

IMPROVEMENT EAST



MARCH 2025 SPRING NEWSLETTER

A SNAPSHOT OF Q1 2025 AND WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR IN Q2.....



IMPROVEMENT EAST – THE BIG GET TOGETHER

On Friday 7 February, the first Eastern Region Big Get Together took place in Stevenage. It was a great day that was attended by over 300 children, young people, school and college staff and professionals from local authorities and partner organisations. The event gave an amazing opportunity for the voices of children and young people from across the region to be heard and celebrate some of their achievements.

The event was opened by keynote speeches from Dame Christine Lenehan, Government SEN strategic advisor, Khadija Hussain, Voices of the East member & ambassador, Lenny Rush, Actor & SEN advocate, Multi-Schools Council ambassador (Virtual) and Hermoine Greenhalgh, Children's Commissioner Office, Senior Policy Advisor, DfE.

The day included a variety of workshop options chosen by the children and young people to attend and enjoy. Purple All-Stars gave an amazing performance for all the delegates to enjoy.



ANTI-RACIST PRACTICE

The local authorities in the Eastern Region have collaborated to create and endorse the Eastern Region Anti-Racist Practice Pledge, to which all 11 local authorities are committed. This pledge underscores our regional dedication to active allyship and the promotion of an anti-racist, diverse environment - [Eastern Region Anti Racist Practice Pledge – Improvement East](#)

The Anti-Racist Practice Conference on 16/05/25 will mark the official launch of the Eastern region pledge.

The Conference will include keynote speeches from Jeffrey Wotherspoon and Teresa Hills.



EASTERN REGION ANTI RACIST PRACTICE CONFERENCE

16 MAY 2025, 09:30 – 15:00

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

The official launch of the Eastern Region' Anti-Racist Practice Pledge!

This conference aims to bring together Children's Service's Leaders from across the 11 local authorities in the Eastern Region to celebrate the work that has been done so far and to consider how as individuals, local authorities and a region we can embed the pledge to create cultures in which anti-racism can thrive.

The conference aims to:

- Promote a deeper understanding of key issues relating to anti-racism
- Challenge individual's thinking and practice
- Share key development in anti-racism initiatives across the region
- Reaffirm the region's commitment to anti-racism and consider how the regional pledge can be put in to practice

We are delighted to be joined by Jeffrey Wotherspoon, an Executive Coach, trainer, and conflict resolution specialist, as well as Teresa Hills, the Director of Children's Operations at Luton Borough Council who will be delivering keynote speeches during the event.

Spaces are limited to 20 spaces per local authority so please contact your manager to secure a place

PRINCIPAL CHILDREN AND FAMILY SOCIAL WORKER NETWORK (PCFSW)

The PCFSW Network provides a forum for exchanging knowledge, good practice, challenges, resources and information about social work developments. Members collaborate to develop and share useful resources to support excellent social work practice. The network gives the opportunity to develop a collective voice to feedback key themes to the national network and the steering group.

The Network has an agreed set of priorities that it is focusing on over the next 12 months.

Eastern Region PSW Network Priorities



Workforce

- Agency Social Workers DfE rules: Regional Implementation (12 months cooling off period)
- Development of a regional leadership programme via a Task & Finish group
- Map and develop insights into Learning & Development, Professional Development and Quality Assurance activity in the region



Anti-Racist Practice

- Anti-Racist Practice Pledge aligned with Children's Social Care National Framework 2023 (CSCNF 2023)
- Anti-Racist Practice Standards aligned with CSCNF 2023
- Anti-Racist Practice Conference scheduled for 15/05/24



Transitions

- Management of cross over from Children's Services to Adult Services
- Benchmarking against PAN London Child Protection Procedures
- Organise a joint meeting with Adult PSWs and heads of service for statutory SEND services/other relevant services, as applicable, to discuss transitions good practice

WORKFORCE PROJECT UPDATE

The workforce team are working with HR leads across the region on the implementation of the social work summary the agency rules. In summary the rules are:

