**SESLIP Quality Assurance Leads Meeting**

**Monday 11 December 2023, (2pm – 4pm)**

**Attendees:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Hampshire & Isle of Wight | Sophie | Butt |
| Hampshire & Isle of Wight | Amanda | Meadows |
| West Sussex | Beverley | Berry |
| Oxfordshire | Tracy | Brawley |
| Reading | Otilia | Broadhurst |
| Southampton | Karen | Cairns |
| West Sussex | Laura | Mallinson |
| Wokingham | Sara | James |
| Brighton & Hove | Sharon | Martin |
| Buckinghamshire | Jennifer | Hathaway |
| Surrey | Linde | Webber |
| Portsmouth | Kate | Soutter |
| Brighton & Hove | Tina | James |
| West Berkshire | Nicola | Robertson |
| Hampshire | Kimesha | Osbourne |

**Apologies:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Windsor & Maidenhead | Shungu | Chigocha |
| East Sussex | Helena | Wickens |
| East Sussex | Douglas | Sinclair |
| Surrey | Thomas | Stevenson |
| Surrey | Patricia | Denney |
| Medway | Rebecca | Cooper |
| Buckinghamshire | Aman | Sekhon-Gill |
| Oxfordshire | Senay | Nidai |
| Reading | Fiona | Betts |

|  |
| --- |
| **1. Introductions & Apologies** |
| There was a round of introductions for those that were new to the meeting. Beverley Berry (Oxfordshire) attended on behalf of Senai Nidai. Karen Cairns (Southampton) represented Stuart Webb. Jennifer Hathaway (Buckinghamshire) attended on behalf of Aman Sekhon-Gill. Linde Webber (Surrey) attended on behalf of Tom Stevenson. |
| **2. Matters Arising from Last Meeting** |
| The actions from the previous meeting were reviewed and the minutes were agreed.  Otilia Broadhurst’s action to share performance measure on Power Bi was shared during the previous meeting. Attendees were happy with what was shared, and the action was closed.  Aman Sekhon-Gill’s (Buckinghamshire) action to share the peer auditing tool was left open as Aman was not present.  The action for all representatives to share any tools or resources with the group by email or by adding them to the SESLIP website was closed.  There was a discussion around Sophie Butt’s (Chair) action to liaise with the MASH senior manager to see how strategy discussions are tracked in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight. Sophie fed back that Hampshire and the Isle of Wight do track the number of strategy discussions that take place to understand the volume and throughput. Sophie asked the group if any others local authorities use internal tracking processes to track strategy discussions.  Sharon Martin commented that in Brighton & Hove, there is additional scrutiny on strategy discussions, thresholds and decision making. Sophie Butt asked whether the additional scrutiny involves looking at the involvement of partner agencies? Sharon noted that that is not necessary because the strategy discussions are very robust and multiagency orientated. Its more about the amount of strategy discussions are being held and the amount of Section 47 investigations that have arisen from them.  Kate Soutter (Portsmouth) commented that she believes most local authorities are tracking their strategy discussions however, the issue is more around whether that data should be included in benchmarking.  Karen Cairns commented that in Southampton, they are tracking the information they are seeing from the strategy discussions, then they look at attendance at ICPCs, to gain some oversight into CPCs.  Sara James noted that Wokingham are looking at strategy discussions and the conversion rate going to Section 47s and then how many are going to ICPC. The conversion rate is low which suggests that too many people have been put for a Section 47 when they could be supported under Section 17. Management have been dip sampling in terms of thresholds and whether or not a strategy discussion is the right forum for concerns to be discussed.  Sophie Butt concluded that it looks like similar things are being seen in the authorities and each are doing their own thing to investigate. Sophie suggested that this be put as a future agenda item for the next meeting noting that perhaps by that point, people will be able to feedback some of the highlights from the work being done around strategy meetings.  **Action: Kim Osbourne will add the strategy discussions and the conversion rate going into Section 47s or ICPC to the agenda for the next meeting**.  Continuing with the Actions Log, Douglas Sinclair was not present so his action to speak to his Data Manager Luke Ede to see how to request strategic discussion data to be included in the SE Benchmarking Report will remain open for discussion at the next meeting.  Rebecca Cooper was not present so her action to 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 will remain open.  Laura Mallinson had to leave the meeting so her action to check in with her LADO Lead regarding peer reviews will remain open for discussion at the next meeting. |
| 1. **Feedback from CP Chairs Sub-group** |
