SEND Courageous Conversation
&
Targeted Support

SESLIP
South East Sector Led Improvement Programme

WWW.SESLIP.CO.UK

SESLIP Approach to Support

	Mindset & Approach	The Relationship Dynamics	Impact on the Stakeholder
Doing TO	Coercion / Dictation	High control by provider; zero input from stakeholder.	Passive, resistant, or disempowered.
Doing FOR	Paternalism / Charity	Well-intentioned management; provider decides what is "best".	Dependent, passive, and lacks ownership.
Doing WITH	**Co-design / Partnership**	Equal partnership, shared power, and collaborative action.	**Empowered, engaged, and resilient.**
NOT Doing	Neglect / Autonomy	Total absence of support, or strategic stepping back.	Left stranded (or forced into complete self-reliance)

SEND Courageous Conversation = ?

- Funded via DfE grant – approved by DCSs as part of SESLIP Regional Improvement Plan
- Offer peer challenge and support for **local areas** (SEND Partnerships) to help develop and improve
- Build on strengths
- Support candid discussions of what can improve
- Supports preparation for (or follow up from) annual engagement meetings and/or inspections/engagement meetings
- Offers an opportunity to focus on a particular aspect of SEND
- Enables mutually beneficial learning for all involved in the activity, inc Parent Carer Forums
- Feedback offered in a clear, honest, and supportive way including the identification of other useful contacts/practice to facilitate follow-up.



How it works

- Independently facilitated
- Confidential to the host LA. Up to host LA how they use the exercise and report.
- Local area discuss and agree possible focus. Best practice to involve:
  - Children and young people
  - Parent/carer forum
  - Designated Clinical Officer; Designated Social Care Officer
  - SEND Area Partnership – for sign off?
- A timetable of activity and appropriate documentation agreed in advance.
- Courageous conversation consists of:
  - Half day prep for the team, reviewing existing information from LA area and any specific work relevant to the area of focus
  - 1 day of courageous conversations – in person or online
  - Half day used to provide summary findings and feedback conversation if requested..
- A short report with a summary of findings and ideas for development sent within two weeks.

Peer team – other LAs & PCF reps

- Build knowledge and capacity within SE LAs by being part of the team undertaking the work
- Benefits include learning about how another area works, what strengths can be translated, what areas for improvement might also be comparable with own LA, what topics might not have been thought of before
- Level – Heads of SEND, Inclusion, Principal EP, Assistant Directors, DCSs, Parent/Carer rep from other area, ICB reps? Heath Trust Provider reps?
- Intention is light touch – arranging, preparation, scheduling will be undertaken by Chris Baird with the host LA

List of topics/themes chosen by LAs so far:

- Developing/reviewing the local area SEF
- Transitions, including 16+
- Alternative Provision
- Timeliness/quality of new EHC assessments
- Annual Reviews
- SEND support and inclusive practice in mainstream schools
- Joint commissioning
- Coproduction and impact of this
- Ordinarily available provision/Prevention
- Outcomes for children – including evidence of partnership working having positive effects
- Quality Assurance
- What happens when?
- Communication
- Experts at Hand

So far…

Buckinghamshire, Brighton & Hove, East Sussex Hampshire, Kent, Medway Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire, Portsmouth, Reading, Southampton, Surrey, West Sussex, Windsor & Maidenhead, Wokingham, West Berkshire, and all had one SEND Courageous Conversation

Buckinghamshire, Reading, Southampton, West Sussex have had a further one

Hampshire, Kent, Oxfordshire, Surrey, Wokingham have starting planning for 2nd SEND Courageous Conversation.

Available to anyone that wants one

SEND Courageous Conversations

Feedback ....

[Provided] “an opportunity to explore; honest, not defensive conversation, without baggage”

“We have made the Annual Review a working document so much quicker, so it can be part of a cycle. No need to update the whole plan – this allows people to focus on a specific area”

“We have already started to explore some the things discussed in the session which is positive e.g.: how we get better engagement and raise queries linked to Appendix D quality.”

“We have a face to face workshop following the report to explore next steps and how we strategically move this forward.”

“We have been reflecting on the day too and it’s already sparked some very interesting internal dialogue, so consider the day a great success.”

“Thank you … for facilitating such a productive day for us. The format works really well in providing space and time for rich discussion. There was a positive energy in the room and what felt like genuine enthusiasm from colleagues to work together to improve the experiences and outcomes for some of our most vulnerable children.”

“I found it to be an incredibly well run meeting which hit just the right balance to allow for open discussion and constructive feedback in what felt like a really meaningful and positive way. I have also had similar feedback from others and have no doubt this can be used as the catalyst for some really impactful change.”

“I can see a direct line between the Courageous Conversation sessions and the development of the SEF, particularly with relation to the parent/carer set of questions”.

“Good to have an opportunity to be transparent and honest. Not many other opportunities to be so blunt.”

“Good opportunity to talk about SEND in more detail that might have been a 30 minute Teams call”

Feedback...

“I really valued the opportunity to be part of the work, and following the conversations with Surrey our wider teams and health services are already in conversations surrounding best practice and therapy advice within the national context. These opportunities are so valuable and allowed us to progress at pace knowing other LA’s implementation plans and practice examples.”