- Councils should work within regions to agree and implement maximum hourly pay rates for agency practitioners Caps should be agreed in summer 2025 and implemented from 1 October 2025 for all new agency assignments and for all existing arrangements shortly thereafter.
- Notice periods for agency social workers should be four weeks or in line with that for permanent social workers in the same or equivalent roles where the latter is shorter.
- Councils should not engage social workers as locums within three months of them leaving a permanent post in the same region.
- Councils should only use agency social workers with a minimum of three years' post-qualifying experience in direct employment of an English local authority in children's services.
- Councils should provide a detailed practice-based reference, using a standard national reference template for all agency social workers they engage and require at least two such references the same before taking on a locum.

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/>

The team are 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

FOSTER EAST

The second short burst of Foster East marketing including TV and radio advertising <https://youtu.be/aSfdCvJq0lc?si=8M1hVyctTfQc8YPV> comes to a close at the end of March. Our always-on digital advertising campaign will continue, now featuring our third case study. So far we've had 947,675 views of our case studies which are proving to be one of our strongest forms of advertising.

The latest figures from Foster East show that the number of initial enquiries progressing into an official expression of interest has increased from 12% in 22/23 to 28% overall so far for 24/25. This indicates the proactive impact the hub recruitment team is having in terms of getting in touch with people within 24 hours, including making calls at evenings and weekends. The hub recruitment team is now handling initial enquiries for 7 LA partners out of 11.

Foster East has purchased 5 virtual headsets for training purposes, The learning and development stream is using them to teach fostering staff, and potential foster carers across the region about the kinds of trauma a child in care may have experienced. This immersive experience is an impactful way of teaching quite a challenging subject which some people find hard to imagine.

Funding has been agreed for year 2 of the Foster East project.

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

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

SEND

The SEND Network continues to work across the region. The next SEND Forum is planned for 8th May. Regional activities include:

Healthy Parent Carers Initiative

Several PCFs have now completed the Healthy Parent Carer training through Exeter University. Feedback has been very positive but PCFs can struggle to maintain the approach over time. Peterborough and Cambridgeshire have requested joint training this term.

SEND workforce project

Two surveys were circulated, a global survey to capture the views of all LA staff involved in the delivery of SEND services and a second survey designed to capture information around SEND leadership. Response to the surveys were good with good 527 participating. LAs will be able to use data to consider their own services and it will be used to inform the regional work plan going forward.

Early indications from the global survey:

- The regional data shows considerable growth in the workforce delivering EHCPs with 20% having been in post for less than one year.
- 65% of staff are happy with their induction experience but the remaining 35% represent a significant figure
- Staff identified the opportunity to work from home as a major factor in retention.
- The current diversity of the workforce is relatively narrow, but it is a highly qualified workforce.

Courageous Conversations

Courageous Conversations, the region's SEND peer challenge approach was implemented in 2023. Five LAs from across the region have participated and feedback so far has been very positive from all of those involved. Four more LAs have requested Courageous Conversations before the summer break.

EASTERN REGION PERFORMANCE DATA

We have now collected the new SEND Regional Dataset for 2 quarters with most LAs now participating. We are now working with Public Alchemy (who are supporting the SEND Strategic Leads Group) to further develop the dataset.

Recent ad-hoc benchmarking around the age of care leavers and numbers of separated migrant children has been carried out. Benchmarking on accommodation types for children looked after is currently underway.

The Early Help dataset after a 12-month pilot is now being moved into the main Tartan Rug document.

The contract to allow regular anonymised uploading of CIN, CLA and Ofsted Annex A data is going through final legal checks and will be implemented shortly. This will greatly enhance our benchmarking ability and will be rolled out over the summer once annual returns are completed.

COMMISSION EAST

As part of Commission East all level local authorities in the region are working together to explore how they can collaborate to increase sufficiency and improve outcomes for children. The project is focusing initially on three strategic themes:

- Regional Commissioning Approaches
- Practice Development
- Data Insight and Demand Management

There have been various networks and task & finish groups established in the region to concentrate on these. Some of the key activities in the last quarter have been the establishment of the Eastern Collaborative Children's Network and the first Eastern Region Residential Providers Event.

