

IMPROVEMENT EAST



DECEMBER 2024 NEWSLETTER

A SNAPSHOT OF Q4 2024 AND WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR IN Q1 2025.....

IMPROVEMENT EAST SHARING WORKSHOPS

The first Improvement East Sharing Workshops were held in September. The idea of the Sharing Workshops is that they are short online sessions to showcase innovative and good practice that is happening in the region.

The first was held on September 19th, 2024, with a focus on SEND. Colleagues from Hertfordshire shared how they are progressing on their improvement journey following their SEND inspection in July 2023. They talked through their ambitious transformation programme 'Making SEND Everyone's Business' and covered the following topics:

- Workforce transformation at scale; with a focus on drawing our community into our workforce and valuing lived experience
- Building the Hertfordshire SEND Academy, professionalising the workforce and better support for our frontline professionals with a strong training and development offer
- Enhancing our Quality Assurance function to support and drive improved practice across the directorate

The second was held a week later with a focus on Home to School Transport and QRoutes. In this workshop colleagues from Bedford shared how they have managed to make significant cost savings in this area through a full review of their offer and a significant procurement exercise. The workshop covered the following topics:

- Procurement processes and marketing
- QRoutes

Feedback from both events was extremely positive and gave those that attended an interesting insight to the work being done in these LAs.

Improvement East hope to be able offer more Sharing Workshops in 2025. If you have any topics you would like to share or there are any areas you would like us to consider for the new year please contact easternregioncib@norfolk.gov.uk

ANTI-RACIST PRACTICE

A regional task & finish group has been established to develop a regional Anti-Racist Practice pledge. Members have collaborated to draft a regional pledge that they are currently sharing with colleagues in their own LAs to gather feedback. It is hoped that a final draft will be ready to share with DCSs in January.

Preparation for the Anti-Racist Practice Conference to launch the pledge has started with Jeffrey Wotherspoon agreeing to be a keynote speaker at the conference. Further details about the conference and booking will be shared as soon as they are available.

EASTERN REGION LEAVING CARE NETWORK CONFERENCE

On September 20, 2024, over 150 colleagues from all 11 local authorities in the region convened at the Hertfordshire Development Centre for the first Eastern Region Leaving Care Network Conference to network, share best practice, and focus on practice. The conference highlighted key topics such as transitional safeguarding, NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) to EET (Education, Employment, or Training), and trauma-informed practice.

The event featured inspiring keynote speeches from Dr. Jenny Malloy, author of “Hackney Child,” Scott King, Director of Section 31 Training, and the Eastern Region Care Leavers Participation Group. Their powerful stories and experiences resonated with the audience, challenging and motivating attendees. In addition to the keynote addresses, the conference included workshop sessions that concentrated on enhancing EET opportunities for Care Leavers and implementing trauma-informed practices.



The Eastern Region Leaving Care Network have taken the shared learning from the conference and have taken a paper to the CSC SLI Leadership Network and DCS Network to agree on a regional definition of EET and a list of approved activities.

WORKFORCE PROJECT UPDATE

The Eastern Region workforce team are working with LAs in the region and other regions to implement the new rules to curb councils' use of agency social workers in children's services have started coming into place as of 31 October 2024.

Under the policy, English authorities will be expected to agree regional pay caps on locums' hourly rates, refrain from hiring early career practitioners, or staff who have recently left permanent roles in the same region, as agency workers and ensure they directly manage all staff hired through project teams.

The DfE says the rules - part of the previous government's *Stable Homes, Built on Love* children's social care reforms – were designed “to reduce the overreliance on and costs of agency child and family social workers” to authorities, saving them money and improving continuity of support for children. Within the Eastern Region there the workforce project team based at Southend City Council is helping the authorities with the implementation of the rules and ensuring the region is compliant by 1st November 2025.

The team are also continuing their work to promote social work opportunities across the region and continue to develop the Eastern Region recruitment microsite

If you need more information or would like to discuss this further, please contact the project team

lisamorris@southend.gov.uk

Please support the Eastern Region microsite by following the LinkedIn page and sharing your networks.

<https://www.linkedin.com/company/eastern-region-social-worker-jobs/>

SEND

Update from Sheelagh Sullivan

Thank you to all of those who have contributed to the Eastern Region SEND network this term. Thanks to all the chairs and members of our network meetings who have found time to contribute, despite the many pressures of the day job. Thanks also to all of those who have attended and/or contributed to the regional SEND forum, including so many of our regional parent/carers who have provided consistent support. Special thanks to our NHE forum co-chair Louise Warren, and to Michael Marks and Michele Lucas for their support and encouragement.

Looking forward to 2025, we have 'The Big Get Together' on 7/2/25. This is an event that has been designed by (and aimed at) children and young people (CYP) with SEND from across the region. However, our CYP are keen for their voice to be heard by the regional SEND decision makers so adults and staff from the region are warmly invited to attend. Your time and support will be appreciated by young people. Speakers on the day include Christine Lenehan, Senior Policy Advisors from the DfE and Lennie Rush. We still have some places available for young peopleand a few adults. Please get in touch with Kierran Pearce (Kierran.Pearce@essex.gov.uk) and/or Sonia Dayal (sonia.dayal@sdsa.net) if you need more information about how to join us. Please also spread the word and encourage young people in your area to come along. You can find a draft plan for the day below.

