**SESLIP Quality Assurance Leads Meeting**

**Monday 27th March 2023, (2pm – 5pm)**

**Attendees:**

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| Hampshire & Isle of Wight | Amanda | Meadows |
| Bracknell Forest | Kogie | Perumall |
| Brighton & Hove | Sharon | Martin |
| Brighton & Hove | Tina | James |
| Medway | Rebecca | Cooper |
| Oxfordshire | Tan | Lea |
| Reading | Fiona | Betts |
| Surrey | Linde | Webber |
| Windsor & Maidenhead | Shungu | Chigocha |
| Wokingham | Mark | Gammon |
| Hampshire | Kimesha | Osbourne |

**Apologies:**

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| Hampshire & Isle of Wight | Sophie | Butt |
| Isle of Wight | Kim | Goode |
| Buckinghamshire | Aman | Sekhon-Gill |
| East Sussex | Douglas | Sinclair |
| East Sussex | Helena | Wickens |
| East Sussex | Julie | Stevens |
| Isle of Wight | Deborah | Price |
| Kent | Leemya | McKeown |
| Kent | Elise | McQueen |
| Milton Keynes | Sophie | Marshall |
| Surrey | Patricia | Denney |
| Slough | Sandra | Davies |
| Wokingham | Danielle | McKenzie |

