SESLIP Quality Assurance Leads Minutes

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| Date: Monday 16th December 2024, 10:00 – 12:00 |

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| **ATTENDEES** |  | **APOLOGIES** |
| **Kent,** Kevin Kasaven – Chair  **Bracknell Forest,** Kogie Perumall  **Brighton & Hove,** Sharon Martin  **Buckinghamshire,** Aman Sekhon-Gill  **Hampshire,** Sarah Plummer  **Hampshire,** Amanda Meadows  **Isle of White,** Victoria Clottey  **Kent,** Leemya McKeown  **Oxfordshire,** Senay Nidai  **Portsmouth,** Kate Soutter  **Reading,** Otilia Broadhurst  **Reading,** Fiona Betts  **Surrey,** Linde Webber  **West Berkshire,** Nicola Robertson  **West Sussex,** Laura Mallinson |  | **Brighton & Hove**, Tina James  **East Sussex,** Douglas Sinclair  **East Sussex,** Helena Wickens  **Medway**, Teresa Devito  **Milton Keyes**, Sophie Marshall  **Milton Keynes,** Martin Clement  **Southampton**, Stuart Webb  **Surrey,** Patricia Denney  **Surrey**, Thomas Stevenson  **West Sussex**, Vicky Richardson  **West Sussex**. Beverly Berry  **Windsor & Maidenhead,** Shungu Chigocha  **Wokingham**, Estelle Kelleway |
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| Next Meeting: Friday 14th March 2025, 10:00 – 12:00 |

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| **AGENDA – DD.MM.YYYY** | | | | |
| **Item No.** | **Time** | **Item Description** | **Lead** | **Papers** |
|  | 10:00 – 10:10 | **Introduction and Apologies** | Chair |  |
|  | 10:10 – 10:15 | **National Ofsted Issues** | Chair |  |
| **3.** | 10:15 – 10:30 | **CP Chair feedback from CP Chairs Subgroup** | Sharon Martin |  |
| **4.** | 10:30 – 10:45 | **Quality assurance and performance**   * **Area of challenge – all LAs investigate and report back on the area identified. Questions to consider could include:**   + **Process**   + **Performance**   + **What do you understand from this?**   + **How do you quality assure** * **Good practice as identified by QA Framework. Questions to be considered could include:**   + **What is it?**   + **How do they know?**   + **What makes this an area of good practice for this LA, what did they add to make it good practice.** | Chair |  |
| **5.** | 10:45 – 11:00 | Kent COA Processes | Leemya McKeown |  |
| **6.** | 11:00 – 11:15 | Kents Practice Framework | Leemya McKeown |  |
| **7.** | 11:15 – 11:30 | Improving Audit Culture | All |  |
| **8.** | 11:30 – 11:45 | Youth Justice Inspection Feedback | Fiona Betts |  |
| **9.** | 11:45 – 11:55 | ToR Discussion | All |  |
| **10.** | 11:55 – 12:00 | AOB | All |  |

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| **SUMMARY OF ACTIONS** | | |
| **Action No.** | **Action Description** | **Lead** |
| **3a** | **Linde to inform Sharon she can send a delegate from the CP chairs group if she cannot attend the SESLIP QA Leads meeting to provide an update.** | Linde Webber |
| **4a** | **Fiona to share with the practice observation tool with the group for Sian to circulate.** | Fiona Betts |
| **10a** | **Email Victoria with feedback on Mosaic if they use this within their local authorities.** | All |

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| **MINUTES** |
| Introduction and Apologies |
| Kevin welcomed all to the meeting, with apologies acknowledged, and introductions were made.  Kevin shared the action log and requested updates, with some actions being marked at complete following this. |
| National Ofsted Issues |
| Kevin shared an email has been received from Yvette and highlighted the changes to the SEND and school inspections may apply to Children’s Social Care. Kevin shared for the Annual Conversation, Kent have changed the template of how feedback to the self-assessment to be more in line with Stable Homes Built on Love and Support.  Senay shared she attended the Adults and Children’s Conference in Liverpool which discussed the Education and SEND inspection framework and highlighted the ambition to move to scorecards of the domains instead of one judgement. Senay noted the idea of moving the ILACs framework to a similar style by 2025/26.  Kevin responded this is the first time he has heard of a timeframe for changes in inspections and highlighted the potential of inspecting Family Hubs and ROTH individually.  Senay further shared there were ambitious conversations around how to move forward with the inspection framework with the potential to undertake peer reviews on other local authorities.  Kevin responded the funding arrangement in line with the reforms next year will lead to local authorities having to make changes. Kevin noted it would be interesting if changes were made to the inspection framework while local authorities are changing their systems.  Kogie highlighted there is a link to a document on the Ofsted website which outlines the changes they are making.  