**SESLIP Quality Assurance Leads Meeting**

**Tuesday 19th September 2023, (2pm – 4pm)**

**Attendees:**

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| Hampshire & Isle of Wight | Sophie | Butt |
| Hampshire & Isle of Wight | Amanda | Meadows |
| Windsor & Maidenhead | Shungu | Chigocha |
| Reading | Otilia | Broadhurst |
| East Sussex | Douglas | Sinclair |
| East Sussex | Helena | Wickens |
| West Sussex | Laura | Mallinson |
| Oxfordshire | Nidai | Senay |
| Brighton & Hove | Sharon | Martin |
| Portsmouth | Kate | Soutter |
| Brighton & Hove | Tina | James |
| Wokingham | Sara | James |
| West Berkshire | Nicola | Robertson |
| Buckinghamshire | Aman | Sekhon-Gill |
| Medway | Rebecca | Cooper |
| Hampshire | Kimesha | Osbourne |

**Apologies:**

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| Bracknell Forest | Kogie | Perumall |
| Brighter futures for Children | Fiona | Betts |
| East Sussex | Louise | Carter |
| Southampton | Stuart | Webb |
| Surrey | Thomas | Stevenson |
| Surrey | Patricia | Denney |
| Milton Keynes | Martin | Clement |
| Milton Keynes | Sophie | Marshall |
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| **1. Introductions & Apologies** |
| Aman Sekhon-Gill (Medway) may be late.  Surrey CC is in the middle of a SEND Inspection; Patricia Denney apologises for not being able to delegate another service manager to attend in her absence. |
| **2. Matters Arising from Last Meeting** |
| The minutes were agreed.  The actions from the previous meeting have all been completed.  The Chair noted that in the previous meeting, Douglas Sinclair (East Sussex) had asked a question around monitoring LADO casework and how this is quality assured. A few representatives had shared their LADO tools which were shared by Kimesha along with the minutes in July.  Laura Mallinson (West Sussex) noted that Hampshire completed a peer audit of the LADO Service in West Sussex last year which she had found useful. Laura asked if there was an appetite for this across the authorities within the SESLIP group. The Chair noted that where only Buckinghamshire were able to supply any information, Sophie Butt didn’t think there was anything consistently happening around quality assurance of LADO work. The LADO Service is part of the improvement plan in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, but there isn’t anything in place for it now.  Tina James (Brighton & Hove) noted that she had followed up with their Head of Safeguarding who confirmed that LADO work is not currently audited. Traditionally the oversight comes from the line manager and discussions in regional and national networks.  The chair asked the group if there is anything stopping the SESLIP group from completing peer reviews? This would require all local authorities to buy into it. Sophie Butt suggested this should be a topic to pick up at the AOB section of the meeting.  The chair went through the open actions and asked that the actions be removed from the minutes and moved into an excel spreadsheet to make it easier to track and close.  **Action: Kim Osbourne will create a SESLIP QA Group Action Log and remove the actions the section from the minutes**  There was a request from Tina James (Brighton & Hove) around direct payments. Tina noted that this was a piece of work she was given to help the Children with Disabilities Service. Tina confirmed that she did receive responses from local authorities that were able to provide it. This action is completed.  **Action: Kim Osbourne will close action for Tina James around Direct Payments.** |
| 1. **Feedback from CP Chairs Sub-group** |
| Sharon Martin (Brighton & Hove)  There was a discussion around the makeup of the IRO teams and those who have chosen to operate in separate roles. It was noted that the bigger authorities operated dual roles and some of the smaller authorities including Brighton & Hove operating with separate functions. Brighton & Hove have the agility where they specialise in different areas and have transferable skills across both conferencing and IRO work. It varied depending on local need.  There were expressions of some level of concern around independence when the roles are joint because the statutory functions are different. There was no consensus, just that it is based on local needs, geographics, performance management, and change management.  There was also a discussion around the escalation processes and whether authorities are utilising systems online linked to children’s records and feeding it into the performance management and reports. Some services had developed excel systems.  There was some discussion around the extent that IROs and CP ROs are enforcing processes. This varied depending on where authorities were in relation to Ofsted and judgements. Some services were leaning heavily on compliance and escalation processes whereas other authorities that were doing well from an Ofsted perspective were adopting a restorative approach.  There was a discussion around dual plans; Children with a Child Protection Plan who also had a Child in Care Plan. Again, there were variants in relation to this. Some authorities would end a CP plan once a child is looked after.  There was a brief discussion around unregulated care settings where it was acknowledged across the board that scrutiny and oversight for those children has increased including IROs and CP ROs.  