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| **1. Introductions & Apologies** |
| This will be Tan Lea’s (Oxfordshire) last meeting as she will be moving into a new role. The new Lead, Senay Nidai, will be joining the SESLIP QA Leads group.  The chair acknowledged and thanked Tan for her input. |
| **2. Matters Arising from Last Meeting** |
| The minutes from the last meeting were agreed and will be uploaded to the SESLIP website. |
| 1. **Feedback from CP Chairs Sub-group** |
| Sharon Martin led the discussion.  The subgroup met on 16th February. Neglect was discussed at much of the meeting; how we intervene, measure and act on neglect. There was a lengthy discussion on categories and the availability and workload of some conference chairs. The meeting was held not long after the publication of the stable homes social care review.  There was a community of practice event that focused on the Stable Homes Filled with Love Government response to Care Review. Sharon will be pulling together a presentation focused on what it means to CP chairs, with a view of pulling together a collective response and to enable people to think about their own positions.  The next subgroup meeting will be held on the 18th April at 1300hrs  Becky Cooper commented that the children partnership recently hosted a neglect programme with a couple of keynote speakers. It was a real opportunity for staff, including CP chairs to focus was on poverty and the impact of poverty proofing our procedures.  Sharon Martin noted that the World Social Work Day was also largely focused on poverty. It was recognised that SW practitioners are good at asking about money and finances. Anti racist continues to remain on the agenda, there is a greater focus on poverty proofing and what that would look like, so pulling together ideas would be good.  Tina James commented that Partners in Change did a really good presentation for learning and awareness and is happy to share once she has obtained permission.  **Action**: **Obtain permission from Tom Stipps to share the PIC presentation on poverty proofing – Tina James**  Sharon Martin suggested the opportunity to share views for poverty proofing processes as an agenda item for the next SESLIP QA Leads meeting.  The chair commented that Hampshire do not routinely poverty proof processes but colleagues on the IOW may possibly. In Hampshire this is a theme that would run through the CYPP as part of the work of the Children’s Trust Board. |
| 1. **Quality Assurance and Performance** |
| Numbers of UASC  The chair commented that the questions shared with the agenda were included in the agenda for Ofsted from the annual questions and asked if any other authority had the same or similar questions?  Tina James noted that Brighton & Hove received the same questions.  Becky Cooper commented that Medway Council have refused to take any UASC children and has recently taken the home office to court. They subsequently lost and are now appealing the decision. Becky noted that this position is not her own, but that of the Council.  The Chair thanked Becky for her open honesty with the group.  The chair provided an overview of the questions for Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. The quota for Hampshire is 285. We are proactive partners in the National Transfer Scheme. HCC have strong relationships and regularly take children outside of the cycle when there are placements available.  HCC does not have a port of entry however we receive a number of spontaneous arrivals due to our proximity to Portsmouth international ferry port. We have seen a small number of spontaneous arrivals over the last few months. The majority of our UASC population come from NTS or from the Home Office Small Boat hotels within Hampshire.  Placements for UASC and UASC care leavers is a challenge with the majority of UASC placed in IFA provision. We have some support from marketing colleagues to run a specific recruitment campaign which will be alongside our mainstream fostering campaign.  As part of setting up our two specialist UASC Teams, HCC intend to have a small number of Family Practitioners who will hold a small caseload of very settled children placed in local provision. These family practitioners are likely to be apprentice social workers and will be closely supervised by Assistant Team Managers/Team Manager. The ATM will attend reviews etc alongside the family practitioner and will ensure regular qualified social worker oversight.  HCC have accommodated approximately 30 young people from small boat hotels in Hampshire (Crown Plaza) who had been age assessed by the Home Office as adults.  The Isle of Wight has been at their quota of 24 for the majority of the last year. The local authority does not have a port of entry.  The placements for UASC and UASC care leavers has the same challenges as Hampshire although with the Isle of Wight, the cohort is place off the Island. The new Refugee Teams prioritise localised placements were possible.  The specialist USAC team mentioned in Hampshire works across both local authorities.  There have been no UASC wrongly classified as adults.  Tina James provided the position from Brighton and Hove. BHCC is a City Sanctuary and have always operated at or above expectations. As of December 2022, BHCC had 49 UASC (13.5%) of CIC is above the 0.1%.  BHCC is not a port of entry but have a number of spontaneous arrivals which has proved to be challenging. The process of being a feeder lengthy and can take three months. To manage the arrival of UASC children, BHCC have introduced a UASC pod to support care leavers.  There are currently 22 living in semi-supported accommodation and 27 placed with foster carers. The increase has caused a knock-on effect. The UASC population is now higher than the LAC population. As a result, BHCC have increased their social work team by one full time social worker and two full time personal advisors. Sufficiency issues in placements and as a result are looking to place children out of area. Educational provisions are accessed through an outside provider.  Guidance – BHCC now have access to staff that can provide additional support.  Wrongly classified - There have been a few UASC that have been assessed as over 18 and placed in adult accommodation.  Tina has also submitted links to the BHSCP statements around missing UASC from hotel and the BHCC response to the Scrutiny Report.  There were 137 UASC missing, 73 not found. There is no evidence to support kidnapping or coercion from gangs. Many could have been trafficked. Children are provided care by home office. The links are in the return if you want to read the full scrutiny and return documents.  Linde Webber commented that Surrey was almost at the quota before it was increased. Surrey now has 150 UASC children which makes up 14% of LAC population. Surrey is not a port of entry, many come via services (M25) or the National Transfer Scheme. Numbers in the care leavers population has increased significantly over the last few years.  Accommodation – Surrey now has Specialist UASC Teams. Lack of capacity means other teams will pick up UASC cases. Some UASC have been reassessed as adults.  Fiona Betts commented that Reading is meeting all mandatory requirements and currently have 34 UASC children. The numbers have significantly increased since the beginning of 2022 and SW capacity has been stretched. In 2022 there were 12 men in hotel accommodation, five were assessed as being under 18. Reading is not a port of entry.  Fiona found having the questions in advance helpful as Reading have not had their Annual Conversation.  Tan Lea commented that Oxfordshire County Council are below quota with 105 UASC which is 0.7% of the under 18 population. They need to be at 148 (0.1%).  OCC are not a port of entry but take all that are transferred via the National Transfer Scheme as well as spontaneous arrivals. They do not have capacity to offer to take more than the quota.  In terms of sufficiency, 29% of current care leavers are UASC. OCC currently have 32 beds for 16–21-year-olds. A challenge is finding the right foster carers for under 16s. Top up costs for move on is a challenge due to the cost of housing in Oxfordshire. No differentiation has been made between UASC and British born CIC. Tan Lea has also submitted a copy of the letter to the DCS.  21 UASC were wrongly classified as adults. This was quickly identified, and the children reassessed in a few days.  