| Sharon Martin presented the feedback.  At the last CP Chair Sub-group meeting, there was a discussion around contextual safeguarding. Southampton City Council are piloting the risk outside of the home work completed by Durham University. Durham have provided advice around meetings, how they are held and the broad approach that’s being taken to conferences and risk outside the home.  There was a discussion around whether Child Protection plans are still being made when there is risk outside the home. It was found that these children were still being made subject to CP plans, there is a drop-down menu to identify those children who have been made subject to a CP plan and are also subject to risks outside of the home.  The number of Child Protection plans is the fifth category of harm. Durham University is researching the fifth category as part of the national pilot activities.  Karen Carins commented that Southampton have been piloting risk outside the home conferencing for about a year and it has been quite successful. There was a multiagency conference last month where it was noted that there will be an additional category, this has not been decided yet. The categories are decided based on information that is provided at the conference. Karen is researching this now. It is not just looking at individuals and how risk outside the home affects those individuals.  Sophie Butt asked if a risk outside the home plan would supersede or be the same as CP plan. Karen Cairns noted that Southampton currently have three siblings, one of them is at risk outside the home but all of them are at risk of neglect inside the home. In this instance, the ordinary CPC would override and the risk outside of home would be managed within the CP plan.  Sophie Butt noted that with some of the more complex cases, there may be risk outside the home, but there are also some inside too, would you go with the CPC to capture everything? Karen Cairns confirmed that you would. As Sharon Martin (Brighton & Hove) mentioned, there is a drop-down list to differentiate between the CPP and ROTH Plan.  Sara James (Wokingham) asked how the fifth category is being reported on. Karen Cairns stated that it is highlighted clearly where there is risk outside the home. Two lots of data are produced, one for risk outside the home and one for CPC. They are separated out. There is no requirement from the DfE to report on ROTH, it is done to demonstrate that the service knows how many its holding.  Sophie Butt asked in terms of the pilot, what has the feedback been and what is the positive impact the change in process had on the children in Southampton? Karen Cairns commented that it’s not just the children, the families have done everything they can to support their child. The ROTH highlights the pockets of poor and criminalised behaviour in certain areas in Southampton. Although the trial has been for a year, the first six months was starting out. There is a steering group around knife crime. There will still be a lot of changes. The service does not have all the building blocks in place fully, but we do know that the children that have gone through the ROTH process have either been excluded from school or are on a part time timetable. We will be working with them to put forward some packages to meet the needs of these children. The service is doing lots of work, but it is not perfect yet.  Sharon Martin commented that Brighton & Hove have a multiagency forum that meets on a regular basis to look at risk outside the home, it has its own framework.  Continuing with the CP Chair group feedback, Sharon Martin noted that there were concerns around agency attendance at conferences where the authorities shared their different experiences. There was also a discussion on whether meetings are held face to face or hybrid. Some authorities are having difficulties with health attendance, others with police.  There was a conversation around the social care review. Attendees were interested to know to hear about what other authorities are thinking in terms of flexibilities, changes, or new innovative ways of working.  There was a discussion around workloads. Sharon Martin created a survey for different authorities to complete. It looked at workloads covering conference chairs undertaking a dual role and where relevant IROs were discussed as well as administrative roles to get a sense of the challenges in the different areas. There were twelve responses, so the findings are small. This will be revisited the next time the group meets.  Nicola Robertson noted that West Berkshire appear to have fallen off the mailing list for the CP Chair meeting and asked how to get back on the list. Sharon Martin noted that there is no admin for the meeting and asked that people share the details of their replacement when they leave so they can remain on the mailing list. Sharon will share the link with the group.  **Action: Sharon Martin will share the Microsoft Teams link to the CP Chairs meeting and the feedback data from the Workloads Survey and MS teams meeting link with attendees.