

EAST MIDLANDS

RIIA News

Regional Improvement & Innovation Alliance (RIIA)

Children's Services

Issue: December 2022

RIIA News will be published a few times each year to share updates of the joint work taking place between the 10 Local Authorities in the East Midlands region to support the improvement of children's services.

SELF-EVALUATION, PEER CHALLENGE AND THE RIIA PLAN

Children's Services collaboration in the East Midlands is underpinned by the sharing of self-evaluation information through a peer challenge process. All 10 councils share their SEFs with each other for scrutiny and invite a supportive challenge from each other, to ensure that there is high confidence in the diagnosis of strength and areas for development.

This review process, which happened most recently during the early summer, also identifies priorities and areas of policy development that are held in common across the region. A RIIA Plan is then developed to coordinate joint action across the region to address these, running until the next SEF review and peer challenge process early in 2024. The current plan is organised into the following sections

The RIIA Plan is an evolutionary document that does not aim to document every regional action. The latest version be seen at sectorledimprovement.co.uk.

REGIONAL PRESSURES	POLICY AREAS	CAPACITY BUILDING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Worker Supply • Placement Sufficiency • SEND and Inclusion • Stronger Partnerships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting Families, inc. the development of Family Hubs and effective Early Help • Staying Close (Care Leavers) • Dissemination of BBB projects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistency of practice and managerial oversight • SEF Improvement • Leadership Development • Diversity in Leadership

NEWS ITEMS

1. RIIA Activities

- CSSSL LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME
- SOCIAL WORKER SUPPLY
- ALTERNATIVELY QUALIFIED PRACTITIONERS
- SEND PRESSURES & SEND PEER CHALLENGE
- STAYING CLOSE, STAYING CONNECTED
- DEVELOPMENT OF FAMILY HUBS

2. Building Back Better Projects

- REDUCING COURT BACKLOGS TOOLKIT
- WORKFORCE WELLBEING GUIDE
- TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICE RESOURCES

3. Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children

4. Sharing and monitoring data in the region

5. Regional Groups

RIIA PLAN ACTIVITIES

CSSSL LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME

Earlier in 2022 a first cohort of 30 senior leaders completed CSSSL, the region's Children's Services Strategic Senior Leadership development programme. This is for experienced leaders whose next career step might be to become an Assistant Director. We are pleased to announce that this programme will run again in 2023 and recruitment will be organised by each LA. You can find out more at sectorledimprovement.co.uk/csssl/ or by contacting becky.smith@sdsa.net.

SOCIAL WORKER SUPPLY

The recruitment and retention of a strong workforce to carry out the necessary social work with children is under considerable pressure at the moment. This is a national issue and the region's LAs have recently been working with colleagues from across the country to look at the use of memoranda, recruitment initiatives and agency price management to improve the situation. We are now pleased to hear that central government is looking to introduce a national 'compact' to introduce more controls into this sector and looking forward to their consultation in the New Year.

ALTERNATIVELY QUALIFIED PRACTITIONERS

As part of the work to improve the quality of work with children, all 10 LAs are re-considering the best deployment and development of their wider workforce. This review is looking at some of the tasks conventionally carried out by social workers to consider whether there are effective ways of utilising alternatively-qualified workers to improve practice and ease some of the pressures within the system at present.

SEND PRESSURES AND SEND PEER CHALLENGE

Special needs, disability and inclusion is another policy area where the overall national system is not working effectively. However, we are pleased that the East Midlands is currently the only region where there are no LAs with improvement plans being monitored by Ofsted but, nevertheless, a joint SEND work plan is still underway to support improvement, help manage finances and create the necessary provision. A key strand of the plan is a programme of SEND Peer Challenge where colleagues from across the region review each other's practice. To find out more about this SEND work or become involved in peer challenge, please contact pat.bullen@sdsa.net.

