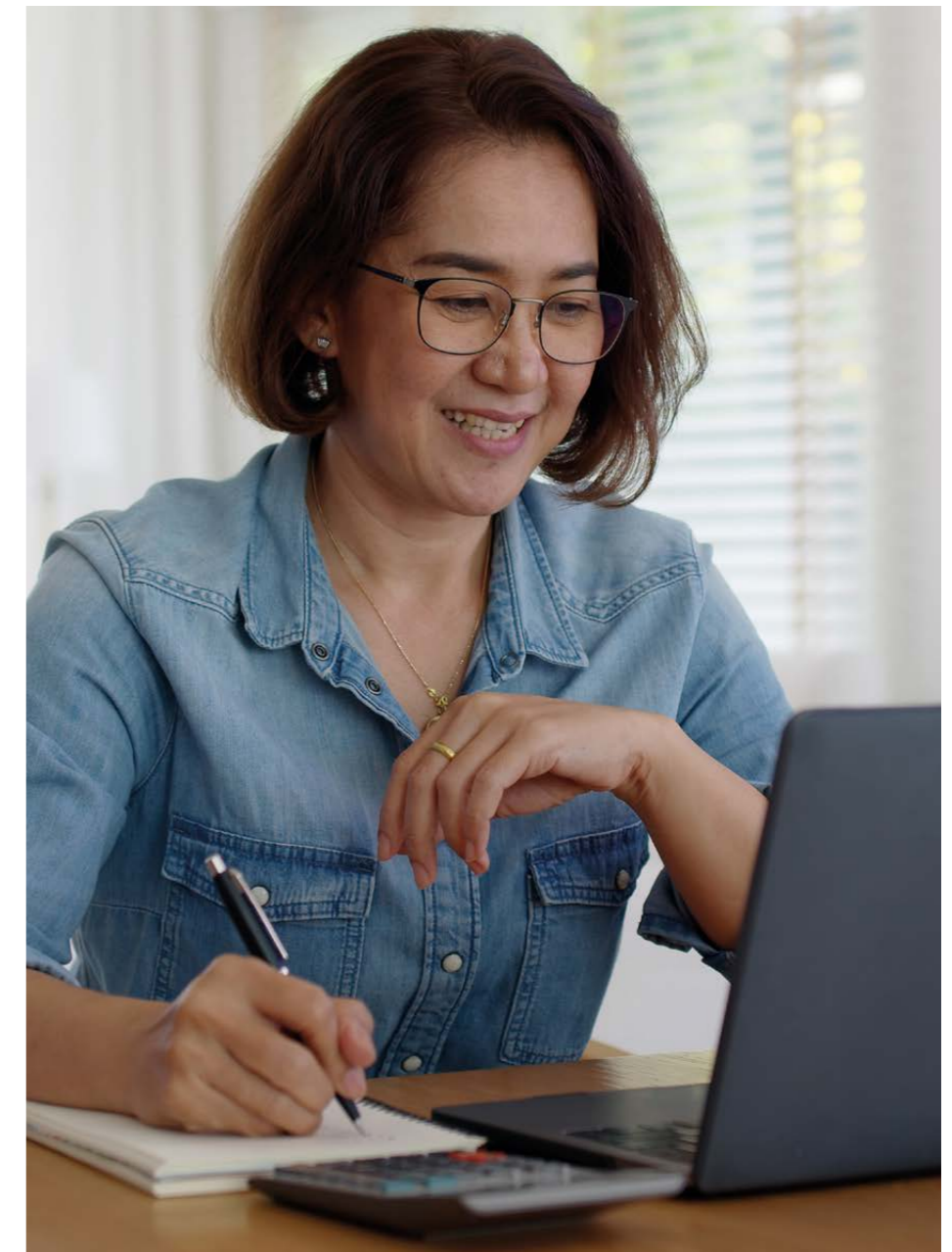
the link between stress and burnout and social worker retention. The product is in its early phases; following a successful pilot using a prototype, a refined version of the app will now be built. The early indications, however, suggest that this could be a useful addition to the social worker's toolbox as they seek to manage the demands of their role in the context of growing pressures.

<https://thefrontline.org.uk/innovation-programme>

Routes to Success – National Youth Agency

Developed in response to the pandemic, and funded through the National Lottery's Community Fund, **Routes to Success** offers a wide range of resources and training to youth workers. They have developed a range of free-to-access online webinars on a large number of topics to improve practice in the sector, and have also received funding to deliver an Organisational Development programme to 20 partner agencies to support them through co-developing creative solutions to meet the needs of their communities.

[Routes to Success – NYA](#)



Scale and Spread Programme – Greater Manchester

The Scale and Spread Programme was a DfE-funded initiative to scale four innovation projects from individual authorities within Greater Manchester to the whole region, in partnership with Research in Practice. These four projects were the Achieving Change Together (ACT) embedded within a complex safeguarding approach, No Wrong Door, Stockport Family and Team Around the School and Salford Strengthening Families. Overall feedback appeared to be positive for the changes to practice, and the potential beneficial impact on children and families, although there were a number of potential concerns raised – particularly around continuing governance and financing of projects, as well as the complicating factors as a result of the pandemic.



[scale_and_spread_report_v4.pdf](#)
([researchinpractice.org.uk](#))

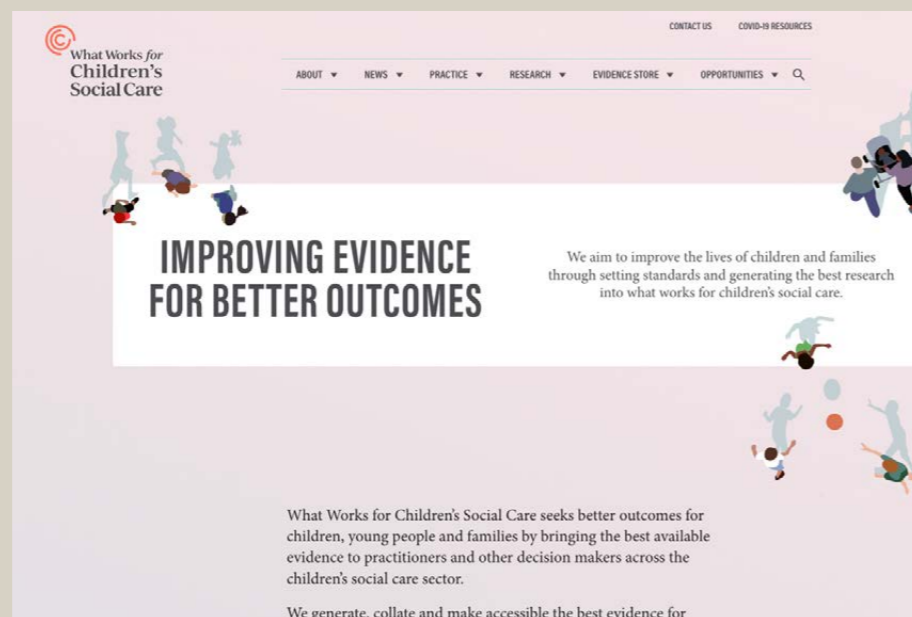


Social Workers in School Project

The **Social Workers in Schools (SWIS)** project is led by What Works for Children’s Social Care, and looks to improve how schools and social workers work together. It began as a pilot project with three local authorities with the first evaluation published in 2020, with the scaling of the project with a larger number of schools and local authorities following shortly afterwards – this phase was further lengthened to Summer 2022.

The results of the initial evaluation found that although the process and structure for how the project ran varied significantly between areas, overall it was well received by social workers, other professionals, and families. It also noted that social workers undertook a wide range of work with children both previously known to children’s services, and others, and highlighted some issues with interagency working.

Social Workers in Schools:
An evaluation of a pilot in three local authorities in England - What Works for Children’s Social Care
([whatworks-csc.org.uk](#))



Supervision for designated safeguarding leads in school – Greater Manchester

As with the SWIS project (above), this programme, led by What Works for Children’s Social Care, began with a single pilot project in Bolton, before expanding to Greater Manchester for the scale-up. The project provides designated safeguarding leads (DSLs) in schools with access to social work

supervision, to improve multi-agency working, to support staff with decision-making, and in the hope of reducing the number of referrals made to Children’s Services. The project was well-received by DSLs and qualitative feedback was largely positive, although the pilot site was too small to generate conclusive results around the impact

on referrals and other quantitative measures. It is hoped that the scale-up project across Greater Manchester will provide more detailed results. [Supervision for Designated Safeguarding Leads Scale-up - What Works for Children’s Social Care](#) ([whatworks-csc.org.uk](#))



Achieving stability for children in care

Always Here – North Yorkshire County Council

Seeking to help build and sustain relationships for those leaving care, North Yorkshire County Council has adopted the **Always Here** approach. This aims to allay anxieties of care leavers that the relationships with

those they have worked with will end abruptly as they reach their early 20s. With **Always Here**, young people are reassured that they can maintain key links and approach the council for advice, guidance and support, whatever their age. The council are in turn able to provide young people

with additional resources they might need. This solution is not resource heavy but by being clear of the offer, young people can benefit from retaining crucial relationships and the support they need as they embark on independence and beyond, ending the sense of a post-care cliff edge.

Bright Light – Catch 22 and The Children's Society

Charities Catch 22 and the Children's Society have teamed up on a pilot programme helping to find apprenticeships for care leavers aged 16-25, Bright Light. The pilot project, which was being funded by The Clothworkers Foundation, recognises the unique set of challenges faced by care experienced young people entering the world of work, which means they are often over-represented in NEET figures. It seeks to understand these obstacles in order to find the solutions which could make a difference on a national level and enable more care leavers to progress into employment, apprenticeships, education or training.