Tan Lea would be interested in any documents that have been translated.  Shungu Chigocha commented that Achieving for Children (Windsor & Maidenhead) are almost at the quota. There is a Specialist UASC post which works with the young people cohort. There has been an increase from 2021/22 AFC only had 4 UASC, compared to the 30 they currently have. AFC have increased its workforce to cope with the numbers and have appointed an Assistant Team Manager, two additional social workers and an assistant PA to assist. AFC are looking at addressing some issues in practice like pathway plans. The protocol expects young people aged 16 to have a plan. At present it is taking up to three months to put together the plan. We are also working at translating documents.    Marc Gammon commented that Wokingham is meeting the quota and currently have 41 UASC at 0.1%. Wokingham is not a port of entry but have had many spontaneous arrivals. The increase has had a significant impact on CIC. UASC make up a third of the CIC cohort. Similar with care leavers, they age out quickly.  Sufficiency – The UASC cohort is mainly in foster care and semi-independent placements. Around 15 UASC were incorrectly assessed as adults.  Kogie Perumall commented that Bracknell Forest are up to capacity 0.1%. They currently have 32 UASC compared to 11 last year. Bracknell Forest is not a port of entry. The numbers have increased the CLA cohort.  Where they are placed depends on their age, the younger cohort is mainly placed in foster care with the older cohort in semi-independent or homes of multi occupancy.  Guidance – Bracknell Forest are compliant but can do better in terms of best practice which has been hampered by the lack of knowledge/expertise of the workforce. Training has been delivered. A group including IROs meet regularly to see what can be done to improve the offer to the UASC cohort.  UASC are not currently receiving the same education provisions, this is being discussed in terms of how to make this better. There have been no wrongly age classified UASC this year.  The chair commented that the theme appears to be around the impact on CLA and Care Leaver numbers and wrongly classified children and adults. |
| 1. **Topic for discussion -**Audit activity undertaken in Q3 |
| Kogie Perumall led the discussion.  The SESLIP QA Leads group began in November 2019, and Kogie felt that topics of discussion have moved away from the original purpose of the group and asked if any other members on the board felt the need to have more quality assurance discussions.  Tina James commented that she has felt the same for a while, and not to minimise the topics that are being discussed, she has at times felt that she doesn’t have the capacity to contribute due to her role. She felt that the themes for discussion had become Assistant Director led.  The Chair commented that the Terms of Reference reflects both quality assurance and performance. The agenda follows the structure as listed in the ToR. Performance is included so we can confidently understand the issue at hand, discuss performance, and so that the group can demonstrate impact. The reason that performance might feel like a task is that prior to the current arrangements, the group would either all discuss different topics so there was limited learning, or attendees were not coming prepared, so conversation/learning was limited to a few LAs.  The agenda is driven by the group and the suggestions made for forward topics. Where suggestions have not been made, the chair meets and tries to ensure that the agenda is relevant and topical for all local authorities. The chair pointed out we merely facilitate the group, and are happy to include QA issues to discuss but in order to do so agenda items/suggestions are required from the group, and other LAs need to be happy to lead discussions and presentations /share practice etc.  Kogie Perumall agreed and stated that she would like to add a standing agenda item for QA discussions, and suggested revisiting the Terms of Reference so we can become more defined.  There was some discussion over exactly what was meant by QA discussions.  Kogie Perumall felt we ought to be looking at QA activity in the quarter, themes, learning audits, thematics undertaken etc.  The Chair asked if the group is still needed? If based on the original document produced by the group, identifying what a good QA Framework looks like and we all do the same things i.e., audits, thematics, peer inspections/practice weeks etc,  Kogie Perumall commented that she does think the group is needed, the topics are relevant, and we take a lot from it, but there other meetings where the same topics are discussed such as the IRO Regional and National, the LADO and the Principal Social Work Networks. Some in group felt discussion was often too operational.  The Chair commented that one of the reasons that SESLIP set up the group is the idea that there would be moderation/auditing between the triad groups. That hasn’t happened because there was no appetite for that for various reasons (ie. technical issues re access, understanding of other LAs processes etc.), However, we can circulate the terms of reference / and SESLIP objectives of the group.  Kogie Perumall commented that she would like for the ToR of the group to be circulated and at the next meeting to agree what we would like to see on an ongoing basis for discussion moving forward.  When discussing QA topics, Kogie suggested a discussion of audits – what’s going well, issues, how do we ensure strength of/consistency of auditing. However, two CC LAs felt that given everyone’s audits are different, including the questions asked that this may be too broad an area to be useful.  Kogie would also like to make better use of the SESLIP website in terms of uploading tools and information, but suggested need to get consensus that all authorities agree to do this.  Kogie Perumall suggested another topic for agenda, a discussion around child protection numbers. What people are finding in their district, what themes are being identified and what is being done to tackle this.  The Chair commented that she had to agree the documents that needed to move across to the new SESLIP website, all documents currently on the site are from 2021 until now. Anything prior to that has been archived.  Sharon Martin suggested rotating the position as Chair to share the load.  Chair reminded the group that this is their meeting and agenda, so happy to adapt it and take forward suggestions, but that in order to do so the group needed to be more fully involved. Pointed out that to date the group had not been as proactive as it could be in either shaping the agenda or providing information for reports back to SESLIP including the annual report.  The Chair commented that all suggestions will be taken forward for the next agenda for June’s meeting. The ToR will be circulated and uploaded to the website if it isn’t already on there.  **Action:**  **Circulate the QA Group Terms of Reference – Kim Osbourne**  **Next meeting to review ToR and to agree a rolling agenda beside performance issues.**  **Repeat CPP as the performance topic – numbers, reasons, themes from audits and actions being taken by LA to address.**  *Government response to the Care Review – Sharon Martin*  This was touched upon earlier in the meeting. |
| 1. **AOB and information sharing** |
| There was no other business. |
| 1. **Items for the next agenda** |
| Sharon Martin suggested the opportunity to share views for poverty proofing processes as an agenda item for the next SESLIP QA Leads meeting.  Kogie Perumall suggested the subgroup revisit the terms of reference with a review to redefine the purpose of the meetings.  Kogie Perumall suggested the subgroup make better use of the SESLIP website.  Kogie Perumall suggested a discussion around child protection numbers. What local authorities seeing, are there any themes? How is the increase being managed? |

**Actions from the last sessions**

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| **Poverty Proofing** | Obtain permission to share the PIC presentation on poverty proofing - Tina James / BHCC | Completed 29/03/2023 |
| **Agenda Item** | Add QA Discussions as a standing item on the agenda - Minute Taker / Kim Osbourne | Completed 15/05/2023 |
| **QA Group ToR** | Circulate the QA Group Terms of Reference - Minute Taker / Kim Osbourne | Completed 29/03/2023 |