Merry Christmas and a happy new year to all!

Sheelagh

Eastern Region SEND Workforce Survey

Improvement East have been asked by the Eastern Region DCS Network to conduct a review of the SEND workforce in the region. As the starting point we are asking colleagues who work in SEND their views about being part of the workforce that supports children and young people with SEND to reach their potential in the East.

If you work in SEND and haven't yet completed the survey, please follow the link to have your say

[Improvement East - Eastern Region SEND Workforce Survey](#)

EASTERN REGION PERFORMANCE DATA

- Eastern Region CS Analysts have received invites to access Hertfordshire County Council's PowerBI environment. This will enable them to access the SSDA903 Sufficiency Analysis when it is published and all other deployed analyses.
- Based on the feedback received by the region, we are in the process of developing a regional ChAT in PowerBI which will utilise the Ofsted Annex A data lists
- We are on track for LA's to be able to submit CIN and Annex A data via the data platform from early next year.
- The Q2 2024-25 Tartan Rug has been shared across the region

PLACEMENT SUFFICIENCY

Commission East

Commission East is underway. This is an ambitious programme that seeks to improve our residential services and placement sufficiency across the region. The programme will develop and support our collaboration, both internally with each Local Authority, but also externally in how we commission and work with the market. Working together will help bring better value for money as we can pool resources, ideas and create economies of scale, whilst driving best practise to secure better outcomes for children and families.

There are currently two broad strands of work in this area:

- **Working with the market differently** – using our Regional Placement and Provider analysis that looks are aggregated commissioning and spend across the region to forge different conversations and relationship with the external market.
- **Workforce Development** - How can we work more collaboratively and effectively. Using our collective knowledge and understanding to create clarity and drive best practise across the residential services.

Progress to date includes:

- A regional data collection on the use and costs of placements has been completed and analysis of this is being undertaken (1)
- A regional commissioner's network has been established with monthly meetings (1&2)
- A set of Practice Principles and Behaviours has been developed for final sign off and roll out (1&2)
- A network for Registered Managers from homes in all sectors has been established (2)

The logo for FosterEast, featuring the word "Foster" in white with a heart icon inside the letter 'o', followed by "East" in white, all on a purple rectangular background.

Foster East went live on 28th May 2024 and is the only regional Fostering Hub that has all LAs from the region on board. The impact of Foster East is starting to be seen with increasing numbers of contacts coming from the Foster East marketing campaigns.

Funding for Year 2 of the pathfinder has been agreed which creates the mandate to build on all the initial work of implementation but enables the projects to really change gear and mobilise more impactful work around the regional learning offer, whilst also focusing on developing a retention strategy for all our Foster Carers.

To find out more please visit [Foster East](#)

IMPROVEMENT EAST WEBSITE



About Us

Improvement East is the Eastern Region's Improvement and Innovation Alliance (RIIA). A collaboration of all eleven Eastern Region single and two-tier local authorities that work together to improve outcomes for Children and Young People in the East.



We have recently launched our new website for Improvement East which will share the work being done in the region and offer a password protected area for networks to share resources and information

[Improvement East](#)

We are currently building on the content, if there is anything you wish to hear about or

wish us to share with the region please drop us an email - EasternRegionCIB@norfolk.gov.uk

UPDATES & DATES FOR THE CALENDAR

Children's Wellbeing and Schools Bill

Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive – breaking down barriers to opportunity.

14/11/24 The Hydrant

Programme published Child exploitation and abuse: an appropriate language guide

07/11/24 Ofsted published Fostering in England 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2024

31/10/24 DfE published Resources to support new agency social worker guidance and employer standards and Children in need: 2023 to 2024

On 24 October NAO published Support for children and young people with special educational needs

On 23 October IFS published The effect of Sure Start on youth misbehaviour, crime and contacts with children's social care

On 9 October the Centre of Expertise on Child Sexual Abuse launched its Data Insights Hub

THE BIG GET TOGETHER 2025

7TH FEBRUARY 2025, 10:00 – 15:30

HERTFORDSHIRE DEVELOPMENT CENTRE, SIX HILLS WAY, STEVENAGE SG1 2FQ

A fantastic opportunity for children and young people with SEND from across the region to get together

ANTI-RACIST PRACTICE CONFERENCE

16TH MAY 2025, ALL DAY

HERTFORDSHIRE DEVELOPMENT CENTRE, SIX HILLS WAY, STEVENAGE SG1 2FQ

This Conference will mark the official launch of the Eastern Region Anti-Racist Practice Pledge.



The next edition of the Improvement Newsletter is scheduled for March 2025. If you have anything that you want including or wish to provide names of colleagues who you would like to receive it or want to be removed from the distribution list, please contact easternregioncib@norfolk.gov.uk