



Improvement East

Eastern Region Sector Led Improvement

[HTTPS://IMPROVEMENTEAST.ORG.UK/ABOUT-US/](https://improvementeast.org.uk/about-us/)

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. Our structure and more info can be found on the website [here](https://improvementeast.org.uk/about-us/).

BLACK HISTORY MONTH: OCTOBER

This year's Black History Month theme is "Honouring Our Communities", celebrating the individuals and communities whose contributions help shape and strengthen Black life across the UK. [See our last page for a poster of upcoming events.](#)

CARE LEAVERS MONTH: NOVEMBER

The opportunity to recognise and celebrate the achievements, resilience and voices of care-experienced young people, while raising awareness of the support needed to help them thrive.

Welcome to the latest edition of the Improvement East newsletter.

As we move into another busy and exciting period, we are pleased to share updates on how the programme is developing, introduce some of the new colleagues and expertise joining our team, and highlight the work taking place across the region. With our programme continuing to grow, there is plenty to share, and we hope this newsletter provides a useful way to keep you connected with our progress, priorities and upcoming opportunities.

This year has seen significant growth across the programme, with an increase in both the number and scale of projects. Alongside this, shorter delivery timescales and increased expectations from the Department for Education (DfE) mean that we need to ensure we have the right capacity and expertise in place to deliver successfully and make the most of available funding opportunities.

In response, we have continued to grow and strengthen the RIIA team, bringing Commission East and Workforce East into the wider team structure. We have also welcomed new project leads and specialist consultants in health and education, further strengthening our expertise and capacity to support delivery across the regional programme.

Importantly, we also want to recognise the invaluable contribution of colleagues from local authorities across the region who support our regional projects, networks and wider improvement activity alongside the demands of their day-to-day roles. The collaboration, shared expertise and progress we are seeing across the region would simply not be possible without your continued commitment and willingness to contribute. A huge thank you to everyone who gives their time, knowledge and energy to support our collective work.

Finally, Improvement East is very much shaped by the needs and priorities of the region, and we want to continue hearing from you. If you have feedback, ideas or suggestions for projects, networks or areas of work that could support regional improvement, please do get in touch. Your insight and involvement are key to helping us ensure that our work continues to add value and responds to the opportunities and challenges facing our region.

Rachel Black
Improvement East Programme Manager

DATA UPDATES

- Tartan Rug for Social Care and SEND has been completed and shared alongside analysis for Q1 (Apr-Jun) and we will shortly be commencing the Q2 collection.
- Child level data for 2025/26 for CIN, CLA and Annex A data has now been collected. Refreshed CLA and CIN diagnostic dashboards will be shared with performance and commissioning colleagues in October with the Annex A Benchmarking tool to follow later in year.
- The Regional Sufficiency Statement for 2025/26 will be completed during September.
- A new regional data role to support Commission East and Foster East is currently under recruitment.
- We continue to work with DfE and Data to Insight to support the collection of the new SEND Reform measures.
- A SEN2 Tartan Rug based on national measures has been produced and will be circulated to colleagues soon.

ANTI-RACIST PRACTICE

ARP: CASE STUDY

Our latest case study celebrates the progress of the Anti-Racist Practice Programme, a collaborative initiative bringing together 11 local authorities to embed anti-racist leadership, workforce development and practice across children's services. Read more about the journey, achievements and ambitions for the future on the [Improvement East website](#).



Case Study: The Eastern Region Anti-Racist Practice Journey Creating a Shared Regional Commitment to Anti-Racist Practice Across Children's Services

Introduction

The Eastern Region Anti-Racist Practice Programme represents a significant sector-led improvement journey, bringing together all 11 local authorities across the region to develop a shared commitment to tackling racism, improving outcomes for children and families from Global Majority communities, and creating inclusive workplaces. What began as a conversation between regional leaders has evolved into a collaborative movement that is influencing leadership, workforce development, practice improvement and organisational culture across children's services.

This case study outlines the region's journey, achievements, challenges and future ambitions.

The Starting Point

In May 2024, Essex County Council shared its developing Anti-Racist Practice approach with colleagues across the Eastern Region. The presentation prompted important discussions amongst Directors of Children's Services (DCSs) about the need for a more coordinated and ambitious regional response to racial inequality. Recognising the shared challenges experienced across local authorities, the Eastern Region DCS group agreed in June 2024 to make Anti-Racist Practice a regional priority.