**  Sophie Butt enquired whether there was there anything new in terms of the responses that were received, Sharon noted that there was nothing new. The authorities all operate differently so there are some that operate a dual role, others have a single role. It’s influenced by the size of the authority. The larger authorities such as Surrey or Hampshire will have a dual role. In some areas, some authorities have conference chairs doing their own notes, and others have administrative support. There are variants in terms of how resources are used and dispersed. Some conference chairs undertake audit activities and data collection as a matter of routine. Particularly with rural and larger authorities, there are timing factors such as travel time getting to conferences.  Sara James (Wokingham) noted that some authorities do not have minute takers, and asked how this might impact the quality of reports? Sophie Butt (Chair) noted that Hampshire and the Isle of Wight have not had minutes takers for some time, conferences are recorded via teams. A few families have requested a copy of the meeting, in these instances an admin will transcribe the notes. Hampshire are independently looking at how to streamline processes around who pulls together the plan following an ICPC. There have been no issues with not having minute takers.  Linde Webber (West Sussex) noted that Microsoft teams recordings do not last long and asked how this is worked around. Sophie Butt commented that the file can be downloaded from Teams and stored on cloud storage, so it is accessible to anyone that needs to access it.  Linde Webber noted that there are some issues around how long a record should be stored for. Certain records should be stored for 100 years and there are concerns around storing digital data. West Sussex still use minute takers for conferences.  Nicola Robertson commented that West Berkshire are moving towards recording conferences and Nicola is interested the policy behind keeping records for 100 years. Nicola has done some research to find out what the legal guidance is, and struggled with child protection, it appears to fall back on the authority’s retention policy. West Berkshire’s retention policy suggests that records are kept until the child turns 18 unless they are children in care. West Berkshire are looking at using a new system called OBS 30 which is a downloadable system that records on MP4 for conferences rather than Teams as it only records video and colleagues were worried about misuse of the data.  Sophie Butt commented that Hampshire records the event, there has been no instances of misuse that Sophie has been made aware of.  Nicola Robertson noted that the advice they were given suggested that if a family requested a copy of the recording, the council would have to give it to them. The concern is colleagues have their names and faces in the recordings and some families have strong views on particular staff members. Sophie Butt commented that Hampshire were not given the same advice that where a copy has been requested, they have received a transcribed version rather than a digital copy.  Kate Soutter commented that she thinks the file retention policy for child protection in Portsmouth is 35 years but intends to do some research to confirm this. Portsmouth Council do not keep recordings, instead, chairs write reflections of the meeting rather than minutes. The quality of the reflections is good and there has not been any challenge from families since it was implemented over a year ago.  Kate noted that the Portsmouth Council are overwhelmed with requests for SARS for the care experienced and asked if this is being seen in other areas. Sara James commented that Wokingham Council have also seen an increase in the number of requests, some of which have a lot of work in terms of reviewing and redacting files, however, the children have the right to see their records. The team manages this by asking the young person what they what to know to prevent having thousands of pages to redact.  Beverly Berry (West Sussex) commented that they did have note takers, but this stopped in April 2023. Conferences are now recorded; attendees are reminded of this at the beginning. A summary of the outcome of the meeting is shared with attendees following the conference. Recordings are kept for eight weeks for the purpose of a complaint only, then they are deleted. If a family wanted to obtain a copy of the meeting, they would be provided with a written version transcribed by a minute taker. So far, there have not been many requests.  Karen Cairns noted that Southampton City Council currently still use minute takers, however Karen is looking to move away from this soon and adopt a style similar to that of Hampshire where conferences are covered by the VPIA. The conferences will be hybrid and uploaded as an MP3 or MP4 file.  