

DEVELOPING DIVERSITY IN LEADERSHIP

Beyond Barriers

Participant Guide 2025/26

About

The Beyond Barriers Leadership Development Programme has been established with the objective of increasing the visible diversity of senior leadership teams within East Midlands Children's Services.

This initiative is aimed at colleagues from the global majority who exhibit promise and potential for senior strategic leadership roles. The regional Directors of Children's Services (DCSs) recognise that individuals from diverse backgrounds face numerous barriers to making career progress. This programme is designed to address some of these challenges by equipping aspiring leaders with the skills, knowledge and confidence to step into senior roles.



A man in a dark suit and glasses is standing and presenting to a group of people seated at a long table in a modern office. He is gesturing with his hands while speaking. The office has large windows in the background, and the scene is overlaid with a teal gradient.

Welcome

We are thrilled to have you join us on this journey towards enhancing diversity and leadership within East Midlands Children's Services. This welcome pack will guide you through the key elements of the programme, ensuring you are well-prepared and informed.

Overview & Objectives

The Beyond Barriers programme is designed to cultivate exceptional leadership qualities, rather than focusing on technical management. It aims to nurture diverse leaders who are capable of rising to the most senior roles in the region over the coming years. Participants will benefit from a unique opportunity to learn and grow alongside other senior leaders and external experts. The programme will offer a rich blend of inspirational and practical experiences, ensuring a comprehensive development journey.

- 1. Leadership Competencies:** Build skills tailored to individual challenges and strengths.
- 2. Cultural Competence:** Deepen understanding to address racism, intersectionality and systemic inequalities.
- 3. Networking:** Foster the development of support systems for leaders from diverse backgrounds.
- 4. Confidence and Visibility:** Improve readiness for senior leadership roles.
- 5. Actionable Strategies:** Develop leadership strategies for individuals and organisations.

Programme elements

- A mixed cohort of up to 30 participants from across children's services in the East Midlands region
- 9 months duration (July 25 - March 26)
- 4 face-to-face days
- 9 online seminars via Teams
- Workplace mentoring (3 sessions minimum)
- Collaborative group/ project work

Your commitment

As a delegate, you are expected to:

- Attend and actively participate in all face-to-face and online sessions.
- Engage fully in your mentoring relationship.
- Reflect on feedback and apply your learning in practice.
- Contribute to your group project and collaborate constructively.
- Champion inclusivity in your current role

Dates for your diary

Date	Activity
June 2025	Delegate on-boarding & agreement of workplace mentors
8th July 25	Day 1: Programme launch (AM only)
July – August 25	360 self-evaluation and mentoring arrangements
23rd September 25	Day 2: Keynote input, workshop, group/project work
9th October 25	Online seminar 1: Navigating Bias and Microaggressions
13th November 25	Online seminar 2: Communicating with Impact
27th November 25	Online seminar 3: Conflict Resolution and Mediation Skills
2nd December 25	Day 3: Keynote input, workshop, group/project work
11th December 25	Online seminar 4: Overcoming Imposter Syndrome
15th January 26	Online seminar 5: Building my Leadership Identity
29th January 26	Online seminar 6: Developing an Inclusive Workplace Culture
12th February 26	Online seminar 7: Advancing Equity in Policy-Making
26th February 26	Online seminar 8: Empowering Under-Represented Voices
5th March 26	Online seminar 9: Financial and Budget Planning
17th March 26	Day 4: Keynote input, workshop, group/project presentations and graduation

The face-to-face sessions at Crowne Plaza East Midlands, Yew Lodge, Kegworth, DE74 2DF. The venue is just minutes from the M1, close to East Midlands Airport and Castle Donington. There are rooms available for those that wish to stay over, however this will be at your own expense.



Mentoring

Participants in the programme are paired with a senior colleague from their workplace who provides mentoring support. Mentoring sessions help participants understand their learning priorities and plan for their future, from immediately after the launch event and throughout the programme. Mentors should be familiar with the participant's work and use coaching skills to aid reflection and development.

