



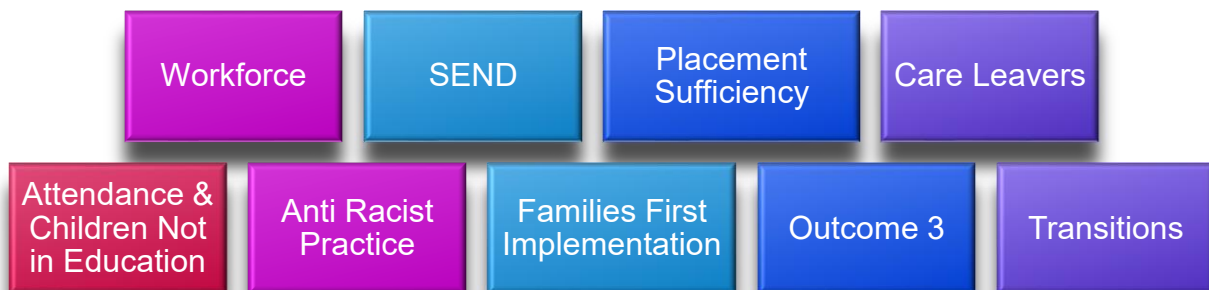
New
Term

SEPTEMBER NEWSLETTER

SEND Special Pages 5-6

IMPROVEMENT EAST

The bi-annual self-assessment process, including peer and DCS challenge, for 2024-25 was completed in July 2025. The process identified 9 regional priorities which form the basis of the [Regional Development Plan](#) for 2025-27:



FAMILIES FIRST PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMME

Update from Luton

"Luton Council has been proud to host a series of successful Learning Open Days as part of the Families First for Children Pathfinder Wave 2. These events welcomed councils from across the wider region, offering valuable insights into how Luton has implemented the social care reforms. Attendees gained a deeper understanding of our approach through shared resources including single assessment templates, job descriptions, structure charts and presentations. Key colleagues from our Family Help teams—including social workers, family support workers, team managers, deputy heads of service, and LCPPs—actively participated, sharing honest reflections on our journey. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, and we're pleased to have supported sector-wide learning through open dialogue and collaboration. Our peers expressed appreciation for the transparency and practical support provided. We're pleased to have had the opportunity to share our journey and contribute to sector-wide learning and improvement".

Luton also attended the DCS priorities event in July to share their journey with a focus on data. Following this it was agreed that a regional network for practice and data leads should be established to provide a platform for regional collaboration, working through common issues, support and sharing plans and practice. The first meeting is being held on 29th September 10:30 – 12:00. If you would like to join please email EasternRegionCIB@norfolk.gov.uk

On 10 July 2025 DfE published [Families first for children pathfinder – Implementation and process evaluation report: early findings](#)

TRANSITIONS

The first Eastern Region ADASS & ADCS Transitions Event on 3rd July brought together senior leaders and practitioners across children's and adult services to ignite a region-wide commitment to better transitions for young people moving into adulthood. This launched the groundwork for cross-service collaboration that we hope will improve not just the pathways, but the experiences of young people as well as their families and carers as they navigate this pivotal phase. The following recommendations will be taken forward:

- ❖ Regional Transitions Conference
- ❖ Develop a Regional Protocol for Preparation for Adulthood and Transitions
- ❖ Regional learning and development of Transitional Safeguarding

ANTI-RACIST PRACTICE

On Friday 16/05/2025, the first Eastern Region Anti-Racist Practice Conference took place in



Stevenage. The event was designed for leaders in Children's Services to take a monumental step forward in anti-racist practice activism and officially launch the [Eastern Region Anti Racist Practice Pledge](#). The Pledge is a collaborative effort co-developed and committed to by all 11 local authorities in our region.

Over 200 senior leaders from across our local authorities came together to listen, reflect, share, be challenged, and commit to meaningful change. The day was not just about

dialogue, but about action—ensuring we move forward with purpose and accountability.

Our Regional Anti Racist Leadership Forum was created following this event to drive Anti-Racist Practice across the region. The second meeting is taking place on 22 September 2025.

Eastern Region Anti-Racist Practice Resources

[Eastern Region Anti-Racist Practice Conference Slides](#)

[Heartbreaking Moment When Kids Learn About White Privilege | The School That Tried to End Racism](#)

S.O.E Still Can't Breathe <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nLDMt3eSwI>

EASTERN REGION PERFORMANCE DATA

We have received additional funding from the DfE to recruit to SEND Regional Performance Manager who will support the regional performance team and individual local authorities to build on the current SEND data collection.