This decision marked the beginning of a collective commitment to move beyond individual organisational initiatives and develop a consistent regional approach.

Building a Regional Approach

To drive the work forward, a regional Task and Finish Group was established in July 2024, bringing together representatives from across the region.

The group was tasked with developing: a shared regional vision for anti-racist practice with common principles and expectation. Through extensive collaboration and engagement, the group developed the [Eastern Region Anti-Racist Practice Pledge](#), creating a collective commitment to action.

In January 2025, all 11 local authorities formally adopted the pledge, demonstrating an unprecedented level of regional agreement and shared ambition.

The pledge was officially launched in May 2025, providing a clear public statement of intent and a foundation for future developments.



SOCIAL WORK ENGLAND: NEW DIVERSITY RESEARCH

As part of National Inclusion Week, Social Work England has published new research on diversity within its fitness to practise process. The findings highlight that referral source and the type of concern raised are the strongest factors influencing case progression, while also identifying differences in outcomes for some demographic groups. The report supports Social Work England's wider equality, diversity and inclusion work, including anti-racism initiatives, fair referral principles and workforce race equity programmes aimed at improving fairness across the profession. The full report and further information can be found on the [Social Work England website](#).

The report has also been featured in a Community Care article, with coverage of the findings, highlights of the report and the proposed pilot roll-out involving Improvement East. Read the article [here](#).

Social
Work
England

CHAMPIONING CARE LEAVERS ACROSS THE REGION

NEW CHAIR: CARE LEAVERS FORUM

Hello everyone,

I'm Melissa Jiggins, and I've had the privilege of working with children, young people and families for over 20 years in a vocation that I am deeply passionate about. I began my journey in a secure unit in Essex, where I learned some of the most important lessons that have stayed with me throughout my working life: the value of strong relationships, the importance of listening, and the difference that believing in young people can make.

Since then, I have worked across a variety of children's services roles, including leading both Children in Care and Leaving Care teams.

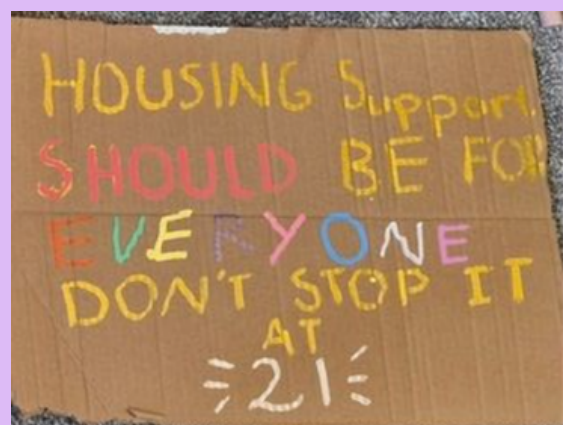
As Chair of the Eastern Region Leaving Care Forum, I am excited to work alongside colleagues and partners who share the same commitment to improving outcomes for care-experienced young people. By working together, sharing learning and listening to the voices of young people, we can continue to make a positive difference and ensure they remain at the heart of everything we do.

I look forward to meeting and working with you all.



GO EAST FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT

The fantastic Care Leavers Football Tournament in August brought together 90 young people from six local authorities for a day of sport, teamwork and new connections. As part of the event, young people worked with Become on a co-production activity, sharing their experiences and ideas to help shape future support for care-experienced young people. Key themes included education, employment, financial support and preparation for leaving care. Congratulations to Suffolk for their win!



PLACEMENT SUFFICIENCY

COMMISSION EAST UPDATES

See [our website](#) for information and useful resources.

Frameworks

Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) & Residential Framework Update is estimated to go live 1st July 2027.

Workforce

Regional Home Finding Form Training - November 2026 – details to follow.

Engagement with [CCRAG](#) to improve regional consistency.

The next Eastern Collaborative Children's Residential Network (ECCRN) meeting is 14 October – monthly newsletters can be found here [ECCRN Newsletters – Improvement East](#).

