



Education Directors Network

Date: 19th Nov 2025

Chair: Sarah Daly (Portsmouth)

Attendees: Elizabeth Funge (ESCC), Natalie Smith (Hants), Ming Zhang (Wokingham), Matthew Rixson (Surrey), Michelle Stanley (Kent), Sarah Clark (WSCC), Georgina Clarke-Green (BHCC), Gareth Drawmer (Bucks), Clodagh Freeston (Southampton), Nathan Caine (Portsmouth), Chris Owen.

Apologies: Marie Denny (MKC), Claire Hayes (W Sussex), Brian Grady (Reading), Kim Wilson (Oxfordshire), Naomi Carter (IoW), Christine McInnes (Kent), Zoe Livingstone (BFC), Julia Katherine (Surrey), Clive Haines (RBWM).

Notes

Actions

- Chris & Elizabeth to liaise about ESCC officer who applied to LGCSO consultative forum.
- Chris to edit proposed joint 'in principle' statement for S19 and SEND following meeting with SEND chairs.
- Chris to revise s19 and recoupment draft and circulate for Ed Directors to consult further with colleagues, including finance partners.
- Directors to check with A2E reps and data team about whether steps are needed to routinise gathering and collation and reporting of their s19 data.
- Chris to work with Sarah to draft an update about engagement with DfE Regions over RISE, joint collaborative approach and concerns about roll-out and implementation.
- Natalie to share latest Targeted RISE 'rules of engagement' from Hampshire and Chris to post on the website.
- Hold Feb 27th 10am for Teams meeting with DfE on universal RISE.

1. Welcome and Introductions

Notes from Sept were agreed as accurate.

Matters arising:

- LGCSO Advisory Forum: reps from SE LAs. Only ESCC had any discussions about putting an officer forward for the Forum. EF to check and feedback to Chris if anyone selected (*update: no-one selected*). Other Network directors to update Chris if a rep has been put forward (to set up a channel of communication).
- Chris has met with Amanda from BHCC about their s19 review and will offer to discuss again.

2. SESLIP Projects – update

a. Alternative Provision (AP) (task-and-finish) Group:

- First meeting:** Take place on 25th Nov.
- Participating LAs: Bracknell Forest, E Sussex, Hampshire, Kent, Portsmouth City, Reading, Wokingham.

Scope / approach

- Set up as 'task-and-finish' group to test and learn about an effective South-east regional network or community of practice for LA AP leads. Also to share learning from CPP LAs.
- For this group, focus on non-school or unregistered AP and relevant and impact possible over 3 meetings.
- Aim to report by Mar / Apr 2026.

Comments:

Recommend to check work around cross-border QA and funding for NMI school placements from the SE19 network.



2. SESLIP Projects – update (cont'd)

Agreed, part of the challenge for the LAs and this group is striking a balance between compliance and risk-management (SG) within children's services and workable arrangements for and with mainstream schools. Safeguarding should be specifically referred to in terms of reference.

b. S19 Groups Progress

Continues to be a live theme for SE LAs.

- i) Region-wide agreement in principle for s19 decision-making and SEND: draft discussed with SE19 group chairs today and amended version to be circulated by Chris – with more contextual content about respective responsibilities of parents, schools as well as LA.
- ii) Meeting between Bucks, Hants and Reading resulted in draft proposal for further regional agreement 'in principle' about recoupment of AWPU from schools if there is an extended period of s19 provision arranged by the LA and/or egregious action by a school akin to off-rolling. Agreement that the draft wording should, at its heart, emphasise that the maintenance of the child's entitlement to education is central and it could signpost to the policy statement which sets out the details. Chris to further edit the draft and circulate so members of the network can consult with LA colleagues and update views about the value of a regional agreement at the Jan meeting.
- iii) The same meeting scoped making a case to the DfE about compensating LAs from savings (AWPU / NPPFF) DfE are making when either s19 provision extends into a second academic year or when a child with an EHCP has EOTAS as their education placement. If the Network wishes to pursue this, then the scale of the issue (ie numbers of children on s19 education plus numbers for whom there is extended provision). Suggestion made that this might be a stronger case if data collated over two or three years, to evidence the increased demand over that time. Speculation that the Schools White Paper might refer to or address this topic, so further consideration was pushed back to the spring meetings (dependent upon publication date).

c. Access to Education Group:

First look at the EHE_CME Dashboard for autumn 2025. All 19 LAs provided their EHE and CME COLLECT return data. The first attempt at s19 data was more partial: 9 LAs sent in data. There are still collection challenges reported by officers: with data being put together from spreadsheets rather than in MIS data systems. Network members are asked to check-in with data teams about how to routinise gathering and reporting. There will be discussion at the A2E January meeting about scope of s19 data – does it include those excluded for instance?

