**SESLIP Quality Assurance Leads Meeting**

**Thursday 16 June 2022 (14:00 – 16:30)**

**Attendees:**

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| Bracknell | Kogie | Perumall |
| Brighton and Hove | Sharon | Martin |
| Brighton and Hove | Tina | James |
| Buckinghamshire | - |  |
| East Sussex | Douglas | Sinclair |
| Hampshire | Sophie | Butt |
| Isle of Wight (Chair) | Kim | Goode |
| Kent | Elise | McQueen |
| Oxfordshire | Tan | Lea |
| Portsmouth | Kate | Soutter |
| Slough | Sandra | Davies |
| Southampton | Jo | Feeney |
| Surrey | Linde | Webber |
| West Berkshire | Nicola | Robertson |
| Windsor & Maidenhead | Shungu | Chigocha |
| Wokingham | Liz | McAuley |

**Apologies:**

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| Brighton & Hove | Justin | Grantham |
| Hampshire | Stuart | Ashley |
| Hampshire | Amanda | Meadows |
| Medway | Rebecca | Cooper |
| Milton Keynes | Sophie | Marshall |
| Reading | Fiona | Betts |
| Southampton | Stuart | Webb |
| Surrey | Tom | Stevenson |
| West Sussex | Sophie | Carter |

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| 1. **Introductions & Apologies** |
| Kim Goode (Chair) gave Stuart Ashley’s apologies.  Introductions were given, including Sophie Butt, Director of QA & Performance for Hampshire, who will be taking over as Chair from the next meeting. |
| **2. Matters Arising from Last Meeting** |
| The minutes of the last meeting were agreed. |
| **Feedback from CP Chairs Sub-group** |
| Sharon Martin reported that the sub-group met earlier this week with reasonable attendance.  There was a discussion around the hybrid way of working and conferences. The group is keen to keep this as a standing agenda item, so that they can share information about how that is operating within different authorities. At that meeting, there was also an extensive discussion on the Social Care Review and what that will look like for practice. That lead to an exploratory conversation about how we might do things differently and how we can involve families more in the review process – the Family Group Conference Model - and how we can take a more child-centred approach. There was discussion around preparation for reviews, how social work colleagues might use the skills set of the conference chairs, consideration around anti-racist process and what that looks like, use of socio-culture grams and the Graces model. This led into a discussion about what conversation should happen and in what spaces, and when.  At the next meeting, the subgroup will be looking at feedback systems. The Chair reported on a practice session held by Brighton & Hove on Extra Familial Harm. There is a community practice event in July and October, giving consideration to research. Those dates will be promoted in the next couple of weeks to CP Chairs in the south and south-east.  SM reported that CLA activity is busy, with complexity of cases. The Care Review was received with some concern but with agreement we do need to be doing things differently. There are concerns around the capacity of the Conference chairs.  Recruitment & Retention was discussed as there is currently more instability. We are already seeing people looking at alternative roles. SB commented that we need that response from government so currently we are in the middle ground waiting period and experiencing difficulty recruiting. The QA Leads agreed, the uncertainty is leading to anxiety, and we need to manage that while we wait for the legislation.  Elise McQueen (Kent) commented that they have had trouble recruiting to the IRO post but not to the CP conference chairs post. They are maintaining consistency and that change, if it does come, is not imminent.  The Chair suggested that “Forward Planner/thinking re the Care Review “might be a good agenda item for the next meeting of the CP Chairs sub-group.  There is a real mix of experiences regarding return to face-to-face conferencing. Some of that is shaped by changes to office space and adapting technology. In Brighton & Hove all ICPCs are in person (hybrid) with a mix of attendance from agencies.  The Chair commented that Hampshire definitely support ICPCs being held in person and the plan is to gradually include other meetings.  The CP Chairs plan to look at the duration of conferences and SM commented it should last for no more than one hour. It will be interesting to look at what practice looks like in different authorities. Elise McQueen’s experience, having surveyed 12 districts, is there has been resistance to bringing chairs back face to face. Definitely the ICPCs will be in person around network/familiarity, with hybrid possibilities included. Meeting rooms can be an issue and CP Chairs have to use their laptop and record the meeting.  