STAYING CLOSE, STAYING CONNECTED

The region's senior managers who oversee the arrangements for young people leaving care have been looking to introduce an approach known as Staying Close, Staying Connected, to create greater quality and consistency around the region. This programme of work is continuing into 2023, working with Break, our partner charity, with a learning and development programme, tailored coaching and a joint effort to secure placement funding from the government. To find out more, contact nicole.francis@sdsa.net.

DEVELOPMENT OF FAMILY HUBS

For a couple of years, the government has been promoting the concept of Family Hubs as an approach to connect all services for families, especially those with young children or in need of support. The 10 LAs in the region have been working together to share their developments and support the development of policy and practice. So far, a couple of LAs have managed to obtain additional finance from government, but all are working to strengthen their local interpretation of the Family Hub approach.

BUILDING BACK BETTER PROJECTS

Over the past year the region received some one-off additional funding as part of the government's investment in Covid recovery, known as Building Back Better. All 10 LAs and many colleagues responded positively to the opportunity this provided and over 20 significant projects were undertaken. Space does not permit full reporting here, but a summary report of the Building Back Better projects can be downloaded from sectorledimprovement.co.uk or by emailing the RIIA Programme Lead khalid.mahmood@sdsa.net

Some of the key work areas included:

- Family Hub development and roll-out
- UASC NTS regional support
- Developing strategic leadership
- Improving social work practice
- SEND improvement
- Safeguarding adolescents from extra-familial harm
- Reducing court backlogs
- Improving regional data arrangements
- Self-assessment and peer challenge
- Investing in promising practice
- Providing local packages of support
- Developing Family Hubs
- Staying Close Staying Connected
- Improving the supply and quality of social work

Some of last year's projects created resources and materials for sharing across the region:

REDUCING COURT BACKLOGS TOOLKIT

All local authorities worked together to develop and roll out practices that might help to reduce some of the significant delays in court proceedings affecting children and families. All 10 LAs were active within this project, but if you're interested to find out more please contact ann.woollard@lincolnshire.gov.uk

WORKFORCE WELLBEING GUIDE

Resources were created by the regional group of Workforce Leads to support the wellbeing of the workforce and a launch event is being held to for this guidance on 1st February. If you want to register your early interest to attend this launch, please contact khalid.mahmood@sdsa.net.

PROTECTING ADOLESCENTS FROM EXTRA-FAMILIAL HARM

Leicestershire, Nottinghamshire and Lincolnshire LAs worked on different projects to extend and develop resources for "Protecting Adolescents from Extra Familial Harm". The learning was shared with the region through a dissemination event held earlier in the year. If you missed this and would like to know more please contact donna.smalley@leics.gov.uk. The resource produced are available at <https://www.childexploitationeastmidlands.org.uk>.

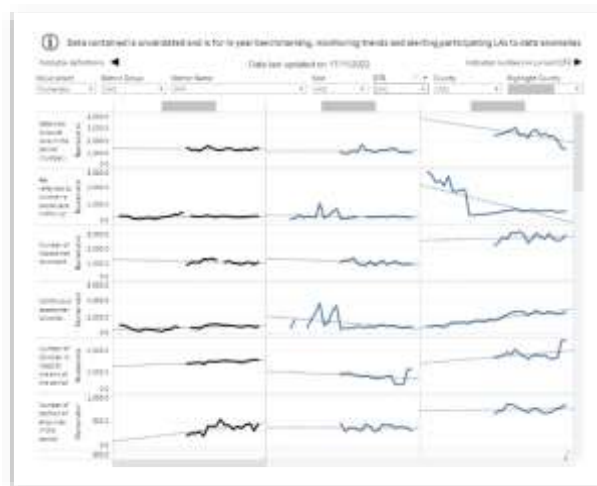
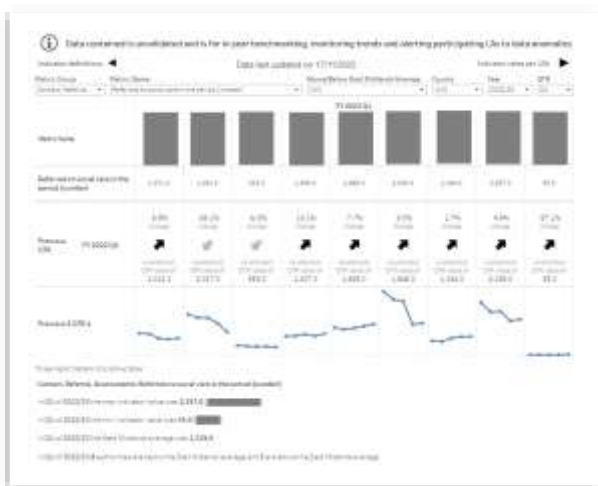
UNACCOMPANIED ASYLUM-SEEKING CHILDREN (UASC)

