

Welcome

It's a busy period for sector-led improvement in children's services in the East Midlands with several peer challenge reviews, safeguarding assurance visits and seminars taking place before Christmas. Please see updates and links within this newsletter to a range of information and opportunities.

Discussion Forum

Over 1,000 colleagues across East Midlands' children's services and beyond receive this newsletter and many have been asking about an online space for discussions. We are pleased to say that this has now been developed at www.sectorledimprovement.co.uk/forum. The email that sent this newsletter also provided you with personalised log-in details for the forum, which you can change to something more memorable when you visit the page. Hopefully this facility will add another useful strand of mutual support. You will receive occasional alerts of forum discussions, from which you can opt out if unwanted.

Regional Priorities

Following the analysis and peer scrutiny of the 2015 Self Assessments from all nine Local Authorities, the region's Directors of Children's Services (DCSs) have identified the priorities below as themes that are most suited to joint-action in some form for the year ahead. Each priority has a link DCS and Lead Member who together guide the collaborative work in the region to deliver specific outcomes.

- a) Tackling social work and wider workforce challenges
- b) Supporting the implementation of SEND reforms (special educational needs and disability)
- c) Achieving consistently high standards in the work of partner organisations to combat the sexual exploitation of children
- d) Further developing a partnership-led school system that tackles educational priorities effectively
- e) Influencing public expectations/demand for LA-funded services

Case file auditing

A social work case file audit tool closely based upon the latest inspection methodologies has recently been developed as part of Ofsted's improvement activities in the region. This tool and its accompanying methodology is being used to very good effect in a number of local authorities to audit the quality of case files and evaluate how children experience services at each stage of their journey, what parts work for them and what does not and how decisions are leading to improved outcomes. The East Midlands DCSs have agreed to use this tool and process within the region's peer challenge scheme and a number of local authorities are also adopting and adapting it within their local arrangements.

A seminar is being held to introduce the tool and explain how it relates to the current inspection framework, can usefully trigger lines of enquiry to investigate the impact of service planning and delivery, decision-making and quality assure practice. The seminar will also include an opportunity to try out the tool and process on case files. This seminar is aimed at any colleagues engaged in managing, reviewing or auditing social work case files and monitoring decision making to track improved outcomes for young people. It will also provide a great opportunity to meet in a structured session with colleagues from across the region to exchange practice in this important area. The seminar is being delivered by Steve Hart who led the Ofsted improvement programme that developed the tool.

Thursday 17th December (2 sessions available)
Either 9.30am-12.00pm or 1.00pm-3.30pm

Developing social work case file audit

To book your place please visit

www.socialworkcasefileaudit.eventbrite.co.uk

To be held at Yew Lodge, Kegworth, M1 Jn24, DE74 2DF

Young carers

A first regional meeting for LA Leads for Young Carers in both children's and adult services is being held to develop practice and mutual support between colleagues who play this important role. The meeting will include significant contributions from John Bangs (Surrey LA and part of the **No Wrong Doors** national working group) and Bill Badham (Working with the Children's Society and Carers Trust on **Making a Step Change**). In addition the session will provide an opportunity for practice sharing between colleagues as well as sharing and tackling problems and issues together.

Thursday 5th November 10.00am – 2.30pm

Regional Meeting: LA Leads for Young Carers and their Families

To book one of the few remaining places visit

www.youngcarerleads.eventbrite.co.uk

Being held at Alliance House, Leicester, LE1 6AF

Peer Challenge

An organised programme of peer challenge visits by colleagues from other LA areas sits at the heart of the East Midlands arrangements. This includes:

DCS-led Team Reviews Within the next 15 months each LA will receive a 3-day, DCS-led Peer Challenge Team Review. PCTR team membership always includes senior leaders from a number of different LAs.

Safeguarding Assurance Visits (SAVs)

SAVs are led by the regional group of Safeguarding Leads (2nd Tier) and typically investigate thresholds and case file audit arrangements. In special circumstances a SAV MAX can be requested that deploys a bigger team over a longer team period to provide a very thorough peer challenge. All LAs will have received a second SAV by summer 2016.

Regional pool of reviewers

Team members for regional peer challenge are drawn from a pool of reviewers who have their manager's support. The next training event for those looking to develop skills and understanding of peer challenge, and so make themselves available for the pool, is in February.

Thursday 4th February 9.30am – 1.00pm

Peer Challenge Training

To reserve a place and to complete your expression of interest to become a reviewer please visit

www.surveymonkey.com/r/EastMidlandsPeerChallenge

To be held at Yew Lodge, Kegworth, M1 Jn24, DE74 2DF

Tackling Child Sexual Exploitation

This topic has high media profile at present and is also a priority in the region, both in terms of the need and demand to uncover historical abuse as well as the current protection of young people in this technology-rich environment. An important aspect of effective practice hinges upon all partner organisations working together to ensure that their processes place sufficient emphasis upon protection. To this end a set of regional standards for partners with a role to play in tackling CSE are being recommended as a benchmark against which to review practice. The standards have been developed from work done in other regions and were presented and discussed at a major regional seminar in October.

This seminar was attended by many key leaders and decision makers from across service areas in the region. It also provided some very useful insights from the Crown Prosecution Service, Ofsted and organisations that provide *recovery* support for victims and their families. All of these resources including the recommended regional standards can be downloaded at www.sectorledimprovement.co.uk/events-and-seminars/past-events

Children's workforce update

A major conference was held in the summer that was attended by workforce managers from over half of the country's Local Authorities. The focus of the conference was on the changing composition and needs of the wider workforce that provides family support and early intervention alongside social work. A conference report can be downloaded at

www.sectorledimprovement.co.uk/workforce-and-leadership

The event signalled a national need for stronger and more flexible professional development arrangements for this workforce and support for workforce managers. Consequently work is now underway to:

- Develop a website platform to support workforce managers that contains useful information, resources and online communications. Further details in these early stages can be obtained from julia.smith@sdsa.net
- Promote and campaign for the nationally identified need to improve modular qualifications and flexible pathways to accredit and recognise the professional status and development of this workforce.

Regional Adoption Agency

The East Midlands' proposal to develop a Regional Adoption Agency has been approved by the DfE, for which the initial project leadership is being provided by Lincolnshire. Work is now underway to add the required details to the outline plans that should lead to important improvements over coming years. Further details can be obtained from bryan.glover@lincolnshire.gov.uk

QSW protocol

Work is now fairly well-developed to establish agreements between Local Authorities that start to address the impact of social care agency work on price, quality and service culture. This work is currently being led by lynn.robinson@nottinghamcity.gov.uk who would be pleased to hear any suggestions.

Regional framework

The tendering process is currently underway for a revised regional procurement framework contract for placements with independent providers. More news will follow in the new year but queries should be addressed to mark.lambell@sdsa.net

Regional networks

Summary information about most regional groups can now be found at www.sectorledimprovement.co.uk. Please use these pages to enquire about the current work programmes or to get in touch with them.

This newsletter is produced by the SDSA, who co-ordinate much of this regional joint-work. Please contact peter.chilvers@sdsa.net with any general enquiries