2024/25 children looked after data has been added the 903 Dynamic Sufficiency Tool.

The Q1 Tartan Rug is now available.

WORKFORCE

Mental Health Awareness Campaign

The Eastern Region recently ran a mental health awareness campaign from **9th to 23rd May**, featuring a **30-second video on TikTok**. The campaign aimed to:

- ❖ Raise awareness of the Eastern Region,
- ❖ Encourage passive job seekers to visit the microsite, and
- ❖ Highlight the region's commitment to supporting mental wellbeing.

📺 You can view the video here: [Mental Health Awareness Week](#)



Upcoming Campaign: Transitioning from Agency to Permanent Roles

Our next campaign will focus on the transition of agency workers into permanent roles. If you know someone who has made this transition and would be willing to share a positive experience, please contact:

✉ lisamorris@southend.gov.uk ✉ vickybrooks@southend.gov.uk

Monitoring Compliance with DfE Agency Rules

The Department for Education (DfE) has introduced new rules to improve the stability and quality of the child and family social worker workforce. These rules aim to:

- ❖ Strengthen relationships between social workers and families,
- ❖ Reduce overreliance on agency staff, and
- ❖ Create a more sustainable and cost-effective workforce.

The Eastern Region is actively monitoring compliance using first-quarter DfE data. Our workforce project team already has a well-established data collection system and has been working collaboratively under a **Memorandum of Cooperation** for several years. These new rules provide an opportunity to explore cross-regional collaboration.

Key Dates

- ❖ **1st October 2025:** Full compliance with the DfE rules is expected.

For more information, please contact: lisamorris@southend.gov.uk

CARE LEAVERS

The Regional Care Leaver project is gaining momentum with the appointment of a Project Lead, Gemma Coxen and the establishment of a regional Care Leavers forum who have worked with the Regional Leaving Care Network to coproduce the priorities for the project which are:

- ❖ EET & Travel Support
- ❖ Support for Care Leavers who are parents
- ❖ Adult eligibility and transitions
- ❖ Health of Care Leavers
- ❖ Support for Care Leavers in custody

Currently a regional diagnostic is being undertaken of local offers to establish a baseline for the region, identify good practice and highlight opportunities for collaboration.

COMMISSION EAST

Strategic Projects & Programme Activity

Commission East is currently managing over 15 projects, including:

- ❖ Practice Principles: Co-developed with providers to align values and expectations across the region. A working group is being formed to finalise these principles.
- ❖ Workforce Development: Exploring regional training pathways to support and develop the residential workforce.
- ❖ Data Insight & Sufficiency Tools: A regional sufficiency dashboard using the 903 data was demonstrated to support placement analysis across the region.

Provider Engagement & Market Collaboration

The Residential Providers Event held in June was a major success, fostering dialogue between LAs and providers. Feedback was synthesised into an action plan covering:

- ❖ Strengthening communication channels
- ❖ Improving quality assurance
- ❖ Enhancing placement planning
- ❖ Streamlining referral processes
- ❖ Fostering shared learning and trust

[Eastern Region Residential Care Providers Event 18-06-25 Slide Deck](#)

Commission East is developing a regional engagement planner that will help create transparency and align engagement activity with providers across the region.

Practice Development & Steering

The Practice Steering Group continues to drive initiatives such as:

- ❖ Development of the Eastern Region Placement Request Form, now being piloted in LiquidLogic.
- ❖ Creation of a One Page Profile to embed child voice in placement decisions.
- ❖ Coordination of Edge of Care workshops to share the good practice across the region. Essex lead the first session which focused on their DBIT service. Norfolk are leading one in October on their New Roads model – please follow the [link](#) to book your space

Eastern Collaborative Children's Residential Network

The Eastern Collaborative Children's Residential Network (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.

Useful resources are shared in our newsletters and on our webpage - [Eastern Collaborative Children's Residential Network \(ECCRN\) – Improvement East](#)

These network meetings are online on a quarterly basis, the next is being held on Thursday 2nd October.

For 2025-26 there has been a significant increase in funding from the Department for Education for the Regional Improvement & Innovation Alliance funding for SEND which means there are more opportunities for collaboration.

To support the delivery additional governance and oversight has been put in place with the establishment of a Regional SEND Strategic Steering Group and SEND Leadership Network. The existing support networks will continue to meet and an additional SEND Quality Assurance Community of Practice has been established.