Kogie Perumall (Bracknell) commented there has been pushback from all IROs and conference chairs. They looked at this from the perspective of what it looks like for the child and family, logged problems over the time and produced a list of examples of what has happened during online conferences and what has been seen in families. This log has provided evidence of why we cannot go on with hybrid conferences. The decision has been made that these need to be face to face and that is not negotiable, unless there are exceptional reasons not to attend. They are working through this with the Police but this has not been a problem with others. It is all about engaging people and you cannot have difficult conversations online.  The Chair reported that on the Isle of Wight we have seen more dads and stepdads attending hybrid meetings and we are gradually returning to face-to-face conferencing so not sure what will happen.  Shungu Chigocha (Windsor & Maidenhead) agreed that hearing about the logging of meetings is interesting. They are likely to battle issues around retention and recruitment when it comes to face-to-face meetings. They went to consultation and received good feedback about adopting the hybrid model. They have issues around room availability, which can mean conferences go out of timescale. |
| **Quality Assurance & Performance – SESLIP SE Benchmarking for Q3** |
| The area of challenge for the meeting is benchmarking and the Chair asked all for an update on LAs benchmarking, how they achieve that, what LAs have struggled with and how benchmarking is used in performance groups.  Douglas Sinclair (East Sussex) commented that it is fascinating to see and ask questions as to why we are an outlier. The dashboard and information prompts more questions than giving answers. East Sussex have an issue with low numbers of applications to court compared to other LAs. The question is, is doing focussed work with parents in initial stages of LAC helping. They are really struggling with the increase at the front door, assessments within timescale, coupled with the struggle to recruit social workers and not being able to get agency workers. They have recruited students who will be newly qualified over the summer and are bringing in staff from other areas of the service. DS commented that bringing in “a team” from an agency has a negative impact.  Linde Webber (Surrey) was attending the meeting at short notice and hadn’t had a chance to prepare but she also clarified they have recruiting problems with SWs in their CP teams. They use data in their monthly meetings and the benchmarking is very useful.  Tina James (Brighton & Hove) explained she did not have any benchmarking data for Q3 due to their migration to “Eclipse”, who could not provide the data. The Performance Board pass on subjects for thematic audits to the QA managers. They have undertaken a CiN audit for the last 3 years.  Sandra Davies (Slough) reported they are going through challenging times in terms of the financial situation. However the performance (for Q4) looks quite good overall but poor around Child Protection. It is puzzling to try and work out why we are higher than other areas, even though we have audited, looked at s47s, and at our thresholds to see if there is consistency across the board. It is difficult to understand and the question is, is there a demographic link with London as it is not thought this is about performance.  Shungu Chigocha (Windsor & Maidenhead) use their monthly performance board to review benchmarking intelligence. In terms of what is working well, our timeliness in undertaking visits is at 93%, with 39% per 10K population for children subject to CP Plans. Re contact with care leavers, our performance is 94%. Windsor & Maidenhead are not doing so well with timeliness of ICPCs and have seen a significant increase in referrals in Q3. Also, the figures are high for CP subject to plan for more than 2 years (sometimes this is around court dates). They are running roadshows to help partner agencies with thresholds and have revised the protocol around timeliness of ICPCs. Their CP recording might not be aligned with the Southeast data and the data team are looking to improve the system.  Elise McQueen (Kent) raised the question of rereferrals, which appear to relate to unborn babies and having to keep pre-birth babies open for 3 months post birth. They have carried out an audit on this and their CP Plans and examine quality of practice. Our assessments were poor in terms of timescales, compared to Hampshire and we will be carrying out a thematic audit.  The Chair commented that on the Isle of Wight there are a number of referrals, which result in C&F assessment with no further action. We are looking at that and also our rereferral rate, and doing some work on the threshold document with schools.  SB commented re pre-birth and having to keep them open for 12 weeks. Hampshire and Isle of Wight have the same at the moment, we have reviewed this and our LSCP is doing a thematic QA audit around safeguarding of unborn and new-borns, to include bruising protocol and non-accidental injury. Hampshire are looking at NFAs as we are interested in source of referrals. Schools are concerned about risk-taking and are erring on the side of caution. In Hampshire we are monitoring timescales of assessments and also the quality.  