Group/ project work

A fundamental value of the programme is derived from participants' reflective engagement with their learning experiences and the subsequent application of these to their professional practice. Delegates are anticipated to collaborate in groups on the following topics:



Designing a diversity recruitment strategy



Improving community engagement



Promoting inclusive leadership practices



Creating a mentorship or sponsorship program



Measuring EDI impact



Advocacy for EDI in leadership

Group/ project timeline

Day 1: 8th July 2025

- Meet your group
- Agree group comms, e.g. email, Teams, WhatsApp
- Arrange an online file-sharing folder, e.g. Google docs, Dropbox
- Nominate your Admin contact
- Discuss your first thoughts
- Agree 'who will do what' over the summer

Gap task

- Explore and develop your early ideas
- Gather insights from good practice, research/literature and peers
- Keep on sharing and chatting

Day 2: 23rd September 2025

- Spend 90mins together
- Work up your summer ideas into a clean project
- Consider a template (provided) for December
- Agree your group plan for December session

Gap task

- Continue to develop your project
- Prepare your interim presentation to the cohort

Day 3: 2nd December 2025

- Present the emerging shape of your project to the rest of the cohort (5-10 mins)
- Give feedback to others
- Reflect on the feedback and suggestions provided
- Possibly adjust your group project, as you choose
- Consider a template and suggestions (provided) for the final March session

Gap task

- Complete your project work
- Create any products, posters, artefacts etc.
- Plan how/who will make the final presentation

Day 4: 17th March 2026

- We plan to invite your DCSs and other significant/relevant senior colleagues to the final event
- The event will include a Project Marketplace, at which each group will have the microphone for 5 mins each to summarise their project outcomes and learning
- Each group will then have a display-point at the marketplace and all participants and visitors will circulate for 45-60 mins.
- All of the final products and artefacts from each project will be collected and produced into a 'keepsake' from the programme. All participants will receive all projects

Cohort list

► **Belinda Rose**
Derby City Council

► **Shaheen Parekh**
Derby City Council

► **Jasraj Sanghera**
Derby City Council

► **Sabina Talib**
Derby City Council

► **Sam Singh**
Nottinghamshire County Council

► **Shareen Bashir**
Nottinghamshire County Council

► **Rochelle Wallace**
Nottinghamshire County Council

► **Tinashe Zirereza**
Nottinghamshire County Council

► **Sameer Patel**
Nottingham City Council

► **Jacquie Thomas**
Nottingham City Council

► **Sonia Burton**
Nottingham City Council

► **Priscilla Gono**
Leicestershire County Council

► **Yateen Makwana**
Leicestershire County Council

► **Roxanne Njopa-Kaba**
Leicestershire County Council

► **Natasha Mann**
Leicestershire County Council

► **Mo Bham**
Leicester City Council

► **Sam Merry**
Leicester City Council

► **Aneeta Hulait**
Leicester City Council

► **Ella Mackie**
Leicester City Council

► **Jeena Chahuan**
Rutland county Council

► **Oladuti Olusesi**
Rutland county Council

► **Liz White**
Northamptonshire Children's Trust

► **Temitope Peter**
Northamptonshire Children's Trust

► **Sandra Kamchira**
Northamptonshire Children's Trust

► **Paulette Wright**
West Northamptonshire Council

► **Candice Montague York**
West Northamptonshire Council

► **Nikki Taylor**
West Northamptonshire Council

► **Leena Warden**
Lincolnshire County Council

► **Tendai Holloway**
Lincolnshire County Council

► **Phillipa Michael**
Derbyshire County Council

Programme Leadership Competencies

The Beyond Barriers programme is built upon a set of qualities recognised as most important for our current and future leaders in the East Midlands region. These qualities relate to individual behaviours and characteristics, features of the leadership role and the working environment. They address a range of themes considered to be most important for colleagues stepping into future senior leadership roles in children's services.

01 Demonstrating the capacity to transition from operational to strategic decision-making.

02 Proficiency in aligning objectives with organisational priorities and broader policy frameworks.

03 Showing effectiveness in leading organisational change and fostering innovative practices.

04 Possessing the ability to influence key stakeholders effectively, even in the absence of formal authority.

05 Preparing thoroughly for challenging interview scenarios and articulating leadership competencies.

06 Maintaining awareness of emotional triggers and their impact on leadership behaviours.

07 Demonstrating expertise in managing conflicts constructively and mediating between colleagues.

08 Communicating with clarity, confidence, and impact across diverse audiences.

09 Identifying and mitigating biases to ensure fairness in leadership practices.

10 Committing to addressing microaggressions and promoting equity within the organisation.

11 Cultivating an inclusive workplace culture through cultural competence.

12 Empowering underrepresented voices and fosters allyship within the leadership framework

360 Evaluation

In preparation for the programme, you are required to complete a self and 360 evaluation of the qualities that will guide your development plan and priorities through the Beyond Barriers programme. We recommend you invite a large sample of colleagues in case some are unable to participate. A minimum of four responses are required to produce a report.

