

## East Midlands Region

# SEND and Inclusion Peer Challenge Guidance

Interim arrangements for Covid-19 period virtual challenge process for local areas expecting a SEND re-visit or for the new schedule

Working Draft: September 2021

## Contents

Guidance .....	2
Background .....	2
Overview .....	3
Further guidance .....	4
Peer challenge team Code of Conduct .....	7
After the peer challenge .....	7
Appendices:	
1. Timetable outline .....	9
2. East Midlands Region Peer Challenge Record (PCR) .....	11
3. DCS Letter of introduction .....	12
4. Draft Report template .....	13
5. Quality Assurance form .....	16

## East Midlands Region SEND Peer Challenge Guidance

This guidance is based using the original East Midlands guidance and experience from successful peer challenges in eight of the EM areas and three 'out of area' reviews. Feedback from those involved informs the process set out below. There will be a continuous cycle of quality assurance to ensure the process goes from strength to strength and is of value to all those involved.

### Comments from participants in a recent peer challenge:

*"I would recommend the experience and found it insightful". DCO member of Peer Challenge Team*

*"I wanted to take a moment to say a huge thank you for undertaking the Peer Review in our Local Area this week.*

*Your professionalism and approach were very much appreciated. Your insight was succinct, accurate and most welcome; most importantly, there was plenty of learning and food for thought. Above all, your analysis and feedback will improve outcomes for children and young people in our area, which is what really matters to us". DCS*

*It was a fantastic experience both personally and for my local area role. Would definitely do it again!" Parent carer member of peer challenge team*

*"We found the SEND peer challenge process to be incredibly helpful. This experience gave us a reflection of where we are currently at in our SEND improvement journey as we would rather find out areas for development now than when the inspectors are here. As a result of the peer review we have been able to put in place some quick changes that will have a big impact and identify further areas for development ahead of the inspection process" Manager for the SEND programme.*

## Background

Peer challenge is a valued and proven method of improvement for organisations. In local government, the 2013 'Rewiring Public Services' campaign endorsed the central role it plays in improving a council's impact on issues like economic development, improving social care and pressing ahead with transforming public services. In 2014 an independent evaluation endorsed the value of peer challenge.

The SEND reforms within the Children and Families Act 2014 and subsequent developments sought to bring about a generational system change in the way services for children and young people are planned, commissioned and delivered. The act requires joined-up working between education, health and care services to ensure early identification of need, holistic assessment of need and provision that meets those needs. All of this is aimed at improving positive outcomes for children and young people with SEND and preparing them for an adulthood that includes good health, employment opportunities, independent living and engagement in the community. Underpinning these ambitions is the requirement for services to be coproducing at strategic, operational and individual level with young people and families.

The East Midlands developed a peer challenge model that encompassed the key strategic partners of the local authority, Clinical Commissioning Groups, health providers and parent and carer forums. The purpose of the peer challenge was to identify areas of progress against the reforms. Although 'paused' due to Covid, the region has now made a commitment to re-start a process of virtual challenge in SEND and Inclusion.

#### **Purpose of peer challenge**

- For key strategic stakeholders in the local area to reflect upon the progress they have made in establishing the SEND reforms.
- For challenge team members to develop their understanding and skills in evaluation of the SEND system
- For all participants in the peer challenge process to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND and thus be better prepared for external inspection and/or revisits.

Peer challenge is not a 'Mocksted' and is quite distinct in intention and execution from the Ofsted /CQC local area send inspection framework.

#### **The Covid-19 period virtual model - Overview**

- The local area identifies lines of enquiry for the peer challenge team to investigate, based upon the outstanding issues of concern highlighted through monitoring visits with DfE SEND Regional Adviser and NHSE SEND area lead
- The challenge team of normally four people are selected from different local areas and will be drawn from the following.
  - A parent & carer forum representative
  - A local authority education officer
  - A local authority social care officer
  - A CCG officer and/or health provider representative (usually in role of DCO)
  - A young reviewers from a regional pool who are experts by experience and trained by CDC

One of the team will take the role of peer challenge team leader. During the 2021-22 fiscal year, this role will be carried out by an experienced senior officer on behalf of the regional peer network steering group. The lead role requires an experienced SEND strategic officer who can effectively liaise with the local area, and then coordinate and support the team. Participating as a team member provides the opportunity to consider taking the role of Team leader in the future.

