**SESLIP Quality Assurance Leads Meeting**

**Thursday 15th June 2023, (2pm – 5pm)**

**Attendees:**

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| Hampshire & Isle of Wight | Sophie | Butt |
| Bracknell Forest | Joanne | Beaton |
| Brighter Futures Reading | Fiona | Betts |
| Brighter Futures Reading | Otilia | Broadhurst |
| Brighton & Hove | Tina | James |
| Buckinghamshire | Aman | Sekhon-Gill |
| East Sussex | Helena | Wickens |
| East Sussex | Douglas | Sinclair |
| Hampshire & Isle of Wight | Amanda | Meadows |
| Kent | Gavin | Swann |
| Medway | Rebecca | Cooper |
| Milton Keynes | Martin | Clement |
| Slough | Sandra | Davies |
| Surrey | Linde | Webber |
| West Sussex | Laura | Mallinson |
| Windsor & Maidenhead | Shungu | Chigocha |
| Wokingham | Danielle | McKenzie |
| Hampshire | Kimesha | Osbourne |

**Apologies:**

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| Brighton & Hove | Sharon | Martin |
| IOW | Deborah | Price |
| Oxfordshire | Senay | Nidai |
| Southampton | Stuart | Webb |
| Surrey | Patricia | Denney |
| Surrey | Thomas | Stevenson |

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| **1. Introductions & Apologies** |
| There was a round of introductions for the new members of the group. |
| **2. Matters Arising from Last Meeting** |
| The last meeting was chaired by Amanda Meadows (Hampshire & Isle of Wight) as Sophie Butt was unable to attend the previous meeting. All actions were completed. |
| 1. **Feedback from CP Chairs Sub-group** |
| Sharon Martin did not have the meeting invite in her diary and therefore was not at the meeting.  **Action: Kim Osbourne will review the meeting invites to ensure all attendees have been invited to all meetings** |
| 1. **Purpose of the group and review of Terms of Reference** |
| The Chair led the discussion around the purpose of the SESLIP QA Leads group and the Terms of Reference.  The chair noted that there is a mixture of long standing and newer members to this sub-group and thought it would be helpful to find out how useful attendees find this meeting.  Douglas Sinclair (East Sussex) commented that he has been a part of the group for a long time and has found the discussions useful in terms of how others are developing their audit work, feedback from inspections and having the opportunity to discuss things that are going on in their authorities. Douglas would like the chance to discuss how other authorities are developing their LADO service. Douglas finds value the meeting but noted it can be a struggle to complete any significant work for agenda items.  Rebecca Cooper (Medway) commented that she finds the discussions around readiness for Ofsted helpful but agrees with Douglas that when there are more complex matters that require a bit more time to prepare, she does not always have the time to adequately prepare. Rebecca also feels that the length of the meeting can also be a challenge as it is half of an afternoon. It would be useful if the topics for discussion are circulated prior to the meeting so that we can read all the information before the meeting.  Sophie Butt agreed that the length of the meeting is a struggle as attendees are all senior leaders. With regards to circulating information in advance, Sophie agreed it is a good idea but noted that the onus is on group members to submit the papers in advance. It was noted that only three authorities had submitted the information requested for this meeting.  This is Aman Sekhon–Gill’s first meeting. Aman (Buckinghamshire) suggested there could be something included around national versus local issues and discussions on the strengths and areas of challenge for those as it would help us to understand what is going on in other areas.  Amanda Meadows (Hampshire & Isle of Wight) commented with regards to national versus local; national is easy, however local is a bit of a problem because we are a big area with diverse local authorities in terms of size and where they sit. Some authorities are closer to their London boroughs than they are to authorities that form part of this group. Another point to note is that if we bring existing reports, we will need to be careful with sharing reports. We may think we are talking the same language about a certain issue and find that we are not.  Tina James (Brighton & Hove) commented that the first few meetings were prior to covid, and the group were looking at QA systems and tools and how they are developing. Tina has found that over the last 18 months there are more senior leaders in the group now, and subsequently, the agenda items have become more operational. The Terms of Reference for this meeting are very clear but there just needs to be a balance between keeping a focus on QA in terms of systems and tools and requests for information like we have done with the Child protection numbers.  Sophie Butt (Chair) noted that the original project was to look at what a good QA system looks like, the next part is to be able to share good practice, ask questions, seek advice, be peer supporters and pick up on national trends. We must agree on what is the key parts of this meeting and how we can commit to it to make it valuable for all.  Tina James (Brighton & Hove) noted that we need ensure we are not duplicating the work of other groups.  Sophie Butt (Chair) summarised the points made, noting that we can reduce the meeting to two hours, have a more focused agenda around quality assurance rather than performance. To include a national vs local focus, we would need to take suggestions or contributions from the group to ensure the meeting is valuable for everyone and is reflecting areas of interest.  Amanda Meadows (Hampshire & Isle of Wight) commented that the meeting was extended to three hours when the meeting was held in London. The option to revert to a face-to-face meeting once a year has been put forward, however there is no desire for this.  