

EDUCATION DIRECTORS NETWORK MEETING

26th September 2025

Meeting notes

Present: Clive Haines (RBWM chair), Natalie Smith (Hants), Ming Zhang (Wokingham), Beth Dyer (IoW), Matthew Rixson (Surrey), Christine McInnes & Michelle Stanley (Kent), Sarah Clark (WSCC), Georgina Clarke-Green & Ashley Seymour-Williams (BHCC), Gareth Drawmer (Bucks), Neil Goddard (W Berks), Brian Grady (Reading), Kim Wilson (Oxfordshire), Clodagh Freeston (Southampton).

Apologies: Sarah Daly (Portsmouth), Duane Chappell (BFC), Marie Denny (MKC), Sarah Daly and Kate Reynolds (Portsmouth CC), Claire Hayes (W Sussex), Naomi Carter (IoW).

In attendance: Paul Schofield and Catherine Turton (DfE Regions Group).

Topic	Actions
<p>1. RISE: Update from DfE and discussion</p> <p>Colleagues from DfE Regions were welcomed, followed by introductions.</p> <p>Key points from Regions Group presentation and discussions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted RISE: cohort 3 schools identified and process initiated; a total of about 45 schools have been identified in all three cohorts across the South-east. Universal RISE: launched nationally and regionally across the four national themes and conferences have either been organised or are forthcoming for each of these. South-east regional RISE plan: stakeholder events have happened and will be followed up with roundtable consultations before being launched before the end of the autumn term. Ambition of the DfE is to map school improvement capacity across the region. Network members reported positive feedback about the conferences and appreciation of invite to the stakeholder event. Discussion about the importance of architecture to support the development of the school improvement offer across the region (how can technology assist?). Network members advocate we should all seek to avoid duplication and that the DfE work with LAs on a coordinated approach to communication with schools and trusts. In terms of regular engagement with the sector, there is only a national consultative group presently and it has 1 rep from the South-east. Paul will notify Chris of who the rep is so lines of communication can be set up. The Network are strongly of the view that a South-east RISE consultative group, at least, is a minimum to support the effective development of the offer. <u>Collaborative approach agreement</u>: latest wording (following edits from DfE) was agreed. An additional action, prior to finalising, is to add the ambition to avoid duplication and to collaborate on communication with schools. Chris and Paul to agree an additional sentence and then publish the agreement. <p>Paul and Catherine were thanked for their time.</p>	<p>Paul</p> <p>Paul, CO</p>
<p>2. Previous notes and matters arising and reflections on item 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> June notes reviewed and accepted as accurate record. Chris confirmed that agreed changes have been made to SESLIP Education Network & to the Access to Education group: on the website and in terms of reference. Courageous Conversations: Chris Baird met with certain LAs & a prospectus of opportunities and support was circulated with the meeting's papers 	

Topic	Actions
<p>Reflections on 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Targeted support 'rules of engagement': Network group want to have these shared via the SESLIP website (expect these to be redacted of officer names and school names , etc). Chris to test the options with the Hampshire version, which can act as an exemplar for other LAs. The limited architecture for consultation and dialogue about the roll-out of RISE was an issue for members and a request was made that Chris explore options with Sarah on her return about raising this with the DCS Steering Group. Likewise there was disquiet about the lack of information about accountability arrangements for RISE and its planned impacts (DfE stated this was being 'worked on' at national level). This is another topic to flag to DCSs. 	<p>CO</p> <p>CO</p> <p>CO</p>
<p>3. Ofsted inspection framework and toolkit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Most are taking part in regional briefings at Ofsted next week. Quite a strong sense of 'wait and see', for the framework to bed in (especially since it is such a large change). Most areas flagged they had schools that had put themselves forward for pilot inspections; disproportionately from those with 'legacy outstanding'. Ofsted had also accepted invitations to give local briefings for heads and trusts too. VSHs are in discussion with Ofsted about how to engage children looked after during inspections, without inadvertently labelling them or any safeguarding risk. Discussion about 'best fit' and 'secure fit' in the framework. Chris to request if Lee Selby can attend the Jan Network meeting; opportunity to reflect on early inspections. 	<p>CO</p>
<p>4. Session with SEND Strategic Leads & SEND workshop</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noted that the date of the next meeting has been changed to Wed 19th November in London to facilitate a joint session with SEND Strategic Leads. The hope is that the schools white (or green) paper will have been published before then so be a focus for joint discussions. 	<p>CO</p>
<p>5. Access to Education Group</p> <p>Recent meeting involved a constructive presentation and discussion with LGSC Ombudsman (slides shared with agenda). A few key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> During complaint investigations, seek to meet with the investigator (especially if evidence from previous complaints or nuanced elements to the case), and have a discussion about the draft determination and make responses – investigators are advised to be open to making changes at this point. The LGCSO is looking to organise a roundtable to consult about certain aspects of the complaints process, including about financial remedies. Chris will circulate information when received. Group members encouraged the LGCSO to have a stronger emphasis on safeguarding and how this might play into actions and processes when deciding about section 19. Section 19 projects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposal for regional statement of principle for s19 across education and SEND was discussed by the group and approved. Some members reflected this is the broad approach in their LAs and works effectively. Chris to brief Sarah and explore with SESLIP SEND strategic leads about it becoming an agreed position across the South-east LAs. 	<p>CO</p> <p>CO & SD</p>

Topic	Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Topic of clawback of finance from schools for s19 provision: Reading shared their policy position, as set out in their draft s19 policy (wording shared in the papers). Bucks are exploring a paper with a similar proposal. Also asked: is there a channel to raise with DfE that children educated by LAs under s19 can eventually save DfE money if they are removed from school rolls, if they have a need for sustained provision? Chris flagged that one of the s19 working groups (run by the A2E Group) has a focus on 'finance and partnership with schools'. He will liaise with Brian and Gareth so developments in their LAs are reflected in its work. ○ Georgina mentioned a 'deep dive' into section 19 arrangements that BHCC are carrying out. Chris will contact to ensure this informs the sub-groups. ● Meeting with Early Help AD Network: Ming and Chris attended a meeting to share the EHE_CME Dashboard and topics of mutual interest. Dashboard to be routinely shared with that group from now on, as well as discussions about joint interest and strategies around some families who children are in receipt of s19 education. 	<p>CO</p> <p>CO</p>
<p>Clive was thanked for stepping in as chair, in Sarah's absence.</p> <p>Dates of future meetings: 19th Nov, 30th Jan, 20th Mar, 8th May, 3rd July.</p>	