

South East Sector Led Improvement Partnership

2021-22 Self Assessments and Triad Peer Challenge

Support for validating and challenging self-assessment conclusions

Authors:

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Introduction

SESLIP has been organising [peer challenges](#) as part of its programme of activities since 2011 and launched the current self-assessment and triad peer challenge programme in 2019 following trials and pilots in 2018.

Looking forward to the 2021-22 round of self-assessments and peer challenges and beyond, we want to use some additional DfE resource directed to this purpose specifically to assist DCSs in securing independent verification of key conclusions in their draft self-assessments.

Approximately £60,000 has been made available across the region and we will be inviting each DCS to access a share of this resource for a tailored piece of work that will independently verify (or otherwise) that specific conclusions of a self-assessment are accurate and well-founded before it is released to triad partners.

Universal moderation of a key conclusion from the self-assessment

Hampshire will oversee this pooled regional resource with a view to undertaking a moderating, critical friend approach to provide support and challenge to each authority.

We envisage that universal moderation will involve activities such as:

- Performance indicator validation (do published figures fairly reflect *the quality of service* performance?)
- Benchmarking analysis to confirm that conclusions are drawn from like-with-like comparisons
- Staff/partner/service user/parent focus groups to confirm conclusions about a particular service area
- Case file review (NB this will not be an audit, but will involve an external review of case files in order to triangulate a conclusion)
- Review of actions from previous self-assessments - have actions been completed and embedded etc

This work will not cover the whole of the self-assessment; the brief will be to verify (or otherwise) a specific conclusion from the self-assessment, looking behind the identification of strengths or areas for improvement. Necessarily this will be light-touch with assignments typically involving 2-4 days work for one person, including a report back to the commissioning DCS or nominee.

The first enquiry under this category relates to assurance that an authority's readiness to supply an accurate and useful Annex A response is fit for purpose.

We will commission a range of practitioners from across SESLIP membership to undertake these pieces of work. Nominations to join the panel will be sought from DCSs and we envisage that the panel will include suitably experienced and qualified managers practitioners from a range of service areas, including colleagues with a quality assurance background. Please see the section below on nominating colleagues to join the panel, and what will happen if a colleague is commissioned to undertake work under this scheme.

This is a universal offer to ALL SESLIP members. It follows the principles set out in the [Regional Improvement Plan](#):

The plan recognises that all children's services have strengths which can help inspire improvement in others; it also recognises that they are all capable of further improvement. It aims to discourage the conclusion that only poor or weak services need improvement help; instead, it celebrates honest self-evaluation and constant improvement as antidotes to complacency.

Funds to assist with areas for improvement

In the event that this piece of work focuses on an improvement need which is validated by the work and is identified as a priority following the peer challenge session, there may be further targeted resources available via Hampshire and SESLIP from the "small packages of improvement support" allocation (max 39 days intervention) or, if eligible, larger packages may be available through the DfE funded SLIP (previously Partners in Practice) scheme.

As with the universal scheme, we will maintain a register of practitioners and managers nominated by their DCS who will be available to undertake these small packages of work. For both the universal moderation and small packages of improvement support, the DfE funds provided to support this activity will be transferred to the authority in proportion to the days worked by colleagues from that authority. Hampshire will provide the coordination, scoping and project management of the work.

Universal moderation and access the small packages of improvement support

At any point during the year, a service will contact Alison Smailes at Hampshire via sectorled@hants.gov.uk to discuss aspects of their continuing self-assessment efforts that might benefit from further independent moderation. The timing of this approach need not be tied to the annual peer challenge day.

Following a discussion, agreement will be reached on a package of work that will be achievable within the resources available (usually 2-4 days for one person) and be useful to the DCS and their service in their development planning.

Hampshire and SESLIP will then secure a suitably independent and competent practitioner from within the region to undertake the piece of work, which will be reported direct to the commissioning DCS (or nominee) before the self-assessment is finalised.

Colleagues who wish to access the "small packages of improvement support" (up to 39 days), will normally have used the self-assessment and peer challenge process to establish a possible project and will contact Alison Smailes at Hampshire via sectorled@hants.gov.uk to discuss scope, staffing and timing of any intervention.

Nominating colleagues to join the regional panel

We will establish one panel of names of colleagues who have been nominated by their DCS to do either the universal moderation work, or to join a team of colleagues undertaking the small packages of improvement support.

- a) To join the panel, a DCS nomination is sufficient, no further interview or qualification will be necessary.
- b) A nomination can be restricted to particular areas of expertise (eg SEND, Fostering etc) or left open at the discretion of the nominating DCS.
- c) We expect all DCSs to want to make at least one nomination to the panel, and we anticipate that panellists will come to see this work as interesting professional development.
- d) If invited to undertake an assignment, there will be a discussion prior to acceptance, and declining the invitation will be an option for the panel member.
- e) There is some money in the system to make payments to the nominating authority in respect of the days contributed to helping other services. We have not yet calibrated the size of that payment, nor whether the administrative bureaucracy will be too burdensome for the benefit it delivers. For the larger pieces of work connected with the small packages of improvement support, “backfilling” payments maybe easier to justify than for the 2-4 days envisaged for the universal moderation. We also have to make sure that processes that support these initiatives are properly resourced. We welcome feedback from DCSs on these points.

User Feedback

Please bear with us while we trial this new approach. We are undertaking it in a spirit of exploration of what might be possible, and it is most likely that this version will quickly be developed and improved into a Mark 2 version; or quietly dropped because it turns out not add any value to the process. All ideas and suggestions gratefully received. Please contact

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