Sharon Martin commented that Brighton & Hove have not used minute takers for a number of years. Now, the chairs just take notes of conferences. There are at least three agency reports that provide the details of why a conference has been requested. The notes that are taken are just a summary of the decisions and plan. There have been no complaints from families. The chairs used to spend a considerable amount of time editing the minute takers notes so this has been cut out. From Sharon’s point of view, it has been a success. The other thing is that the notes are written to the family rather than about them.  Tracey Brawley commented that Oxfordshire County Council have a similar model where they record conferences on Teams. If there is a need, an audio script is sent to the families if requested. A lot of time was taken to achieve the level of consistency regarding the chairs summary and looking at defensible decision making. Initially, the removal of minute takers was a challenge for Conference Chairs.  Otilia Broadhurst commented that while in her previous role within Bracknell Forest Council, they just use the chair summary. Within Reading, the chairs have raised that the minute takers are a real support and are involved with other tasks such as getting the room ready, greeting attendees, and preparing the reports. Otilia feels that removing the minute takers will also remove some of the admin support and asked what other authorities are doing. Otilia is also interested to see an example of a good conference summary.  Sophie Butt commented In Hampshire, the IRS team have a dual role, so they do CLA and CPC work. There is a small admin team of maybe three employees that support IRS team, they concentrate on CLA work only and are on a temporary or part time contracts. We also have CP admin that do the CPC admin work within the district teams. Their role involves booking the conference and provide support technical support that might be required. This is currently being explored where many of the conferences were virtual during covid. As we are trying to get back into face-to-face conferences, the role as previously described is not working as it was meant to.  Sharon Martin commented that conferences are held in person by default in Brighton & Hove for agencies and families. Admin support is very minimal. Parents/Carers will be provided with a printout of reports on arrival. The business support provides assistance to other agencies with regards to uploading to MS Teams. Agency reports are no longer circulated via email, we utilise Microsoft Teams channel where all agencies submit and download reports ahead of conferences. The links are provided in an email. There was problem with information governance, using this method to share reports has cut out a lot of the issues with that. There have been no complaints so far. The Police are the only agency where reports are shared via email.  Sara James (Wokingham) asked if it would be possible to share an anonymised chair summary from Brighton & Hove or Hampshire? Sophie Butt and Sharon Martin have agreed to share copies with the group.  **Action: Sophie Butt and Sharon Martin will look to obtain anonymised copies of a chair summary to circulate with the QA Leads Group**  Sharon Martin noted that for Brighton & Hove, this is work in progress, it has been worked on over time. There are still staff that need to get on board with the changes. We still have work to do. Sharon is happy to provide it, but it will not be unified. This will be true when sending reports to parents. |
| 1. **Quality Assurance** – Contextual Safeguarding |
| Sophie Butts started the discussion on Contextual Safeguarding.  Sophie thanked representatives for the submissions received for the discussion. Sophie noted that she was not going to go through the document authority by authority but welcomed input wherever anyone had anything to share or ask questions about.  It was interesting to note that local authorities are all doing similar but different things and the way teams and services are structured are slightly different. Some authorities have specialist or bespoke teams that are working in particular areas, others have refugee or asylum-seeking teams, and some authorities have transition teams for adults.  Tina James commented that Brighton & Hove have just finished the multi-agency child exploitation audit, there were two questions from the return, one came from the Head of Safeguarding who noted that the council are good at multiagency working but are not consistently resulting in improved outcomes for the child. The questions are how can we increase contextual approaches, and focus on preventing opportunities for children and young people to be exploited with regards to disruption, suing and successful prosecution? These are the challenges that our exploitation and monitoring and evaluation groups will be considering.  Sophie Butt commented that this goes back to the earlier discussion with Karen (Cairns) around children that have risks inside and outside the home, and poses the question of how many children have risks inside the home that is pushing them outside the home? How many of the risks are related or linked in some way? It’s very complex.  