

**CORAM
INNOVATION
INCUBATOR
PROJECTS**

**PREVENTATIVE
APPROACHES**

**SYSTEM
CHANGE**

**PRACTICE
DEVELOPMENT**

**THERAPEUTIC
SUPPORT**

**A CALL FOR
CONTRIBUTIONS**

**CII INNOVATION
COLLECTIVE**

Preface

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

For more information about the Coram Innovation Incubator, see coram-i.org.uk/coram-innovation-incubator

Coram Innovation Incubator Projects

Digital Outreach Tool

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