ADOPT EAST

[Find out more - Home - Adopt East](#)

FOSTER EAST

Important update: End-to-End Fostering Hubs

Following the announcement of the pause to Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), the Homes for Children Board has considered the implications for the development of End-to-End (E2E) Fostering Hubs across the region, alongside plans for a Regional Care Cooperative.

In summary, the Board has agreed to pause the E2E element of our work until there is greater clarity about the Government's direction of travel. However, our regional commitment to strengthening fostering recruitment remains unchanged, and we will continue to use the Foster East brand to support recruitment activity across the region.

A key role for Foster East will continue to be promoting and sharing good practice in fostering recruitment, supporting local authorities as we work collectively towards our regional recruitment ambitions. This will include:

- collecting and analysing regional data;
- identifying and sharing examples of effective practice; and
- continuing the sub-regional practice development meetings that are now established.

New Data and Performance Lead appointed

We are delighted to confirm that we have successfully appointed a new Data and Performance Lead following interviews last week.

Our new colleague will join the central hub team on 9 November, and we look forward to introducing them to colleagues across the region in due course.

FOSTER EAST CONTINUED

National Leaving Care Benchmarking Forum: Housing Webinar

Care Leavers Living Out of Area

From 30 September 2026, care leavers must not be treated differently or deprioritised for social housing simply because they are living outside their home local authority area.

To mark this important change, Terry Galloway is hosting a free webinar aimed at colleagues and partners supporting care leavers living out of area.

The session will be relevant to:

Leaving Care Personal Advisers;
supported accommodation staff;
foster carers;
children's home staff;
housing teams; and
other professionals supporting care leavers.

The webinar is free to attend and you can sign up [here](#)

IMPROVEMENT EAST NETWORKS AND UPDATES

EASTERN REGION FAMILIES FIRST PARTNERSHIP FORUM

The Eastern Region Families First Partnership Forum are now meeting Bi-monthly, instead of every 6 weeks. They have recently established a Teams channel for members to ask their regional colleagues questions and advice between meetings. Every meeting of this Community of Practice has been attended by the DfE's Kelly Verney, who provides DfE updates and takes questions from the group. Kelly's informative guidance has helped member of the forum across the region with their FFP implementation. Collin Pettigrew of the DfE also recently attended presenting on the "Delivering the Children's Social Care Reset". Slides from Collin's presentation can be found the improvement East website [here](#).

EASTERN REGION PERSONAL ADVISER (PA) NETWORK

We have our second quarterly PA Network online on 29 September where we have [Care Leaver Covenant](#) joining as well as discussing Local Offers across the region.



EASTERN REGION CHILDREN'S CONTINUING CARE

We had our first CCC network meeting on 16th September if you wish to be part of this network, please reach out to

EasternRegionCIB@norfolk.gov.uk

EASTERN REGION RIIA MEETING

The Eastern Region RIIA met in person on 11th September to review progress across regional programmes, discuss SEND reform developments, share updates from RIIA projects and consider future network priorities. The event provided valuable opportunities for collaboration, reflection and planning as partners continue to work together to improve outcomes for children, young people and families across the East of England.

CONNECTING SEND ACROSS THE REGION

The SEND programme continues to support collaboration across the Eastern Region through a range of networks and communities of practice. These groups provide opportunities to share learning, discuss regional priorities, explore emerging issues and develop solutions together.

NETWORKS

Current Active Networks:

- SEND Reform Leadership Network
- SEND Managers Network
- SEND Social Care & DSCO Network
- SEND Quality Assurance Network
- Eastern Region SEND Forum
- Inclusion Community of Practice
- Preparing for Adulthood Community of Practice
- Local Offer Network
- Home-to-School Transport Network

Coming Soon:

- Early Years Network
- Experts at Hand Community of Practice

For more information on these groups or how to join please contact us at EasternRegionCIB@norfolk.gov.uk

EASTERN REGION INCLUSION CELEBRATION EVENT

Across the 11 Eastern Region Local Authorities, individuals, schools, services and partnerships are going above and beyond to make a real difference for children, young people and families. The awards on 8th October are a chance to recognise that impact and celebrate what exceptional inclusion looks like in practice.

