# Agenda – South East regional early help network

**Chair Grainne Siggins** DCS Bracknell Forest

**Meeting details:** Tuesday March 8, 12-1.30pm via MS Teams

**Attendees:** Simon Deer for IOW, John Foster (data), Jo Foster Oxfordshire, Maria Godfrey, Gareth Morgan (Bucks), Hayden Grim (Portsmouth), Jenny Boyd (West Sussex), Jo Goldfinch (E Sussex here for Celia Lamden), Alistair Lee (East Sussex), Julie Greer (Nat cen for family hubs, regional coordinator and SEND specialist), Gill Noble (Portsmouth Kelli Pierce), Rebecca Roach (Kent here for Stuart), Vicky Rhodes (Reading), Steph Coomber (West Berks), Jo Templeman (Brighton and Hove), Jo Goldfinch

**Item 1:** The notes and actions from March were agreed.

**Item 2: Early Help Data standards project**

Since the last meeting the team has had 30 sessions at 20 different LAs to scope the project. They identified the following challenges which the project is seeking to address:



JF noted that there is a huge variation in how Early Help is defined, for some it is Level 3 service pre social care, for others it is much wider and earlier, some localities have a partner-led model with partners doing EHAs.

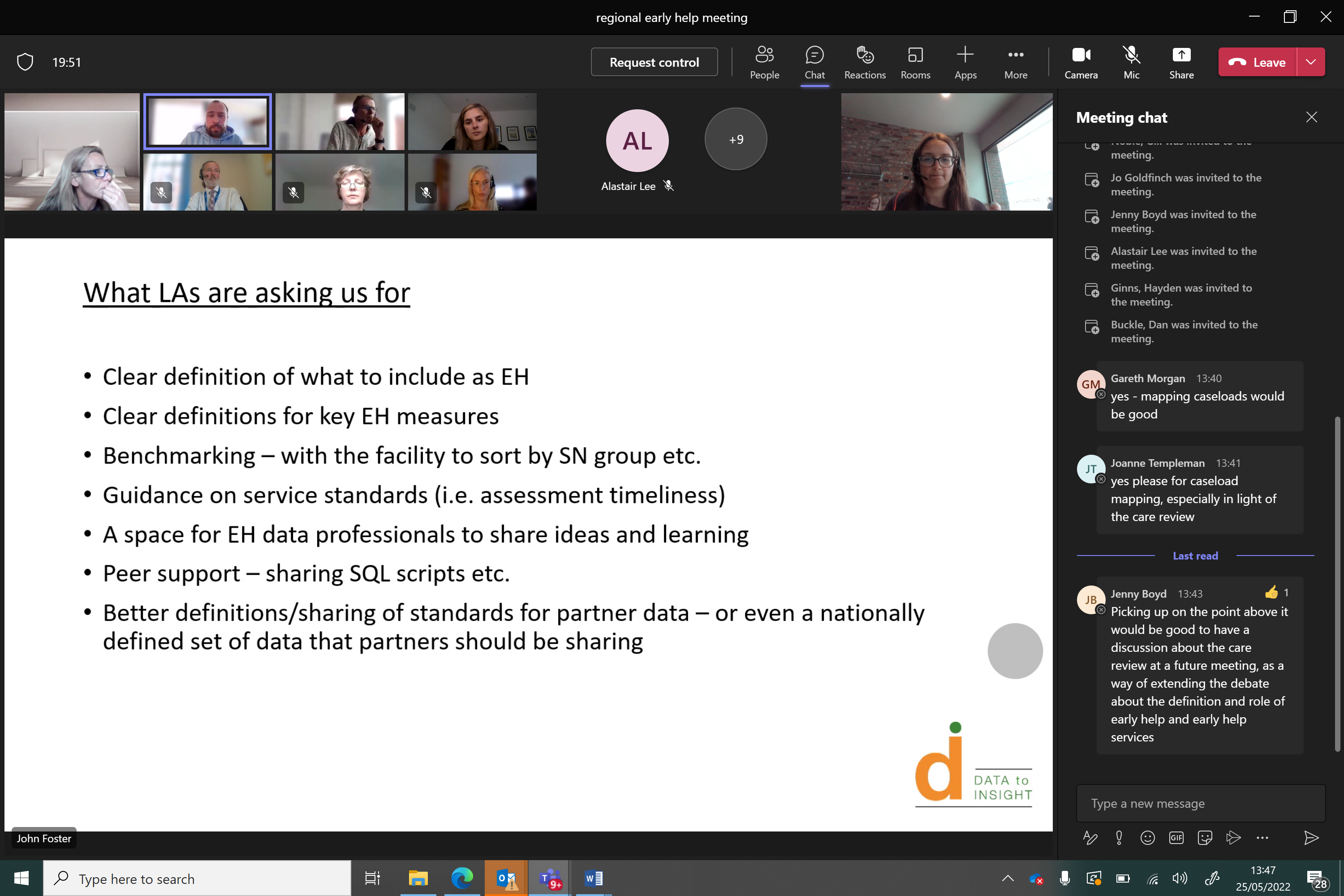
JB asked whether there could be a discussion about the care review at a future meeting, as a way of extending the debate about the definition and role of early help and early help services