This bespoke programme provides wrap-around one-to-one support and coaching to care leavers at this important transition point. It prepares young people to begin considering their future, equips them with the skills and confidence needed to apply for jobs, guides them through the application process and offers sustained support over a 12-18 month apprenticeship period. Employers taking part in this project receive £1,000 for offering an apprenticeship to a care leaver, as well as receiving



support during the contract. Findings indicate that young people benefit from the relational and holistic approach of this project, with coaches investing a significant amount of time in getting to know the young person and to resolve any factors that might be impacting their employment prospects. It also reports the value of offering well-rounded support to employers to navigate any challenges

that might come with the programme. This programme indicates a promising approach to bettering the long-term employment prospects of a group of young people for whom this has been historically challenging.

catch-22.org.uk/services/bright-light

Care Leaver Local Offer Website

With leaving local authority care a critical time for many young people, the **Care Leaver Local Offer website** is a key tool to find out about local care leaver offers. This simple, intuitive tool covers 332 local authorities in England, helping councils to learn from others as they seek to improve opportunities and support to care leavers over a number of domains. For example, it details local policy on housing allocation and how the council will financially support young people moving into their first homes or local health, wellbeing and employment offers. There is the facility to directly compare local authority provision for care leavers. This easy-to-use tool

intends to help to drive up standards of support for care leavers and encourage national best practice so young people receive the support they need to navigate the challenges they may face leaving local authority care.

careleaveroffer.co.uk



Cradle to Crayons– Maricopa County, Arizona

Maricopa County in Arizona introduced the **Cradle to Crayons (C2C)** initiative, acknowledging the importance of a coordinated whole system approach to support the mental health of and achieve permanence for, infants and toddlers who have faced early life abuse and neglect. It is an adaptation of the Safe Babies Court Team, an intensive trauma-informed approach which combines the resources of the courts, child welfare agencies and other child services to help young children and families to manage early life trauma. **C2C** is offered in Maricopa via the courts to all families where a child under 3 has been removed from the home.

It is fundamentally focused on facilitating coordination between systems, with the specific make-up of support for each family is decided upon by judges. Elements involve the work of Community Coordinators, who work as advocates for (but not directly with) families and help unblock issues to ensure they receive the services they need as indicated by the court. Some of these Coordinators are also able to help

with mediation which can accelerate case progression. The programme also has Family Treatment Courts, **C2C** clinical services and a regular Maricopa Community Court Team. There is also the offer of parent-child relationship therapy, Family Time coaching, as well as trauma therapy - it is a multi-faceted model which is focused on dealing with trauma, supporting parents and building the secure attachment relationship for young children. There is an effort to ensure concurrent planning, looking to assess possible kinship placements early to ensure stability, and a programme component where foster carers can provide mentoring to birth parents. The ultimate goal is to support reunification and the programme has been shown to help families achieve permanency via reunification, as well as helping to reduce re-entry into care. This cross-system approach led by judicial professionals indicated the value of a multi-faceted approach to supporting children to return safely to their families.

[Cradle to Crayons – Casey Family Programs](https://www.maricopa.gov/c2c)

Coram and Churchill Fellowships

Coram is delighted to be partnering with the Churchill Fellowship and the Hadley Trust on a three-year programme of Fellowships, which will look at how we can learn from global approaches to improve the lives and outcomes of children and young people with experience of care. Each year the initiative will fund up to ten Fellows to travel worldwide and spend up to two months discovering new ideas and best practice to develop innovative solutions which can be applied in the UK to transform the lives of those in care. This includes children in care, those on the edge of care, adoptees and care-leavers, as well as considering how we can improve the support provided to caregivers and families.

Applications for 2022 are open until 5pm on 22nd November 2022 for projects beginning in August 2023. You can find information on how to apply at <https://www.churchillfellowship.org/>

Note that there will be subsequent application cycles.

Churchill Fellowships are open to all adult UK citizens regardless of qualifications, background or age, and the international research can be carried out through travel, online from the UK or a combination of both.

Applications are particularly encouraged from people with experience of care themselves, as well as foster carers, kinship carers and adopters, and are also welcome from researchers, educators, social workers and those in the health, charity, justice and education sectors.

<https://churchillfellowship.org/become-a-fellow/our-current-themes/children-and-young-people-with-experience-of-care>

Family Safeguarding for Children in Care Programme – Hertfordshire County Council

Amid a backdrop of a growing number of looked-after children in recent years and many children remaining in care compared to previous years, Hertfordshire County Council resolved to put in place a system to make sure the right children were in care at the right time. The council also wanted to ensure that children had the best chance to return home from care where it was safe to do so and were supported to maintain strong links with their birth families and networks.

The Family Safeguarding for Children in Care Programme began with a deep dive data analysis exercise, looking at children looked after data from the previous decade, to determine any key trends that needed to be addressed. Thereafter, the decision was made to extend Hertfordshire's successful [Family Safeguarding model](#). This is a multi-disciplinary, family-focused child protection model, which aims to keep more children safe at home, and has proved [effective](#) in reducing the number of children in care and on child protection plans, as well as

promoting a decline in the number of families needing police or emergency health services. Hertfordshire are now extending this model to a new cohort. In this new endeavour, the principles of Family Safeguarding, which involves a strength-based, multi-disciplinary approach to promoting change, will be applied to support reunification and improve outcomes for children and families already involved in the care system. A new multi-disciplinary team - involving parental mental health workers, substance misuse and domestic abuse workers as well as children's social workers and life coaches - will provide intensive support to families of children who have been in care for more than a year, as well as working with families where children are in their first 16 weeks in care. This will be complemented by an extension of the Family Group Conferencing Service and the recruitment of trauma specialists to work with families.

The programme is in its initial stages, with pilot funding for the next 3 years, but the council anticipates that 110 additional children will return home over 3 years. The work comes at a key time for the sector and aligns with



many key recommendations of the Care Review, around unlocking family networks, deploying multi-disciplinary teams, using data more effectively and supporting reunification. Innovation is clearly cumulative and by tweaking and remodelling existing successful services, there is opportunity for a broader positive impact on the lives of vulnerable children and families.

<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/about-the-council/news/news-archive/hertfordshires-trailblazing-family-safeguarding-model-highlighted-in-government-national-review-to-be-extended>

Future for Lyndene Model – Manchester City Council

Responding to the need to provide better, local specialist support for children and young people with a learning disability and/or autism and preserve crucial family links, Manchester City Council and Manchester Clinical Commissioning Group developed the **Future Model of Care for Lyndene**. Co-produced with children, young people and families, this new model of residential, short breaks and edge of care support care involved the regeneration and refurbishment of a former children's home in Manchester, funded by NHS England capital funding. It ultimately aims to

establish a means for this cohort of children and young people to remain in the family home or in family-based care, whilst providing support packages for families and carers to meet the needs of the child. Families are provided with appropriate strategies to support their children at home, with the ability for children and young people to receive more intensive behaviour support where necessary through short breaks care in proximity to their home. The model seeks to provide stability to young people, a retention of support networks by mitigating the need for them to travel out of area to receive specialist support. The project is in its early

stages, but through repurposing an existing local authority asset, in two months, it has helped two young people to avoid going into care, leading to a £360k annual cost avoidance. It has been estimated that the model will lead to four fewer young people needing to go into residential care per year, and have effects of increasing the capacity of in-house foster carers, decreasing reliance on short breaks respite facilities and reducing rates of familial or placement breakdown.

Gap Homes – Barnardo's Scotland

Young people who are care experienced are statistically more likely to become homeless, amid a chronic lack of suitable accommodation. Barnardo's has developed an innovative solution, in partnership with young people, local authorities and industry partners. They are building **Gap Homes**, purpose built for young people leaving care. Barnardo's **Gap Homes** offer a stable, easy to manage home within the community, also providing wraparound support to residents so they can develop skills for independent living, for example budgeting and cooking. The initiative acknowledges the specific difficulties faced by young people leaving care,

in accessing suitable accommodation and living alone for the first time, often without a reliable support network. The lack of appropriate housing is also costly to local authorities, both in terms of placement costs and crisis interventions. However, Barnardo's **Gap Homes** are designed for young people leaving care, and the provision of a home is complemented by a broad package of practical and emotional support available for two years to ease young people's transition to adulthood. An important interim step prior to independent living, it is an example of effective partnership working, with local authorities and industry partners such as Saint- Gobain and

IKEA. Barnardo's are building 50 high-quality, sustainable homes on gap sites in cities across the UK.



GM Room Makers Scheme – Greater Manchester Combined Authority

With placement sufficiency a regional (and national) priority and housing often a barrier to fostering, the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) developed the **GM Room Makers Scheme**. This scheme provides funding and support to foster carers to enable them to redecorate, renovate and refurbish rooms in their homes so that they can care for another foster child or young person. The scheme was introduced after a survey conducted by the GMCA in March 2021, looking at the housing circumstances of in-house foster carers, found that there were a number of carers who were willing to foster another child and had a spare room, but the spare room was not currently fit to be a bedroom for a young person. Carers fostering for each of the ten GM local authorities were able to apply for a grant from the **GM Room Makers Scheme**, and

candidates chosen to receive the funding to renovate a room were selected by local authorities. By making the most of the existing space in foster carer properties, this scheme has allowed more children to live locally with experienced in-house foster carers and carers have been able to keep siblings together in the same home. This has had a positive impact on council sufficiency and reduced dependence on external IFA

or residential placements. The first wave of this project is nearing completion, with 22 new bedrooms being renovated and GMCA is preparing to commence wave 2 of the scheme.

You can watch a video with some of the Foster Carers that took part in GM Room Makers [here](#).



Housing Solutions Scheme – London Borough of Islington

In 2020, the London Borough of Islington embarked on a novel **housing solutions scheme**, aiming to build the fostering capacity among its foster carer population so that more children can be placed locally in family homes. With the number of children coming into care rapidly increasing, the council was having to find homes for children with carers from external independent fostering agencies (IFAs) or in residential settings. This often meant upheaval for the children involved at a time of instability, requiring them to move out of borough and away from their families, friends, support networks and schools. It also represented a great financial cost to the council, who were paying around an extra £400 a week to place a child with an IFA carer and significantly more for residential care. The council wanted to make cost savings at a time of budget constraints so it could divert funds into other service areas and, fundamentally, to achieve better outcomes for local children.

The council surveyed its foster carer population twice across 2020 and 2021 to identify carers who would be willing and able to foster another child if they had the space in their home to do so. A total of 15 carers were assessed as suitable for a housing solution. A broad and ambitious range of housing solutions were proposed and implemented thereafter: housing adaptations on properties (e.g. extensions, loft conversions, garden, annexes) to add additional bedroom space, rehousing of social housing tenants into larger council properties and the council supplementing rent in the private sector to allow carers to rent bigger properties to house more children. The potential placement capacity arising from all 15 carers receiving their housing solution amounted to an additional 12 in-house placements, and would prevent the loss of a further 8 placements (e.g. as carers continued to support young people in their care through staying put or with birth children reaching an age where they needed additional bedroom space). The cumulative



potential savings in terms of costs avoided were circa £2.45m over a 7 year period.