Aman noted the focus on CP processes not being suited to harm outside the home is reasonable alongside this being looked at within the inspection framework. Aman highlighted HMIP have also changed their framework with a focus now on contextual harm. Aman raised there is a potential risk of 2 inspections having different asks of the same cohort of children, which Aman raised within a separate meeting.  Kevin referred to the settlements which are due to come out for supported families and noted these are coming out of the same budget for Youth Justice. Kevin explained this means Early Help services will have a different funding stream. Kevin also highlighted the impact of the Children’s Wellbeing Bills which is due to be launched.  Leemya agreed with the discussion points made. Leemya referred to the White Paper, Keeping Children Safe and Helping Families Thrive which focus on contextual safeguarding and child protection/multi-disciplinary teams holding this work. Leemya noted it is important to understand how this will be inspected. Leemya noted the paper has a focus on regulated spaces with Ofsted increasing their powers in relation to these with this being the most imminent changes from a children’s social care framework as opposed to any fundamental changes within ILACs.  Kevin added when looking at risk outside the home, this only focuses on the top level and does not outline a path underneath this to lower levels. Kevin shared during a strategic meeting with ICBs from Kent and Sussex it was found children viewed by Kent as Mental Health were viewed as Learning Disabilities by Sussex. Kevin highlighted there is ongoing disagreement between Neurodiverse, Learning Disabilities and Mental Health which leads to children not being picked up on. Kevin explained these children who have not had previous involvement with Early Help or Social Care are then being placed in 3:1 provisions and these invisible children do not have a pathway.  Kevin highlighted Health having a role in Social Care and currently there is not a pathway between children’s services and Health that explores risk outside of the home. Kevin suggested when completing Kent’s system change to do this alongside health rather than in isolation and encourage other local authorities to take the same systemic approach. |
| CP Chair feedback from CP Chairs Subgroup |
| Linde shared she attended the last CP chairs meeting and one of the key issues discussed was in relation to child protection plans ending and different local authorities’ practice if there are supervision orders in place. Linde explain the majority of the local authorities present at the CP chairs meetings agreed they would be ending the CP plan under the circumstances.  Kevin agreed with the decision to end the CP plan as the court would have oversight however the team manager in the allocated service should still be holding core groups. Kevin shared sometimes there is disagreement from the child’s guardian which puts pressure on the CP service to keep up.  Leemya agreed with Kevin explaining there has been a lot of pressure from guardians who feel the need of the robust framework to be maintained and highlighted this has been a challenge.  Kogie shared in most cases if a family have gone to care proceedings the child can then come off the CP plan however noted this is not a definite outcome. Kogie clarified her conference chairs understand there has to be a degree of flexibility the professional network might disagree with the outcome of the court. Kogie explained the conversation taking place within the court will determine whether chairs feel confident to take a child off a CP plan or not.  Kogie gave an example of a case where the matter was taken to court with the judgement made against the local authority and the child was returned home despite concerns. The local authority acknowledged the court's decision an ended the CP plan with the child made subject to a CIN plan for a short period of time before the case closed even and there were continued concerns. This case is currently subject to a Safeguarding Practice Review and the learning from the rapid review so far is even though the court made a judgement it would have been appropriate to hold a professional meeting to discuss what the network can collectively do to support the family if the local authority disagrees with the court’s judgement.  Kogie suggested if the local authority agrees with a supervision order, then they will have completed their assessment and feel assured this is the correct pathway. However, if a supervision order has been placed and the local authority do not feel confident or agree with this decision then it would be appropriate to reflect on whether it is suitable for the case to the leave the CP arena.  Linde shared during the CP meeting they discussed family-by-family situations. Linde explained Surrey have been challenges twice by two different judges where the plan had ended under an interim supervision and the judges criticised the local authority and chair for doing this stating they pre-empted their outcome of the judgement with the interim supervision order stating threshold of significant harm had been meet therefore the child protection plan should continue for the network to continue.  