“Thank you again for the opportunity, it really has allowed me to also consider some of the strengths we have in Buckinghamshire and the challenges we have overcome since our written statement of action across our partnership.”

“Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the visit yesterday. I feel I have gained as much from being there as we hopefully offered to Kent colleagues.”

“This was such a brilliant CPD opportunity for myself and supported me to develop my understanding and explore new ideas within another LA’s context which I was then able to apply when returning to [LA] and now as the Strategic Lead for SEND in [another LA], I am very grateful for this opportunity and would say that this has probably been one of the most meaningful CPD I have engaged within my career in SEND.”

Targeted Support inc. SEND

Sept 2025 - December 2026: locally defined priorities, regionally enabled solutions

Responsive to local need

Authorities identify their own improvement challenge; SESLIP helps shape a proportionate, tailored package rather than prescribing a standard intervention.

Independent insight

Coaching approach - doing **with**, not to: External challenge and structured facilitation help partners reach a shared view of what works, where practice varies and what needs to change.

Regional added value

Peer specialists, transferable practice and cross-authority relationships build capability and capacity that individual authorities may struggle to access alone.

Areas of focus chosen by LAs

Bracknell Forest - SEND SEF inc. accuracy, ownership and understanding by partners.

Buckinghamshire – SEND Assessment Review including decision-making panels

Buckinghamshire – senior leadership development and reflections

Brighton & Hove - Commissioning for SEND

East Sussex - SEN Assessment and EHCP statutory processes and delivery

Hampshire – Commissioning for SEND

Hampshire/Portsmouth/Southampton + Hampshire and IoW ICB - capturing SEND and AP best practice

IoW use of data and analysis to inform strategic planning inc. sufficiency

Medway redesigning Ordinarily Available Provision, including using coproduction principles

Oxfordshire – Annual Review quality and lived experience

Oxfordshire LEAN training and case reviews of children moving into adulthood

Reading – Annual Review process mapping

Slough - legal compliance of Local Offer and what to improve

Surrey – Hearing the Voice of Families

Surrey – Diagnostic Review of SEND Complaints and recommendations on best practice

West Sussex - learning from SEND Tribunals and what do they tell West Sussex about services, sufficiency, gaps



Also included...

- Lean training (including data analysis tools)
- Process mapping
- Leadership Development Workshops
- Coaching and Mentoring

Feedback

“It was so valuable to have a range of professionals who could talk about their input into the Annual Review process”

“There was a high level of expertise that facilitated difficult conversations. A good use of precious time”

“Bespoke and adapted to our needs as the topic {commissioning} could be quite wide ranging. Well structured, worked in partnership, excellent level of expertise and input. Reflected what had been discussed in meetings. Felt it was an excellent use of time.”

“This is something that had been difficult to get buy-in from, and SESLIP support made it happen”

“It was very clear where the gaps are and what we need to do next”

“It has helped me to see the process from start to finish”

“The key take aways from our work together is clarity on the work we need to do in mapping out Annual Review processes across the partnership”

Benefits

- ✓ Independent, skilled, valued work delivered by associates and peers
- ✓ Provides capacity on an issue of the LA's choosing – not imposed / bespoke
- ✓ Strengths based – not "the glass is half empty and it's got a leak"
- ✓ Enables people to feel valued, positive about ways forward
- ✓ Shining a different light
- ✓ Practical and sustainable - can be used – makes a difference
- ✓ Enables shift in local approach through external objective facilitation and reflection
- ✓ Enables participants from other LAs to reflect on their own practice and area's work, as well as using their experience in a different context

Why authorities may want the offer continued/opportunity to collaborate and share good practice

Themes for testing through the regional feedback survey

The needs suggested by current projects

- Capacity to diagnose difficult pathways objectively
- Specialist SEND / CSC expertise on demand
- Time and facilitation to align multi-agency partners
- Support to implement, not only recommend
- Opportunity to learn from neighbouring authorities

Future funding choices to test

- Short diagnostic packages vs longer implementation support
- Local engagement funding and specialist input
- Regional workshops vs in-house support
- Coaching, mentoring and Lean capability
- Shared toolkits, data and practice networks



Ask the region | shape shared learning opportunities or the next funded programme

A short survey across all 19 local authorities should turn demand signals into evidence

Suggested survey questions

1. Which three improvement priorities would benefit most from support?
2. What has SESLIP targeted support enabled you to do differently?
3. What would help you move from diagnosis to implementation?
4. Which delivery formats would you use?

Get In Touch!

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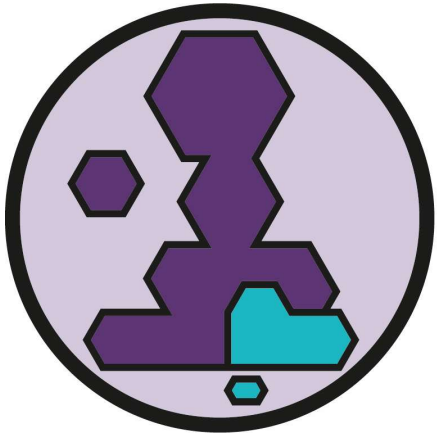
Either to arrange a SEND Courageous Conversation

And/Or

to volunteer to take part as a member of a SEND Courageous Conversation Team

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