In the longer term, this model will be extended, making use of existing council assets, with work to transform a vacant former adult's social care property into a home for a fostering family underway. This innovative approach to tackling a significant issue of placement sufficiency, based on an invest to save model, has already shown it can help to alleviate financial pressures and provide better, local homes for a group of vulnerable children.

Iowa Parent Partners

The Iowa **Parent Partners** programme is a peer support programme seeking to enable parents to be safely reunified with their children and reduce re-abuse. The programme capitalises on the successes and skills of parents who have previously been involved in the child welfare system and have had a positive outcome with their children (e.g. reunification), equipping them to become Parent Partners. After extensive training across a number of issues, **Parent Partners** are matched with other parents whose children are involved with child protection services to provide support, mentoring and advice in the hope that they can look after their children again. In addition, **Parent**

Partners are able to attend key meetings and events with their mentees. The programme recommends that **Parent Partners** meet face to face with mentees for between 1-2 hours per week for at least 6 months. Partners receive support themselves and are guided to fulfil and manage their role by coordinators, and there is an additional offer of clinical mental health support sessions, acknowledging that working with other parents may present challenges and triggers. As well as helping other parents, this is an important development and rehabilitative role. A 2019 [analysis](#) of the Iowa Parent Partner programme demonstrated favourable outcomes for families involved. There was a

greater likelihood that children on the programme would be able to step down from fostering placements to return to their homes, and the likelihood of children being removed from the home within 12 months of returning also reduced, although the impact over a 24 month period was less conclusive. Such peer mentoring opportunities provide a unique insight and personal empathy to help to rehabilitate and support parents to make key changes to improve the outcome for the family.

[Iowa Parent Partner Approach \(hhs.gov\)](https://www.hhs.gov/)

Kinship Connected – Kinship

The Kinship Connected programme is a model of kinship carers offering support to other kinship carers with special guardianship orders. It was created under the umbrella of the Connected Communities Innovation Fund and was delivered to over 400 kinship carers across 17 local authorities from April 2018 to March 2020. The programme seeks to address and support carers to work through some of the challenges they and their children face. Via the Kinship Connected programme, carers have access to both intensive one-to-one support and to peer support groups, to help to develop a cohesive kinship carer community. The support offered via this scheme includes emotional and practical support as well as advice, informal advocacy and support to access key grants. The programme was

evaluated in 2020. The evaluation indicated that for most carers enrolled on the programme, parenting confidence increased and concerns about their children were fewer thanks to the support they received. Significantly, the programme helped reduce the sense of isolation among carers, as well as demonstrating a statistically significant improvement in mental health in comparison to a control group. Cost benefits were also evident with the estimation that for every £1 spent on the programme, £1.20 would accrue in terms of benefit. Among families supported between 2014 and 2017, there was an 86% decrease in the number of children on Child Protection Plans and an 88% decrease in the number on Child in Need plans. By helping to stabilise placements, the programme also helped to mitigate the need for a child

to live in foster and residential care and supported longer-term prospects when considering the wider benefits of placement stability for children. This type of programme demonstrates the value of peer support to a key group of carers both in terms of wellbeing and stability and also longer-term financial outcomes and fits with recommendations in the Care Review related to improving support for kinship carers.

<https://kinship.org.uk/commission-our-services/kinship-connected>



Lifelong Links – Family Rights Group

Funded through the DfE's Social Care Innovation Programme, the Family Rights Group's **Lifelong Links** programme helps to provide looked-after children and young people with supportive networks so they can sustain the important relationships they need across their lives. Each child in care is assigned a specialist independent Lifelong Links coordinator, who they are able to meet with to go through and map the key people in their lives and talk about who else they want to connect with. On the basis of this information, the coordinator uses tools such as genograms to identify these people and this network comes together to attend a Lifelong Links Family Group Conference to discuss and plan how they can all support the child and maintain positive relationships. Local authorities are then supported by the Family Rights Group to put this plan into action. The initiative has helped over 1,775 young people to find and sustain important links with their families

and wider networks.

An [evaluation](#) by Oxford University of a 3-year trial across 12 sites reflected the benefits to children of this programme as it helps to foster a sense of identity and belonging. It found that at the beginning of the work, children and young people tended to pinpoint between 1 and 25 people they wanted to be part of their lives; 96% of the people identified had been established as contacts by the time the Lifelong Link plan had been formulated or the Lifelong Links family group conference had happened. It was also seen to have a positive impact on placement stability: in the year following Lifelong Links, 74% of children referred were still in their placement, whereas only 41% were in placement in the comparison group. A few children were also able to return home to their families or cease to be a looked-after child. The increase in placement stability and the ability of children to leave statutory care meant that the programme promoted costs savings of around £1.02 for every £1 spent.

The evaluators were clear that the commitment of the local authorities involved in implementing the programme and that adapting culture and engagement with birth families were important to the success of the programme, as well as its positioning as an independent service distinct from the local authority. A further [briefing paper](#) by the Rees Centre is available to offer guidance on how the Lifelong Links programme should be implemented in practice as an ongoing, child-led process which promotes collaborative working with birth families. Programmes like this are clearly important to enabling children in care to better understand their life story and feel a sense of belonging with family members, rather than feeling isolated. This in turn is conducive to better stability and better outcomes for looked-after children and young people.

<https://frg.org.uk/lifelong-links>

Mockingbird Constellation Model – Together4Children

Mockingbird led by The Fostering Network in the UK, delivers sustainable foster care. It is an evidence-based model structured around the support and relationships an extended family provides. The model nurtures the relationships between children, young people and foster families supporting them to build a resilient and caring community. The model has recently been expanded and is being implemented collaboratively by the Together4Children partnership across a region covering Shropshire, Staffordshire, City of Stoke-on-Trent and Telford & Wrekin Council. This joint delivery of Mockingbird aims to improve foster carer retention, improve stability, and contribute to a positive experience of care for children and young people by building a strong network of carers and providing an

'extended family' approach to support. With the support of the Fostering Network, two services have launched their first Mockingbird constellations with further launches planned this year for the two other services. Each constellation comprises of between six to ten foster carers from across council areas. This is the first time that Council fostering services have combined regionally to implement and deliver **Mockingbird**.

Throughout the project there have been many challenges relating to different processes, procedures and practices across the four council's services. By working together, building trust and sharing expertise and a passion for improving outcomes for children, the services have been able to overcome barriers and use the learning from the launch of each successive Mockingbird Constellation to support development across the region. Where possible, the services

have put in place standard regional approaches to policies and processes which has saved time, avoided cost and helped to support a 'common culture' of practice across the region. As the project grows, the group are benefitting from having 'ready-made' groups of key experts, whether that is the four Liaison workers, who are now working together across the region to deliver Mockingbird, or the Hub carers, who are central to supporting other carers in their constellations. These groups are now coming together to support each other, share learning and develop and improve practice.



On The Way Home – Boys Town Child and Family Translational Research Center and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln

On The Way Home is a 12-month wrap-around support model for children and young people leaving residential care. The model is designed to improve reintegration, support placement stability and help young people settle back into their home, school and the community at a key point of transition. Working with young people aged 12-18, the programme involves three interventions: Check & Connect, Common Sense Parenting and homework support.

Check & Connect focuses on ensuring young people can engage in school. Family consultants closely monitor school engagement e.g. punctuality, absence, detentions etc. and there are weekly meetings with the young person, their carer and a school-based mentor to work

through key goals related to school, with key interventions offered to deal with issues identified. For example, if a young person is struggling in particular lessons, they can receive one-to-one tutoring. The Common Sense Parenting component is delivered to parents in a group-based setting to help them better understand their child and how to deal with their behaviour. The homework support element helps to involve parents in the young person's homework, providing a mechanism to monitor homework and for those with greater difficulty, the family consultant is able to work with the family and schools to come up with a plan to support the young person.

Research on the impact of On The Way Home [found](#) that those taking part in the programme were more likely to remain at home a year after services had ended and caregivers showed increased

empowerment and self-efficacy. However, a later study was more sceptical about the impact on placements compared to the control group. It also acknowledged the fact that all children came from one residential home, although there were still questionnaire reports of positive placements among those who received the intervention, as well as improved caregiver empowerment and long-term school and community engagement. The programme was deemed to have a Promising Research Evidence by the California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare.

boystowntraining.org/assets/1807-132-04dNationalOnTheWayHome.pdf

Out There National Fostering Recruitment film - Coventry City Council

In a bid to increase the national foster carer population amid recruitment challenges, Coventry City Council facilitated the production of a short film to encourage more people to become foster carers. **Out There** was informed by 34 local authorities and focuses on reflecting the life-changing impact fostering can have

on both foster carers and the children and young people they look after. The film, which premiered in October 2021, is intended to be shared by local authorities across the United Kingdom as a shared strategy to address common challenges. Similar films have previously boasted positive results in terms of engagement and the hope is that this campaign film will replicate these benefits in terms of encouraging

more people to put themselves forward to become foster carers. The film is available [here](#).