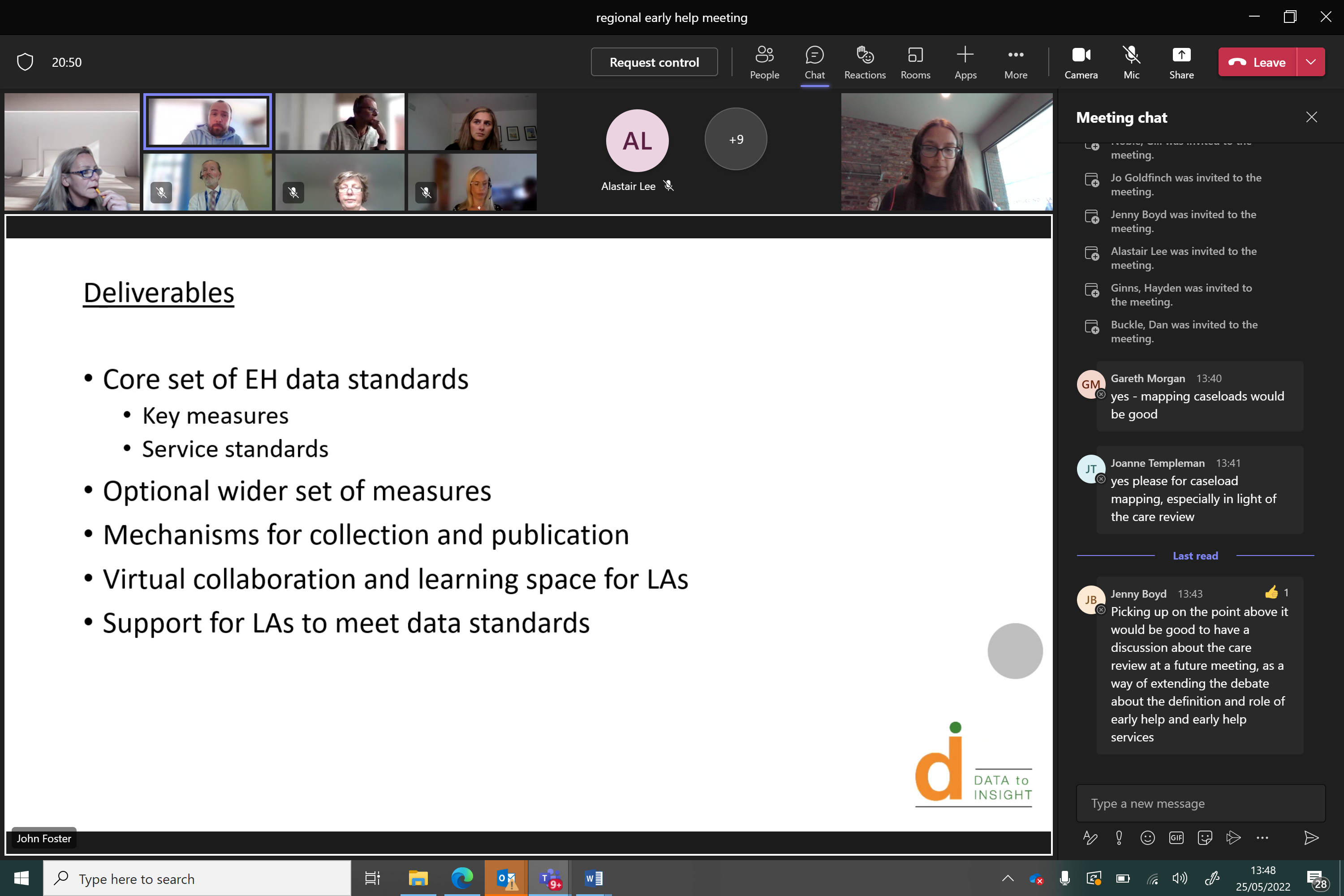
**Action:** Care review and bringing together of CIN and EH on next meeting agenda

Other challenges noted include that:

* there is not a shared and coherent case management system. Systems can often be fragile, and rely on one person knowing how the data and systems fit together across the council and partners more widely.
* There is a lack of adequate capacity in data teams, with EH coming second to social care and no regional networks for EH data leads.
* There is a lack of consistency in KPIs and service standards; and in most areas Las are seen as responsible for managing processes that is everyone’s responsibility.