The team leader will ensure there is good communication with the local area in establishing the one-day programme. They will present summary information to the challenge team and meet with them prior to the challenge to clarify the programme for each participant.

The challenge will go ahead on a pre-determined day with agreed virtual meetings between the host (receiving) area and the challenge team.

An initial meeting for introductions and clarification of the process will take place on the morning of the challenge. The local area will set the scene to the peer challenge team and discussions around the agreed key line of enquiry will take place.

Following these initial discussions, the challenge team will disseminate to perform their specific investigation tasks. Conversations and observations will be recorded on a 'Peer Challenge Record' and submitted to the team leader for inclusion into the feedback session and ultimately the SEND Peer Challenge Report.

The challenge team will meet at the end of day one to discuss their findings and assist to pull together a presentation which will be given to the host Local Area on the morning of Day 2.

The morning of Day 2 the challenge team leader (plus potentially team members as well) will present back to the LA and discuss the findings of the challenge.

Based on the initial feedback and drawing on evidence from the peer challenge activities, the team leader will draft a report and share with the other team members for corroboration within one week.

Within two weeks the report is sent to the local area to be agreed and checked for accuracy. The local area owns the report and will determine whether and how to publish the report. The general approach within the region is use it within strategic partnership groups in each local area. Options for publishing it include the Local Offer.

## **Further Guidance**

### **Indicative Challenge Programme**

TEAMS virtual meetings are agreed between the lead 'receiving' area officer and by the Team leader of the challenge team

#### **Day One**

9:00 - 9:15 Introduction and clarification of process, by team leader

9:15 - 10:00 Local area setting the scene presentation to whole challenge team,

10:00 - 10:30 Discussion around key lines of enquiry

10:30 - 10:45 Break

10:45 - 16:45 TEAMS virtual meetings, e.g.

- LA colleagues
- Schools
- Health
- Parents & Carers
- Children & young people

16:45 - 17:15 Optional feedback for local area

17:15 Challenge team meet to discuss outcomes from meetings and focus groups, including emerging evaluations and considerations. Fine tune day 2.

## Day Two

10.30 to 12.00 Report back from Team Leader to receiving LA on headline findings and outcomes of challenge process

*There will be an opportunity during initial feedback and discussion session on Day 2, or soon after, for the local area to comment on how the peer challenge was for them; one of the regional coordinators will facilitate that quality assurance feedback from the local area. Team members will also have this opportunity. This will inform quality assurance and the development of the process.*

### Before the peer challenge

- Dates are confirmed between the host area and the SDSA project lead and the Regional SEND Network coordinator. The SDSA will confirm the identified host link and identify suitable team members.

As of autumn 2021 the SDSA project lead is [Julia.smith@sdsa.net](mailto:Julia.smith@sdsa.net)

And the Regional SEND Network co-ordinator is [pat.bullen@leicester.gov.uk](mailto:pat.bullen@leicester.gov.uk)

### **At least two weeks before the peer challenge the team lead will:**

- Make contact with the SEND Strategic Lead for the local area to firm up the key lines of enquiry (KLOE), based upon a self-evaluation of strengths and areas for development.
- Confirm with the regional network coordinator that the team have appropriate knowledge and experience appropriate to the key lines of enquiry. Team members will be drawn from the trained peer challenge pool and those with specific expertise from the various regional network groups.
- Discuss possible meetings that would be appropriate during the challenge and share a draft programme template
- Confirm both the agreed KLOE's and programme plus any contextual information that would be useful to the team
- Share this with the peer challenge team along with relevant documents. Provide a "brief" introduction for the team that enables them to prepare for the agreed activities
- Ask the team to revisit and familiarise themselves with the code of conduct
- Share mobile numbers
- Check with parent/ carer team member and young people review team, on timings and process
- Agree timing and outline pre-visit information in a challenge team briefing including which meetings team members will undertake and clarify team expectations with hosts and of each other.