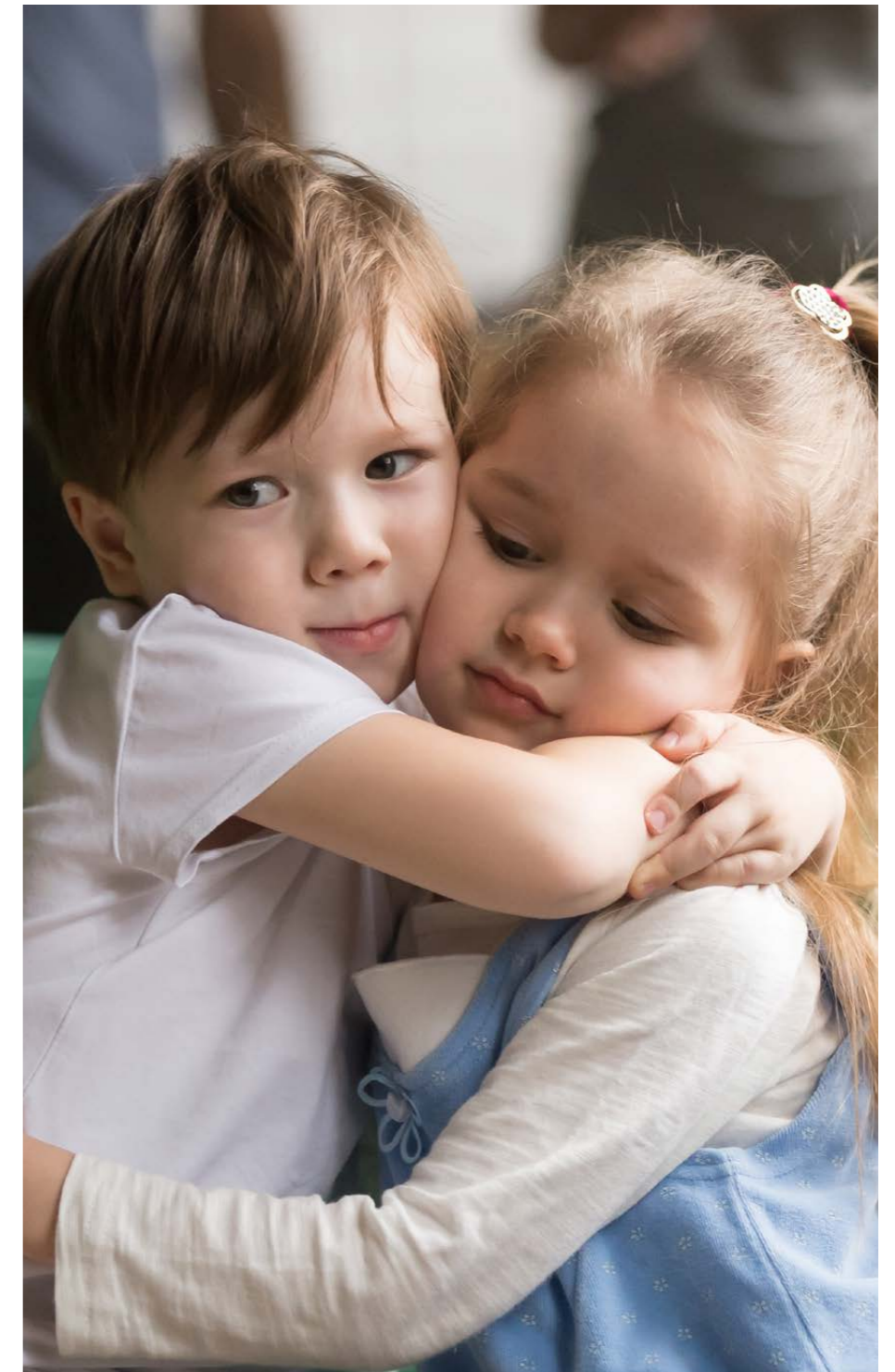
Sibling Time Activity Days – Coram

Coram is piloting a new adaptation of its activity day model to help local authorities to support looked after or adopted children to maintain meaningful contact with their siblings. Coram's Activity Days were originally offered as a family finding service to help to match prospective adopters and foster carers with children and young people awaiting permanence, in a more natural, relaxed environment. It has supported matching: over four events involving 44 children, 21 children were matched to foster carers.

Acknowledging the recommendation of the Children's Commissioner that there should be legal protection for the maintenance of sibling relationships, **Sibling Time Activity Days**, will provide a supportive, therapeutic and safe environment for siblings to meet and create new memories. During these activity days, young siblings will get the chance to take part in arts and crafts activities, den building, sports activities and creative therapy sessions. At the end of each session, the children will receive photographs of their time together, with a social worker also providing a short report for each sibling group.

The sessions cost £150 per child and will take place during school holidays. For more information or to request a referral form, please email adoption.

activitydays@coram.org.uk



Stepping Stones - Shropshire Council

With foster carer recruitment increasingly challenging and the number of children coming into care outstripping the number of foster carers, Shropshire Council launched the new Stepping Stones project to build its cohort of in-house carers and enhance placement planning to ensure children are cared for locally in the right setting for them. The project sees the council specifically targeting those with experience in specific professions, from teaching to nursing and caring, to offer them a new career in fostering with a weekly wage of £750 and additional allowances. Underpinned by therapeutic practices, this model aims to equip foster carers with specialist skills to look after children with complex needs, with a wraparound support package available at all hours. It looks to help those young people currently living in residential homes, on the edge of care, those requiring fostering and even those who could return to their familial home.

The focus of **Stepping Stones** is on developing relationships between young people and their carers in



advance of placements, with time taken to allow the young person the chance to get to know their carer prior to moving into their home permanently. The initiative, which began in 2022, could be conducive to better outcomes for children and young people, reducing the instability many experience in care through

better planning and support from specialist carers who are attuned to their needs.

[Stepping Stones Fostering | Shropshire Fostering](#)

TACT Connect – TACT

TACT Connect is a national programme set up by TACT Fostering, created to offer both support and, most importantly, community to teens and adults who live within or have lived within TACT fostering families. **TACT Connect** works across regions, predominantly online, and is open to those aged 15 and upwards. It is Big Lottery funded and the scheme now offers a [mentoring programme](#) to young people who are 15 to 18-years-old, as well as a full membership to those who are aged 16-years-old and beyond.

On entering the **TACT Connect** community, all new members are sent a Membership Welcome Box, and those over the age of 16 are given access to our members-only online

Connect Hub. Here, information, support, and up to 10 online community spaces per month are waiting for them. This year, TACT has offered the opportunity for members to meet face-to-face, spending time together at the very first **TACT Connect** Get Away in the countryside. Alongside fun and social connection, Connect members benefit from consistent access to educational and employment advice and support through our TACT Education Service. As well as this, there are also opportunities to be part of creating TACT's very own seasonal Connected Magazine. There is also a **TACT Connect** Grant for those who require support financially – as often life throws a curveball unexpectedly and many find themselves in need of a

little help. Any member is eligible to apply for this for any reason. **TACT Connect** takes pride in a hands-on approach to co-production, with employment opportunities offered to all members who are 18-years-old and above; voluntary work through the mentoring programme, and paid employment opportunities through the role of being a **TACT Connect** Advisor. TACT advisors help to shape the community as it grows by offering their valuable perspective as young, care experienced people. Notwithstanding, the opportunity is always there for any and all members to have their say and the freedom to inform events, membership and resources.

tactcare.org.uk/tact-connect

Transformation of Fostering Service – London Borough of Redbridge

The London Borough of Redbridge has invested to improve its fostering service, recruit new carers and develop the capacity and capability of its in-house carers. The council is committed to ensuring its carers feel fully prepared and qualified to look after a range of children and young people with increasingly complex needs and has introduced structured specialist pathways within the service, for example around complex contextual safeguarding, SEND and parent and child caring. Each of these pathways has a unique fee structure as the council aims to take a more

bespoke approach to working with its carers. The council has also honed its recruitment strategy and offer to carers as it seeks to broaden its pool of in-house carers. In Redbridge, there is now a dedicated Recruitment, Engagement and Development Officer working in the fostering team. As a result, the team has been able to enhance its communication, training and support offer and improve its marketing and online campaigns to promote fostering, making use of a broad spectrum of social media sites, from Facebook to Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn. In the last year, the council reports to having had more fostering applications than ever. These efforts have made a tangible

difference: the number of in-house fostering households now stands at 80, in comparison to 57 the year previously. Whilst in the past 3 years, on average, 4 foster carer households were approved annually, in 2020/21 20 foster carer households were approved. This has significantly improved the service the council is able to provide to vulnerable children locally and supports better matching of children to carers most appropriate to cater to their needs. The council is now looking to keep pace with this trend and approve 20 additional households per year.

Trauma-informed commissioning & Trevone House – Gloucestershire County Council

Amid a lack of sufficient local provision to meet the growing needs of local children in the existing market, Gloucestershire County Council is following a **trauma-informed approach to commissioning**. This is part of a 3-year, £15.5m plan to create the right homes for young people in the county, removing transition points and adopting a needs led approach to enable them to foster trusted, loving relationships. Previously, 85% of Gloucestershire children in residential provision were placed outside of the county, a trend the council were keen to reverse. As this unique new model of care has been developed, it has been imperative that the voice of children and young people remained central throughout and that they were able to use their experiences to tell the council what they needed in a home. The council has also created frameworks through which young people are able to quality assess homes directly.

Co-designed with care-experienced young people, the first home, **Trevone House**, opened in 2021 at the site of a former care

home. This modern, newly renovated home now provides semi-independent accommodation for young people aged 16-25 to enable them to thrive into adulthood, feeling supported and looked after in their home. The specially designed home is made up of ten studio flats, four shared flats, two CQC registered wellbeing flats for young people stepping down from Tier 4 care and one emergency bed. It can house up to 21 young people. In addition, the home has its own wellbeing suite and there are four trained staff available 24-hours a day (one of whom is an RMN), supporting young people through any challenges that arise. It is underpinned by the trauma informed model of care and Gloucestershire has worked with Dr Ana Draper from the Tavistock to put this into practice in Trevone House.

The model is awaiting formal evaluation by the IPC, but the outcomes for young people living in Trevone House have been positive. The team have seen a reduction in missing episodes of around 73%, with missing hours declining by 93%, saving the Gloucestershire constabulary £250,000 in police time. There is a 90% stability rate for the young people living there. The

supportive environment the home provides has also negated the need to place two young people in secure welfare provision, with one young person who had previously been in Tier 4 provision for 6 years able to move into the house too. The team will also trial completing safe and well checks within the home. The council plans to build a further two homes similar to Trevone House, as well as working with adults services to develop lifetime homes for individuals with complex support needs and developing up to 12 residential homes across the county for a range of children as part of the broader residential framework. A virtual estate agent will also be created to help support tenants. The outcomes associated so far with this model demonstrate the tangible pay-off for young people of investing in provision designed with their priorities and needs at the forefront.

The Trevone House launch video is available [here](#) and you can also watch Wendy Williams, Assistant Director for Integrated Children and Families Commissioning speak at a CII webinar about the model [here](#).

You Say Who – North Lincolnshire Council

North Lincolnshire Council was commended in the Independent Review of Children's Social Care for its **You Say Who** project. The project, which is part of the council's children in care process, acknowledges the imperative for children in care to be able to develop and maintain positive, stable relationships with the important people in their lives. It involves working with young people to build a network to support them,

comprising of both people they previously had a relationship with and new people. The model complements the implementation in North Lincolnshire of the NSPCC reunification practice, which has shown promising indications of increasing reunification.

Between October 2018 and October 2021, 114 children, some of whom were involved in legal proceedings, were able to move back in with parents or family members. 110 have been able to stay with their families.