Tina James noted that a small pool of eight cases were dip sampled during the audit, and of the eight there were two young children where one of the push factors was overcrowding in the home which was leading to tension, and another where three young females living with a single father who was struggling but hasn’t engaged with services. There is some learning in this for Brighton & Hove.  Sophie Butt commented on the earlier point about prosecuting and disrupting, noting that it is a challenge for all authorities due to the evidential thresholds and asked how other authorities are managing this.  Karen Cairns (Southampton) commented that for her, it’s about getting the profile right for the type of children to put forward. We are highlighting those children to assess whether they should be going through the ROTH process to reduce the risk going forward.  Sophie Butt took the discussion back to the information collated ahead of the meeting and commented on the section about specific concerns in relation to adolescents. There appears to be some common themes around youth when the child turns 18, mental health provisions, knife carrying etc.  Sophie continued noting that with regards to our strengths and what we think we are good at as local authorities, we have spoken openly about the need to work in partnership with other agencies and services. It looks like a mixed bag. What would colleagues like to take forward from what we have learnt?  Karen Cairns (Southampton) commented that when looking at the steering groups, there are not many representatives from other agencies. It would be interesting to find out who is involved in meetings in other local authorities. Going forward, children and families in Southampton will be inviting some of the community services such as Barnardo’s, Cubs and Scouts etc to meetings.  Nicola Robertson (West Berkshire) commented that they do not open meeting invitations to their risk management meetings that widely, but they are very well attended by partner agencies. Nicola was struck by how much wider and effective the process is with child protection conferences.  Otilia Broadhurst noted that authorities such as West Berkshire, Reading, Wokingham, and others have experienced serious youth violence and tragedies that reaches the media, there are serious case reviews being looked at.  Sophie Butt commented that Hampshire has an active children’s partnership, there were things around exploitation for their business plan last year, and we did some multi-agency auditing. This year we have a focus on children that are not in full time education. As noted earlier, the large percentage of those children at risk are not in full time education, it is work that is still ongoing in Hampshire.  Linde Webber (Surrey) the information shared interesting as there is work to do to improve the intervention services within Surrey Council. There has been a review of the service and Linde is keen to learn from other authorities and revisit it with colleagues in Early Help.  Sophie Butt commented that she is interested in those areas that are working closely with Adult Services where the risks have not changed but they are transitioning to Adults Services. Where people are doing this, does it lead to different outcomes for the young people? The thresholds in Adult Services are not the same as Children’s Services. It is likely due to the size and dual authority aspect that Hampshire struggles with maintaining a good working relationship with the other services and would like to see good examples of the crossover between the two services.  Tina James (Brighton & Hove) commented that work has started with the AVRM plus which is the multi-agency risk group which has been set up with Adult Services. They do transitional and substance misuse work. |
| 1. **National and Local issues** |
| Sophie Butt led the discussion.  There were two reports for the National & Local Issues agenda item. The JTAI Thematic around Early Help and the Child and Family Workforce response. There were no questions or comments raised from the two reports.  Kate Soutter (Portsmouth) commented on the recent communication from the DfE around sexual abuse. This is an area that Portsmouth Council have been working on. It may be timely and useful but a difficult one.  Sophie Butt commented that there is a consultation from the House of Commons Education Select Committee. They are conducting a review of Children’s Social Care and are asking authorities for answers to some pretty big questions, by the 15 January 2024. Sophie put the link to publication in meeting chat. |
| 1. **Recent Ofsted Inspections / Ofsted publications of interest** |