Therefore, the data to insight project has honed down on the following priority areas and set of deliverables.





JF explained that the DHLUC early help data pilot and this work are being taken forward alongside each other. There is a dedicated mailing list if people want to be added.

In terms of timescales, the project started in March and is aiming for end Feb core reporting. AL will be taking data to regional data network in spring and then come back in Spring next year.

**Action:** All to let JF know if they want to be added to the mailing list

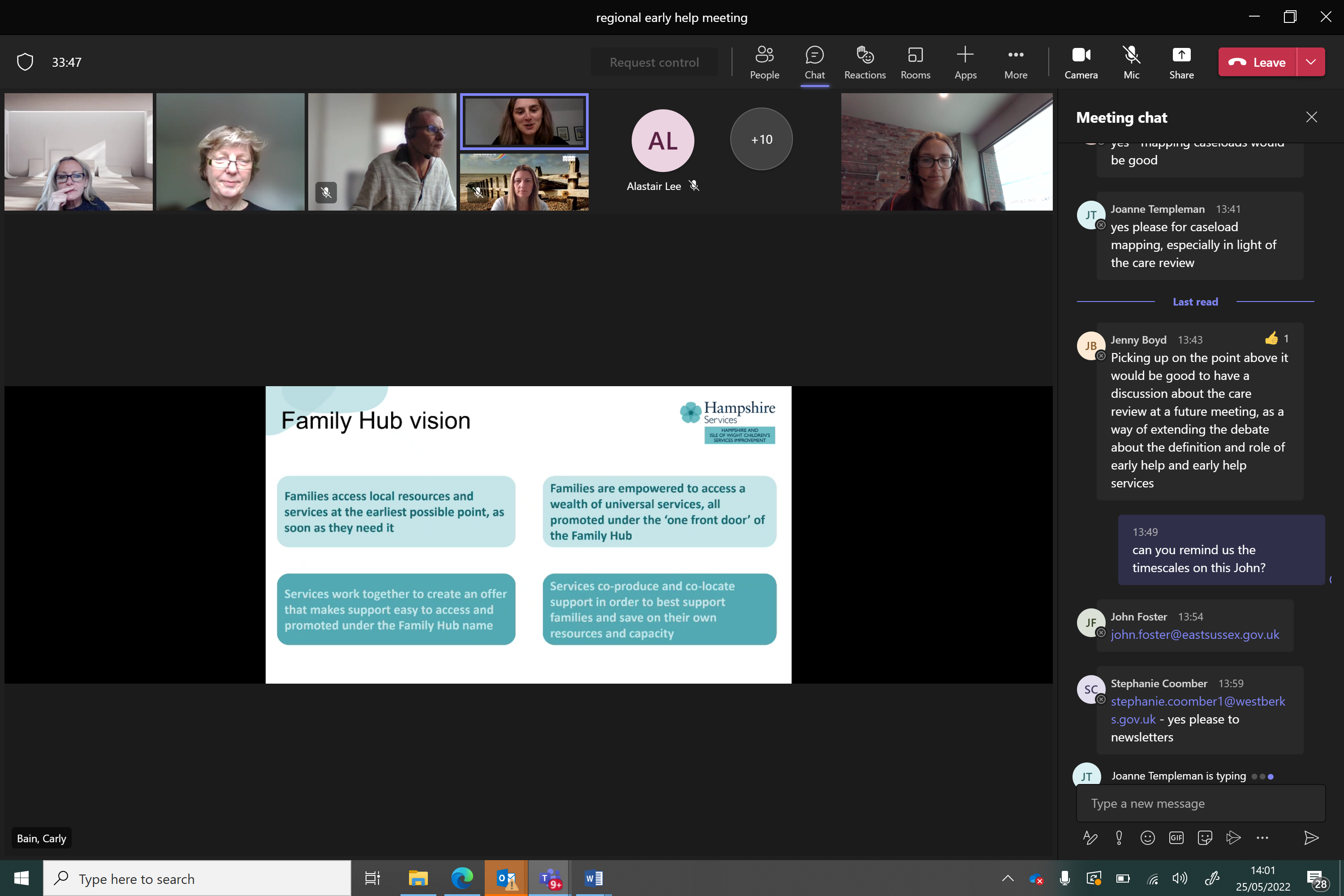
**Item 3: Family hubs**

JG explained her role alongside Carly Bain’s in IoW and that together they are working to implement and enhance family hubs, facilitate a community of practice, and provide bespoke support. They can help really flexibly depending on the need of the LA by attending in person, writing JDs, sharing practice and issues nationally.

