

THE CORAM INNOVATION INCUBATOR

— A National Catalyst
for Radical Innovation in
Children’s Social Care



Introducing the Coram Innovation Incubator

Children and young people are facing an extraordinarily difficult climate. The protracted Covid-19 pandemic has severely and permanently changed life as we know it, creating stark emotional and social challenges for our young people. Stalled education, hidden harm (whether intra or extra familial; in person or online), isolation from friends and loved ones – all of this has compounded an already growing picture of complexity and demand. The full impact on young people’s mental health, educational outcomes and referrals into children’s services is yet to be seen but we know that these monumental challenges need to be met with radical solutions in order to avert disaster for many young, vulnerable people – incremental improvement simply will not suffice.

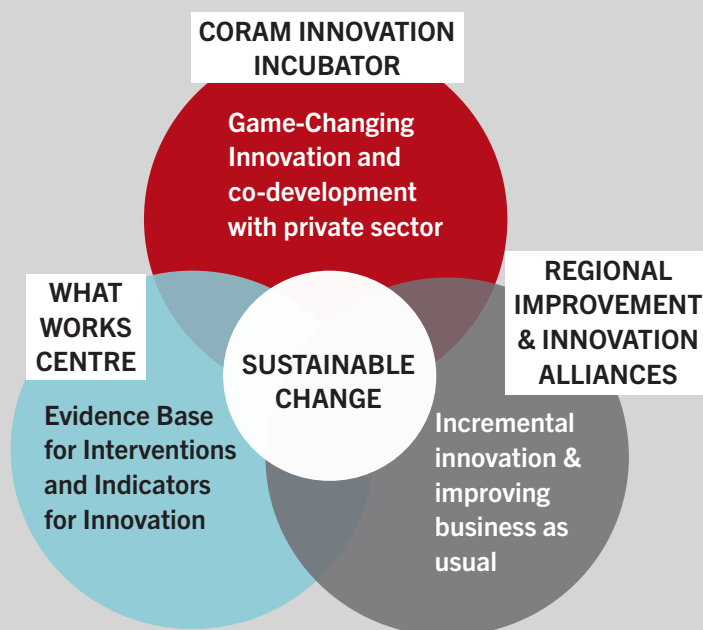
Henry Ford once said of his invention of the motor car: **“If I had asked people what they wanted, they would have said faster horses.” Right now we need more than just faster horses – we need game-changing solutions that match the scale of the challenge facing a generation of young people.**

In fact, a recent national survey conducted by Coram-i, looking at the innovation landscape in children’s social care, revealed that although services recognise the imperative for high impact innovation, they lack the resourcing infrastructure (in terms of funding, scale and personnel) to commit to the kinds of game-changing innovation required to make the greatest difference. **Little more than one third of organisations (39%) surveyed were able to operate at the level of radical innovation needed.**

The Department for Education’s Children’s Social Care Innovation Programme has been a key catalyst for enabling improvement and innovation in day to day practice, importantly creating some much needed supporting infrastructure in the form of regional innovation and improvement alliances. And the What Works Centre for Children’s Social Care has looked to helpfully consider and perpetuate evidence-based changes in the sector. However, until now, there has been a void in the radical innovation space which the Coram Innovation Incubator (CII) is seeking to address.

What is it?

The Coram Innovation Incubator (CII) will create a space and vehicle for **generating, testing and scaling** (i.e. incubating) radical approaches to the most important challenges in children’s services as defined by the providers of those services. The CII seeks to become the ‘go to’ place for local authorities looking to co-develop innovative solutions to the biggest challenges facing the sector in partnership with other local authorities, relevant private sector colleagues and wider public bodies/agencies. The CII will provide the opportunities and resources to collaborate, ideate and implement a programme of innovation.



Coram is looking for a further nine local authority partners to support this ambition for children and families.

Please contact innovation@coram.org.uk

How does the CII Work?