Linde highlighted Surrey won’t end outside of the conference and shared some of the local authorities did state they would end outside of the conference by a paper notification. Linde acknowledged the difference in practice but noted it also depends on where a local authority is graded in practice and how this is then perceived by guardians and courts.  Linde shared contingency planning was also discussed with some local authorities removing contingency planning out of CP conferences minutes. The decision to not record this is because it is felt there is some duplication around who the contingency plan is for (the local authority or the family). Highlighted a lot of the local authorities work to the model of working with families to create the plans and therefore the contingencies.  Kevin thanked Linde for providing the feedback from the meeting and shared if a representative can attend each meeting this would be beneficial moving forward. Kevin asked Linde if she can inform Sharon, she can send a delegate from the CP chairs group if she cannot attend the SESLIP QA Leads meeting.  **Action 3a - Linde to inform Sharon she can send a delegate from the CP chairs group if she cannot attend the SESLIP QA Leads meeting to provide an update.**  Nicola referred to ending CP plans on paper and noted these are risk-based, multi-agency decision making and planning meetings. Nicola shared she feels uncomfortable with a CP Chair ending the CP plan because procedurally this isn’t necessarily guided on. Nicola shared she feels the correct way to ensure all professionals are clear on the ongoing support plans around families would be to hold a multi-agency meeting to then unanimously agree the case will be stepped down with all those involved clear on what the monitoring and supporting of the family would look like.  Kevin described an audit Kent had undertaken in relation to pre-proceedings, and it was made multi-agency because it was highlighted multi-agencies do not fully understand pre-proceedings. Kevin explained a survey was conducted and training has been delivered to multi-agencies to help their understanding. Kevin suggested that local authorities’ LSCPs need to take responsibility to deliver training to multi-agencies about what the legal frameworks are. |
| Quality assurance and performance |
| Kevin explained this agenda item is to allow the group to share what their areas of challenge or good practice are.  Aman shared Buckinghamshire see quality assurance as not just formal case file audits however their regulators will often only see formal case file audits as part of their quality assurance. One of the Buckinghamshire’s challenges is the volume of audits completed. Aman explained there are 83 auditors and usually audits and dip sampling split with the dip sampling based on themes that came up, however from January onwards will aim for all auditors to complete full case file audits.  Aman shared there is currently a challenge of the volume of audits across the service due to the size of the service with an additional challenge of balancing the moderation. Aman queried how other local authorities capture practice observations as part of their wider QA work.  Aman shared an area of strength is the programme they used with allows them to pull data very quickly. The sections within the audit allow for detailed data to target learning more appropriately.  Kogie asked which staff members make up with audit team within Buckinghamshire and Aman responded Team Managers, Service Managers and Senior Leadership including the Director.  Kevin asked how many Social Work teams and Early Helps Units there are within Buckinghamshire. Aman responded they have 21 locality-based teams, with each of these having a Team Manager and then there are 4 Service Managers. Aman explained the Senior Leadership Team consists of 2 Heads of Service for locality, 1 Permanency Head of Service, 1 Placement Head of Service and 1 MASH Head of Service.  Fiona shared Reading have a strong audit process, with a series of routine quality audits that are completed internally. Previously, external auditors were used until they were confident about the consistency and quality of their internal audits. Fiona shared there are also a range of thematics that are completed at team level which draw from improvements plans which each Team Manager is responsible for.  Fiona highlighted Reading have a comprehensive practice observation approach which includes feedback and reflections from both the supervisor and supervisee and is happy to share this with the group. These used to be completed within a practice week however noted these need to happen more often. Fiona explained there is supervision training workshops for supervisors and supervisee alongside observations audits.  **Action 4a – Fiona to share with the practice observation tool with the group for Sian to circulate.**  Fiona shared they have aligned their Mosaic system which means every audit that results in recommendations follows through to the next supervision, with it being the managers responsibility to oversee the completion of these. Fiona noted although currently not all managers see this as their responsibility and noted there is some work to do around this.  Aman shared Buckinghamshire feels they are strong from a cultural perspective as staff see completing audits as part of their role and routine, however the volume of these are the challenge with it being hard to encourage participation in the wider QA work.  Fiona explained Reading only complete 3 quarters a year of internal and external audits, with Q1 and Q4 completed as they are however Q2 and Q3 are combined after the summer holidays until December holidays.  Fiona highlighted within Reading there needs to be more focus on the learning from audits to ensure this is disseminated into the teams effectively.  Senay shared Oxfordshire have changed their QA framework following an ILACs inspection in February as they found a lot of the audits were focused on compliance but were unable to evidence the impact and outcome. Senay explained there is a was a pool of 60 auditors which has now decreased to 30, with all managers completing bi-monthly audits. 15 of the 30 audits will completed a standard monthly audit with the other 15 completing a thematic audit monthly. The thematic audits will focus on areas that are being flagged by senior management  Senay explained because of a CSPR commissioned for a child death, Oxfordshire have reintroduced practice week to help strengthen some of the observations and line of sight into practice. This week focused on neglect with lunch time learnings, increased audits and speakers to celebrate good practice. Senay shared this included all the senior management team including the Chief Executive and reflected this will be an activity they will continue with as it engaged the workforce.  Linde explained Surrey’s monthly audits are completed by all managers, Service Managers, CP Chairs and IROs, either on the child’s file or on observation. Assistant Directors and the audit practice team will complete the moderations to check the quality assurance.  Kogie questioned Fiona on the purpose of having external auditors and if they were auditing the same cases as the internal auditors to gauge the quality of the internal auditors. Fiona responded they did not audit the same child but the same cohort of children. Fiona shared for 12 months they have focused on CP and CIN however it is now broader. Moderations are completed for both internal and external audits, with a consistency from the moderation panel.  Kogie asked how local authorities are defining themes if these are being tracked from findings within audits. Kevin responded this can be discussed within agenda item 7.  Laura shared West Sussex completed collaborative audits, with the same audit tool being used in each service. Previously all audits were moderated however following on from their last ILACs inspection, they have reduced the number of moderations to increase the audit activity, with learning shared through their monthly performance meeting. Thematic audits are completed with a learning brief template that is disseminated which is then reviewed later to explore the impact.  Kevin explained Kent’s audit tool has 10 questions with 5 sections. Each of the 10 questions hosts quantitative or scaling questions, with the Analytics Team and QA Team picking up themes based on the data. Kevin shared having only 10 text boxes, limits the amount of information that is reviewed due to having 100 Social Work Teams and 30 Early Help Units. Kevin highlighted within Kent there is a pool of 530 auditors and 60 moderators, with each case being moderated. Each moderator completes 2 audits a month and Kent has a bi-monthly audit process whereby one month the team audits the case and the second month the moderator meets with the Team Manager and Practitioner to discuss the moderation. Kevin touched on the COA process, however noted explained Leemya will discuss this is more detail in agenda item 5.  Kevin encouraged to the group to reflect on if they are auditing the things they know about or the things they don’t know about. |
| Kent COA Processes |