Eastern Collaborative Children's Residential Network

Commission East established the Eastern Collaborative Children's Residential Network (ECCRN). This is a newly established network hosted by Improvement East. The ECCRN is a 3 monthly forum for exchanging knowledge, good practice, challenges, resources and information. All Registered Managers of all homes are invited to be collaborative members

The ECCRN is integral to this project collaboratively supporting Residential Child Care practice. We have our own space and will use it for a variety of purposes.

First presentation - [2025-01-09-ECCRN-Presentation.pdf](#)

First Newsletter - [ECCRN Newsletter March 2025](#)

Eastern Region Residential Providers Event

On Friday 31 January, the first Eastern Region Children's Residential Care Providers event took place in Stevenage. It was well attended by colleagues from LAs and residential care providers from across the region. This event marked the start of our collaborative efforts to innovate and refine processes, aiming to improve outcomes for children and their families and enhance efficiency.



Presentation slides - [Eastern Region Residential Care Providers Event 31-01-25 FD 2.1 \(1\)](#)

REGIONAL SELF ASSESSMENT PROCESS

The regional self-assessment process is currently in progress. Local authorities are preparing their social care self-evaluations/assessments, have been paired with other local authorities in the region, and the dates for peer challenge events have been scheduled. Following the completion of all peer challenge events, the DCSs will convene to establish the regional priorities for the next two years.



2024-25 Eastern Region Self – Assessment Timeline



CARE LEAVERS

The [Eastern Region Care Leavers EET definition](#) and a list of agreed activities to improve consistency of recording across the region has been agreed and shared across LAs.

Funding for a two year Regional Leaving Care project has been agreed by the DCS Network which will involve a regional diagnostic of the Leaving Care offers and support to enhance the offer across the region. An Eastern Region Care Leaver strategy and offer will be developed through work with LAs, partners, external agencies, stakeholders and employers to offer opportunities, incentives, subsidies and entitlements to Care Leavers.

The first regional Care Leavers forum is planned for 25th March 2025 and there are plans for a summer event. For more information please contact csparticipation@norfolk.gov.uk

The poster is for a 'Care Leaver Forum' held on Tuesday 25th March 2025 in the East of England. It is an online event from 17:00 PM to 19:00 PM. The poster highlights that it is an exciting opportunity for care leavers from across the East of England to meet online and share experiences. It also lists benefits such as making new friends, learning new skills, and having a voice heard to help improve services. Contact information for more details is provided at the bottom.

Tuesday 25th March 2025

East of England

Care Leaver Forum

Online from 17:00 PM - 19:00 PM

Exciting opportunity for care leavers from across the East of England to meet online and share experiences which helps us make decisions about topics which are important to you.

What's in it for you?
Make new friends, learn new skills (great for your CV), have your voice heard and help improve services for other young people

Join ONLINE via Teams
Meeting ID: 351 848 020 461
Passcode: w9N9x7

For more information contact:
csparticipation@norfolk.gov.uk

UPDATES

- 27/02/25 DfE published [Children's social work workforce data for 2024](#)
- Supporting children aged 16 and 17 who need help when they are homeless was published on 25/02/25 [click to open](#)
- 20/02/25 the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman published [Fostering better services: Helping to improve council services for foster carers and their children](#)
- 07/02/25 Foundations published [Parenting through adversity](#)
- 05/02/25 DfE published [Alternative provision - statutory guidance](#)
- 01/02/25 Centrepont published [Hidden in Plain Sight: Understanding Youth Homelessness in the UK](#)
- 01/02/25 The Fostering Network published [State of the Nation's Foster Care](#)
- 28/01/25 The Children's Commissioner published [Children's Involvement in the 2024 Riots](#)

IMPROVEMENT EAST

The [Improvement East](#) website and LinkedIn page [Improvement East - LinkedIn](#) have been launched. Please take a look and follow the page to keep up to date with regional activities. If you have any suggestions for content or anything you wish us to share, please email EasternRegionCIB@norfolk.gov.uk