The CII will operate on a 12 month cycle of innovation labs, learning sets, innovation surveys and reporting on good practice, plus an innovation business partner resource. It is intended to enable senior leaders to be involved in the design and focus of the innovation programme and to delegate implementation as appropriate within their teams, supported by a CII business partner to provide additional capacity.

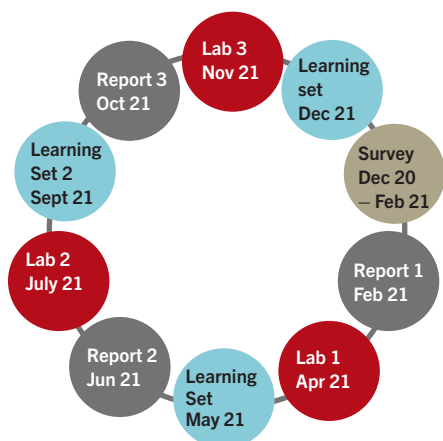
National Survey and Quarterly Innovation Reports

(1 national innovation survey annually plus 3 subsequent innovation reports). The annual survey is the primary means of measuring and gauging innovation practice across the sector. It provides a means of quantifying issues and barriers as well as identifying and showcasing promising innovations. This intelligence feeds into the innovation labs and provides source material for learning sets throughout the year.

Innovation labs (3 per year) are the main methodology for identifying the nature of a specific challenge and/ or ideating to identify potential solutions. They provide a powerful means of combining the in-depth knowledge and latent creativity of the sector with specific external expertise to generate candidate ideas and form the basis of a development project. This ultimately leads to co-production of a prototype for testing “in the field” with interested partners. Working groups carry forward the innovation work programme identified through the labs to ensure progress on each and every project.

Learning sets and webinars (minimum of 3 per year) are intended to accelerate the scaling up of existing innovations and to cross-fertilise best practice within the sector as well as from other related sectors such as health. Up to 3 attendees per partner organisation can attend and bring back the learning to their organisation.

Innovation Business Partners (3 days total per year although additional days can be purchased) are specialist innovation project managers/ project directors who are available for local authority partners to draw on and provide additional capacity in order to implement innovations locally.



The Very Best of the Private Sector To Support the Public Sector to Innovate

Recognising the need to co-develop solutions with expertise, know-how and resources from the private sector, Coram is delighted to be working with two titans of innovation – Microsoft and EY. Both organisations are committed to supporting the sector to innovate and each has significant expertise and capabilities upon which we can draw. The CII will seek out and secure further partnerships as needed to deliver on its programme of innovation, bringing the very best of the private sector to bear on the challenges for children.

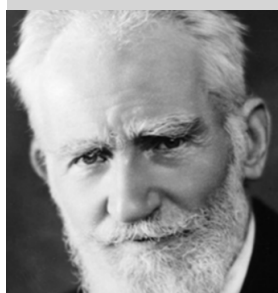
Founding Partners

Nine authorities are launching this project with Coram and we are delighted to announce the following founding partners to the incubator: London Borough of Redbridge, North Yorkshire County Council, Hertfordshire County Council, Southend-on-Sea Borough Council, London Borough of Bromley, Stoke City Council, London Borough of Havering, London Borough of Newham, and the London Innovation and Improvement Alliance.

Rated outstanding by OFSTED, Redbridge Council were the first of the incubator’s founding partners. Director of Children’s Services Adrian Loades has acknowledged the opportunity the incubator presents:

“Innovation is an essential ingredient for high performing services and the Coram Innovation Incubator provides an important vehicle for the sector to collaborate in pursuit of high impact, radical solutions that address our biggest challenges at a time of immense need.”

By bringing these partners together, the CII will facilitate national collaboration and ideas generation around common “grand challenges” and enable partners to develop and test radical innovations, without the substantial burden of risk or distraction from business as usual which pursuing these projects alone may create.



“The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists to adapt the world to himself. Therefore all progress depends on the unreasonable man.”

George Bernard Shaw

Innovation starts by thinking like an entrepreneur

coram-i.org.uk/coram-innovation-incubator