



Children's Social Care

IMPOWER

At IMPOWER we're different.

When you work with us, you know that we really care. You can tell because we always do the right thing, even though it might make our jobs harder. You can tell because, through our behaviour, we demonstrate deep respect for the people who work in the sector. And you can tell because, despite all the challenges, we stay focused on results that bring positive outcomes, and we keep going until tangible change is delivered.



**Whenever I run into a problem
I can't solve, I always make it bigger.
I can never solve it by trying to make
it smaller, but if I make it big enough,
I can see the outlines of a solution"**

Dwight D. Eisenhower

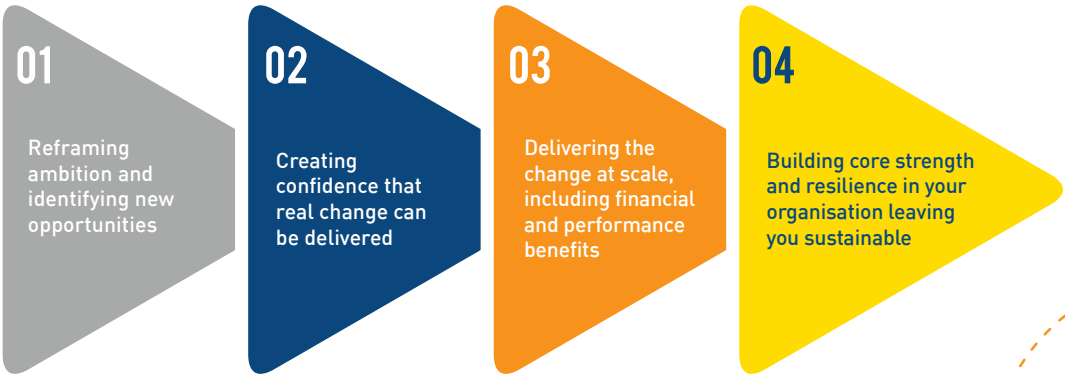
It's a very different kind of consulting.

We don't just assume private sector innovation can be shoehorned into the public sector. Instead, we have a deep understanding of the complexity of public services, recognising that a different kind of challenge needs a different type of approach. Borne from this understanding, and over two decades serving the public sector, we developed EDGEWORK®. There is a better way.

We believe that a better public sector is the cornerstone of a better society. Delivering better outcomes is at the heart of what we do and is the key to financial sustainability. We aim to put humanity at the heart of public service reform.

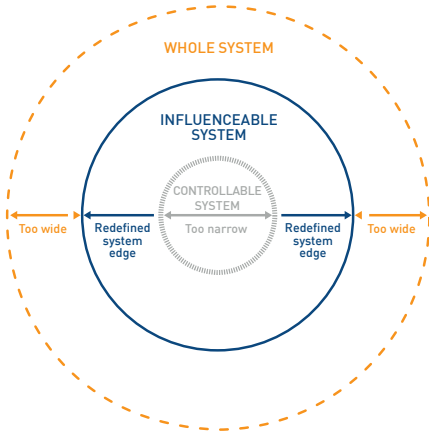
We're also the most fun, engaging, helpful and supportive team to work with – and don't just take our word for it. Ask our clients and their clients; our track record is unmatched. We get results, at scale, which last - because we understand that you don't just need our help now, you also need the capability to keep going once we're gone.

There is a different way. The IMPOWER way. Through our EDGEWORK® approach we help our clients deliver successful transformation through four key stages:



In practical terms this means we work with you, your frontline teams and partners to develop and implement the tools, training, and systems you need to drive the change to make these sustainable well into the future. We build confidence in your team and provide transferable tools that expedite and accelerate the impact of change initiatives.

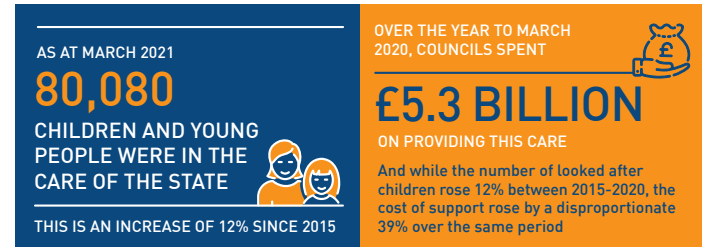
So, how does this deliver change for Children's Social Care?