They are also organising a series of workshops on digital offer and coproduction, SEND, Youth and Governance. Themes based on ideas from LAs in the south east, more workshops can be run post September

**Action:** All to contact JG or CB if you want to be on mailing list, receive or volunteer to write blogs, receive updates from workshops, research etc.

JG confirmed progress and approach to family hubs nationally - 75 pre-selected LAs, 6 in the south east. Majority are engaging to enhance their existing models. All seems to be going well. Dorset and Brighton and Hove have transformation funding. They have pulled together a shared vision based on work with LAs.



**Item 4: Sharing practice themed discussion**

* **impact of Ukraine on Early Help (any increases in demand noticed in South East)**

Kent noticed little impact to date. Brighter Futures noted that their EH offer is key, and there is funding for a post in EH to support Ukraine.

West Sussex noted early use of family hubs, but very minimal at the moment. Live examples of families being stranded by host families abandoning them. But it hasn’t yet had a significant impact. EH services quite involved with families from Afghanistan and Syria, not seeing the same volume for Ukraine. In West Sussex there isn’t a worker for Ukraine, but they do have expertise around refugees generally. Corporately there is a lot of political sight around the families and anticipating the demand going up.

Reading noted that numbers are quite small about 30 children via host scheme. However they are worried about families arriving via family schemes – c. 300 – we are worried about demand and hidden need. There is a good joint offer in Reading, not anticipating not being able to cope but expect an impact on EY placement and sufficiency come September.

Portsmouth has had 36 families’ assessments, quite a lot of 3rd sector support so not seeing impact on EH at this date. Looking at future impact on school placements. Health visitors and school nursing not reporting a significant impact. Hotel being opened for asylum seeking families, quite a lot of services going in to those, so we aren’t seeing impact as their needs are being met

* **Discussion all - how are people managing risk with increasing waiting lists**

West Sussex reflected they do have a problem with increased demand, but they did a radical redesign of services which got implemented in January which was about refocusing service and losing key staff/posts. There still remains a waiting list but it is closely overseen by senior managers with operational managers making weekly contact with those on the list. GN noted that you can hear other LAs not having a waiting list because they can respond, but some places are not accepting referrals. West Sussex has taken the position if they require EH service we don’t say we aren’t accepting referrals.

Reading noted they make contact weekly with those on their waiting list, and try to make sure that doesn’t go over 4 weeks. Managers prioritise stepdown, but increasingly we have a small partnership outreach team and an expectation that universal partners like schools should hold and support some cases with outreach support. It is something only going up. It isn’t easy to release resource to do this. Feels very uncomfortable, wouldn’t look good on a JTAI but we are also trying to predict where demand/

Portsmouth never had waiting list until last 2-3 months. Doing the same as others weekly contact, go back to referrer and wider partners to do some work whilst the case is waiting to say they will get a service, but in the meantime can you do this. Seems to be working, because schools feel comfortable to do that piece of work because they know we will take it eventually. We’ve worked closely with CSC and held stepdown for 3-4 weeks and we review the cases and only pass cases that need to have a social care intervention.

People reflected that staff shortages in EH are a key driver alongside increased demand in causing waiting lists.

JT noted that in Brighton and Hove waiting lists are increasing, especially relating to cost of living - support around healthy meals on a budget has gone up. We are lucky support for Ukraine families is delivered through ethnic minority team they have always done specific interventions for asylum seeker families in mother tongue and other intervention. Specialist services also can’t recruit and that is also causing pressure on EH.

Jo Goldfinch noted that 146 families are placed which places extra demands on rural teams because that is where more people are being placed. Being placed in holiday lets in much more isolated areas. Also facing issues with wait list. Moved level 2 resources to level 3 to try and address wait list.

GS – increasingly seen doubling of waiting times for CAMHS and that doesn’t seem to be improving but the expectation the service is being expected to do more upstream in early help. Anyone come up with any innovations to address this? Redesign?