The Chair asked the group if this is still the case; there is still no appetite for this as attendees feel they would struggle to find the time to travel.  **Action: Kim Osbourne will reduce the meeting length to 2 hours update the meeting invites**  The Chair suggested a standing item on the agenda for inspections. We can contact colleagues beforehand to see if anyone has had an inspection in the past quarter. Another item can be for any publications of interest.  This was agreed by the group. Tina James (Brighton & Hove) commented if an authority is doing prep work for a JTAI and has done a summary of what the key findings are, it could be helpful should we choose to do our own thematic audit in preparation for a JTAI Inspection.  **Action: Kim Osbourne will include a standing item on the agenda for discussions around recent Ofsted Inspections and any publications of interest.**  The Chair commented that Hampshire are currently in the middle of a thematic CQC and Ofsted review on alternative provisions for children, this can be discussed during the AOB section of the meeting.  The Chair noted that in terms of the agenda itself there should be a substantive discussion item on themes that have been chosen by the group. This could be where the agenda may have strayed to performance topics rather than quality, as there is a lack of contributions from the group. The chair asked the group to think about any topics for discussion during the meeting and offer any suggestions towards the end of the meeting.  The chair steered the discussion back to the point Douglas Sinclair (West Sussex) made about how authorities quality assures LADOs, and asked if he is looking to do something different?  Douglas Sinclair stated that West Sussex relaunched their QA Framework last year. Through supervision, Douglas monitors the casework and feedback from other agencies adding that they do not currently audit LADO work and wondered what other local authorities do.  Gavin Swann commented that Kent have transferred the LADO work to PowerBi and have set up a peer review with Croydon Council. Although this has only been done it once, it revealed a lot about the multiagency working, thresholds and how different they are with regard to relationships with schools.  Rebecca Cooper noted that Medway have an audit timetable for LADO work where the safeguarding manager does quarterly audits in the LADO service. The practice development service dip into a portion of the audits and these are then reported on quarterly. Medway have also had an external review of the LADO service which gave them some direction on the quality of their tracking and monitoring and ensured that they are capturing all the required information. The LADO support office calls the referrers at the point of closure to offer the opportunity to give feedback which is built into the wider report.  Aman Sekhon-Gill commented that Buckinghamshire now have a process in place that includes a bespoke audit tool which looks at the quality of the ASP meetings and thresholds at the point of closure. The Service Manager and their team have audit days where they do deep dive auditing and thematic reviews. These are then reported on quarterly. Themes are collated across the service which identifies strengths, areas for development and next steps. Aman is happy to share the audit tool if the group would find it useful.  **Action: Aman Sekhon-Gill will share the Lado audit tool.**  Danielle McKenzie commented that Wokingham Council do LADOs locally. The team meet on a regular basis to pick up on any themes and have recently completed a peer audit which they hope to repeat annually.  **Action: Danielle McKenzie will ask the LADO workers what kind of tools they are using.**  The Chair asked the group whether any internal quality assurance work, Ofsted inspection, or observations on LADO have led to changes?  Danielle McKenzie commented that Wokingham had their ILACS in March, which was published in May. The Inspectors were happy with the organisation of the LADO process, but a key point that was raised was the focus of the child’s voice within the Allegation Strategy (ASB) meeting and the interaction between S47 and the ASB meeting.  Douglas Sinclair commented that the discussion was useful and exactly the sort of things the group should be discussing. There are some things that have been discussed that are easily implemented. It would be greatly appreciated if the tools were shared.  The Chair asked that attendees circulate the tools or send them to Kim Osbourne  **Action: Subgroup attendees to share their LADO tools or send them to the SESLIP Admin, Kim Osbourne.**  The Chair commented that Hampshire and the Isle of Wight have seen similar things and have had to take a firm line on what LADOs can, will, or won’t do in terms of all the extras. There have been mixed responses from schools where some understand, but others have used LADOs as an informal advice line and consultancy on a range of business.  Tina James (Brighton & Hove) had received un update from Sharon Martin who apologised to the group for not being present in the meeting. Sharon has submitted a response on behalf of the CP Chairs group to the Stable Homes Built on Love consultation. Sharon will send the minutes of the group to the QA Leads Admin to be shared with the group.  