Cultural competence and disproportionality

BAME Achievement Strategy – London Borough of Haringey

The Haringey Education Partnership (HEP) formed in 2017 as a not-for-profit company. With local data showing that the GCSE attainment gap between higher achieving white British students and lower achieving BAME groups was higher in Haringey than anywhere else in the country and in the context of a link between attainment, exclusion and disadvantage, the **BAME Achievement Strategy** looked to narrow this gap. This strategy acknowledged the wider context of the education system in informing outcomes, with factors including institutional racism, unconscious bias, a lack of or negative representations of BAME groups in the

curriculum, lack of cultural competence, the lack of visible BAME representation among school leaders impacting young people's self-worth, aspiration and life chances. In order to remedy some of these issues, the programme offers resources to schools, public sector organisations, pupils and parents. For example, schools are given self-evaluation tools including vulnerable to underachievement checklists, BAME action plan templates and an achievement database which depicts local trends. Furthermore, BAME literature is provided to boost representation. The strategy also includes a commitment to schools employing a Lead governor for Black Caribbean and BAME achievement

and a champion for Black Caribbean and BAME on their Senior Leadership team, with a whole-school focus on these issues. All schools in Haringey are encouraged to sign up and support this strategy, with HEP committed to driving it among schools, council leadership and partner services. By equipping schools with resources to proactively support BAME children and young people and by acknowledging the inequalities inherent in the education system, the programme aims to facilitate better educational and life outcomes, looking to close the gap between white British and BAME groups within 7 years.

[PowerPoint Presentation \(haringeyeducationpartnership.co.uk\)](https://www.haringeyeducationpartnership.co.uk)

The Disproportionality Project – London Borough of Islington and London Borough of Haringey

In the context of an over-representation of BAME young people in the criminal justice system, the **Disproportionality Project** engaged multiple agencies working within Haringey and Islington across youth services, youth offending services, early help and police services. It involved practitioner workshops, interviews with frontline workers, interviews with young people involved in the criminal justice system, as well as workshops for parents. It followed [research](#) into the work of the Islington Integrated Gangs Team in 2019. Organised by the charity, AIM High, the project's stated aims were to 'improve awareness and capacity' of the young people's workforce to tackle the disproportionate number of BAME offenders and the negative outcomes for this group within the criminal

justice system. It involved staff training, which covered the adverse childhood experiences within BAME communities, as well as conscious and unconscious bias and institutional racism. It also worked on an engagement programme for local parents and carers from BAME backgrounds, including creating a 'safe space' for parents with young people involved in ASB/offending to discuss the difficulties they face. On a wider level, the programme also looked to help improve local services and support provided to marginalised communities in these areas. The programme was [evaluated](#) by the Centre for City Criminology, City, University of London in 2020. Specific strengths of the programme were discussed, with the guidance offered by the facilitators in creating an open discussion and the neutral position of the charity highlighted as important. Furthermore, delivering the training to services from different

agencies via this programme was said to encourage important exchange and debate. Professionals who attended the workshops mostly said the lessons they had learned would impact their practice. The process was also said to provide an important insight into and enable parents to articulate the multiple challenges they face, which include structural and societal pressures. The importance of these difficulties being presented to relevant stakeholders was raised. There were some challenges identified, however, including issues of parental engagement and some structural tweaks to the programme were suggested. Eleven key recommendations were made by the evaluators in order to inform local work on addressing disproportionality in the criminal justice system and these are available on p.33 of the [evaluation](#).

Establishing a cultural competency approach to youth justice – London Borough of Lewisham

Seeking to address inequalities in terms of race and ethnicity, the London Borough of Lewisham has worked to promote the cultural competency within its youth offending service. This follows the longer term development of a trauma-informed approach within the service with active efforts to ensure the workforce is culturally competent. The transformation involved the deployment of external facilitators to deliver workshops to the service across 6 weeks. These workshops focused on confronting challenges, holding the organisation to account and identifying ambitions.

With unconscious bias highlighted as an issue and recognising the importance of a child first approach, there was an effort to ensure the workforce was diverse across all levels and to become more proactively anti-racist, with work to develop trust with communities and work more effectively with partners. Efforts to increase the representation of



minority staff in leadership positions has been key to this. The service has also utilised 'journey of the child' data to identify the key points in the system where children and young people from BAME communities may experience bias and discrimination, with the Concern Hub a tool to improve early identification of risk. At the core of the service is a

restorative approach focusing on learning, which the service has shared with education, police and social care colleagues locally. The service was awarded the MJ Award for workforce transformation in 2020 and service users have been positive about their experience with the service.

Improving Outcomes for Young Black Men – London Borough of Hackney

With a focus on education, mental health and reducing the risk of harm, the **Improving Outcomes for Young Black Men** programme looks to address the disproportionately poorer outcomes experienced by young black men in relation to GCSE attainment, exclusion, mental health and poverty. By tackling inequality and boosting visibility, it seeks to create the conditions where this group can achieve better outcomes. The approach is multi-faceted. In terms of education, there is a focus on specific risks such as the school transitions

process and exclusions, which centres on utilising CAMHS support as an alternative to exclusion. It also addresses recruitment in schools to promote more black role models, as well as providing cultural competence training for schools. Another strand of the programme is around boosting the accessibility and inclusivity of mental health services to this community and deepening understanding of the impact of mental health on behaviour. The third element is around reducing the risk of harm across social care, health, school and community settings. For example, this includes improving the provision of information to parents, looking at how stop-and-

search operates and working with local media to facilitate positive coverage of young black men. This approach aims to reduce disproportionality over 10 years, acknowledging that a crucial step in making improvements in this area is to deepen insights into the key issues and diversifying workforce and leadership.

[Improving outcomes for young black men | Hackney Council](#)



Raising the Game – London Borough of Lambeth

Led by the Lambeth Schools Partnership, Raising the Game aims to promote better outcomes at all stages, raise aspirations and address the academic attainment gap experienced by Black Caribbean pupils in Lambeth. The programme responds to findings of a 7-10 percent academic attainment gap and increased exclusion rates among this group. Informed by detailed research, **Raising the Game** runs in a number of Lambeth schools to reduce this gap and involves multiple strands. These include *Aim High*, where young people are linked with Black role models from across the professional and academic world to provide inspiration and raise aspirations, as well as teachers being given license to develop a diverse, inclusive curriculum. Another key strand is the Parental Engagement Network, which helps to improve parental engagement in their children's learning, focusing on early years and transition. Racial Justice Champions are also involved to promote the programme to schools staff and communities. Finally, the programme involved headteachers using a group coaching model to work to highlight key interventions and assess their impact. In the first two years of the programme, the Aim High events had been attended by 2,200 pupils from

Levelling the Playing Field

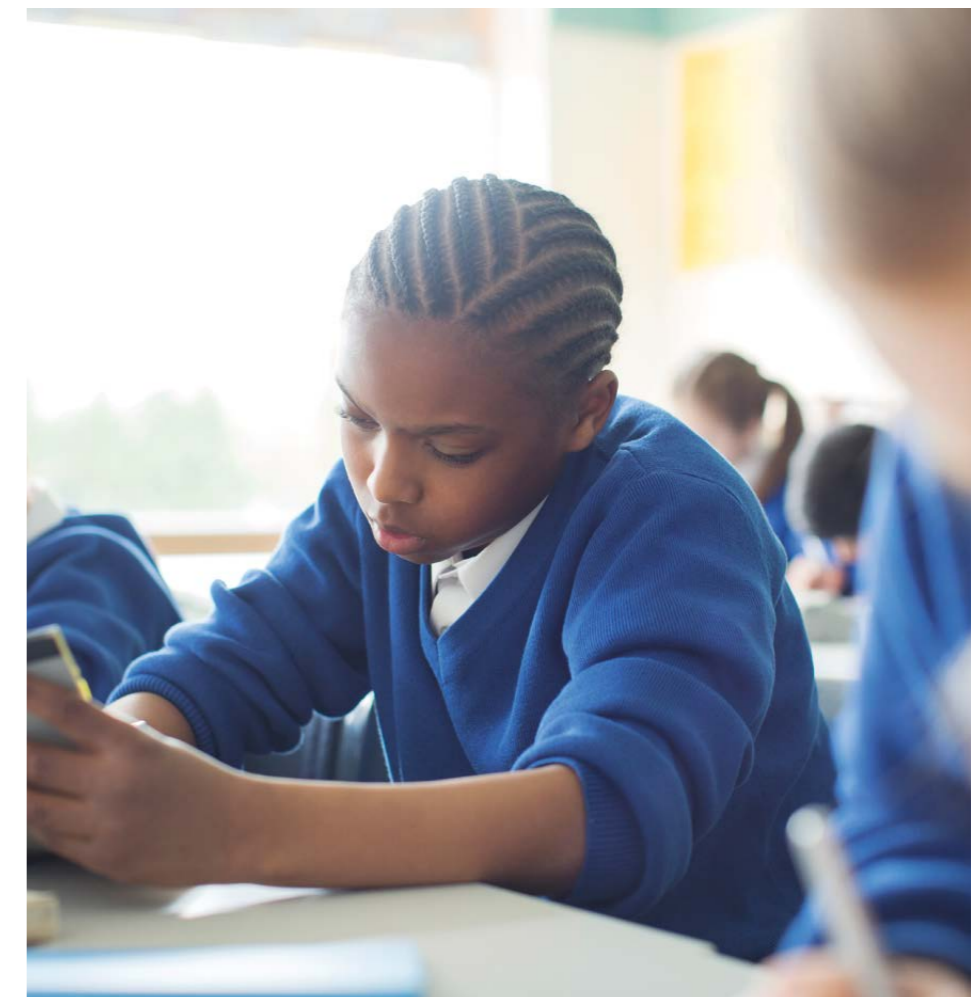
Focusing on addressing the increased likelihood that children from ethnic minority communities will be involved in the criminal justice system, **Levelling the Playing Field** is a sports and physical activity programme for young people. Taking a 'Health Promotion, Public Health' approach, the programme is being piloted in London, Gwent, the West Midlands and South Yorkshire. Part of the programme focuses on 'reducing harm' via bespoke trauma informed mentoring programme,

with the 'reversing harm' part of the programme involving the weekly sports and physical activity sessions, both in communities and on the secure estate, elevating the voice of the child. There is also a 'preventing harm' element, which facilitates knowledge and insight sharing. The programme aims to reach over 11,200 children and is being evaluated by the University of Birmingham.