**Action:** Future agenda discussion item are EH services being expected to pick up support those on CAMHS waiting lists

SC noted that surprisingly in West Berks they haven't experienced any difficulty recruiting to EH non SW qualified posts - recently had 28 applications for 2 fixed term youth worker posts

In Brighton and Hove they are looking at AMBIT model when you can’t get clinical posts having that team around the worker approach can help. Waiting lists can be over a year for SALT and CAMHS and that approach is helping.

JB reflected in West Sussex they are being told 2 years for autism assessment

SD reflected that they went out 3 times to recruit to a post in IoW. Now working with footprint trust. Whole cohorts of families have never been known to services who have just been coping but covid combined with increased costs of living and may feel they don’t know or don’t feel a EH offer is for them. They won’t have crossed our radars before.

RR said in Kent they are also considering the impact of cost of living for lower paid workers and staff in EH workers, youth workers etc.

**Action:** Future discussion item on cost of living.

* **Discussion all – Development of business case for Early Help – Have any LAs developed cost analysis/business case for early help in terms of prevention of children coming into care. Do we want to undertake this as a sub-region. If yes, need volunteers for steering group.**

VR noted that when Brighter Futures were in intervention they used transformation funding to do a few projects to prevent children coming into care. CIN intensive support through family workers and used benchmark of agency social workers. However the business case was difficult because for other reasons at the same time CIN cases went up. Cost avoidance vs cost savings. Family reunification and when DfE funding came to an end but then shifting our own internal resources. 350 children and only 2 came into care.

SD noted in IoW getting elected members on board and invested in Early help and understanding what they provide in local community has helped with investment. Has meant they haven’t come for budget of £1m which is delivered by Barnadoes. Ion IoW we have been able to demonstrate for every pound saves £2.60 .

**ACTION:** Jo Templeman, Carl Burton, Stuart (Kent), Vicky Rhodes, Simon Dear (IOW) to get together to discuss narrative (and if possible data/finance) to explain business case for early help.

**Item 5: issues for escalation**

GS to escalate difficulties in recruitment .

Future meeting dates:

Monday 5 December 11.30-1pm

**Action log:** This action log was updated on September 8 2022. Shaded actions are closed or complete

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|  | **Action** | **Responsible** | **Date issued** | **Status** |
| **18** | All to let JF know if they want to be added to the EH data project mailing list | All | May 2022 | Open |
| **17** | All to contact JG or CB if you want to be on Family Hub mailing list, receive or volunteer to write blogs, receive updates from workshops, research etc. | All | May 2022 | Open |
| **16** | Future discussion on cost of living, Care review (EH and CIN being brought together), EH being required to support CAMHS cases due to long waiting lists | RE | May 2022 | Complete |
| **15** | Jo Templeman, Carl Burton, Stuart (Kent), Vicky Rhodes, Simon Dear (IOW) to get together to discuss narrative (and if possible data/finance) to explain business case for early help | RE to convene | May 2022 | Open |
| **14** | All to provide feedback to CB and JG on how best to engage your LA around family hubs | All | Mar2022 | Complete |
| **13** | All contact Georgie to arrange user research interviews, and John on ideas for project scope. | All | Mar 2022 | Complete |
| **12** | RE to share raw responses from EH mapping with data to insight team | RE | Mar 2022 | Complete |
| **11** | KS to feedback on multi-agency (referral?) process at future meeting (Wokingham) | KS | Mar 2022 | Open |
| **10** | Rachael (RPD)(achieving for children) to circulate EH strategy and partnership advisory board terms of reference | RPD | Mar 2022 | Complete |
| **9** | RE to map caseloads and thresholds | RE | Mar 2022 | Open |
| **8** | RE to amend terms of reference naming SC as vice chair and upload to SESLIP website. RE to diarise ToR for annual review | RE | Nov 2021 | Closed |
| **7** | AL to present quarterly to this group on progress of data accelerator | AL | Nov 2021 | Ongoing |
| **6** | CB to present quarterly to this group on progress of regional family hubs work | CB | Nov 2021 | Ongoing |
| **5** | RE to send benchmarking out to all 19 LAs and to summarise findings as item on next agenda | RE | Nov 2021 | Closed |
| **4** | All to contact CB on regional family hub offer of support | All | Nov 2021 | Closed |
| **3** | KP to share report on the impact of bringing together health and EH with Rebecca to circulate to the group | KP | Nov 2021 | Open |
| **2** | AL to ensure learning from supporting families/troubled families influences the EH data accelerator | AL | Nov 2021 | Closed |
| **1** | Refresher data demonstration for the early help network at a future 2022 meeting | AL | Nov 2021 | Closed |