Danielle McKenzie noted in the group chat, that Wokingham have seen a huge increase in the number of consultations and feel it is on the back of the updated "keeping safe in education" which requires schools to monitor low level complaints. In response to this, Douglas Sinclair noted that East Sussex have also seen a huge increase in LADO referrals and agrees that it is likely in line with the Keeping Safe in Education. It got to the point where the LADOs were the answer to everything, especially for schools if they were not getting the right response. To tackle this, the service have created an online referral system which triages the referrals coming through and separates the referrals from those wanting advice.  The Chair asked if attendees all had access to the SESLIP website and whether they use it. The newer members of the group do not have access to the website.  Tina James (Brighton & Hove) asked if members can upload things themselves or whether they had to go through the group admin. Tina and colleagues have been working on a multi-agency audit tool and thought it would be a good tool to share with the SESLIP group.  The Chair confirmed that there is no need to go through the group admin, members can upload whatever they want, whenever they want.  **Action: Kim Osbourne will send website link and instructions for joining along with the minutes.**  Shungu Chigocha commented that Windsor & Maidenhead are in the process of updating the language used in their audit tools to make it easy for the child to understand. A few of the other local authorities have been doing the same.  The Chair commented that this is the kind of thing that would be useful to share with others on the SESLIP website if they are in the position to do so.  **Terms of Reference**  The Chair shared the Terms of Reference on the screen.  The Chair noted that Steve Crocker who was the Director of Children’s Services (DCS) at Hampshire and Isle of Wight retired earlier this year, and Stuart Ashley who was the previous chair of this group is now the DCS for both local authorities.  **Action: Kim Osbourne will update the contacts in the Terms of Reference**  **Attendees** - In terms of the attendee mix, the group still has the quality assurance needs for the different authorities.  **Frequency** - This will remain four time a year. The reference to London can be removed given the discussion earlier regarding meeting in London.  **Action: Kim Osbourne will remove the reference to London in the Terms of Reference**  **Focus** - The Chair was not sure that the group have been good at maintaining the library of shared quality assurance tools. Amanda Meadows (Hampshire and Isle of Wight) commented that sometimes the reason we don’t share is technical. There are some things that cannot be shared without moving it to a word document which is time consuming. We need to be realistic about the tools and documents that can be shared.  **Develop opportunities for mutual external audit moderation and challenge** -  Amanda Meadows commented that this was in the ToR because it is one of the original aims of the group as agreed, but noted that there hasn’t been the appetite to do this, and it likely due to capacity.  There were no objections to removing it.  **Action: Kim Osbourne will remove the Develop opportunities for mutual external audit moderation and challenge line from the ToR.**  The Chair asked if there are any local authorities that have Peer Review arrangements between authorities. Gavin Swann commented that Kent has a relationship with Waltham Forest where they peer review each other. The feedback has been positive.  **Develop a CP chairs network with the aim of enhancing the contribution of CP chairs to quality assurance** - The Chair commented that we do this in the group.  The Chair noted that some local authorities have combined IRS and CP roles and others that separate the roles. Only a few local authorities have separate CP and IRO roles.  Sandra Davies (Slough) commented that IROs are well covered by the South-East IRO (SEIRO) meetings. Sharon Martin has oversight in this meeting so this is not something we should duplicate at the SESLIP meeting.  The Chair noted that we could ask Sharon to feed in IRO feedback when we discuss the CP Chairs Network  **Action: Kim Osbourne will add a line to the ToR to gather feedback from Sharon Martin from the IRO Regional Group.**  **Agenda** - The chair noted that we do not require the performance section.  **Action: Kim Osbourne will remove the reference to performance under ‘areas of challenge’.**  Regarding the questions under the areas of challenge section, the chair commented that the group should consider the types of questions that are being asked. Amanda Meadows (Hampshire & Isle of Wight) commented that the performance questions are altered when the topic demands, or if an authority requests it, for example the questions that went out for this meeting were are around what local authorities know about Child Protection cases in their local authorities. With regards to good practice, one of the reasons this was pulled was because different LAs will have different areas and we cannot have discussions on them all.  Tina James (Brighton & Hove) agreed with Amanda noting that what is good practice for one authority may not be good practice in another, it could be standard.  There were no other suggestions for changes to the Terms of Reference.  The chair asked what things would be useful to discuss for the rolling agenda. Suggestions included the voice of the child and feedback from families as part of audits.  Feedback as part of audits was on the agenda for the last meeting but there was not much of a response. It was added to the agenda as this is an area of interest and development in Hampshire and Isle of wight. The chair asked if any authority feels they have this nailed.  Linde Webber commented that Surrey Council do not have it nailed, but they have built feedback into the new monthly audit tool. The new audit tool was implemented three months ago, and they intend to do an evaluation after six months.  Medway and Windsor & Maidenhead do similar things where the feedback is built into their audit tools. Shungu Chigocha noted that they do regular check ins with some of the families rather than call to request feedback once an audit has been done.  There was a brief discussion around the IRO service, the Chair asked the group if any other local authorities are doing anything different considering the Care Review now that we know IROs are here to stay.  Linde Webber (Surrey) commented that the IRO role was a single role for a long time but moved to a dual role around three years ago. Surrey takes a flexible approach to the role in that things such preference, skillset and demand are taken into consideration.  Laura Mallinson joined the meeting at 3:45 |