There was an interesting conversation around staff wellbeing in relation to CP Conference Chairs, Social Workers and managers across the board and a recognition that wellbeing is a feature. There was variability with regards to recruitment and retention.  There was a brief conversation around Working Together. The next meeting the group will be revisiting contextual safeguarding.  The Chair commented that she is interested in the staff wellbeing work as this has arisen in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight particularly with regards to workloads. The Chair asked if there was anything that local authorities were doing in relation to managing caseloads?  Sharon Martin (Brighton & Hove) noted that the conversation did not extend to caseloads but rather managers attending to wellbeing and recognising the difficult decisions that practitioners make at all levels.  Sara James (Wokingham) asked how local authorities are handling high-risk individuals who have risks outside of the home and children in care that are subject to dual planning as this is an emerging theme in Wokingham.  The Chair noted that this has not been examined since she has been in post and asked the group whether any authorities have completed any work around dual planning?  Kate Soutter (Portsmouth) noted that the Head of Adolescents at Portsmouth has been doing some work around contextual conferences in terms of working more closely with schools and the community. There was only one plan, either CP or looked after in terms of reducing the population around dual actions.  The chair suggested that dual working be looked at in the AOB section towards the end of the meeting.  Sara James (Wokingham) asked whether CP chairs are continuing in the role as the IRO for children coming into care that have been subject to a child protection plan. Wokingham have received challenge from an independent group who have said this should not be the same person. What is seen as good practice?  Sharon Martin (Brighton & Hove) commented that this varies with some service areas employing people specifically as conference chairs and IROs. The geographics meant that there was good reasoning around this, whereas in other service areas people are employed as IROs but can travel across. Brighton & Hove are actively trying to reduce the number of relationships the children and families must build relationships with. The conferencing process does work in a different statutory environment in terms of the escalation processes.  Senay Nidai (Oxfordshire) commented that in her experience, the role was originally a dual role, but this was separated into separate roles later. Senay believes there is a conflict in relation to care plans. Children are being advocating for in one way in a child protection process, and then the same person for a child in care process.  Shungu Chigocha (Windsor & Maidenhead) commented in Windsor & Maidenhead the roles are dual, but they have a mixture of CIC and CP cases. CIC numbers are low (130), and CP numbers fluctuate between 120-150. If the roles were to split into specialist roles, it would be at a disadvantage as the CP chairs would have fewer cases than the reviewing officer. This system is working for the authority. |
| 1. **Quality Assurance** |
| IRO Discussion  The Chair thanked the representatives for completing and returning the questionnaire.  Looking at how many authorities have dual roles, there is quite a mix, particularly where there was one role and have recently moved to another type of role. Most have dual roles.  With regards to case management, we had asked this because many of us manually report on this because the case management systems do not enable it, or when authorities are moving to systems that do. Hampshire and the Isle of Wight will be moving to Mosaic, it is hoped that this will resolve some of the reporting issues. Many of the returns mention that the electronic systems in place are working well.  The next part was around quality of performance indicators and quality assurance. Looking at the spreadsheet, the performance indicators reported on do vary across the authorities. In Hampshire and the Isle of Wight, the data is available, but it is just numbers and does not inform of anything qualitative which is a challenge. An example is that we can see how many midpoint reviews have been put of the system, but it does not inform us of the quality or what percentage of midways have taken place. This must be dip sampled which takes a lot of manual time. The Chair asked if any authority has a better way of doing this.  Aman Sekhon-Gill (Buckinghamshire) commented that it’s not necessarily a better way, but they have been able to see where midway reviews are due and coming up which has helped massively. It has tidied up some of the information from partners which has improved the quality of them. Where it is built into the system, there is a glitch where if it hasn’t been signed off on one end, the system will create a delay in being able to complete the midway and it is subsequently counted as not completed.  The Chair asked how the system has helped with partner information.  Aman commented that social workers can see the midway reviews themselves when they access the system. If there is a midway that is partway and a school for example is attending the meeting, there is now the ability to print that off and take it into the meeting.  