Project updates will be shared through the networks, this newsletter and the Improvement East website [SEND East – Improvement East](#)



SEND RIIA Projects Overview



SEND Data Paul Dryden & PIMG - Appoint SEND data lead - Community of Practice - Consistent reporting	Partnership & Engagement Rachel Black & Sheelagh Sullivan - LA/NHS Collaboration Group - Regional Sharing Platforms - SEND Strategic Board	Alternative Provision Chris Owen - Community of Practice - Regional Diagnostic
Mainstream Inclusion Marian Cullen & Emma Stone - Community of Practice - Regional Diagnostic - Create Regional Toolkit	SEND Quality Assurance Rachel Black & Sheelagh Sullivan - Community of Practice - Regional Diagnostic	Home to School Transport Rachel Black Regional Diagnostic
Voices of the East Kierran Pearce - Co-design participation events 3 participation events in H1 2026 - Share key learning	Preparing for Adulthood Julie Pointer - Community of Practice - Regional Diagnostic - Transitions Event	Regional SEND Support Marian Cullen & Emma Stone Regional Diagnostic
Regional Diagnostics Lou Williams & Rachel Black - Courageous Conversations - Regional Diagnostic - Peer challenge	SEND Workforce Rachel Black & Sheelagh Sullivan - Data Collection - Case studies - Workforce strategy	



Inclusion Community of Practice for the Eastern Region

What is the Inclusion Community of Practice?

As part of the Regional Improvement and Innovation Alliances (RIIAs) Programme for 2025/26, DfE have asked Improvement East to establish an Inclusion Community of Practice for the Eastern Region, with the purpose of supporting and accelerating progress towards greater inclusion in mainstream education.

How will it be delivered?

The Eastern Region Inclusion Community of Practice will be facilitated by Improvement East via the 2025/26 RIIA grant, and all activities will be co-produced and delivered in partnership by regional colleagues.

Who should attend?

The Inclusion Community of Practice invites participation from all 11 LAs in the Region. LA Inclusion leaders and practitioners, Health and Parent-Carer representatives are invited to join.

Sign Up!

The first Inclusion Community of Practice meeting is online at 1pm on Thursday 16 October. For more information click [here](#) or email EasternRegionCIB@norfolk.gov.uk

Regional SEND Workforce Training

A programme of regional training has been developed for colleagues in response to the SEND Workforce Survey conducted earlier this year and is fully funded through the RIIA. The offer includes:

- ❖ Leading Change Programme delivered by Staff College
- ❖ Online Legal Training delivered by Bevan Brittan
- ❖ The SEN Apprenticeship Programme that has been developed in the Southeast.

Regional Targeted SEND Support Offer

Improvement East is delighted to launch a new Regional SEND Support Offer for 2025/26. It aims to leverage regional expertise, peer-to-peer collaboration, and DfE funding to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND. The approach focuses on tailored support for Local Authorities to address their specific priorities and challenges.

The Regional SEND Support Offer sits alongside several initiatives to assist Local Authorities in the region and is fully funded as part of the 2025/26 RIIA Grant. The support offer complements these activities and focuses on what can be done within individual local authorities on a topic of their choosing.

Packages of support are available, led by a team of experienced consultants with the aim of providing support to LAs seeking to make swift improvement in an area of their choice. Packages are fully funded and could be arranged as a one-off whole day workshop through to a longer piece of up to 4-5 days.

Get in touch! To find out more information click here [here](#) or email EasternRegionCIB@norfolk.gov.uk

Voices of the East

Voices of the East is a network for young people with SEND from 5-25 to help share their views, priorities, and ambitions, while collaborating with other young people. As we enter another academic year there are upcoming opportunities for young people in schools/colleges/home education to join virtual meetings and help plan the groups next projects:

Tuesday 23rd September – (10:00, 13:30 or 18:00)

Thursday 13th November – (10:00, 13:30 or 18:00)

All meetings last for up to 1 hour and include an interactive quiz as-well as opportunities for young people to generate ideas such as our big together earlier in the year which you can read about here <https://improvementeast.org.uk/the-big-get-together-07-02-25/> .

To join this exciting network please email kierran.pearce@essex.gov.uk with your contact details, further information and links to the meetings above will then be shared.

UPDATES

[Children and young people's mental health - LGA](#)

[More than Words: how definitions impact on the UK's response to child trafficking and exploitation - ECPAT](#)

[Social care providers and places as at 31 March 2025 - Ofsted](#)

[Emerging Insights – Inclusion Practice](#)

[Keeping Children Safe in Education for use from September 2025](#)

[National Audit of Group-based Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse](#)

IMPROVEMENT EAST

The [Improvement East](#) website and LinkedIn page [Improvement East - LinkedIn](#) have further details of the improvement and innovation initiatives across the region. 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