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| 1. **Quality Assurance and Performance –**Child protection numbers |
| **What child protection numbers are you seeing in your authority?**  Medway has had 3 times more ICPCs in the last year. This is starting to stabilise.  Laura Mallinson commented that West Sussex, have seen a 29% increase in the number of CP Plans between May 2022 and May 2023. This has been incrementally steady month on month it is a 3% increase. It is not that children are sitting on a plan for longer, they are coming on and coming off much quicker. A number are coming off at first review so there are some questions around whether they should be on a plan in the first place.  Linde Webber noted that in Surrey, there was a significant dip in 2019. In the last 6 months there has been a substantial decrease in numbers.  Amanda Meadows commented there are two very different pictures for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. In Hampshire there has been a decrease since 2017/18, a big decrease in 2019/20, and an increase over covid but they still not at the level of 2021/22. Currently there are 1046 children subject to CPP.  For the Isle of Wight, there has been a 35% increase in children subject to CPP. The Isle of Wight have quite small numbers so 35% sounds dramatic, in terms of numbers, there were 161 in March 2022, this has increased to 217 by March 2023.  The Chair noted that evidence of the Hampshire approach coming through in assessments.  Tina James commented that Brighton & Hove have always been above their statistical neighbours. In March 2020 there were 335 children subjected to a CP plan, by the 30th April 2023 the number had reduced to 280. This is down from the previous month, but up from 268 in April 2022. The number is high for the local authority, but they are working hard to reduce the numbers.  Douglas Sinclair noted that in the run up to the pandemic, East Sussex did an exercise around the number of child protections plans as numbers had increased significantly. East Sussex have a target of 535 which is measured against the IDACI Index. The authority has always been higher than their statistical neighbours for Child Protection, but this is where they hold risk in the system. Going into the Pandemic, the council were around the target number and numbers increased to 691 by the end of the last financial year. Since March 2023 there has been a slow decrease, and numbers are around 660 now.  **‘What themes are identified and what are we doing differently’.**  Tina James commented that Sharon Martin manages the Safeguarding and Review Service at Brighton & Hove and has fed back that she is leading on a pilot where she looks at all requests for ICPC and raises questions where appropriate to see what can be done differently. The service has developed a Governance Framework and are rethinking the local response to domestic abuse. The authority is giving increased scrutiny to the over/underrepresentation of children in the system in relation to anti racism practice and are taking learning from the Thematic audits. In terms of themes worries about the impact of poverty, mental ill health and neglect, and the lengthy waiting lists will start to be addressed.  Aman Sekhon-Gill commented that Buckinghamshire have seen a spike in CP work. The service looked at around 200 cases in a themed way to investigate the quality of assessments and in particular the CP plans for children that where were at risk of contextual harm. There was a big spike in children with self-harm and mental health needs where safeguarding was not a primary need, it revealed where interventions could have happened at an earlier stage. At every touch point there is a conversation on how the service is working with families. A repeat theme was around exploitation, the service is now looking at a new pilot programme for the older cohort of children. The pilot involves the exploitation hub working alongside CPAs to have a look at cases when they come in as an ICPC request. This is helping the CPAs to upskill their understanding of what might be needed. There are multiagency meetings held early on to see what work has already happened and what else can be done. The caveat is that it has had a knock-on effect for the measure for ICPC Timeliness as they have had to pause to check and review the next steps. The effectiveness of the Early Help Service around domestic abuse has helped. The other bit that came out of audit work was professional anxiety. There was a huge evidence base that suggests that children were on a plan because the worker felt it would be better. The professional anxiety was mainly seen in external agencies and mental health services.  Sandra Davies commented that Slough are picking up a theme of older children being put on a CP plan. Slough have traditionally had higher rates of Child Protection than their statistical neighbours (59.8%). They have been an increase in instances of neglect, but a decrease in terms of emotional neglect. Sandra wonders whether people select neglect because it is a broad category. There are many children coming to ICPC that do not go on a plan. Work has been done to strengthen the CP chairs having consultations with social worker about thresholds prior to the conference.  