### **The local area will:**

- Identify a single point of contact to link with the peer challenge team leader
- With strategic partners identify / share the two key lines of enquiry.
- Provide a draft one-day peer challenge programme and confirm a final version with the team lead. This should include:
  - focus groups and provider visits
  - Meeting links and passcodes if necessary.
  - Names of participants and role.

- Send documents relevant and focused to the two KLOEs, including the SEND self-evaluation, to the team lead at least 6 working days before the event.
- Develop a script to inform the providers and practitioners to ensure that the focus of the meeting relates to the KLOEs. This to include the introductory letter from the regional ADCS.
- Familiarise and share as appropriate the peer challenge code of conduct for hosts.
- Prepare a presentation for the peer challenge team for the morning of day one, which focuses on the two KLOEs and doesn't try to 'oversell' the local area
- Agree any specific and administrative requirements.

#### **Peer challenge team members will:**

- Read all documentation that is sent through by the team lead
- Focus on the two lines of enquiry that you will be exploring
- Research the local area by looking at the local offer
- Familiarise yourself with the code of conduct
- Store your fellow team members' contact details, especially the mobile number of the lead.
- Be available all day for Day 1, the morning of Day 2 and make time to read documentation specific to the challenge – this will include time before and after the challenge but is unlikely to go beyond ½ an additional day of time.
- Have copies of the peer challenge record (PCR) sheet in readiness to note observations

#### **During the peer challenge**

##### **Peer challenge team lead will:**

- Ensure that the team are aware of meeting times, responsibilities and has meeting links.
- Prepare and deliver a verbal introduction at the beginning of day one of the peer challenge process
- Support team members with the process as required
- Begin to formulate feedback at end of day one on PowerPoint in collaboration with the team.
- Be prepared to provide initial feedback to the area either at the end of day one or beginning of day two.
- Confirm arrangements for day two.
- Ensure that the Peer challenge is viewed as an opportunity for the local area to have fair and challenging views from the challenge team.

##### **The local area will:**

- Facilitate practical help with arrangements, enabling focus groups and visits to run to time with the correct people in attendance.
- Maintain a welcoming and positive relationship with the peer challenge team that includes the following expectations of conduct:
  - Be courteous and professional, treating the challenge team with respect and sensitivity
  - Enable the team to conduct their visit in an open and honest way with ongoing purposeful discussion between the hosts and team
  - Provide experiences and evidence that will enable the challenge team to report honestly, fairly and reliably about your provision
  - Work with the challenge team to minimise disruption, stress and bureaucracy
  - Draw any concerns about the peer challenge to the attention of the team lead promptly and appropriately

- Recognise that sometimes the challenge team will need to observe practice and talk to stakeholders without the presence of a manager or registered person.

#### **Peer challenge team will follow this Code of Conduct:**

The team must uphold the highest standards in their work and treat everyone they encounter during the process fairly and with respect.

Team members will:

- Undertake the process objectively and with impartiality
- Review the local area lines of enquiry with reference to any relevant legislation
- Base all reflections on clear and robust evidence detailed on the peer challenge record (PCR)
- Declare all actual and perceived conflicts of interest and have no real or perceived connection with the Local Area that could undermine objectivity
- Report honestly and clearly, ensuring that evaluations are fair and reliable
- Carry out their work with integrity, treating all those they meet with courtesy and sensitivity
- Take all reasonable steps to prevent undue anxiety and minimise stress
- Act in the best interests and well-being of service users, prioritising the safeguarding of children and learners at all times
- Maintain purposeful and productive dialogue with those engaging in the peer challenge.
- Communicate feedback sensitively but clearly
- Respect the confidentiality of information, particularly about individuals and their work
- Respond appropriately to reasonable requests
- Take prompt and appropriate action on any safeguarding or health and safety issues

#### **After the peer challenge**

##### **Peer challenge team lead will:**

- Collect in all PCRs from team members.
- Thank those who participated in the peer challenge process (hosts and team members) with follow up emails when home. Both the host area and team members will have invested considerable time in the process.
- Based on the power point used in the feedback on Day 2, draft the report. Having collected in all the peer challenge records (PCRs) these can also add further detail and corroboration. Once the draft is complete share with team members for proof-reading and comment.