| Tina James (Brighton & Hove) commented that East Sussex are currently having their ILACS so should be able to feed back in the next meeting.  Sophie Butt noted that the Isle of Wight had their ILACs last month and are awaiting the publication. Sophie will be able to feedback at the next QA Leads meeting. There were lots of inspectors that were shadowing and observing. A point of learning for Ofsted is that they had not checked the school holidays on the Island and arrived during the school holidays which caused challenges as staff were on leave and therefore not available. Many of the schools were closed apart from two academies.  The partnership between Hampshire and Isle of Wight Children’s Services comes to an end the 31 January, going forward there will be colleagues attending from the Isle of Wight.  Linde Webber noted that Surrey Council had a SEND inspection in September 2023, the report has been published. There was some learning around timescales. Surrey have had significant staffing challenges. There were some examples of good practice so a mixed picture. It was very full on as we had recently had a JTAI. Surrey is not expecting another ILACS until January 2025 as their DCS will be the Vice DCS Chair.  Otilia Broadhurst commented that Brighter Futures for Children in Reading escaped a full ILACS Inspection which is likely due to the inquest into the death of the Headteacher. Otilia is interested to see whether Ofsted will do things differently as a result of the inquest.  Amanda Meadows (Hampshire & Isle of Wight) noted that Adopt South Service had their inspection a week after the IOW inspection, we are currently waiting for the publication of a thematic report. |
| 1. **AOB and information sharing** |
| There were no other business or information sharing raised. |
| 1. **Items for the next agenda** |
| Sophie Butt led the discussion on topics for the March 2024 QA Leads meeting.  Sophie recalled that at the beginning of the meeting, there was a possible future agenda item around the strategy discussion rate per 10,000, the conversion to S47 and then ICPC, and asked if any authority has seen a reduction in the number of referrals into their Early Help Services? Linde Webber commented that service managers in West Sussex have completed a dip sample on the Strategy discussions that have not translated into an ICPC. Linde is happy to share the findings with the group.  **Action: Linde Webber will share the findings of the dip sample into strat discussions that did not translate into an ICPC.**  Sophie Butt noted that during the Ofsted Inspection on the Isle of Wight, they were challenged by inspectors around the input from partners at strategy discussions.  Partners were able to provide the information but were not able to attend. Sophie will devise some questions around the topic for the next meeting.  **Action: Sophie Butt will devise some questions about the challenges around partner input at strategy discussions**.  Nicola Robertson commented that West Berkshire are experiencing issues around police and their involvement in Child protection conferences. They started by requesting five working days’ notice of a conference otherwise they will not be providing or report and will be unable to attend. More recently they have stated that they will be attending review conferences and have requested a link. When Nicola unpicked this with them, it was around evidence gathering for ongoing cases. They have even used information they have heard in a conference to make arrests. Nicola is worried about how to prepare parents for conferences going forward. Nicola thinks it might be insightful to see how other authorities are managing this.  Otilia Broadhurst (Reading) commented that previously, the attending officer would give parents the heads up that if they admit to anything criminal, they would be obliged to take the appropriate action. Non-attendance from Police is becoming a bit of a problem. There were eleven child protection conferences that went ahead without any police attendance as we have been unable to provide them with five days’ notice.  Karen Cairns (Southampton) commented that within the opening lines of a conference we state that the meetings are highly confidential, so this puts more distrust in the families if police are using the conferences to their own ends.  Nicola Robertson continued that Thames Valley Police have moved to a central system for their case conference attendees, whereby they will no longer be providing us with a name, we would need to send the meeting link to a generic mailbox and if they can attend, they will send an officer but won’t be able to provide the name until the day. It could be down to capacity.  Linde Webber noted that there are four Police Officers that do conferencing for the whole of Surrey, so there is a real issue with getting them to attend conferences. If we have multiple conferences in one day, it is an issue however ICPCs are prioritised. There are a few times when we have had no police reports too. It’s a real significant challenge.  Sophie Butt closed the meeting by thanking the subgroup attendees for their attendance, discussions and contributions this year. Sophie wished everyone a Christmas and New Year.  The next meeting will be on Wednesday 27 March 2024 at 2pm – 4pm. |