3. Curriculum and assessment review – reflections and local responses

- E Sussex, Kent and Southampton shared early reflections on the Curriculum and Assessment Review (CAR) and from discussions with heads and CEOs in their areas.
- Agreement there was much to welcome. For example: oracy, end of the EBacc, curriculum pathways towards vocational routes post-16.
- There was some surprise that the initial responses from school leaders were relatively muted. This probably reflects the pressures schools are facing presently and there was some tendency for them to focus on the 'problems to manage' in the proposals.
- Strategic take-away:
The join up across four key national policy announcements for schools and education: CAR, Schools and SEND white paper (underpinned by Children's Wellbeing & Schools Bill), post-16 strategy and new Ofsted inspection framework. Discussion and thinking through then translation of these policies to local areas will be important in 2026.

4. Join the SE19 SEND Strategic Leads – focus on offer of Targeted Support and Courageous Conversations

- Joining the SEND Strategic Leads.
- Slides from the presentation about the offer to submit proposals for targeted support (between 30 and 40 days of project support from SESLIP) and for future Courageous Conversations will be circulated.



5. DfE and RISE: discussion and ways to progress

Information update about universal RISE was considered and discussed as well as the latest experiences with the targeted support programme.

Members would much rather have had an in-person discussion with someone from the national RISE team. A hold has been placed on 27th Feb for an additional meeting with members of the DfE's universal RISE team; but no confirmation yet from them.

Issues raised included:

- Some DfE RISE colleagues' understanding of the role of LAs on behalf of all children, as well as responsible authority for maintained schools.
- Timelines for events and coordination with those already in the calendar (e.g. the spring term's Inclusive Mainstream' conferences, with no details yet).
- Timelines for being consulted about the regional RISE plan and alignment with LA plans.
- Join-up across networks e.g. attendance hubs set up by LAs, and now behaviour and attendance hubs being rolled out by DfE,
- Lack of transparency: announcements of lead schools for DfE hubs, yet among these have been examples of schools with recent change in leadership or leaders under disciplinary procedures; no information about criteria for selection have been shared by the DfE.

Actions: the 'collaborative approaches' statement with DfE Regions South-east has been signed off and is now published on the SESLIP website. Rather than LAs developing their separate 'rules of engagement' to share with RISE targeted support advisors, Hants agreed for theirs to be shared and used as a template by other LAs in the South-east. Chris to publish on the SESLIP website.

Continuing concerns about insufficient strategic join-up from the DfE. Chris will work with Sarah to draft a briefing for DCSs: to highlight positive developments and the overall welcome for RISE and set out concerns about strategic alignment.

6. Strategic education system challenges

Discussion about strategic challenges and responses to the short poll circulated last week.

SENDAP / inclusion and budgets feature for both schools and LAs as big challenges. Another key challenge is across demographic changes and school sustainability; with the complexities of different types of school organisation and levers to reduce PAN, mergers or closures. The poll findings will be circulated with the slides from the meeting.

In addition to the cross-cutting policy change join-up set out under item 3, early years and GLD targets was suggested for discussion at a future meeting and the pressures being faced by the post-16 sector (demographics, budget and capacity).

AOB

A need to update LAs about the agreed procedures for funding for LAC who have an EHCP and are in a different LA from that funding them.

Sarah (WSCC) will forward a reminder and Chris can circulate to the Network members.

For a future meetings:

- Post-16 strategies and capacity pressures.
- Strategic join-up across curriculum & assessment, Schools White Paper, Ofsted and post-16.
- Universal RISE

Agenda Items for Next meeting:

- January: presentation and discussion with Ofsted about piloting the new schools inspection framework (Lee Selby)
- Focus on local strategies in response to GLD targets.
- Maybe: reflections on Schools and SEND White Paper.
- Revisit s19 and recoupment of funding and whether to raise funding gap for prolonged LA provision with DfE.

Next Meetings:

Future meetings: 23rd Jan, 13th Mar, 8th May, 3rd July)