- Within 7 working days of the peer challenge send the report to be fact checked with the local area. Following local area response, complete final report.

**Local area will:**

- Feedback on any factual inaccuracies and other clarifications.
- Respond to the draft report (within 10 working days)
- Once final report received, agree how the report will be used and shared in the local area.

**Team members will:**

- Hand in all PCRs signed and dated to the team lead.
- Complete Quality Assurance based on the process of the challenge; this will inform future training and practice.
- Proof-read draft report when sent and make comment as appropriate, particularly to clarify considerations for the area that will improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND.



## Appendix 1: Example timetable outline

Day 1				
TIME	Teams meeting links established and set up by receiving area			
9:00 - 9:15	Introduction and clarification of process team lead			
9:15 - 10:00	Local area scene setting presentation to the whole peer challenge team			
10:00 - 10:30	Discussion around key lines of enquiry			
10:30 - 10:45	Break			
10:45 - 12:30	<u>Team member 1</u>	<u>Team member 2</u>	<u>Team member 3</u>	<u>Team member 4</u>
	Strategic & operational groups and rep.s Approx 2 x 45 min groups	Strategic & operational groups and rep.s	Strategic & operational groups and rep.s Approx 2 x 45 min groups	Strategic & operational groups and rep.s Approx 2 x 45 min groups
	Whole Life Disability 10:45 – 11:30  <i>Followed by</i>	Parents & Carers Focus Group 11:00– 12:30 6 Parent/Carers	IASS Engagement & Local Offer 10:45 – 11:30  <i>Followed by</i>	KLOE – Early Identification and Graduated Approach 10:45 – 11:30  <i>Followed by</i>
	Joint Commissioning and Sustainable Transformation Programme 11:45 – 12:30		KLOE - Preparing for Adulthood 11:45 – 12:30	Assessment 11:45 – 12:30
12:30 - 13:00	Challenge team lunch break and activity review			

<b>13:30 - 14:45</b>	Team in virtual meetings with schools, health clinics, parent & carers, CYP  Short Breaks - The Bungalow	Team in virtual meetings with schools, health clinics, parent & carers, CYP  Early Help Focus Group at a Children's Centre Southglade	Team in virtual meetings with schools, health clinics, parent & carers, CYP  Secondary academy 2 x Pre-16 groups (1 mainstream, 1 inclusive)	Team in virtual meetings with schools, health clinics, parent & carers, CYP  EHCP Panel 2pm start
<b>14:45 - 15:15</b>	Reflection and note catch up	Reflection and note catch up	Reflection and note catch up	Reflection and note catch up
<b>15:15 – 16:45</b>	Team in virtual meetings with schools, health clinics, parent & carers, CYP  Inclusive short breaks	Team in virtual meetings with schools, health clinics, parent & carers, CYP  Adventure Playground	Team in virtual meetings with schools, health clinics, parent & carers, CYP	Team in virtual meetings with health clinics, parent & carers, CYP
<b>16:45 - 17:15</b>	Optional feedback for local area			
<b>17:15</b>	Challenge team meet in early evening			

Day 2				
TIME				
<b>10.30 to 12.00</b>	<u>Team Leader &amp; possibly team members</u>			
	Feedback	PowerPoint	report	
	End of session- agree meeting for short period of reflection then meeting with Team Leader and SEND network Lead to consider brokerage and any requested support			



### **Letter of introduction – SEND Peer Challenge**

This letter of introduction provides some background context to the visit to your premises being made today by its holder.