WORKFORCE

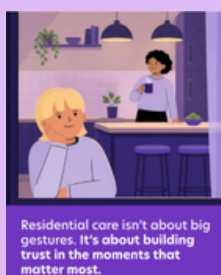
It's Never Just a Job: Careers in Residential Care

A new campaign from Workforce East Children's Services Jobs is highlighting the rewarding and life-changing work of children's residential care professionals across the Eastern Region. The campaign showcases the everyday impact staff have in supporting children and young people, providing stability, building trusted relationships, and creating environments where young people feel safe, valued and able to belong.

The campaign also aims to raise awareness of the diverse career opportunities available within residential care and encourage more people to consider a career helping children and young people achieve positive outcomes.

Learn more and explore current opportunities across the region [here](#).

WATCH THE WORKFORCE EAST CAMPAIGN VIDEO THROUGH THE LINKED IMAGE BELOW



ADASS AND IMPROVEMENT EAST PREPARATION FOR ADULTHOOD (TRANSITIONS) COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

We are delighted to invite colleagues and partners from across the East of England to join the new ADASS & Improvement East Preparation for Adulthood (Transitions) Community of Practice. First Meeting: 30th September 12:00-13:00.

This Community of Practice has been established to bring together professionals from across children's and adults' services, health, education and partner organisations to share learning, strengthen collaboration, and drive improvements in the experiences and outcomes of young people as they transition into adulthood.

Join Our First Community of Practice Meeting for an opportunity to:

- Hear about progress made across the region over the last year
- Receive updates on national developments and priorities
- Learn from examples of effective practice
- Share experiences, challenges and solutions
- Build connections and strengthen collaboration
- Help shape future regional priorities and work programmes

A year of regional collaboration has led to the launch of a new Preparation for Adulthood (Transitions) Community of Practice. Bringing together colleagues from across children's services, adults' services, health and education, the network will support shared learning, stronger partnerships and improvement across key areas affecting young people as they move into adulthood. Together, we aim to improve experiences and outcomes for children, young people and their families across the East of England.

Key milestones from the last 12 months have included:

- The ADASS & ADCS Transitions Event (July 2025)
- Regional Mental Capacity Act (MCA) and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS) Training
- The Eastern Region Transitions Conference on Transitional Safeguarding (February 2026)
- A regional diagnostic review involving all 12 local authorities across the East of England

The diagnostic review identified significant variation in approaches and practice across the region. One of its key recommendations was the development of a Regional Community of Practice to promote collaboration, share learning, and support continuous improvement in transition services to enhance the experiences and outcomes of children, young people and their families through stronger regional partnerships and shared best practice.

Regional Priority Areas

- Contextual safeguarding and the preventative opportunities within the Care Act
- Preparing children, young people and families for independence and adulthood
- Continuing Healthcare
- Information sharing and digital systems
- Joint workforce development
- Mental health support and engagement

We look forward to welcoming you and working together to improve the experiences and outcomes of children, young people and their families across the region.

UPCOMING EVENTS AND TRAINING

Date & Time	Training
1 st October 4:00pm-5:00pm	Eastern Region SEND Hot Topic 5: An Intro to Disability Discrimination
6 th October 10:00am-12:00pm	Eastern Region SEND Virtual Legal Training: Tribunals
13th October 4:00pm-5:00pm	Eastern Region SEND Hot Topic 6: Writing Effective Reports for EHCP's
14th October 2:00pm-3:00pm	Eastern Region Black History Month Webinar: What is Black History?
21st October 10:00am-11:30am	Eastern Region Parent Carer Workshop: The MCA-DoL & Your Loved One's Rights, Your Rights and Professional Responsibilities
22 nd October 12:00pm-1:00pm	Eastern Region SEND Hot Topic 7: Attending Tribunal as Witness
22 nd October 1:00pm-2:00pm	Eastern Region Black History Month: We Built, We Served, We Changed: Black Achievement, Community and Social Work
27 th October 10:00am-1:00pm & 28 th October 10:00am-1:00pm	Eastern Region Practitioner Workshops: The MCA/DoL and Transitional Safeguarding - Advanced Workshop 1 & 2
28th October 1:00pm-2:00pm	Eastern Region Black History Month Webinar - From Tilbury to the Nature Island: Honouring the Communities That Made Us
3 rd November 12:00pm-1:00pm	Eastern Region SEND Hot Topic 8: Regulation 6 -Role of the ICB
5 th November 4:00pm-5:00pm	Eastern Region SEND Hot Topic 9: Parental responsibility/voice of the child
10 th November 12:00pm-1:00pm	Eastern Region SEND Hot Topic 10: Ceasing to Maintain EHCP's
16 th November 10:00am-1:00pm & 17 th November 10:00am-1:00pm	Eastern Region Practitioner Workshops: The MCA/DoL and Transitional Safeguarding – Advanced workshop Part 1 & 2