Tan Lea (Oxfordshire) shared the details of their Performance framework. They have an issue around caseloads, which are 18% higher than 12 months ago, which is significant. They want to keep caseloads around 20 mark and the question is, do we have unallocated children with rigorous oversight or we bring in additional staff. This is a dilemma. In terms of timeliness, there has been a significant increase in MASH referrals that do not lead to further action, also an increase in assessments that do not lead to interventions. We are currently reviewing our processes, doing a multi-agency audit and are revising the Threshold of Needs document to encourage partners to prioritise other routes for support. We are also doing work at a strategic level to get a better buy in to Early Help. Our assessment timeliness is at 93% but our ICPCs timeliness is not where we want it to be. They are doing some work on duration of plans and repeat plans. |
| **National/Ofsted issues – Education White Paper and SEND Green Paper** |
| The Chair welcomed Brian Pope, Assistant Director for Education & Inclusion for Hampshire, to the meeting. Brian shared his presentation on the Green Paper and the White Paper to give the QA Leads an overview.  The Green Paper details the three challenges as its case for change. The current system is not delivering value for money and we agree with this. The SEND system and alternative provision system is not always positive for parents and difficult for them to navigate. Also the outcomes for those with SEND and in an alternative provision are poor. The Green Paper is in chapters and talks about a single SEND and alternative provision system. These both have different routes in and they will now be amalgamated. There will be new national standards setting out how needs should be identified and needs met.  The SEND code of practice will be updated and each LA will need to set up a SEND partnership to put into the local inclusion plan. There will be standardised EHCP plans, which will move through the system with the child. Needs will be assessed and families will be offered a preference. Mandatory mediation must be taken before parents take LA to tribunal.  There will be more money for schools, which will reverse some of the cuts which have happened since 2010. There will be a new SENCO qualification. The big push is can we improve mainstream provision by investing in quality and teaching of curriculum. There will be funding for respite places, new specialist provision, to encourage young people on EHCP to work. When asked what they would like, the second thing young people say is, they would like a job.  Alternative provision funding will be changed with LAs having a greater oversight of pupils movements. Brian Pope feels all alternative provision should be registered. The feedback has been that Head Teachers are mainly warm about the paper, with positive feedback.  Brian explained the White Paper appears to be about ambitions and improvements in children’s learning, which may result in some unintended consequences around targets. He has concerns about schools being “less inclusive”.  The paper is about improving teaching, providing additional support for some children, establishing a register for children not in school. There are improvements around attendance in the paper. However, there is conflicting guidance between the Green and White paper around behaviour. It is a system-wide reform and is controversial in that all schools must join or alternatively have a plan to join a multi-academy trust by 2030. |
| **6. Any other Business and Information Sharing** |
| The Chair confirmed we are still looking for volunteers for the moderation of Self-Assessment panels. Kate Soutter, Sandra Davies and Kim Goode have volunteered.  Sophie Butt suggested practices around multi-agency auditing could be a future agenda item.  Potential agenda items for the next meeting also include:   * Your authorities thinking of the care review and next steps. * How you complete multi agency audits in your LA with your LSCP. * How we gather feedback and use that to influence practice and service delivery.   Please email Sally with any agenda items.  The Chair thanked all for attending the meeting. |

**Actions from the last sessions.**

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| **Moderation of self-assessment panels** | Kate Soutter to share the SESLIP Newsletter link re moderation of self-assessment panels. | Pending |
| **Care Leavers transitions work** | Douglas Sinclair to share East Sussex protocol developed as part of Care Leavers transitions work | Closed (circulated with minutes of meeting on 16 June 2022) |
| **Children Missing Education** | Douglas Sinclair will share the East Sussex multi-agency CME audit tool | Closed (circulated with minutes of meeting on 16 June 2022) |
| **Forward Planning and Agenda** | Stuart plans to do a monthly touch base that will help develop the agenda and plan contributions. This will help colleagues do preparation in advance of the meetings | Closed |