



Improvement East

Eastern Region Sector Led Improvement



December 2025 Newsletter

Improvement East Team Update

This year there has been an increase in the scope of the RIIA, particularly in SEND. To support this, we have expanded our team, we welcome Bryony Edwards, Business Support and Becky Granger, our SEND Project Lead.

Contact Information

Email: easternregioncib@norfolk.gov.uk
www.improvementeast.org.uk

Upcoming Events

15/1/26 Commission East Risk & Reward Review
22/1/26 Eastern Region Anti-Racist Practice Practitioners Event
11/2/26 ADASS & ADCS Transitions Conference
12/2/26 Regional Training - Coercive Control
13/2/26 Eastern Region Global Majority Reflective Space
6/3/26 Voices of the East Secondary Event
12/3/26 Voices of the East Post 16 Event
12/3/26 Regional Training - The Changing Landscape of Domestic Abuse
19/3/26 Vices of the East Primary Event
20/3/26 Voices of the East Primary Event
28/3/26 Commission East IFA & Residential Provider Event



WORKFORCE REGIONAL UPDATES

The latest data set shows that most of our workforce is now operating within agreed price caps and moving toward full compliance with the Department for Education's agency rules.

For full details, visit: Agency rules – statutory guidance for local authorities on the use of agency child and family social workers.

Workforce Data

We're actively collecting data on the SEND workforce and supporting the anti-racist pledge through a regional data collection initiative. Highlights will be shared soon—watch this space!

Microsite Relaunch

A refreshed regional microsite goes live in January 2026, featuring dedicated sections for:

- SEND
- Residential Care
- Educational Psychology
- Children & Families Support

Where you'll find regional job opportunities across these areas.

Caraffi Campaign: Promoting Permanent Roles

From 10–25 September 2025, we launched a LinkedIn campaign showcasing the benefits of permanent social work positions—stability, support, career progression, and purpose. The campaign featured authentic stories from social workers who successfully transitioned to permanent roles.

Platform: LinkedIn (video ad + organic post)

Top Engagement: Community & Services professionals (view rate: 30.78%)

Highest Reach: Essex, Norfolk, and Luton councils

What's Next?

Our upcoming campaign will spotlight Apprenticeships in Children's Services during National Apprenticeship Week (9–15 February 2026).


Want to get involved? Contact lisamorris@southend.gov.uk.




Eastern Collaborative Childrens Residential Network

The Eastern Collaborative Children's Residential Network (ECCRN) is a quarterly forum designed to share knowledge, good practice, challenges, resources, and information. All Registered Managers of children's homes are invited to join as collaborative members.

Next Virtual Session:


 Thursday, 29 January 2026


 10:00 – 12:00

If you'd like to be added to the invite list, please reach out.

Resi Reads Book Club

Our first Resi Reads session was a success! The next book club will be held on:

 Thursday, 29 January 2026

 17:30

Book your free place here: [Insert booking link]

Stay Connected

For useful content and past newsletters, visit our website: Eastern Collaborative Children's Residential Network (ECCRN) – Improvement East



Data Team update

- Welcome Lou Gosling – Our new SEND Data Lead joins the team.
- Regional CLA Sufficiency Analysis – Findings were shared with Directors on 5 December.
- Tools & Dashboards – All Local Authorities now have access to the 903 Sufficiency Tool and SEND Dashboard as needed.
- Coming Soon – An Annex A ChAT benchmarking tool will launch in the New Year.
- Workshop Alert – A Performance and Care Management Systems FFPP workshop takes place on 15 December.
- Q2 Tartan Rug – Now available for review.

Care Leavers Project

A big thank you to all 11 Local Authorities that supported the Eastern Region Leaving Care diagnostic. The findings will be shared in the New Year, and together we'll co-design our 2026 delivery plan in collaboration with young people from our Care Leavers Forum.



Commission East

Commission East is an Eastern Region initiative designed to engage with the External market differently by establishing a single Local Authority (LA) voice and perspective for the region. It is a partnership with all 11 LAs that consent to, and support, targeted activities aimed at fostering more cohesive regional strategies and frameworks of working, both internally within LA's but also externally with providers. Commission East consists of a small project team that collaborates with all commissioners, practice leads and relevant stakeholder across the 11 LAs and the external market. We are currently working on several different projects that include developing regional commissioning frameworks, a shared placement request form, regional placement and financial data collection.



Foster East

There is an urgent need for foster carers in the East of England. More than 7,000 children are in the care of their local authority in our region, with 150 more children coming into care every month.

To encourage more people to become local authority foster carers, the 11 local authorities responsible for Children's Services in the East of England are working together to deliver Foster East.

www.fostereast.org.uk

Eastern Region Homes for Children Board

A new Eastern Region Homes for Children Board has been established to lead and support all of the regional initiatives around homes for children.

The first meeting is on 16th January 2026.

Attendance & Children Not in Education

In partnership with Improvement East, the Regional Education Leads Network is conducting a regional diagnostic to gain a clear picture of current practice across the area.

This work aims to:

- Identify key challenges
- Highlight opportunities for collaboration and shared learning
- Showcase what's working well within local areas



Families First Implementation

Local areas are progressing with the implementation of the reforms at varying speeds, reflecting their unique structures and priorities. To support this work, we have established a collaborative network that brings together both practice and data leads. This forum enables the sharing of ideas, challenges, and innovative approaches to drive change. The sessions have been well attended by local authorities and include valuable input from Kelly Verney at the Department for Education.

Domestic Abuse

We are pleased to announce the first online training and knowledge-sharing workshops of the new year, focusing on domestic abuse. These sessions will be facilitated by Neil Shade and are open to practitioners across the region.