| **Leemya shared the following presentation:**    Leemya explained the Kent COA process is the main vehicle of QA which is a combination of various different methodologies used to support the understanding of practice within Kent,  Leemya explained the COA process supports the service to understand the intricacies and details around the data in relation to performance management and improvement plans,  Leemya shared as a result of a COA, certificates are awarded to acknowledge positive practice and reflected this has been a key factor in changing the culture and engagement within this QA activity.  Leemya highlighted sit by audits are completed as part of the COA weeks to explore lines of enquiries which service have shared with the QA team; this results in spending time with practitioners to understand their experiences. Leemya explained this provides an opportunity to embed initiatives, policies and guidance.  Leemya reflected during COA weeks good practice is observed however this isn’t necessarily evidenced within the care planning or recording, which meant the usual audit process isn’t an activity solely relied upon to provide insight.  Leemya explained it has been found helpful for Team Managers and Service Managers to complete the observations of their staff to link in with the importance of coaching and development alongside their HR responsibilities.  Kevin shared when approached regarding QA activity he is clear it is not about undertaking HR related activities and managers have the responsibility to hold this. Kevin explained the COA process provides an opportunity to explore how Service Managers and Team Managers complete observations with the QA team’s role to provide scrutiny, challenge and positivity.  Aman questioned if the monthly audits include family feedback as part of the tool. Kevin responded the main audit tool has 7 sections with 5 questions about the audit, The first section is service user feedback and the seventh section is practitioner feedback. Kevin reflected the feedback enable the Team Managers and Social Worker to reflect on what could be different and the learning required.  Kate queried the resource which facilitates the COAs. Leemya explained there are 2 Audit Managers which run the COA team, with them having 3 senior auditors however also try to include all the resource within the QA unit.  Senay reflected on how QA work with colleagues to drive QA as this is seen as an everyday function across every team. Senay suggested for the smaller local authorities who do not have a big QA resource to upskill the service teams by including them in the QA activity as this will ripple into everyday practice.  Kevin highlighted this is the culture that should be adopted and referred to his earlier point regarding HR with the service needing to complete their own level of QA to understanding the impact on service delivery. |
| Kents Practice Framework |
| **Leemya shared the following presentation:**    Leemya explained the reform agenda has highlighted the direction of practice and Kent has taken the opportunity to review the Practice Framework and align it with the government's direction.  Leemya shared there has been a series of tasks and finish groups for each of the components of the practice framework to ensure there was the right participation from the beginning.  Leemya spoke to the slides and explained each of the components of the Practice Framework. It is recognised none of the areas are considered new and are the elements are already being done by multi-agency partners.  Leemya shared a series of roadshows were organised to create space to have supportive conversations with partners and it was found there was a lot of buy in for this.  Kevin asked if other local authorities have had their multi-agency practice frameworks by their LSCMP. Kevin reminded the group, if they haven’t been able to achieve this, they need to notify the DFE by 20/12/2024 as it will becoming law. |
| Improving Audit Culture |
| Kevin explained the culture Kent is trying to achieve is for staff not to feel done to. Although Kent has a large QA resource, it can be argued as not enough due to needing to support 3000 staff members. Kevin shared he took over the QA unit in 2019 and had to change the culture and perception of the QA unit as previously it was seen as threatening and reflected instead it should be something that the services are receptive to.  Kevin shared he also decided to remove QA from HR matters and encouraged to other local authorities to do the same. Following this change, Kevin changed the narrative regarding QA to ensure staff members look forward to being visited by QA and having good conversation.  Kevin shared following feedback from Ofsted in 2022, the workforce shared they valued the QA unit more than they did Ofsted and reflected this highlights the impact of the QA unit.  Kevin encouraged the group to think about what can be done to encourage the services to welcome QA and partake in QA activities. Kevin reflected on Senay’s earlier point and stated the whole system needs to be taking part, as the resource within QA teams alone is not enough.  Senay shared the importance of professional curiosity upskilling the workforce in this area. In doing so, this will help staff to ask the “So what” questions within their own teams and supervisions. Senay suggested creating spaces within teams for them to have these conversation and reflections in real time rather than later on.  