The challenge

In recent years, most local areas have seen rises in the number of children in their care and disproportionate increases in costs of support. More than 8 in 10 councils in England responsible for children's social care are overspending on budgets, despite a funding increase of £1.1 billion over the past two years. Despite this investment, longer-term outcomes for children in care and their families remain poor, while increases in cost are placing significant and increasing pressure on local authorities.

Local areas are unable to demonstrate improved outcomes for children in care, or how they are achieving value from the billions of pounds of investment in their support. Central change from policy or legislation is still years away. Local change and influence is key to shifting the focus of practitioners, providers and commissioners towards better meeting the needs of our children and young people.



Data source: LGA forecast of spend growth on children's services, submission to Spending Review 2021 (validated financial outturn figures are not available for 20/21).

England's total spend of £10.5 billion on children's services should be seen as an investment in the futures of our most vulnerable children and young people; right now there is no correlation between need and the amount we spend. What if there was a way to:

Clearly define need (not risk) and use it to make consistent commissioning and brokerage decisions

Invest in services that make the biggest impact for children, young people and their families' wellbeing

Remove the requirement to make short-term 'bad savings'

Connect placement spend with impact and child-centred outcomes

Find common ground between children's services planning and wider council financial planning

Our impact

Our work focuses on helping local areas to improve life chances for children within and outside of the care system and across the full child's journey. Our Valuing Care approach helps teams supporting families keep children at home where it's safe to do so, or access the care that will best enable them to meet their needs and longer-term ambitions.

Through working in this way, we have delivered impact across a wide range of councils, and together we have achieved some impressive results:

Improving outcomes

35 children reunified with families or transitioned into step down accommodation in Lincolnshire.

22 children stepped down to more appropriate provision in Oxfordshire.

8 children supported to live/remain living safely at home in Stockton.

Delivering good savings

£3.2m in year 'good' savings through positive changes to care and support in Lincolnshire.

£3.5m 'good' savings achieved through positive changes to care and support in Oxfordshire.

£1.5m 'good' savings through more appropriate, stable placements in Norfolk with support and cost better matched to needs.

Delivering social value

"Working with **IMPOWER** has helped us to significantly strengthen and improve the way we support our children in care – and this is having a real impact on children's lives and on our efforts to maintain a stable financial footing."

Debbie Barnes, Chief Executive, Lincolnshire County Council

Improving resilience

Valuing Care is improving support and outcomes for children in care – one of the country's most disadvantaged groups with significantly worse health, educational, employment and housing outcomes than the general population.

As part of our social value offer, **IMPOWER** also provides practical support to care leavers.

Our approach

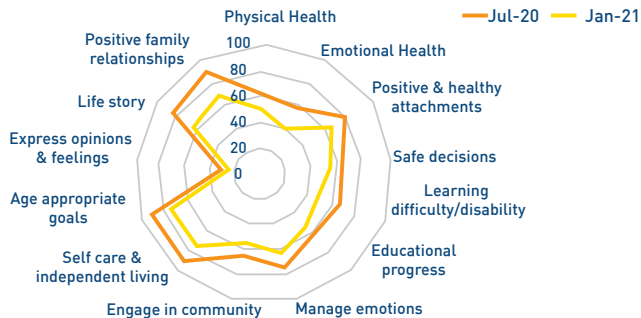
Our Valuing Care approach helps social workers, individually and as teams, to produce a profile of needs of individual children and groups of children, and to track this over time. The information provided by the Valuing Care tool is used to improve support and outcomes for individual children, and at a population level to help local areas meet the needs of children, manage providers, and plan future support and provision.

Valuing Care provides a shared and consistent view of children's needs

On an individual level - Provides holistic, nuanced picture of needs
At population level - Understanding of needs for all children/cohorts

- Understand how needs and outcomes change over time
- Used to prevent entry into care
- Used to support children out of residential into family settings

Below is an example of the needs-led insights the tools can provide (0 = low need/strength, 100 = high need). Simple visuals like this enable professionals to ask the right questions and find better solutions.