Upcoming Workshops:

12 February 2026 – Coercive Control

12 March 2026 – The Changing Landscape of Domestic Abuse



Eastern Region Anti-Racist Practice Pledge – Six Month Progress Update

Following the launch of the Eastern Region Anti-Racist Practice Pledge on 16 May at the Hertfordshire Development Centre, we are pleased to share a six-month update on progress.

Regional Leadership and Collaboration

The Regional Anti-Racist Practice Leadership Forum is now well established and continues to drive momentum and coordinate activity across the region. Several strands of work are being led by this forum to embed anti-racist practice within our services.

Events and Engagement

As part of our regional offer, we hosted a series of online events during the autumn, all of which were well attended and received overwhelmingly positive feedback:

- 16 October – Why Be Anti-Racist? Webinar facilitated by Jeffrey Wotherspoon
- 6 November – First Regional Global Majority Reflective Space, a supportive session facilitated by a psychotherapist, attended by colleagues from all 11 local authorities. Feedback confirmed this space was highly valued.
- 4 December – Training session delivered by Afruca on Fundamental Principles of Child Protection When Working With Black & Ethnic Families

Looking Ahead

Our commitment continues into the new year with several events already planned:

- 22 January – Anti-Racist Practitioners Event
- 13 February – Second Global Majority Reflective Space ([click here to book your place](#))

Thank you

We remain committed to driving meaningful change and welcome your ideas and feedback on this work. Thank you once again for your ongoing support and dedication to this important pledge.





Transitions

ADASS East and Improvement East continue to collaborate on the recommendations agreed in July, focusing on:

- Hosting a Regional Transitions Conference
- Developing a Regional Protocol for Preparation for Adulthood and Transitions
- Advancing Regional Learning and Development on Transitional Safeguarding

To support this work, a core oversight group—with representatives from Adults, Children's Services, and parent/carers—meets regularly to maintain momentum. A regional diagnostic is currently underway to review local transition arrangements and inform the development of the regional protocol.

As part of our learning and development programme, December saw Mental Capacity Act and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards training delivered to colleagues across Adults and Children's Services, Carer Services, the Private, Voluntary and Independent sector, and parent/carers. Looking ahead, on 11 February we will host the Regional Transitions Conference, bringing together colleagues from Local Authorities, Health, Housing, Education, as well as parents, carers, and young people from across the Eastern Region.

If you are interested in attending, please contact your Principal Social Worker.





Educational Psychologist Conference

On 25 November, we hosted the annual Educational Psychologist Conference at Newmarket Racecourse, bringing together over 200 professionals from 11 local authorities to share expertise and best practice.

The event featured 10 tailored workshops addressing key topics within the sector, delivered by colleagues from educational psychology services across the eastern region, including trainees and specialist practitioners.

We welcomed a diverse range of speakers whose insights encouraged meaningful reflection on fostering belonging and inclusion, particularly during the transition from adolescence to adulthood.

Keynote presentations included:

Linda Jordan: Preparing for Adulthood – Supporting Young People's Communication Through Person-Centred Planning.

Duncan Gillard: Person-Centred, Pragmatic & Whole-Child – A Contextual Psychological Science Approach to Developing Thriving Young People, Families & Schools.

We really enjoyed being involved in this event and support this CPD opportunity for the Educational Psychologist network.





SEND Workforce

Last year, we successfully completed a Regional SEND Workforce Survey, which was well received and completed by 493 colleagues across the 11 Local Authorities in our region. The feedback gathered played a key role in shaping regional plans, particularly around workforce training and development. As a result of last year, several CPD opportunities have been introduced, including:

- The Regional Education Psychologist Conference (funded by Improvement East)
- Regional SEND Legal Training
- A SEND Leadership Programme delivered by Staff College for aspiring and current leaders

There are two surveys, Please complete the survey by 9 January 2026 using the links below:

1. Leadership Survey – This has been e-mailed to leader, if you have not had this please to e-mail and we will send you the link
2. Workforce Survey – 2025-26 Improvement East – Eastern Region SEND Workforce Survey – Fill in form

Voices of the East


Planning is underway for Voices of the East events in March 2026, and this year we're introducing age-specific sessions:

- Primary (two events)
- Secondary
- Post-16

Children and young people aged 5–25 will come together to:

- Speak out and have their voices heard
- Meet new people and share inspirational stories
- Celebrate achievements – with awards for outstanding efforts over the past year
- Enjoy a fun-filled day for everyone!

These events aim to give every child a voice and create the best experiences within the Voices of the East community. We can't wait to share more with you in the New Year!





Mainstream Inclusion

We've been actively sharing good practice in mainstream inclusion across Local Authorities, and the value of learning from one another is truly invaluable.

What's Happening Now

We are currently undertaking a mainstream inclusion diagnostic to gain deeper insight into each Local Authority's journey and progress. This will help shape future development opportunities across the region.

Survey Reminder

The mainstream survey is due from all Local Authorities by end of December.

A big thank-you to those who have already submitted—your input is essential in evidencing our collective progress.

Save the Date

Our next session will take place on **Thursday, 29th January**. We hope to see every Local Authority represented. More details will follow after Christmas.



Wider Updates



Fostering in England: year to end March 2025

On 26 November DfE published annual statistics for Fostering 2024-2025

Tipping point: tackling the challenges in safeguarding children educated at home

On 24 November NSPCC published Tipping point: tackling the challenges in safeguarding children educated at home

Children looked after in England including adoptions: year to end March 2025

On 26 November DfE published annual statistics for Children looked after in England including adoptions 2024-2025

Thousands of children with life-threatening conditions not getting vital NHS support. On 30 October Contact published a policy briefing **How Continuing Care for Children fails those with the most complex health needs (England)**. You can download the full FOI request data by ICB.



**Thank you for your continued support this year.
We are looking forward to working with you all in
2026.**

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