Kate Souter (Portsmouth) noted that Portsmouth have created a work around in terms of reporting on performance and cross referencing the data on reviews and case notes on children by IROs within a three-month period. When Portsmouth was inspected,  consistency and frequency of IRO oversight were highlighted so the service is making sure there is more of a footprint on the system.  Nicola Robertson (West Berkshire) referred to the questions on KPIs and noted that their return looked sparse because their data zone which performance is measured by only looks at three things. The audit tool pulls a lot of data around quality of reports. West Berkshire are not asked to provide the data centrally. There is not a lot of focus on the IRO service, it seems to be left to the manager of the service to ensure the quality is good.  Aman Sekhon-Gill (Buckinghamshire) noted that interestingly it was the same in Buckinghamshire until Ofsted came and pointed out the impact and footprint of the IRO. It took the regulatory report to push the agenda. Now it is built into the wider QA framework, there is a different focus on the quality of the IRO and CPAs.  Laura Mallinson (West Sussex) commented that there has been a lot of focus on the role and responsibility of the reviewing officer. There is a lot of dip sampling to check the quality of the work. The data is on PowerBI but is cross referenced with other reporting application because for example, PowerBi will not provide the reasons for late ICPC conferences, so we need a bit of both.  Shungu Chigocha (Windsor & Maidenhead) commented that this is an area that Windsor & Maidenhead have not been reporting on. The service has decided to report on it on a three-monthly basis rather than monthly. Sometimes the quality of the meetings is what the service needs to be careful about. The discussions do not always drive plans forward. One of the key performance indicators that is focused on is around corporate meetings. The service has seen that these are not being held within the statutory timescales. The service is looking at it from different angles to improve practice and reporting.  Otilia Broadhurst (Reading) commented that in Reading, they complete an IRO report and a CP Chair report. The data is used in the performance and outcome meetings. There is also a quality impact group and board meeting every month where the data is used, but no one is asking for the data. Reading have recently had a CLA Focused Visit from Ofsted, the previous report was not complementary of the service. The service has had to be clever with recording and have made the tools work for them, it is much easier to evidence the progress.  **Action: Otilia Broadhurst will see if she can share some screenshots of the performance measures on PowerBi.**  Sharon Martin commented that Brighton & Hove are lighter in terms of reporting which is partly linked to the introduction of a new electronic system. From a CP Chair and IRO point of view, they are still waiting for the development of the reports. Brighton & Hove have taken a targeted approach to midway reviews so there is no standard. The focus has been on progress chasing to avoid matters escalating. There has been a shift in the systems to reflect this. The IRO will have a structured telephone conversation with the social worker a month in advance to discuss where the child wants to have the review etc. The concentration has been on the type of language used and whether the child is being seen.  Aman Sekhon-Gill (Buckinghamshire) noted that a challenge is around consistency with IROs. One thing that has helped is peer auditing and dip sampling. This has allowed the team to think about their own practices and solutions in a positive way. There has been some work around feedback from children and it was found that the children do not know their IROs. Buckinghamshire are piloting a project where the IRO shares their interests and children can pick their IRO.  **Action: Aman Sekhon-Gill will share the tool Buckinghamshire use for peer auditing.**  The Chair commented that looking at the returns, there is variety in the way that authorities approach quality assurance, audits and peer reviews. Some authorities include the IRS in the broader auditing schedule and others don’t. Buckinghamshire include the IRS contribution to a child’s case as part of the quality assurance processes as well as an audit per IRO.  Aman Sekhon-Gill (Buckinghamshire) commented that audits are completed monthly, the themes are selected based on concerns or themes that have been identified within the cohort.  Tina James (Brighton & Hove) noted Brighton & Hove use generic audit tools for child protection, reviewing officers and CIC reviews every quarter. Sharon Martin works with the teams and comes up with a theme suggested by the team. Peer audits have recently been included and are going well. Sharon moderates the audits to ensure they are focused on quality assurance. Sharon will get the overall RAG ratings every month which are discussed at SLT and Tina writes the yearly report for CP and IRO Reviewing Officers and pulls out the things that are or are not working.  The chair was conscious of the time and how much of the agenda is left and encouraged representatives to review the questions in their own time.  **Action: Representatives are reminded that they can share any tools or resources with the group by email or by adding them to the SESLIP website.**  The Chair asked the group if any local authorities have any Ofsted Inspection related topics that can be reported back to the group. There were none raised. |
