on...

innovation & improvement
Differently is high on the agenda for social services.

The IRISS innovation and improvement programme is focused on supporting the workforce to realise the potential to make change happen with others.
We know that Innovation & Improvement is challenging because it means continually questioning, reflecting and sometimes rethinking our values, beliefs and assumptions.

In essence it is an ongoing process of learning in relation to interactions, support models and the shape of systems. Part of our role is to support the sector to create conditions where ideas and new thinking can flourish.
THINKING OUR VALUES

What makes this programme different is that we are focused on openly sharing what works, and what could be done differently. We are working from inside the system to build the capacity of practitioners, people and communities.

WHilst we are focused on ways to 'do things differently', our focus - and the focus of those we work with - is always on the outcomes people wish for themselves and their communities.
Discover & Explore

IRISS “On”... have been created as topic-based resources to assist people to think and explore key concepts related to INNOVATION & IMPROVEMENT in our sector.

The publications aim to prompt, provoke and provide accessible overviews in this emerging field.

This First Edition outlines our approach to Innovation & Improvement.
GET IN TOUCH, LET US KNOW YOUR THOUGHTS AND JOIN US ON THIS OUR VOYAGE OF DISCOVERY!
INNOVATION

implies a real change in how work is done; using new knowledge, organisation or processes to develop changes in the ways people are supported. We believe innovation can be new to sector, scale or place.
IMPROVEMENT

Involves incremental change to developing support - constantly looking for better, more efficient and desirable ways to complete a task or process, but representing continuity with the past.
ENLIGHTEN

FINDING, SHARING & ENCOURAGING RESPONSES TO ISSUES FACING SOCIAL SERVICES BY DRAWING ON IDEAS AND KNOWLEDGE ABOUT WHAT WORKS ELSEWHERE & TESTING NEW IDEAS.
BUILDING EVIDENCE ABOUT INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY TO IMPROVE THE UNDERSTANDING AND CONFIDENCE OF PEOPLE IN THIS SECTOR.
Developing projects to test ideas practically & to contribute to our understanding about how innovation & improvement can be embedded & scaled.
Connect

Providing creative, open spaces for people to come together to look differently at challenges facing the sector.
INNOVATION IS MESSY

It doesn't happen overnight, and generally doesn't go according to plan.

Hartley (2006) reminds us that innovation is a process that cannot be viewed as a linear process because factors like opportunities and risks (and setbacks) can happen along the way.
Although there are many different models for innovation, we think for the young foundation it’s unique for the sector. It isn’t one way and you can (and might be necessary), and you have less steps, double back or jump forward when necessary. But it does give us a simple process for us to hook on to, what we are not saying is that this is the process that must be followed. We are saying that these components we believe are likely to happen within your organization work or organisation.

- Prompts
- Proposals
- Prototypes
- Sustaining
- Scaling
- Systemic Change

Murray Caulier Grice Mulgan (2010)
All ideas start somewhere. It could be a need, a gap or something that's been successful elsewhere.
PROMPTS COULD BE:

- Crisis
- Daydreaming
- Talking to someone who has a completely different life experience or knowledge base
- Taking in stimuli that you don’t normally
  - Video clips, artwork,
  - Nature... this list is endless
- Technology developments
- A shift in policy
- Chats with people in the park
- New research
- Or, really, anything

THE POINT ABOUT THIS PHASE IS TO BE CONSCIOUS ABOUT IT & SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS WITH OTHERS
PROPOSAL

If we always made decisions based on what is safe, right or what we think we already know, then we are destined to keep living in the same patterns and experiencing the same issues.

This phase turns that.

It’s all about having ideas, thinking differently & responding intuitively, by acting with curiosity & thinking with an open mind.

For us, this proposal phase is one of the most exciting elements of this kind of work! It’s the time where a range of people come together to explore, throw things out there, have lightbulb moments, argue, be inspired and redefine the question that is being asked.
There are lots of tools and techniques that can be used to help you think more creatively and to have ideas. For example:

Reframe the issue you are experiencing, as if seeing it through someone else's eyes.

Think about the positive elements of the issues & work from them rather than try to solve them.

Reword the issues and explore through your use of language what assumptions, values or beliefs may be acting as a barrier to creative thinking.

Think in reverse, from the ideal solution you'd like to get to, work backwards to where you stand now and think about the stages you may need to work through and how to reach those.

Use visual imagery to stimulate thoughts, connections, metaphors & emotional connections to the issues you face.

Talk interpretations through with others to stimulate new thoughts & perspectives.
One of the issues in our sector is that people spend too much time trying to perfect ideas or processes before they do anything about it...

...instead of trying to plan every little detail, the point of prototyping is to do something and improve it as you go. It is the process of testing and improving something else. The key is to do this in small iterative steps with a group of people so you can get many different perspectives and reflect on what happens along the way. This also helps you to minimise the risk associated with innovation or improvement. We have found that you can learn just as much (if not more!) from what doesn't go well, as what does.
DO
SOMETHING!
SPREAD & SCALE

We're going to be honest with you: we're still trying to figure this phase out - and we're OK about that!

We're grappling with a number of questions.
How can we scale ideas when the critical knowledge is tacit and therefore more difficult to standardise?

What happens if, in the standardisation, there leaves no further room for innovation?

How can we effectively determine the transferability of an innovation/idea?

Effective replication often depends on holding constant the context within which an innovation will operate - how do we do this when we have so much local diversity?

When is it appropriate to scale up or out?

And what are the conditions that will be required in order to do both?

**NB:** 'Scaling out' is the replication of an idea to other location(s) at the same scale.

E.g. from one team to another team.

'Scaling up' instead, is the expansion in the area of coverage, for example from team, to department, to community to national levels.
References


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