

The Coram Innovation Inset

The Coram Innovation Incubator (CII) runs the Coram Innovation Inset, a five-session course offered to our members annually to support them to develop and implement an innovation pilot in their organisation. The Inset brings together a Design Thinking approach, social work theory and a focus on evaluation to help immerse participants in a problem, identify their end user, and think creatively about solutions. We then work together to support them to put this into practice and measure outcomes.

The Inset course is offered as part of membership of the Incubator, with three staff from member organisations eligible to join at no extra cost each year.



The Inset provides participants with a collaborative and supportive space to discuss challenges with like-minded people, confidence and tools to develop a pilot project, skills and expertise in evaluation, and two coaching sessions with an experienced, external coach, who is a tutor at the London Business School and Director of an independent innovation agency. CII member organisations benefit from staff time to explore practice challenges, upskilling colleagues, space for auditing and reflection, and a scalable project to address challenges.

In 2023, we ran our second cohort of the Inset and worked with local authorities across our member organisations – many had a focus on staff wellbeing and

retention, but also working at improving supervision for foster carers, expanding edge of care services, and developing a new apprenticeship programme for young people interested in working in children’s social care. We also continued to work with participants from the first cohort to develop and scale their projects over the course of the year, and look forward to building on this success and running the Inset for the third time in 2024.

You can find a case study from Aneesa and Margaret from the London Borough of Bromley on their experience of the Coram Innovation Inset here:



Above: Aneesa and Margaret, Bromley Council

When Aneesa and Margaret, who work for Bromley Council, joined Coram-i’s Inset programme, they were facing a common problem amongst local authorities. Social workers in children’s services were leaving and becoming increasingly difficult to recruit.

Aneesa, Head of MASH, Referral & Assessment and EDT for Bromley, was unsure of how the Inset programme would help, but six months later they finished with a pilot scheme idea that has proved very successful.

Aneesa explains “We went in with an open mind but didn’t realise how beneficial the Inset programme would be. We had a problem that needed to be solved. Social worker turnover was huge, constantly doing interviews was exhausting. We thought the problem lay with our recruitment practices. The sessions helped us to think about the issue in different ways.

“We really benefited from being in a room with other local authorities and the coaching we received helped us to think innovatively. We started looking at staff welfare and what we could do to make the lives of our social workers better. We know the job is very stressful and involves countless appointments and house visits, which are traditionally conducted between 9-5. This can be difficult for social workers and the people they are visiting who may have work and childcare commitments.

Margaret, Practice Manager, explains how they introduced flexibility to the service. “We put out a survey asking our social workers if they would benefit from working their hours flexibly. We learnt a lot about what would make their lives better and the

idea was well received. They were excited to have a better work-life balance and they felt better listened to and appreciated.

“We piloted the scheme with one team and it has been really successful so we’re introducing it to another. Our social workers are more motivated and their wellbeing has really improved. Other teams are keen to get on board too! There is a real appetite for it.”

The Bromley team are also working with CII partners at Microsoft to look at how simple technology solutions can also support their workforce in their work with children and families.

The Inset programme has given Aneesa and Margaret a clear solution to a problem but they have benefited in other ways too as Aneesa explains.

“Taking part in the programme gave us the time and space to step back and think outside the box. It has given us a new network of other local authorities who we can share best-practice with. We really enjoyed the one-to-one coaching too. We have even been introduced to some tech partners like Microsoft who are helping with other aspects of our work. I would really recommend the programme to other local authorities.

You learn so much about your organisation, yourselves, and the joy of innovation.”