[About LtPF \(levellingthefield.org\)](#)

years 2 to 10, with 190 inspirational speakers presenting. The impact has been positive, contributing to a reduced rate of exclusion of Black Caribbean students and better age-related expectations for students at Key Stage 2 and 4.

[Raising The Game | Lambeth Schools Partnership](#)



Rights and remedies: safeguarding young people and their learning – Coram, the Clement James Centre and the Grenfell Foundation

Coram worked with the Clement James Centre (CJC) and the Grenfell Foundation on a pilot project exploring how young people could be better supported to reduce exclusions from school. The project acknowledged the correlation between school exclusion and adverse social and economic life chances, and that those young people who have been involved in the care system, those who have experienced familial poverty and those from BAME backgrounds have been historically over-represented in exclusion data. With data showing an increase in school exclusions among young people living in proximity to the tragic Grenfell Tower, the Grenfell Foundation funded this new initiative to help children, parents, carers and schools to work together to secure better outcomes.

Whilst investigating cases of school exclusion, CJC and Coram found that many parents and carers had not been provided early on with clear information and advice on their legal situations and possible remedies, and there was a lack of clarity on processes

and procedures. Seeking to address some of these challenges, the initiative involved providing access to experts at an early stage, via a mix of in-person and virtual training and consultancy sessions. This was complemented by the convening of experts from across legal, educational psychology and education services to interrogate and review individual exclusion cases, sharing their expertise to determine the best course of action for the child. A representative, present on behalf of each family, was able to better understand the intricacies of each case, the legal situation and what could be done for each child. The process was found to be beneficial to all those involved, with the multi-disciplinary approach providing varied expertise and facilitating a well-rounded insight into the case, helping to identify tangible next steps. Although the circumstances may have been unique to the locality and linked to the effect of the fire on local families, many young people face educational challenges, with their parents or carers often ill-equipped with the knowledge to find a resolution early on. The [evaluation](#) did highlight the fact that this initiative involves a significant investment of



time and money. However it is a promising model for how a multi-agency, rigorous case-by-case approach can help parents, carers, children and schools to better work together to enable children to stay in education.

[Rights and remedies: safeguarding young people and their learning | Coram](#)

SpeakOut – Early Intervention Foundation, Race Equality Foundation and Action for Children

The **SpeakOut** survey was distributed in order to find out from young people and parents from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds about their access to support and how it could be improved. It was coordinated by the Early Intervention Foundation, Race Equality Foundation and Action for Children. The [findings](#) were reported on in June 2022. It showed the prevalence of experiences of racism and discrimination when attempting to access and whilst accessing services. One in three reported feeling they were treated unfairly whilst accessing support and

importantly, over 40% of respondents said the support received did not make a difference to them or even made things worse. The report provided important insight into how we can better support ethnic minority families. The importance of keeping families' experiences of racism and discrimination and their impact on access to support was also emphasised. The report recommended that all services working with children and families must work to eliminate racist and discriminatory practice in their services. It also highlighted the importance of ensuring early help services better align with the needs of ethnic minority families and

embedding and sustaining a no wrong door approach for those families, with family hubs potentially facilitating this improved access to services for communities. It also suggested that workforce planning was also crucial in terms of focusing on how services build trusting relationships with ethnic minority families. These findings are instructive in helping the sector to better design services so they address these challenges in accessing the right services for minority ethnic communities.

[A safe space for your voice to be heard - SpeakOut](#)

Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities Parent Programme

Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities is a parenting programme, which has been devised by the charity, the Race Equality Foundation. Offered over a 13-week period, the programme works to support parents to care for their children via a group-based approach, promoting the protective factors linked to good parenting. In particular, the programme aims to reach and

support families from marginalised communities, particularly those from ethnic minority communities. Based on social learning theory, the programme works with parents whose children are 18 and under, seeking to support parents to improve their understanding of child development, positive discipline techniques and enhance family relationships. It has been [reported](#) to support an improvement in parenting confidence, parent and child self-esteem and relationships with children and within

the family. There is currently a 4-year RCT taking place to determine the effectiveness of this programme with this group. There are 676 parents participating across 7 areas.

[SFSC for commissioners – Race Equality Foundation](#)



Young Changemakers - Centre for Mental Health, UK Youth and The Diana Award

Developed by the Centre for Mental Health, UK Youth and The Diana Award, **Young Changemakers** aims to tackle mental health inequalities in racialised communities by supporting young people to start youth-led social action projects. The programme aims to address the factors that lead to young people from racialised groups being disproportionately affected by mental health issues, and ensure that mental health services are accessible and culturally competent.

The project started in Autumn 2021 with an initial cohort of 15 Young Changemakers and 8 Co-Producers, all aged between 18-25. The first four priority strands for social action focus on microaggression training, culturally sensitive digital resources, a podcast, and a series of creative workshops for young Black people. Evaluation is being undertaken, and uses a peer-research approach.

[Young Changemakers: Tackling mental health inequalities in racialised communities | Centre for Mental Health](#)



Technological Innovation

Axis Model – London Borough of Hillingdon

Hillingdon Council developed the **AXIS** in 2017 as a prevention tool, aimed at avoiding negative outcomes for young people at risk of exploitation and criminality. Exploiting the capabilities of new technology, **AXIS** uses advanced analytics to compile, triangulate and analyse information provided by a range of multi-agency partners, community groups and the public in order to identify at risk young people, as well as themes, trends and locations linked to criminal and exploitative networks. This technology affords safeguarding teams, including the police, a

comprehensive insight to help them to more efficiently and effectively target their operations to dismantle exploitative networks. This model also involves a dedicated social work support service, with young people identified as at-risk via **AXIS** assigned **AXIS** case workers who work with them to steer them towards a more positive future path. This information gathered from the tool also informs a monthly **AXIS** bulletin, which also tracks developments related to adolescent safeguarding, informing partners of new exploitation methods to look out for. The **AXIS** model has been widely commended, and won the Municipal Journal award for 'Innovation in Children's Services'

in 2019. It has also been beneficial to the young people who have received the intervention: between April 2019-March 2020, 114 young people, who had not been open to statutory services, completed the intervention and 80% of these young people are no longer classified as at risk of exploitation and criminality or requiring monitoring by safeguarding agencies. The model shows that combining innovative technology with intensive social work practice is a promising formula for diverting a vulnerable group away from exploitation and crime.

BERRI Tool

The **BERRI Tool** is an online clinical evaluation tool which aims to promote better outcomes for children with complex needs. This assessment tool uses a questionnaire to map, identify and track children's evolving needs, encompassing issues around behaviour, emotional wellbeing, risk, relationships and psychiatric and/or neurodevelopmental indicators. The insights are transformed into reports and graphs, which can be customised to provide specific information and can either reflect the situation at an individual or a broader group or service level. They can then be used to deepen understanding of a child's needs and inform carers, professionals and commissioners on how they can better support children by indicating the need and key goals, and there is the additional offer of access to a psychologist. The system also presents information on how a child progresses over time and can depict the impact a placement is having on a

looked-after child and the best type of placement for a child. The tool was praised by Sir Martin Narey in his review into residential care and a pilot of the tool showed a 14% improvement in children's scores over 6 months. An [independent analysis](#) of the tool indicates that the tool contributes to cost avoidance across a child's life, for example by helping to enable a step down from residential to

fostering placements, as well as the young person avoiding more intensive mental and physical health service access across the years and being less likely to present as NEET. Overall, the suggestion is that BERRI saves at least £193,994 per young person with a return of over £100 per £1 spent on Berri.

<https://berri.org.uk>



Cloud Adoption – California Child Support Services and Microsoft

Amid a need to migrate its operations to digital means during Covid-19, the California Child Support Services (DCSS), which is responsible for collecting child support payments from absent parents, worked with Microsoft on its **Cloud Adoption**. DCSS wanted to be able to more efficiently protect its families and improve the system it uses for Child Support Enforcement (CSE). The DCSS has now moved the CSE to Microsoft Azure Government Cloud. The DCSS also wanted to ensure that its digital systems were robust against the threat of cyber and security attacks, and moving to the cloud with Azure facilitated this. Throughout the process, the DCSS was supported by a team of experts from Microsoft and within two years, the CSE system was



operating completely via Azure. Through the collaboration, the DCSS has accelerated its payment processes so it can provide more timely financial support to families in need. This modernisation process created cost savings for the DCSS and benefitted more children across California. It shows how digital transformation and modernisation has great potential to

be exploited to improve the way services work with and facilitate support for families.

<https://customers.microsoft.com/en-us/story/1505267816666273076-california-child-support-services-national-government-azure>

Cobots – Hampshire County Council

Working with Cyberdyne Inc and PA Consulting Services, Hampshire's Adult Health and Care Team are using **Cobots** in an attempt to deal with shortages in the care workforce and protect carer wellbeing. **Cobots** are wearable collaborative robots and in Hampshire, they have been distributed across multiple care settings to allow carers to work independently and mitigate the need for two staff members or 'double-up' care. They are lightweight, battery-powered devices and can be readily put on and taken off and used throughout the day.

The model is similar to an EU-approved medical device used for people with a partial spinal-cord tear and it was originally conceived to help stroke patients. The idea in Hampshire is that the devices will reduce the physical strain associated with the manual elements of caring,

for example when moving or washing people, tasks which often involve two carers. The discovery phase of this project was funded by LGA and NHS Digital and the council then funded a nine-month six-Cobot trial across a number of settings, before the project was implemented in 2021 as part of the Enhanced Care and Transformation Programme. By providing Cobots to staff, the aim is to improve the delivery of care, enhance carer wellbeing and help the council to better manage resources by reducing 'Double-up' care. With 'double-up care' constituting around one-third of care costs, Cobots are expected to lead to significant cost services. Furthermore, by facilitating one-to-one care and a continuity of carer, Cobots have encouraged a stronger emotional connection between carer and cared-for.

The team are following a 'Cobots by default' strategy where the expectation is that single carers

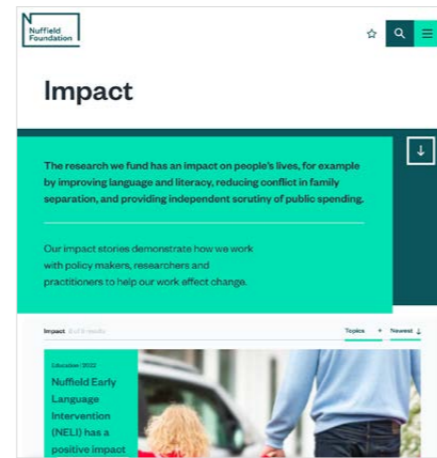
are given a Cobot and assessing where a Cobot could safely substitute a second carer to reduce double up packages. In Hampshire, there are around 30 Cobots being used, with around 100 more in the pipeline. The impact has been positive; in one case where the person had two carers coming in four times a day, the Cobot has reduced the need for two carers and the annual package cost has reduced by £14,600. This endeavour demonstrates the multiple purposes and benefits new technology can have and the value of refining and re-applying existing innovation in new contexts.

