



## The Innovation Programme at NCAS

Innovation Programme projects were out in force at the National Children and Adult Services conference in November. They featured in eight sessions, with the Secretary for State and Minister for Vulnerable Children and Families speaking in plenary on the final day.

### Speakers corner

Five projects were featured in 'speakers corner', informal drop-in sessions that ran throughout the conference.

**Lincolnshire County Council** discussed its improvement journey and its adoption of Signs of Safety as its operating model. The team shared case studies of their work with children to exemplify how the Signs of Safety approach has improved the quality of work both with children and families and across social work teams.

[Read more about the Signs of Safety projects in the Innovation Programme Directory](#)

**Coram** outlined its Coram-i initiative, bringing together data analysis, social care expertise and management consultancy skills to support local authorities in to enable earlier permanence for looked after children in adoption, fostering and special guardianship settings. The team shared their insights into how a rigorous approach to improvement can help realise positive outcomes for looked after children and local authorities.

[See the project storyboard for Coram-i](#)

[Read more about Coram-i in the Innovation Programme Directory](#)

**Hertfordshire County Council** presented its alternative approach to family safeguarding and tackling the 'toxic trio'. Alongside 22 new co-located, multi-disciplinary Family Safeguarding Teams, Hertfordshire changed its focus from monitoring compliance to the engagement of families and producing change through Motivational Interviewing. Teams use an electronic workbook that enables information sharing and reduces the recording burden on social workers.

[See the project storyboard for Hertfordshire's Family Safeguarding work](#)

[Read more about Hertfordshire in the Innovation Programme Directory](#)

**North Yorkshire County Council** outlined No Wrong Door - rethinking care for adolescents to ensure young people access the right services at the right time and in the right place to meet their needs. Operating from two hubs, No Wrong Door brings together a variety of accommodation options, a range of services and outreach support under one management umbrella. Multi-agency roles and a committed residential team wrap around young people and stay with them throughout their journey, be it to prevent care, within care or beyond care.

[See the project storyboard for No Wrong Door](#)

[Read more about North Yorkshire in the Innovation Programme Directory](#)

**Action for Children** discussed Step Change, its work to safely prevent young people entering care. With a focus on the work on multi-systemic therapy in Manchester, the team outlined the common features of effective programmes working with young people, how to



replicate and scale these features and their effectiveness in protecting children from abuse and neglect.

[Read more about Step Change in the Innovation Programme Directory](https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/what-we-do/parents-and-families/evidence-based-programmes/step-change/)  
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### **Break-out sessions**

Three projects ran break-out sessions in conjunction with partners.

**Leeds City Council** led a session on restorative practice with West Berkshire Council and Research in Practice. The session focused on how restorative practice and working *with* children, families and communities (rather than '*doing to*' or '*doing for*') can support improvement. The panel discussed the evidence around developing a common approach to social responsibility and shared accountability, and shared their learning of applying these principles to local authority improvement activity and reflections on how relationships are at the heart of enabling culture change.

[See the project storyboard for Leeds Family Valued](#)  
[Read more about Leeds in the Innovation Programme Directory](#)

**TriBorough** and the Thomas Coram Research Unit at the Institute of Education led a session on Focus on Practice, a programme of work to bring systemic thinking to life in statutory social work. The session explored the implementation and impact of Focus on Practice in Triborough (Westminster City Council, London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham and Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea) and the experiences of families, clinicians, social work practitioners and senior managers.

[Read the evaluation report of the Focus on Practice programme from UCL](#)  
[Read more about Focus on Practice in the Innovation Programme Directory](#)

**Catch22** chaired a session with Cheshire East and York Councils on the circumstances in which innovation does (and does not) make sense for children in need: how to recognise when new approaches are required and when to protect existing programmes. York's new Child in Need service and Catch22's Project Crewe were explored, to look at how new delivery models and partnerships involving different sectors can make best use of different skills and resources.

[Read more about Project Crewe in the Innovation Programme Directory](https://www.catch-22.org.uk/services/project-crewe-children-in-need/)  
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### **Plenary sessions: Justine Greening and Edward Timpson**

In his plenary speech Edward Timpson, the Minister of State for Vulnerable Children and Families, praised the work of the projects in the Innovation Programme. He announced [a new opportunity to bid for funding from the Innovation Programme](#), to pilot new, creative approaches to supporting vulnerable children in these specific areas:

- Testing the use of social investment to improve support for care leavers
- Building on the recommendations of the Narey report on residential care, piloting Staying Close and regional commissioning



- Testing and developing understanding of targeted support to prevent children entering child protection systems
- Testing alternative delivery models of children's social care

Justine Greening, Secretary of State for Education, [confirmed that additional money will be invested](#) in some of the more successful projects from the first phase of the Innovation programme who had bid for further funding in wave 2 of the programme:

- £444k for Calderdale's Positive Choices project, which works with high-risk young people;
- £3.73m for the successful [Firstline](#) social work development programme; and
- £6.8m to extend [Pause](#), which works with mothers who have experienced repeat removals of their children.