Otilia Broadhurst commented that Reading have also seen an increased in repeat CP plans. 34% of children on a plan have been on a plan before. One thing stood out is that a number of repeat CP plans are around domestic abuse, it was found that many plans have finished but the work is not completed because the perpetrators have not engaged, which asks the question if they disengage what are the safety plans? The CP chairs need to audit plans that come back to conference. The data for the SE region is interesting, some local authorities have a rate of 51% whereas authorities such as Milton Keynes are at 9%.  Danielle McKenzie commented that Wokingham is a small authority and currently have 158 children subject to a CP Plan, there were 156 at the end of last year. There has been an increase in the use of neglect being used as a category (65%). The complexity of neglect has increased so the council are working with partners to increase confidence around how social workers assess neglect. 8% of children are on a CP plan for sexual abuse, which is double the amount from last year. There have been fewer conferences in comparison to last year. The conversion rate of S47s going to ICPC has fallen.  Laura Mallinson commented that West Sussex changed the structure at the beginning of last year and have not seen any change in the percentage of cases for neglect (49%), it has been the same since December 2022. The council have done a lot to raise awareness around sexually harmful behaviours, but this is not reflected as the primary category when cases have gone to conference. Sexual abuse is at 5% which is consistent.  The Chair commented that it is reassuring when we see that other authorities are experiencing similar issues like the rise in neglect. Are there any authorities that have noticed a cross over between children being classed as neglect because of domestic abuse that could be contributing to the increase?  Linde Webber commented that Surrey has always been higher in neglect and what they have found is that if domestic abuse is the dominant factor, then it usually is emotional, where there are multiple factors, it is classed as neglect. This has been looked at again recently following the recent domestic homicide review where the child was on a plan for neglect, but the outcome was that people had taken their eye off domestic abuse because of the neglect.  The chair thanked the group for prepping for the discussions. In terms of the QA part of what we do in this group does anyone else have anything to add or anything anyone wants to report back on anything they are trying.  Shungu Chigocha commented that she would be interested in how other authorities are collating feedback responses. Windsor & Maidenhead look at feedback from many places, how do others triangulate the responses to help find ways to improve the quality of service provisions?  The Chair commented that from the discussions earlier, people are in the early stages of reviewing their feedback processes and suggested we revisit this in six to nine months to see if there are any significant changes.  **Action: Kim Osbourne will remind the group in 6-9 months to see how local authorities’ triangulate feedback**.  Sandra Davies suggested timing it after the CIN Census review is published as it would have the most up to date comparative data. The trends would be helpful to look at.  Tina James commented that Brighton & Hove are currently reviewing direct payments for children with disabilities and wanted to ask the group how other local authorities are approaching this. Tina has short questionnaire that she would like to share with the group to gather some feedback.  **Action: Tina James will circulate the short questionnaire around direct payments after the meeting** |
| 1. **AOB and information sharing** |
| There was no other business raised.  The chair concluded that the meeting invites will be updated and resent considering the changes discussed in the meeting.  The Chair will create a template for requests for information to ensure the ask is clear.  The meeting ended at 16:36 |
| 1. **Items for the next agenda** |
| Voice of the child  Triangulation of feedback from families as part of audits. |

**Actions from the session**

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| **Topic** | Action | Date completed |
| Meeting invites | Kim Osbourne will review the meeting invites to ensure all attendees have been invited to all meetings. | 22/06/2023 |
| Meeting length | Kim Osbourne will reduce the meeting length to 2 hours update the meeting invites | 22/06/2023 |
| Agenda Setting | Kim Osbourne will include a standing item on the agenda for discussions around recent Ofsted Inspections and any publications of interest. | 23/06/2023 |
| LADO Audit Tool | Aman Sekhon-Gill will share the LADO audit tool. |  |
| LADO Audit Tool | Danielle McKenzie will ask the LADO workers what kind of tools they are using. |  |
| LADO Audit Tool | Subgroup group members to share their LADO tools or send them to the group Admin. |  |
| SESLIP Website | Kim Osbourne will circulate the SESLIP website link and instructions for joining along with the minutes. |  |
| Terms of Reference | Kim Osbourne will update Terms of Reference as discussed. | 23/06/2023 |
| Service User Feedback | Kim Osbourne will remind the group in 6-9 months to see how local authorities’ triangulate feedback. |  |
| Direct Payments questionnaire | Tina James will circulate the short questionnaire around direct payments after the meeting. |  |