[Europe first: Hampshire County Council and PA Consulting first to trial cobots in European care sector, 20 July 2020 | PA Consulting](#)

Data and Voice to Improve Children's Lives – The Nuffield Foundation

The Nuffield Foundation is leading an innovative research project with five local authorities and five universities to improve the way information from and about families is collected, interpreted and employed in policy making, both locally and nationally. The project focuses both on children and families involved with local authority children's services and services for children more widely, and has the voices of children, families and practitioners at its heart. The project began in October 2021 and will run until September 2026, and aims to assess the impact of better use of data on outcomes for children, societal

inequalities and cost efficiency. The project is focused on five key practice areas, covering collection and analysis of data by local authorities, the voices of children, families and practitioners in terms of data related to them, the ethics around how data is used, how information shapes policy and the learning from new initiatives. Each partner local authority will have its own Information Use project, from school readiness to care leaver outcomes to social care referrals and their predictors and consequences. The group plans to share the learning via workshops, webinars and podcasts and the findings will inform tools, guides and other learning materials co-produced with other local authorities.



nuffieldfoundation.org/project/data-and-voice-to-improve-childrens-lives

Enhancing social work practice with Microsoft Dynamics 365 – Aberdeen City Council

Social workers from Aberdeen City Council have been leading efforts to redesign the council's social care system so that it can provide a better service to its communities. With the bespoke use of Microsoft Dynamics 365 and automation mechanisms, social work staff are able to record, share and analyse information more easily, with adult and children's social

care data and workflows available in one unified portal. The new system will enhance practice for staff across social care - on the frontline and in the back office - by improving their ability to access and understand key data from across domains and manage their complex caseloads more efficiently. The system is also available to partner agencies who can view the information and share their own information to alert other teams and agencies to concerns.

By employing machine learning and AI in this practice, the council will be able to better predict and analyse trajectories for families, which will in turn allow for better resource planning for the service and effective early intervention to prevent more adverse familial outcomes later down the line. This work complements Aberdeen council's broader transition to the Microsoft Azure cloud platform, which has enabled greater flexibility for staff, and other efforts to utilise technology to improve the support it can provide to communities. For example, the council has built chatbots with Microsoft, which now deal with 200 queries daily from staff and residents. Digital transformation such as this can clearly improve joined-up working and offers the public sector a way to deal more effectively with rising demand and escalating community need.

[Aberdeen City Council is transforming how it cares for its community \(microsoft.com\)](https://www.microsoft.com/en-gb/story/1361734714926634211-berlin)



Family Context – Leeds, Stockport and Manchester

Leeds, Manchester and Stockport are building a new tool, **Family Context**, to accelerate information sharing and improve the efficiency of decision making. It was originally sponsored by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. The tool is a key time-saving device, which provides practitioners with key information readily via a simple search, allowing them to easily and intuitively understand which services the family has been involved with and the relevant contact details. This reduces the previously laborious and complex work involved in obtaining necessary information. It

encompasses multi-agency data, including from education, adult social care and housing services. The theory is that this will enable better safeguarding, enhance the facilitation of support and allow practitioners to spend more time with families. The process has sought buy in and insight from a number of key stakeholders, including information governance and ethics teams, social work practitioners and technical colleagues.

The original estimation was that with this tool, on average, a council will save around £188,000 due to social workers reducing time spent searching for information and around £348,000 via a reduction in the

number of families escalated unnecessarily. The tool has been piloted with live data and the findings were positive, with the tool reducing the time spent on tasks and improving the coordination of services and decision making. On average, over 2 hours of social worker time per referral was saved using this tool. Use cases included new assessments, checking existing cases and case handovers. **Family Context** is now being introduced across Stockport, with an ambition to broaden the available datasets. localdigital.gov.uk/funded-project/building-family-context-in-childrens-services

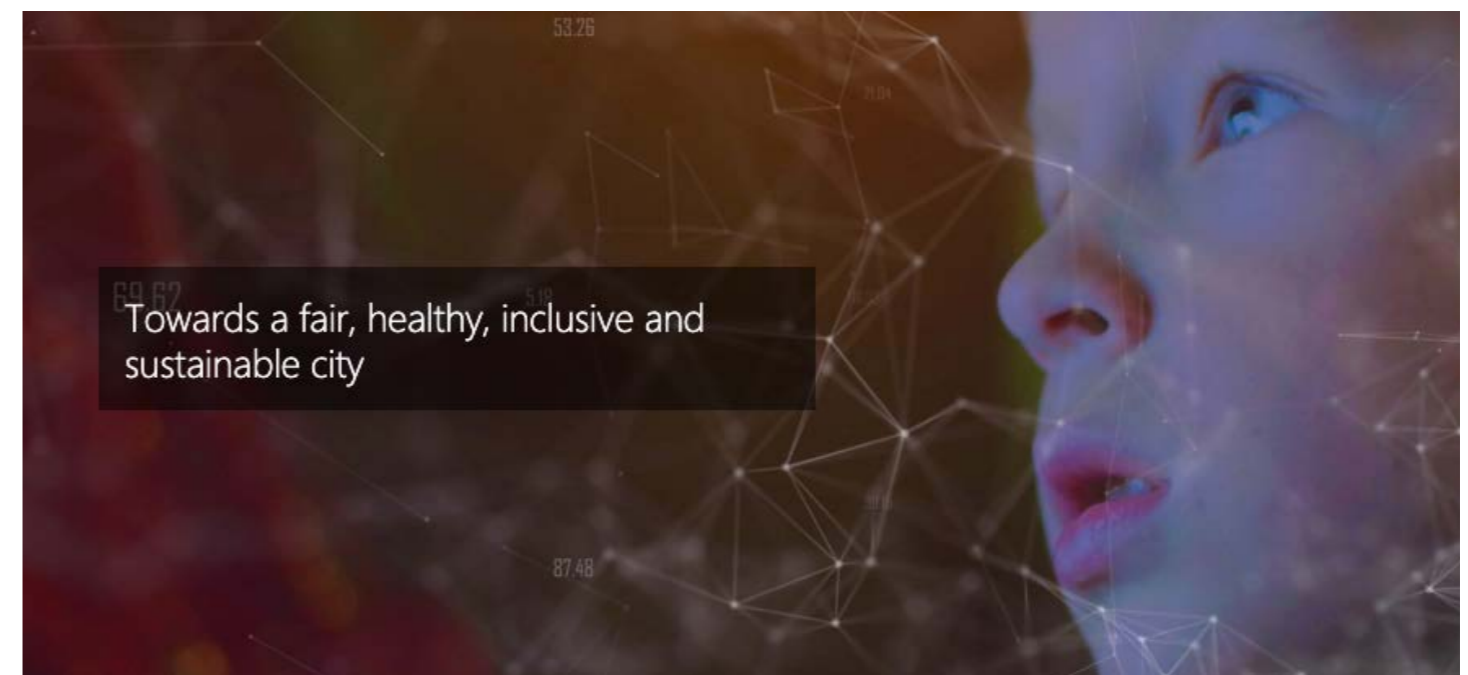
Insight Bristol – Bristol City Council

In collaboration with Microsoft, Bristol City Council have developed **Insight Bristol**, a data analytics hub. They operate the Think Family Database, a single view tool that brings together previously distinct council data sources and silos into a common system so children's services providers are given a holistic view of local children. Developed using a data and analytics platform in Microsoft Azure, the tool allows key concerns about children and families to be

flagged and interventions to be made rapidly by providing a crucial broader picture of the child, and their circumstances and those of their family. Previously, the team relied on referral to identify at risk children. Now children's services are now able to rapidly receive information about a child involved with the police, for example, and support for the family can be implemented. The use of Microsoft Power BI also enables the team to generate interactive reports and dashboards to better visualise the situation for children across the

service. This tool seeks to boost decision making and complement the skill-set of practitioners, as well as enabling the service to better preempt and predict what might happen to a child, so they can intervene early. With joined-up, better data, Bristol City Council are able to improve outcomes for children, families and communities.

<https://customers.microsoft.com/en-gb/story/1361734714926634211-berlin>



Letterswap

RAA leaders have been piloting how they can digitise and modernise contact between adopted children and their birth parents, working with Link Maker to create the **Letterswap** platform. Embracing the common preference among young people for digital communication means, this

platform is an evolution of traditional letterbox contact, enabling children to stay in touch with birth parents in a controlled and modern way and retain a crucial part of their identity. It comes in the context of research indicating that traditional letterbox contact is not always sustained. Letterswap is currently being piloted

by five RAAs, with the hope that by 2022 it can be rolled out nationally. Although it is early days, the Care Review has recommended that such digital contact platforms should be utilised across the nation.

