Buckinghamshire Children's Services

SLT Away Day – Workshop Evaluation

23 November 2026 | SESLIP Targeted Support
Facilitated by Claire Woodcock and Jenny Boyd

Summary

The away day provided protected space for senior leaders to consider how they operate as one integrated leadership team, rather than as separate portfolios. The pre-work and closing feedback point to the value of deeper mutual understanding, genuine collaboration, honest challenge and shared accountability. The immediate legacy is a shared leadership ambition and a basis for translating that ambition into practical service-level and collective commitments.

Starting point: what the discovery survey told us

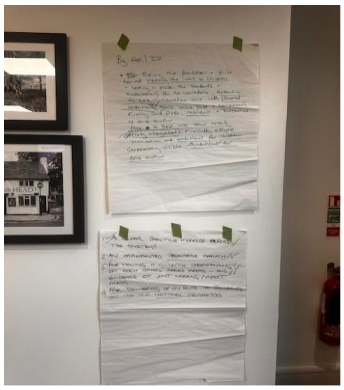
Five anonymous responses informed the design of the day. Earlier help and prevention were prominent, alongside SEND reform, placement sufficiency, participation and financial sustainability. Leaders wanted greater cross-service understanding and less fragmented decision-making.

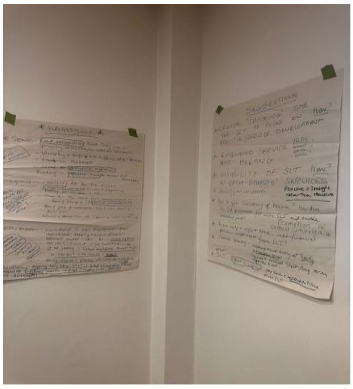
- Existing workforce communication channels offered a foundation for more consistent, two-way engagement connected to frontline practice.
- Capacity, finance, competing priorities, reform demands and timely data were identified as barriers.
- Respondents wanted protected SLT time for strategic choices, practice, cross-directorate dependencies and follow-through.

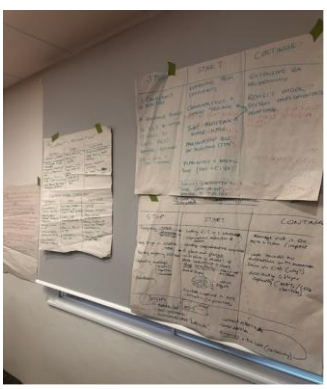
Emerging SLT vision

One integrated, compassionate and courageous leadership team, united by a shared purpose and a deep understanding of each other's portfolios. We lead with authenticity, honesty and mutual respect, embracing constructive challenge and collective responsibility. We champion equality, diversity and inclusion, embedding our core design principles throughout our work to make a positive difference to the lives and outcomes of children, young people and families across Buckinghamshire.

This wording reflects the vision discussion shared on the day and is presented for SLT confirmation.







Workshop approach and emerging learning

The workshop was designed as an SLT-led working day, with SESLIP providing structure, reflection and constructive challenge. Six activities linked the Directorate Plan to leadership behaviours, workforce engagement and delivery.

1 | Collective vision

The vision discussion articulated integration, compassion, authenticity, honest challenge and a shared focus on outcomes, equality and diversity.

2 | Directorate Plan into service delivery

Leaders were invited to connect their own portfolios to directorate priorities, identify practical changes and surface dependencies. Pre-work examples included attendance, post-16 sufficiency, adolescent services, local placements and finance/data alignment.

3 | What needs to change?

Stop, Start, Continue and the tame, wicked and critical problem framework provided a way to distinguish routine management from complex system challenges and urgent decisions.

4 | Bringing the workforce with us

The iceberg, continuous improvement model, leadership styles and delegation matrix supported reflection on listening to frontline colleagues, matching leadership responses to the situation and enabling ownership at the right level.

5 | Collective accountability

The activity focused on strategic SLT time, shared decisions, resolving cross-service barriers and using existing governance to track delivery.

6 | 30–60–90-day commitments

The action-planning exercise asked leaders to identify service-level and collective contributions, owners, milestones and evidence of impact. Closing feedback identified this approach as valuable and highlighted accountability to shared commitments.

What the day appears to have achieved

Closing comments suggest a stronger sense of togetherness and the value of moving beyond transactional conversations. They also indicate that participants saw the benefit of collective working and practical follow-through. These are immediate qualitative signals, not yet evidence of sustained behavioural change or improved service outcomes.

Participant evaluation and next steps

What worked well

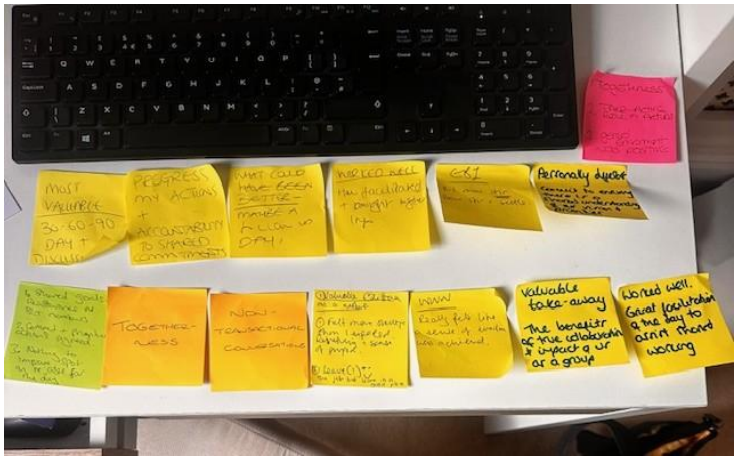
- Facilitation and the way the day was brought together were positively recognised.
- Participants valued togetherness, non-transactional conversations and the benefits of genuine collaboration.
- The 30–60–90-day discussion and accountability to shared commitments were identified as useful takeaways.

What could be improved

One comment suggested making this a follow-up day. This points to the value of returning to the commitments and sustaining momentum rather than treating the workshop as a standalone event. Some handwritten comments are not sufficiently clear to interpret reliably.

Selected participant feedback

"Togetherness" • "Non-transactional conversations"
"The benefits of true collaboration" • "Accountability to shared commitments"



Recommended follow-through

- Within 30 days: confirm the shared vision, communicate it to Heads of Service and the workforce, and consolidate named actions and milestones.
- Within 60 days: review cross-service dependencies, workforce feedback and progress through existing SLT governance.
- Within 90 days: assess evidence of delivery, leadership behaviours and changes in practice; agree adjustments and further support.

Overall evaluation: the feedback indicates a positive and purposeful day, with a clear appetite for continued collective working. Its longer-term value will depend on SLT translating the vision and commitments into routine leadership practice and measurable improvements for children and families.

Claire Woodcock & Jenny Boyd | SESLIP Associates | November 2026