| 1. **National and Local issues** |
| The Chair noted that the last time the group was together was before the new Working Together publication came out. The Chair commented that the general feeling was one of being underwhelmed. It is felt that it might be a holding version until they have completed some of their pilots and trailblazers to understand what they mean by Family Help and how it might work in practices and therefore what might need to change in the statutory guidance.  Sharon Martin (Brighton & Hove) commented that her understanding is that there is going to be an annual update however, she was disappointed that timescales for strategic decisions to initial conference was not revisited.  Aman Sekhon-Gill (Buckinghamshire) noted that the consultation point was interesting. There were teething issues when Buckinghamshire tried to introduce this. The service has recently gone back to CPAs and the frontline teams to remind them that it is a useful tool.  Sara James (Wokingham) asked if any local authority manually tracks the number of strategic discussions that are being completed as there is no data available within Wokingham.  The Chair commented that it might be that whatever is used isn’t published. Sophie will ask the senior manager responsible for MASH (Sarah Marston) to see how this is tracked as Hampshire and the Isle of Wight track most things.  **Action: Sophie Butt will liaise with the MASH senior manager to see how strategic conversations are tracked in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight.**  Douglas Sinclair noted that East Sussex do collect data on the number of strategic conversations that are held. They administrate the SE Benchmarking data return and can speak to the Data Leads to see if that can be included in the quarterly reporting. It would require all local authorities to submit the data so that it can included in the benchmarking data if people want that.  Laura Mallinson (West Sussex) noted that it is certainly a big focus within West Sussex as it impacts the whole service.  Kate Soutter (Portsmouth) commented that the bit that would be helpful is to see the conversion rates to see how many are converting to ICPCs.  Douglas Sinclair noted that if you report on the strategy discussions, you see the conversions as Section 47s and ICPCs are reported on already.  The Chair asked Douglas Sinclair to take the lead and request for the strategic discussion data to be included in the South-East Benchmarking Report.  **Action: Douglas will speak to his Data Manager Luke Ede to see how to request strategic conversation data to be included in the SE Benchmarking Report.** |
| 1. **Recent Ofsted Inspections / Ofsted publications of interest** |
| Aman Sekhon-Gill (Buckinghamshire) has emailed the group regarding the cross over between SEN and ILACS and the focus on it. Aman noted that this could be a topic for discussion at the next SESLIP QA Leads meeting. Aman is interested to know whether the QA Leads within the group are responsible for SEN work, or how it looks in other local authorities. Buckinghamshire have completed a fair amount of work on it but there does not seem to be a framework or a way to get a feel from other local authorities to help with the cross over work.  Senay Nidai commented that Oxfordshire Council had a SEND Inspection under the new framework at the end of July, the letter was published last week. The new framework is graded differently, not like an ILACS as is graded as a one, two or three. The LA has 35 days to put together a plan on how to move forward following the feedback. Oxfordshire were one of the first ten to be inspected under the new framework. There is a question around how the quality assurance function could be spread across the partnership.  Aman Sekhon-Gill noted that Buckinghamshire are in the process of developing a multiagency tool to compete cross over audits for Social Care, SEN and Health and are focusing on the quality of practice. It is evident that cross working will be a big theme.  Senay Nidai noted that the SEND inspection framework is much more like an ILACs inspection. We are taking about the same children, so it is about how we all work together. Getting the multiagency audits ready in an inspection is difficult if the processes are not in place in the beginning.  Kate Soutter commented that Portsmouth was part of the pilot and went into it thinking it would be a joint venture, however it was pretty much social care led in terms of the expectations around the quality assurance element. Pulling in people from education and health was challenging in terms of the expectations. The framework was like an ILACS but with some input from other agencies.  Senay Nidai noted that during the three weeks of the inspection, all agencies worked together beautifully, but it did highlight that we did not get ourselves together quickly enough.  