Today's meeting is being carried out as part of a SEND peer challenge scheme organised by the local councils and their partner organisations. The scheme has been agreed by the Directors of Children's Services from all of the local authorities. Today's meeting is part of that scheme.

The information gathered in today's meeting is contributing to a general picture that is being built up to help local partner organisations improve their arrangements to improve outcomes for children and young people with special needs and disability (SEND). No judgments are being made and no sensitive information will be taken away.

*(Local area to add in here something about the key line of enquiry and focus of the visit).*

Meetings for this peer challenge are taking place across a number of sites during this one day SEND peer challenge.

The colleagues in the peer challenge team come from around the region and represent different areas and sectors. Please welcome them today and help them to undertake this valuable activity. They are not required to have any unsupervised access to children or their records, so we hope you are able to accommodate today's meeting within your safeguarding policy.

Many thanks for the part you are playing in enabling this visit to take place to contribute to the picture that is being built to help improve services and arrangements for local children

Yours sincerely

**Confidential Report**

**Sector-led Improvement within Children's Services in the  
East Midlands Region**

**SEND PEER CHALLENGE REPORT**

**Local area:**

**Dates:**

**Review Team members:**

- Name - Parent Carer Forum - area
- Name - Education rep - area
- Name - Social care rep - area
- Name - Health rep - area
- Name - Team Lead

**Background/ context**

**Selected key lines of enquiry –** *(outline the two agreed KLOE's)*

**Area of Strength:**

**Area of Development:**

**Methodology**

The peer challenge was conducted using the agreed and adopted East Midlands Region methodology.

Example text: *Following a telephone conference between the team lead and senior officers to agree the key lines of enquiry, a team of four spent two days in the local area meeting with parents and carers, young people and a range of managers, commissioners and providers. The team also scrutinised a range of relevant strategy and policy documents, associated data, a sample set of anonymous EHC Plans, as well as information from the Local Offer. There were a number of visits to settings and schools, both mainstream and specialist, across Early Years, Primary, Secondary and Further Education. The purpose of the meetings was to see how well the local area had accurately identified strengths and areas for development through the self-evaluation process and evidence of impact. Verbal feedback was given at the end of the second day to leaders, attended by a range of partners from the local area.*  
 (Modify the content of this section as appropriate)

**Evidence** (Examples of possible evidence)

*This comprised:*

- *A detailed self-evaluation document*
- *Strategy and policy documents*
- *Extensive dataset provided before the visit with additional reports and data provided following discussions with managers*
- *A sample of EHC Plans*
- *The Local Offer website*
- *A presentation by leaders in the area*
- *A meeting with the Parent Carer Forum*
- *Visits to x providers*
- *Discussions with parents, children and young people*
- *X meetings with local area practitioners and managers*
- *Observation of Panels, Forums or other meetings* (Modify list as required)

**Overall Findings**

**a) Conclusions**

**In respect of the first Key Line of Enquiry:** Describe the first KLoE

**In respect of the second Key Line of Enquiry:** Describe second KLoE

**In relation to any particular aspect that may have had a specific focus such as Early Years, Coproduction, Preparing for adulthood.**

**b) Recommendations/ considerations**

Here list the priorities (4-8) that the team feel the area needs to give attention.

**c) Next steps in the peer challenge process**

*The key points from the verbal feedback will form the basis of the team lead's draft report. This will also draw on evidence from the peer challenge records (PCRs) to add details. The draft will be shared with team members for proof-reading and comment.*

*Within 7 working days of the peer challenge the team lead will send the draft report to be fact checked with the local area. The local area is asked to respond within 10 working days in order that the final report can be completed.*

*(Adapt as appropriate)*

**East Midlands Region Peer Challenge Quality Assurance**

**Area officer/ team member**

**Date**

**Contact and preparation prior to the peer challenge.**

What worked well

Even better if

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**Peer challenge process**

Securing evidence and observations

Communication

What worked well

Even better if

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**Feedback**

What worked well

Even better if