What you'll gain



Honest feedback across key leadership behaviours



Insight into how you are perceived in the workplace



A personalised development focus to guide your growth



Useful starting points for mentoring conversations

How it works

- 1 Complete your self-evaluation at assessment.360-feedback.org.uk.
- 2 Once logged in select 'Beyond Barriers qualities'.
- 3 Evaluate yourself against each quality and how often it is seen in your work.
- 4 Invite your colleagues to anonymously assess your leadership skills.

All self and 360 evaluations to be completed by **Friday 29th August 2025** and reviewed with your mentor to identify key development priorities.

Your feedback report

On completion you will receive a feedback report that will present your overall scores from both the self-evaluation and 360 evaluation. Here, you can start to identify your personal development priorities that will be supported in subsequent sessions with your mentor and help to set growth goals.

As you read through the report, try to be objective as you reflect on the scores and comments from your colleagues and be sure to remember to celebrate your strengths.

As with any feedback, this could potentially lead to some tough reflections. Therefore, remember to view this opportunity as a springboard to kick start your development journey, a stepping stone for progressing your career as well as a chance to improve your working relationships.

Programme Timeline



In person, Crowne Plaza Hotel East Midlands



Online, via Microsoft Teams

	Jul 25	Aug 25	Sept 25	Oct 25	Nov 25	Dec 25	Jan 26	Feb 26	Mar 26
Day 1: Programme Launch	08/07/25								
Day 2: Keynote, Workshop, Project Work			23/09/25						
Online Seminar 1: Navigating Bias & Microaggressions				09/10/25					
Online Seminar 2: Communicating with Impact					13/11/25				
Online Seminar 3: Conflict Resolution & Mediation Skills					27/11/25				
Day 3: Keynote, Workshop, Project Work						02/12/25			
Online Seminar 4: Overcoming Imposter Syndrome						11/12/25			
Online Seminar 5: Building my Leadership Identity							15/01/26		
Online Seminar 6: Developing an Inclusive Workplace Culture							29/01/26		
Online Seminar 7: Advancing Equity in Policy-Making								12/02/26	
Online Seminar 8: Empowering Under-Represented Voices								26/02/26	
Online Seminar 9: Financial & Budget Planning									05/03/26
Day 4: Keynote, Workshop, Presentations & Graduation									17/03/26

Day 1 | 8th July 2025

Agenda

9:30am

Arrival and registration

10:00am - 10:45am

Welcome and introduction to the programme

Jane Moore, Director of Children and Family Services - Leicestershire County Council



Jane has held her DCS post since October 2018. Prior to this, Jane was the Assistant Director for Education and Early Help, Head of Service for Early Help and Safer Communities and Head of the Youth Offending Service. Jane joined Leicestershire in 2003 to set up the Youth Crime Prevention arrangements for Leicestershire and went on to manage youth crime prevention work for the county council. Jane has a strong track record of leading and developing inclusive practice and cultures across organisations and is passionate about ensuring children and young people are at the heart of practice and organisational thinking and development.

10:45am - 11:00am

360 Evaluation Tool

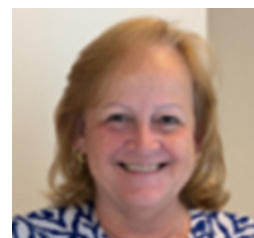
11:00am - 11:15am

Refreshment break

11:15am - 12:00pm

Mentoring Arrangements

Kate McKenna



Kate brings over 40 years of experience in public sector services, including 30 years in Local and Central Government, where she held strategic senior leadership positions.

As the associate and coaching community lead for the Staff College, Kate has extensive experience in establishing, managing, and supporting brokerage and deployment of individuals for coaching, mentoring, facilitation, quality assurance, and continuous quality improvement activities.

12:00pm - 12:45pm

Introduction to group tasks and projects

Pete Chilvers



Pete currently serves as the East Midlands Regional Strategic Coordinator, having worked closely with the region's DCSs for over 20 years to support their sector-led approach to improvement; he has been a key player in the design and delivery of several leadership programmes like this one. Pete's career in education and children's services has included the roles of CEO of the SDSA organisation and primary school headteacher in Leicestershire.

12:45pm - 1:00pm

Q&A

1:00pm

Lunch and close

The Beyond Barriers Leadership Development Programme is managed by SDSA on behalf of the East Midlands Local Authorities and Northamptonshire Children's Trust. SDSA is a not-for-profit organisation and is the Business Partner for RIIA East Midlands.

