



Evidence Into Real World Practice in Children's Services: Creativity and Innovation in Challenging Times

Seminars hosted by National Implementation Service

4th November 2016 in Leeds & 9th November 2016 in Birmingham

The [National Implementation Service](#) (NIS) held two seminars on 'Evidence Into Real World Practice in Children's Services: Creativity and Innovation in Challenging Times' in November 2016, hosted by Leeds City Council and Birmingham City Council.

The National Implementation Service is a centre of excellence, committed to developing, testing and promoting evidence-based programmes to radically improve children's social care. It offers training, organisational support for implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Within the Children's Social Care Innovation Programme, NIS is testing six evidence-based interventions that use Multisystemic Therapy (MST) alongside training and support for parents who want to foster or adopt children and training for social workers who support adolescents. Watch [the NIS presentation](#) or visit the [NIS website](#) to find out more, including the views and feedback from parents who have been involved.

The conference in Birmingham was opened by Sam Olsen, Deputy Director Children's Social Care Reform and Innovation at the Department for Education, who highlighted the focus areas of Wave 1 of the Innovation Programme, which ran from October 2014 to March 2016:

1. Rethinking children's social work – improving the quality and impact of children's social work.
2. Rethinking support for adolescents in or on the edge of care – improving the quality and impact of services which provide a stable effective launch pad for adolescents to transition successfully into adulthood.

At both events, Local Authorities and providers shared their experiences of implementing evidence-based services as part of innovative system reform. We heard from Leeds on its use of [MST for children experiencing abuse and neglect](#), as well as the implementation of RESuLT and AdOpt. (*Read more about [RESuLT](#) and [AdOpt](#) here*). The team from Oxfordshire County Council spoke about its children's residential provision and the role the [RESuLT programme](#) plays in creative service development across the county. Northamptonshire County Council spoke about its use of MST for effective and safe return home of children from care and we heard from Dudley on its use of KEEP to support their foster carers effectively. (*Read more about [KEEP](#) here*). Importantly, young people and families were present and shared their views too. A young person who had participated in an MST intervention shared his experience of MST, bringing in a new perspective to consider.

Through interactive discussions the seminars sought to answer the following questions:

- How do you identify what you are setting out to change?
- How do you establish an intervention that can affect the change at a scale and that can be sustained over time?
- How do you measure impact, not only in terms of social outcomes but also of value for money?



Aligning strategic vision with evidence-based social work practice. In Leeds we heard from Saleem Tariq, Chief Officer for Children's Social Work at Leeds City Council, who showed that, with careful strategic planning, evidence-based approaches (such as MST, RESuLT and others) can be woven into service reform to deliver high-quality services where it matters most. Dawn Roberts, Assistant Director of Birmingham City Council, highlighted at the seminar in Birmingham the importance of a strong vision and clarity over underlying social work principles - taking a strengths and evidence-based approach - while being flexible with regard to how the respective interventions (such as MST) are implemented.

Key insights from evaluators on the effect of evidence-based programmes. Professor David Berridge (University of Bristol) provided an overview and analysis of the current state of children's residential services in England, and shared some promising outcomes from the RESuLT training programme for children's homes. Dr Lisa Holmes (Loughborough University) shared some of her key research on the costs of implementation and value for money, highlighting that the effective calculation of costs of services aids informed commissioning and determines the value for money of interventions.

Social Impact Bonds can present new opportunities for closing the funding gap. Essex and Manchester local authorities shared their experiences of delivering payment by results programmes through Social Impact Bonds (SIBs) and how this approach enabled them to overcome funding challenges - a recurrent theme from across local authorities. Andrew Levitt from [Bridges Ventures](#) urged attendees to recognise the real opportunities that outcomes-based investment provides for financing programmes.

The seminars provided opportunities to hear about policy developments, the latest research findings on effective social work interventions, and the opportunity to exchange learning and experiences of implementing evidence-based interventions as part of wider systems change.

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