Aman shared to help with the setup of culture in the early stages, any new managers attending audit training within their first 2 months. Aman explained this is a great opportunity to land the messages that they are trying to achieve as well as identifying the training gaps as an organisation.  Aman shared another factor towards their audit culture is if a manager of an auditee disagrees with an outcome a reflective case note is added to record the discussions had which encourages the services to have the conversations themselves. Additionally on their audit form, there is an evidence box and an impact box, which enables the auditor to explore and reflect. Aman emphasised the importance of messaging within the early stages to help embed the culture.  Leemya agreed with the importance of messaging. Leemya highlighted the importance of engaging senior leaders and managers to ensure everybody feels the audit tool is relevant, useful and purposeful. Leemya noted the tool itself is not static and should be reviewed constantly to ensure its relevancy. Leemya shared another important factor in embedding culture is how senior leaders create the environment for participation and the space for reflective conversation.  Fiona shared Reading have started using appreciative inquiries more as well as within practice weeks. Fiona reflected appreciate inquiries are a quick way to explore a case at a practitioner level, and there has been good feedback about what has been taken away from these. This feedback provides good evidence about what is making a difference for a practitioner and therefore the children.  Kevin summarised the discussion had within this item:   * The role of QA is not to provide a secondary HR function * Use the touch points with people to hopefully inspire them about outstanding practice and how they can carry on the conversations * Using the earliest opportunity to explain what auditing power can be * Encouraged the local authorities about how to get the workforce excited about QA * Ensuring there is the understanding the QA activity is complete with the service and not in silos * Moderations are in important, and for the moderators to have training to support them with this * QA the QA – CP chairs/IROs and LADOs should be challenged and if they can self-reflect they can play a role within the culture change. |
| Youth Justice Inspection Feedback |
| Fiona shared Reading had a poor outcome following their inspection which is now published. The inspectorate recognised work had been completed in relation to the board and partnership arrangements however still have work to do. The findings for assessment and risk were poor therefore had an impact on the planning and intervention to support risk to other and to children. Fiona reflected one of the learnings for Reading was the have not prioritised Youth Justice which speaks to the scale of improvement work. The absence of professionally qualified staff, both Social Workers and Probation Officers, was seen as a contributor to some of the areas of development.  Aman responded to Fiona’s earlier point regarding the absence of Social Workers and Probation Officers, and highlighted Youth Justice Teams have moved away from solely Social Work qualified staff. Fiona responded Reading were heavily criticised for not having probation staff within the service and advised Aman to reach out to another member of staff who could provide more information regarding the Social Workers.  Aman noted if local authorities can evidence they are completing the work which would be the responsibility of a probation officer, then this would be less of an area of improvement. Fiona highlighted for Reading the issues were in relation to practice as well as the lack of probation.  Leemya highlighted the importance of the risk assessment which requires a level of experience and expertise. |
| ToR Discussion |
| Kevin decided due to time, to roll this over to the next meeting in March.  Kevin touched on if the CP feedback needs to have a standing item or if Sharon can circulate this via email to the group. Kevin reflected if IRO and LADO should also be feeding into this meeting as they have their own national frameworks.  Sharon shared she believed it does need to be discussed every meeting. Sharon suggested particular requests can be discussed within this meeting of potentially attend on a 6-monhtly basis.  Kevin agreed to take the CP feedback standing item off the terms of reference and suggested in the next meeting the group discusses how feedback from the CP chairs, IROs and LADOs in a persistent way. |
| AOB |
| Victoria introduced herself to the group. As the Isle of Wight is currently in the process of uncoupling from Hampshire they are bringing in a new children’s database on Mosaic. Victoria asked the group if they can provide feedback outside of this meeting on how other local authorities use it within their services.  **Action 10a – Email Victoria with feedback on Mosaic if they use this within their local authorities.** |