As frequently featured in TV news items, channel crossings by people seeking asylum in the UK continues to increase and a National Transfer Scheme is now in place to disperse and place new arrivals across the country so that their support is shared. The Home Office has now commissioned several hotels in our region for this purpose. Within this group there are occasionally unaccompanied children and young people (UASC) whose needs require additional support and, at present, there are over 400 UASC being supported by the 10 councils and a further 700 who have recently been in their care. Within the East Midlands region we benefit from the support of a small dedicated team at who provide practical advice and guidance around planning and placements, led by Matthew Clarke, Senior UASC Policy Advisor at the East Midlands Strategic Migration Partnership.

SHARING AND MONITORING DATA IN THE REGION

Within the East Midlands, a range of data is collected quarterly including the National RIIA24 data set as well as other indicators that have been agreed locally. Data collection covers areas such as social care and safeguarding, Education/SEND, Early Help, Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), Missing and Elective Home Educated (EHE), Child Protection, Referrals and Assessments, Looked After Children (LAC), Care Leavers, Adoption and some workforce indicators.

Leicestershire County Council's Business Intelligence Traded Service is commissioned to collect, analyse and share the visualisation of this data **securely** for the region.



- Tableau is the data visualisation tool that is used. [Click here to access the public view of the tool](#)
- A secure Leicestershire Traded Services portal provides access to the [Tableau dashboards](#)
- Each registered user of the portal has a unique URL to access the site, as well as a username and password. For problems with the login or to request permission to use the site, visit the [portal help page](#)
- Permissions and access are set at appropriate levels and some of the local indicators collected have restricted permissions.

REGIONAL GROUPS

One of the key strengths of East Midlands is a wide set of regional groups for Heads of Service and specialist leads in different aspects of children's services. The chairs of each of these groups come together regularly to review and contribute to the RIIA Plan and to share their group's priorities. We are currently communicating with the following groups, but aware that others might also be active. If you think your local authority colleagues might not be connected with any of the following groups, then please contact the RIIA Programme Lead khalid.mahmood@sdsa.net who can put you in touch.

- Directors of Social Work & Safeguarding
- EMSEG (Strategic Education Group)
- Commissioning Leads Group
- SEND Strategic Leads
- 3rd Tier Safeguarding Leads
- Principal Social Workers
- Child Exploitation Leads
- Care Leavers Leads
- IRO managers and Child Protection Chairs
- Early Help & Supporting Families Leads
- Early Years Strategic Leads
- Virtual School Leads
- Principal Educational Psychologists
- School Admissions/ Place Planning
- Participation Leads
- Regional Placements Commissioning
- Data and Improvement Leads
- Children's Workforce Leads
- Quality Assurance and Audit moderation
- Regional Permanence Board
- Residential Workforce Lead

The next editions of RIIA News are scheduled for March and July 2023. If you wish to provide names of additional colleagues who you would like to receive it, or want to be removed from the distribution list please contact the RIIA Programme Lead khalid.mahmood@sdsa.net.