UPCOMING EVENTS AND TRAINING

Date & Time	Training
19 th November 12:00pm-1:00pm	Eastern Region SEND Hot Topic 11: Flexible session – responding to White Paper developments, regional needs
26 th November 10:00am-1:00pm	Eastern Region Partner/Voluntary Workshops: MCA/DoL Advanced (Level 2) for the PVI Sector
26 th November 4:00pm-5:00pm	Eastern Region SEND Hot Topic 12: Personal Budgets & Direct Payments
30 th November 10:00am-11:30am	Eastern Region Parent Carer Forum Workshops: An Introduction to the MCA & DoL for Parent Carer Representatives
1 st December 12:00pm-1:00pm	Eastern Region SEND Hot Topic 13: Social Care Reforms and the overlap with SEND Reform
8 th December 10:00am-12:00pm	Eastern Region SEND Virtual Legal Training: SEND Fundamentals
11 th December 10:00am-12:00pm	Eastern Region Global Majority Reflective Space
21 st December 10:00am-1:00pm & 22 nd December 10:00am-1:00pm	Eastern Region Practitioner Workshops: The MCA/DoL and Transitional Safeguarding – Advanced workshop Part 1 & 2

To view more upcoming training opportunities and book onto sessions, please use our website, linked below.

Book tickets here!

BLACK HISTORY MONTH 2026

"We have a rich, vibrant, powerful history and heritage that has shaped global history." Antonia Ogundayisi

CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY, HERITAGE AND ACHIEVEMENT

Join us throughout October for a series of inspiring online events exploring Black history, identity, community, belonging and anti-racist practice. Together, we will challenge assumptions, broaden understanding and celebrate the contributions of Black communities to our shared history and society.

In Search of My People

09/10/26 13:00 Speaker: Dr Arlene P. Weekes



Join us for an inspiring Black History Month event exploring the rich contributions, experiences, and impact of Black communities across Britain. Through powerful discussion and personal insights, guest speaker Dr Arlene P. Weekes will reflect on heritage, identity, belonging, and the importance of understanding our shared past to help shape a more inclusive future.

This engaging session offers an opportunity to learn, reflect, and celebrate the diverse stories that continue to enrich our communities today.

Click Here to [Book tickets](#)

Beyond the Single Story: Reclaiming the Richness of Black History

14/10/26 14:00 Speaker: King Simpson



Black history is often taught through a narrow lens centred on slavery and colonialism. This thought-provoking session explores the rich histories, societies and achievements that came before and examines how these narratives continue to shape perceptions of Black identity today.

The session will consider how Black children and young people are understood and supported within care and professional settings and how professionals can develop more informed and equitable approaches to practice. **Click Here to [Book tickets](#)**

Black Achievement, Community & Social Work

22/10/26 13:00 Speaker: Ray Addai



Moving beyond familiar historical figures, this session highlights the achievements of Black professionals, pioneers and communities and explores what their stories can teach us about identity, resilience, belonging and anti-racist social work practice.

Participants can expect thought-provoking discussion, critical reflection and opportunities to challenge how we understand and support the children and families we work with.

Click Here to [Book tickets](#)

From Tilbury to the Nature Island: Honouring the Communities That Made Us

28/10/26 13:00 Speaker: Dr Sylvia Smith



Through a blend of social history and personal storytelling, Sylvia reflects on the communities, experiences and heritage that have shaped identity and belonging.

Dedicated to her late mother, this powerful presentation celebrates the contributions of Black communities and supports the region's commitment to anti-racist practice.

Click Here to [Book tickets](#)