The Chair commented that neither Hampshire nor the Isle of Wight have had a recent SEND inspection, although earlier this year, Hampshire had a thematic review on Alternative Provisions based on the SEND framework. Our experience was that the ask from inspectors was not clear. It highlighted that partner agencies operate on different understandings, expectations, and timescales. Our experience to date with SEND inspections is that it is led by education staff with input from us social care where relevant.  Senay Nidai commented that in their experience, there was no one agency that took the full lead. The themes that they had chosen from were looking at we are holistically addressing the needs of the children. The conversations around the multi-agency audits were facilitated by Children’s Services QA, but there was a QA lead from Education, Health, and Social Care.  Aman Sekhon-Gill commented that this was helpful in terms of the cross over. The HMIP inspection for Youth Offending Teams is very much multi-agency, especially around the leadership and strategic oversight. It’s new for people so there is real value in thinking about things and discussing it in this forum. It is a very complex area. Buckinghamshire have two different databases, so there is a need to ensure we are looking at data from both areas. It would be good to keep this conversation live so we can share good ideas and practices when we have them.  Amanda Meadows asked the group whether they have had the opportunity to read the South Tyneside ILACS report. The service has been creating homes and staffing them with social workers and colleagues from their Residential Service to ensure that some of their most tricky children were safe in a home. Ofsted deemed the practice to be unacceptable. Amanda Meadows urged the group to read the report if they have not done so already to ensure this is not something they are doing or contemplating doing.  Rebecca Cooper commented that Medway Council have recently recovered from being graded as inadequate. The report was published on the 11 September, and they are now graded as Good. This is the first time in Medway’s history that they have been graded as Good. The Council did become unstuck in one area, but the focus was on vulnerable adolescents and responses to exploitation. There were significant improvements noted across the board. The Care Leaver judgement under the new category was positive, as was leadership. Rebecca thanked everyone for the support over time. |
| 1. **AOB and information sharing** |
| The Chair asked the group whether peer reviews of the LADO Service should be a discussion for the group or if it should be discussed at the Regional LADO group?  Rebecca Cooper (Medway) commented that she has not been linked in with the regional group for a while, but Medway have recently had an independent review of the service to help them prepare for the ILACS. Peer reviews is on the national agenda so suggested that we consult with them first. Rebecca will link in with the LADO manager at Kent County Council for a view or a contact.  **Action: Rebecca Cooper will liaise with the LADO Manager at Kent County Council to ascertain whether peer reviews of the LADO Service is on the agenda for the Regional Group.**  Aman Sekhon-Gill commented that she would suggest letting the regional group discuss this as it would provide a richer focus on it.  Laura Mallinson (West Sussex) noted that she is happy to check with her LADO lead.  **Action: Laura Mallinson will check in with her LADO Lead regarding peer reviews and can feed back to the group.** |
| 1. **Items for the next agenda** |
| Contextual Safeguarding – Dual Planning  The group agreed that dual planning regarding contextual safeguarding should be a top of discussion for the next meeting.  Nicola Robertson commented that an area of challenge for West Berkshire is the point when a child becomes 18 and the risk has not been addressed effectively. Child Protection Conferences are still being used but they try to use different language. There is something around whether there are any robust processes on how the young people are supported at the time of transitioning into adulthood. The current services do not bridge the gap.  Aman Sekhon-Gill asked whether the topic is around exploitation issues with CP Plans or dual planning as they are different topics. A discussion around exploitation would be helpful, especially the focus on adolescents.  The group agreed that the conversation should be around contextual safeguarding of adolescents.  Sharon Martin (Brighton & Hove) commented that Kent County Council have done a lot of work around this, so it might be helpful to link in with them.  Sara James (Wokingham) asked whether any authorities had been involved with Carline Flemming. Sara was previously at Wiltshire Council and was involved in the development of child protection planning but left before the outcome of the project was completed. Sara is interested in hearing about how people are using the 5th Category and how it’s working.  Aman Sekhon-Gill thought it would be useful to see how partners are playing a role in contextual safeguarding children work and how they are quality assuring what they do.  Sara James commented that it would be helpful to know what child protection planning and contextual safeguarding would look like.  The Chair noted that herself and Amanda Meadows will translate this into a reasonable ask for the next meeting.  There was no other business raised.  Meeting ended at 15:58 |