This provides the foundation for a different approach to commissioning and practice



CURRENT SYSTEM	VALUING CARE
Random spend and opportunistic cuts	Investment and financial control
Cost	Value
Presenting behaviours and risks	Holistic view of need
Reactive	Proactive
Containment	Ambition
Measurement of inputs	Measurement of outcomes
Commissioning by anecdote	Intelligence-led partnerships
Market not meeting need	Market shaped to respond to need
Lack of evidence for inspectorate	Clear story on improvement

	As is	How Valuing Care changed the conversation
Case study 1 – Kamal	<p>Kamal came into local authority care at the age of 15. Social workers worried about the risk Kamal posed to himself and society as he was engaging in antisocial behaviour - instead of, in particular, moped thefts.</p> <p>Kamal was therefore placed in a residential facility in the countryside to limit this risk, at a significant cost to the local authority (£150k per year). The cost of this placement reflected the provision of 'therapeutic input'. It was not clear whether Kamal engaged with this, benefitted from this, or if it had meaningful impact on his life.</p> <p>Kamal felt unhappy and cut off from his family, friends and community. He declined to attend lessons.</p>	<p>Using the Valuing Care approach, social workers assessed Kamal's needs. These were identified as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meaningful activity, building on his strengths • Building relationships with peers who have a positive influence • Trauma-informed counselling support • Reunification with wider family group <p>This reframed conversation enabled social workers to search for a more appropriate placement for Kamal. This included a placement closer to family, and an engineering apprenticeship to build on his skills, and provide meaningful activity and opportunities for developing new positive relationships.</p>
Case study 2 – Anna	<p>Anna, age 15, was at significant risk of coming into care. She was attending school very rarely and displaying frequent outbursts and 'challenging behaviour'. Her mum was finding it increasingly difficult to cope and felt keeping Anna at home was unsafe for her younger children.</p>	<p>Using the Valuing Care approach to facilitate a different conversation between Anna, her mum, her social worker and her school tutor enabled Anna to articulate the reasons behind her school absences and behaviour. Unmet educational needs were identified and an autism assessment pathway was undertaken, whilst community support groups and appropriate respite provision were also identified.</p>

	As is	How Valuing Care changed the conversation
Case study 3 - Alisha	<p>Alisha, now aged 16, came into care as part of a large sibling group at age 7. A series of placement breakdowns, and an incident in which it was alleged that she started a fire, resulted in her moving to an internal residential placement two years ago.</p>	<p>Alisha has expressed sincere regret over the incident, completed the Youth Offending Service (YOS) course early, and there have been no subsequent issues since. The Valuing Care approach has been used to articulate this, alongside Alisha's strengths (exceptional academic progress, and her ability to build relationships with others) and her genuine needs (emotional wellbeing due to a history of self-harm).</p> <p>This enabled a different conversation with Independent Fostering Agencies who had previously rejected Alisha due to the fire incident, enabling a family-based placement to be found.</p>

*For anonymity reasons, these are not real children, but portraits based on experiences from working across multiple local authorities.



Our approach enables and incentivises innovation and impact for our clients and the people they support.

Digital transformation *will not deliver impact simply based on boxes and wires*. IMPOWER deploys its EDGEWORK® approach, with digital as an enabler. This allows us to co-develop, deploy and embed digital tools and techniques, utilised in a way that problem solves the challenges facing organisations and systems.

We support delivering consistent and appropriate practice improvement at scale, understanding and managing impact, including return on investment, and genuinely shifting the dial on what matters.

Workforce is a key part of this transformational process, and we support the adoption of new practices, ways of working and systems. This helps deliver continued and sustainable impact well after IMPOWER has completed the implementation.



The outcome

Our work has delivered demonstrable changes in how children are supported to succeed within and outside of the care system, including:

- Cost reductions and improvement in outcomes for children through working with frontline practitioners, commissioners and providers to change practice, culture and ways of working.
- Shifts away from cost and risk containment towards a focus on value - and a more holistic view of need.
- A comprehensive understanding of the needs of children in care and how these change over time at both a child and population level.
- Clear medium-term trajectories for cost and demand - and established tracking and reporting of progress over time.



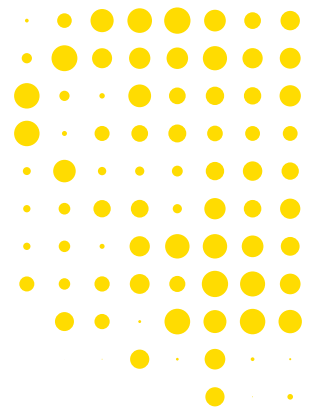
Working with IMPOWER has helped us to significantly strengthen and improve the way we support our children in care – and this is having a real impact on children's lives and on our efforts to maintain a stable financial footing. My team have been really impressed with how IMPOWER have engaged and worked with frontline staff, using Valuing Care to make step changes to behaviour, practice and decision making at pace.”

Debbie Barnes, Chief Executive, Lincolnshire County Council



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To find out more about the impact we could achieve together, please get in touch:

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