letterswap.co.uk

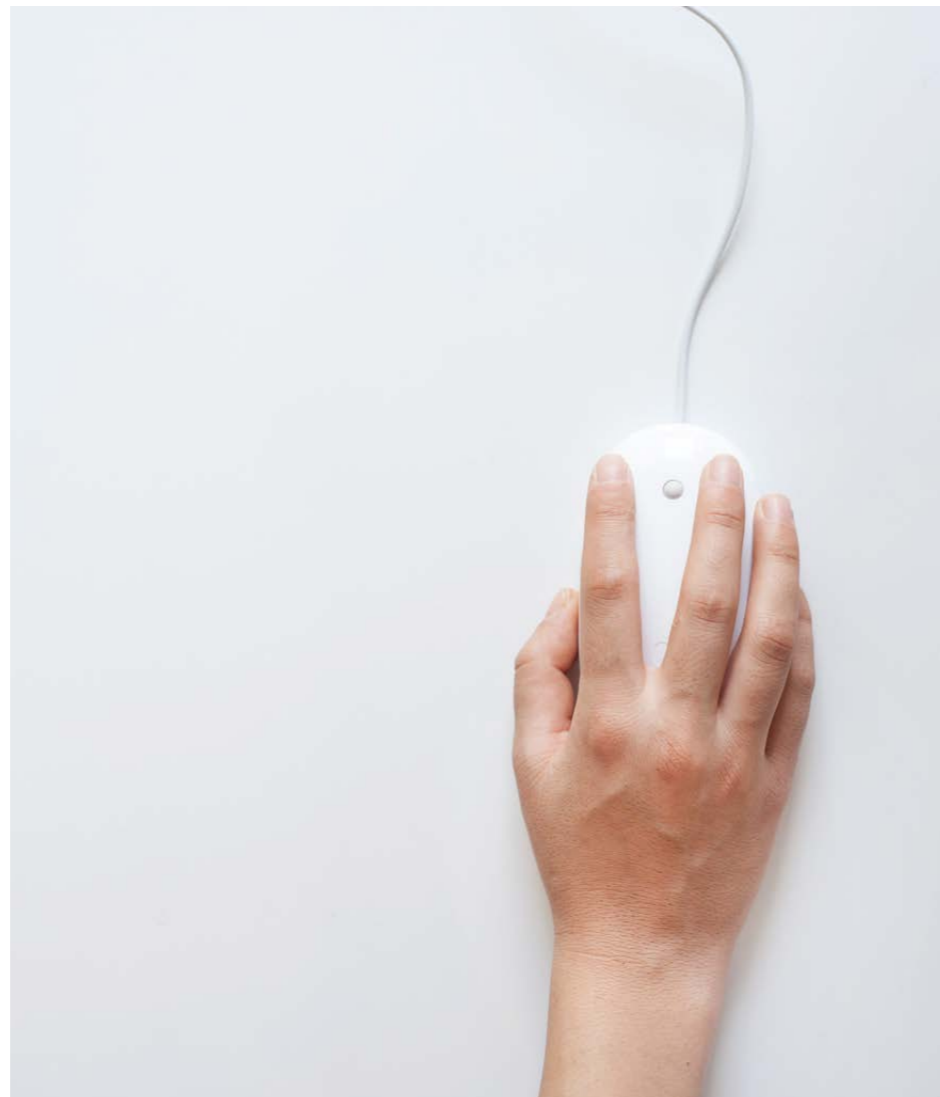
Mobile First – Arizona Department of Child Safety and Diona

The Arizona Department of Child Safety (DCS) has transformed the way caseworkers work and adopted a **'mobile first'** approach in a bid to boost productivity and efficiency. This signalled a move away from a 20-year-old Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS), which had become outdated and not fit for the mobility caseworkers were required to work with. Local caseworkers rely significantly on field work, not least to undertake monthly child wellness visits, and DCS noted that even providing workers with laptops did not solve all challenges related to mobile workers.

Working with partners at [Diona](#) on this digital transformation, DCS committed to enabling over 1,400 caseworkers to optimise their use of mobile technology over a period of just 8 months. The [Diona Visits](#) and [Diona Investigations](#) solutions support mobile working and case management, affording caseworkers with the comprehensive real-time information they need when they need it and wherever they are, as well as effective and more expedient electronic note taking and recording tools. This means local families and children in need have been able to receive better support and has helped improve decision making. Through this initiative, all caseworkers have been able to access case management

systems in the field and DCS has boosted caseworker efficiency by 20% and enabled them to spend more time with children and families and complete more visits, as well as producing better data. It is projected to save \$18.7 million a year in departmental costs.

[Diona+Arizona.pdf \(squarespace.com\)](#)



OneView – EY and Xantura

EY and Xantura have developed the **OneView** platform, a predictive analytics tool which seeks to enable teams on the frontline to provide more proactive support to the families across their populations. **OneView** demonstrates the art of the possible beyond standardised analytics; it compiles and connects real-time information using data from across council services (e.g. adults and children's social care, housing and revenues) to provide a single view of the family presented in an accessible and intuitive format. This gives practitioners a rounded picture of the challenges a family is facing allowing them to provide timely and bespoke support and avoid escalation to a crisis point. In addition, councils can take a data- and insight- led approach to service delivery, pivoting from reactive to proactive, preventative delivery. This

in turn can help improve outcomes and minimise costs for the council.

The **OneView** model has been successfully trialled in one London borough as part of an incentive to create a new front door for residents experiencing covid-related risks, those vulnerable to homelessness, that have multiple debts and as part of the supporting families programme. Staff are saving c10 minutes per household now they have access to a single view of the family – they no longer need to gather information from different systems and can spend more time with residents. This London borough also used **OneView** to identify 1,000 households with multiple debts to pilot proactive support. 30% of these households were identified to be at risk of homelessness, escalation to social care, or unplanned hospital admission. The council received a c23% positive response rate to

proactive texts, fantastic feedback from residents – "If I could give 1,000 gold stars, I would" – and enabled cost avoidance and debt reduction.

The potential for such a tool to be applied in a children's services context is vast: for children today, there are a number of complex factors which can impinge on their lives and risks can emerge in a number of settings, be it the home, school or financial arena – a theme which has come into sharp focus during covid times. Having immediate access to details of historical and new challenges facing families can help children's services practitioners better manage related risks and intervene in a timely manner to avoid a worse outcome for the child.

[The OneView platform - Xantura - We change lives through data](#)

Provision of LTE Surface Pro devices – New York City Administration for Children's Services (ACS)

It is well known that frontline caseworkers and social workers are required to navigate busy schedules, spending much of their moving between meetings, home visits to families and offices. Recording key information discussed during these meetings and keeping a child's crucial records up-to-date with important information is often time intensive. In the New York City Administration for Children's Services (ACS), frontline caseworkers deal with over 50,000 cases of suspected child abuse or neglect every year, leading to a significant amount of paperwork. In order to enable its staff to manage this load and work on-the-go as their busy schedules dictate, ACS invested in **Surface Pro devices enabled with LTE** for its workers. LTE devices offer fast, wireless broadband, meaning users do not need to rely on Wi-Fi or phone

hotspots. These devices enable workers to access and record critical information from across the child welfare database instantaneously wherever they are, accelerating administrative processes so they deploy their valuable practical social work skills to support children and families directly. Historically, caseworkers had to take notes manually during visits before subsequently transferring them onto online systems and could only review records when in the office and lacked the information they needed in critical moments. Migrating to this online platform has significantly improved the efficiency of practice, with one frontline critical incident worker reporting that this technology has halved the time it takes to write reports. Caseworkers were involved in the process of deciding on the system that would work best for them day-to-day and offer maximum security. This has been complemented by the use of the Surface Pen, enabling

remote signature capture and offers another option for note taking. Whilst the technology involved is not radical, the decision of leaders to enable its workers to utilise it has real life advantages for staff and, crucially, better allows them to keep children safe and get families the help they need.

[Microsoft Customer Stories](#)



Thames Valley Together – Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit

Effective data sharing across agencies is fundamental to protecting vulnerable populations, most notably children and young people. The **Thames Valley Together Programme** pioneered by the Thames Valley Violence Reduction Unit is a new approach to data and information sharing, which aims to lead to better decision making and subsequently safer communities. The programme combines live data across local partner agencies (police, local authority, education, youth offending, health and criminal justice) into a single, tailored, accessible data visualisation platform. With the causes of violence often linked to wider disadvantage including poverty and adverse childhood experiences, this platform looks to support better understanding of complex individual and community trends and risk factors and in turn enable early intervention and prevention of criminality and violence. The platform confronts a key issue highlighted across serious case reviews in children's social care around cross-agency information sharing failures and provides a resource to bring



together important disparate sources of information to get a better picture of familial situations, backed by rigorous data security to ensure data is not misused. In Thames Valley, the approach has helped the force develop their Serious Violence and Stop & Search Dashboards to drive more effective policing and partnership and inform the VRU's public health focused Strategic Needs Assessment. There is a hope that this mechanism will also enable the use of data-led machine learning to further assist decision making. To complement this initiative, the VRU is developing a Data Ethics

Board to ensure the data is used ethically and does not see risk factors as necessarily deterministic as not to disproportionately target specific populations. At the heart of this initiative is community engagement to help solve issues and tackle the causes of violence on the basis of the data available, acknowledging the fundamentality of partnership across multiple fronts to achieving better outcomes for communities, safeguard vulnerable populations and reduce violence.

tvvru.co.uk/sna/tvt

Use of Robotic Process Automation for Child Protection Referrals – Achieving for Children

Achieving for Children have deployed Robotic Process Automation (RPA) software to process child protection referrals. The software can replicate time-consuming manual administrative tasks for the Single Point of Access Team, who are the gatekeepers of the 2000 child

protection referrals submitted each month. The use of this software has had multiple benefits. It has boosted confidentiality as fewer people are needing to review the inbox that referrals come into and meant referral teams have more capacity, equivalent to one FTE, which can be diverted to other priorities including communication with families and data analysis to inform service

improvement. Importantly, it also means that there is no backlog of referrals waiting to be processed after a weekend, with the bot automatically doing this as referrals come in. The speed with which referrals can be processed thanks to this software means families are directed to support services in a more timely manner.

Wellbeing Automated Call Service – Hampshire County Council

Hampshire County Council worked with PA Consulting to rapidly develop the digital **Wellbeing Automated Call Service (WACS)** to build crucial capacity during the COVID-19 pandemic. The service was developed to enable adult services at the council to identify, understand and prioritise the support needs of the 50,000 vulnerable people shielding during the pandemic. **WACS** worked by sending an initial automated call to people to find out whether they needed support. Those who indicated that they did need support were then transferred to a contact centre to speak to a live call handler, who could listen and help to enact support for them. Processes

were put in place to send automated follow-up calls and texts if a person could not be contacted. With time of the essence, **WACS** was built by PA in just a week, and was co-developed and tested with a group of people who were shielding, allowing people to receive the right support quickly. The service was voiced by a real person to allay concerns about automation and efforts were made to ensure it was accessible e.g. including landline phones and allowing users to respond by voice, and that data privacy and AI process had been thought through. It was able to make in excess of 2,500 calls per day, meeting the needs of 50,000 people on the shielding list.

The rapid turnaround of this service

received commendation, with **WACS** a finalist in the Fast Company's 2021 World Changing Ideas Awards and a winner of the 2021 Amazon Web Services' Global Public Sector Partner award. It can act as another indicator of the possibilities of technology to manage social care demand, with the premise being potentially applicable across a number of contexts in the sector.

[SiliconANGLE - How PA Consulting helped UK council launch Wellbeing Automated Call Service in 7 days, 7 July 2021 | PA Consulting](#)





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

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