

Norfolk Summer Exchange Programme:

Leadership in Services
for Children and Families

August 2025





Introduction.

Sara Tough OBE

Executive Director Norfolk Children's Services
and Chair of Norfolk's Children and Young
People's Strategic Alliance (CYP SA)

I'm delighted to introduce our third Leadership Exchange Programme for multiagency leaders working with children and families.

This year we have four brand new topics that we have been working on in Norfolk and once again, we want to collaborate and share with you and other multiagency leaders from across the UK. You will hear about our good practice, the learning we undertook or challenges we overcame to get here and the improvements and developments we are still working on. We hope you will help us by sharing your good practice and any innovative work you are doing or are planning to do with children and families in these areas of practice.

We are running these events on Microsoft Teams to provide ease of access. No need to book; just save the date and time in your calendar and click on the link to join. It really couldn't be easier, it's free and everyone is welcome!

We look forward to you joining us every Wednesday throughout August, from 15:30-17:00.

Best wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sara Tough', enclosed within a circular loop.

Sara Tough OBE, D Litt hc

Wednesday
6 August 2025



[Click here to join the meeting](#)

Family Help: Embedding our Multi Disciplinary Teams (MDT)

Sponsored by Phil Watson, Director –
Help Care and Protection

Presented by Jen Dewar, Gary Hackett, Michelle Dunsire,
Sarah Adams, Jo Todd and Eve Cronin

In this session, we will discuss Norfolk's implementation of the Family Help model over the past two years. From the initial pilot phase to county-wide roll-out, we will share our strategies for implementation, partner engagement, and the ways in which we have reviewed and evaluated our approach.

We will delve into our prevention and protection model, focusing on ensuring team parity and overcoming challenges. Our discussion will highlight the importance of maintaining a balanced structure between prevention and protection services, and the value of integrating alternatively qualified practitioners, including those who are not social workers. Every worker should feel valued and special within this framework.

Additionally, we will explore how input from children and families has been instrumental in refining our approach. This session provides a platform to share our learnings as a Local Authority operating outside the Department for Education Pathfinder programme, offering insights into our journey and methodologies.

Join us as we lean into the unique aspects of our model, emphasising the significance of our multi-disciplinary teams and the collaborative efforts that drive our success and positive outcomes for children and their families.





Wednesday
13 August 2025



[Click here to join the meeting](#)

Making School Attendance Everyone's Responsibility

Sponsored by James Wilson, Director
Strategy and Outcomes

Presented by Kelly Waters, Paul Webb
and Martin Manders

Learning from national and Norfolk Safeguarding Children Partnership serious case reviews and child practice reviews highlight the importance of children having access to a full-time education and the need to place school life at the heart of multi-agency planning and provision. Like many areas of the country, levels of absence since the Covid-19 Pandemic have been of significant concern. In this session, we will be sharing how Norfolk has designed and implemented its strategic approach to improving school attendance through consultation with schools and a range of local partners. Whilst we acknowledge there is still more work to do, in the last three years we have harnessed our resources and worked collaboratively to make school attendance a priority across out services.

We will be sharing how we developed our strategic approach through learning from audit and leveraged the requirement for schools to share attendance data to develop real-time attendance data dashboards which enable senior leaders and individual case holders to rigorously track attendance data and strengthen our systemic approach

to responding to persistent and severe absence and ensure that school attendance is a non-negotiable in our work. We will also showcase what children have told us about their experiences of school and what they need to attend school regularly and hear from a local school about the approach they have taken to improve attendance.

This is an opportunity to reflect on barriers and challenges and the impact of leadership, partnership working and establishing a system-wide response to improving school attendance. We look forward to hearing your ideas and practical examples of how you have overcome challenges in your local areas.



Wednesday
20 August 2025



[Click here to join the meeting](#)

SEND and Team around the school-System collaboration and integration

Sponsored by Jane Hayman, Service Director Inclusion and Belonging

Presented by Rob Cole, Sian Larrington and Charmaine Hannant

In this session we will share our learning and journey in regard to moving from collaboration towards integration. Like many local authorities, ICBs and health providers we are faced with the challenges of ensuring that our resources are aligned to the needs of our families; a challenge that we believe can only be met through a genuine and purposeful commitment to integrating our practises wherever we can. Come and join us to hear about how we've established this approach including:

- Outcomes from establishing a single point of access for 0-25 mental health services.
- Developing a collaborative system approach to the challenge of supporting neurodivergent children & young people.
- Using our neighbourhood approach of school and community zones to create a 'team around' approach.

We will explore how we are utilising the power of our partnership working, whether at a strategic level or operationally within local communities to improve the experience that families have when working with our services. We will also share some of the key success factors and challenges along the way, with an opportunity for those taking part to also share their learning about how to move beyond collaboration towards integration.



Wednesday
27 August 2025



[Click here to join the meeting](#)

Approaches to supporting adolescents

Sponsored by Sarah Jones, Director
Safeguarding, Partnerships and Opportunity

Presented by Lauren Downes and
Lee Napper

In this presentation you will hear how Norfolk has collaborated to provide a range of responses to risks faced by adolescents.

This includes:

- Our Targeted Youth Support Service who work specifically around contextual risk.
- Our New Roads residential and outreach services which ensure we are working together to manage adolescent risk in a different way.
- Our Adolescent Hub approach which is the mechanism for multi-disciplinary services coming together to support vulnerable adolescents.

You will hear from Children's Services leaders who will set out the journey so far, some of our learning and where we continue to improve our responses to young people in Norfolk. You will also hear from our young people and how they are supporting professionals to understand them better.



Thanks for joining us in our Leadership Exchange events.

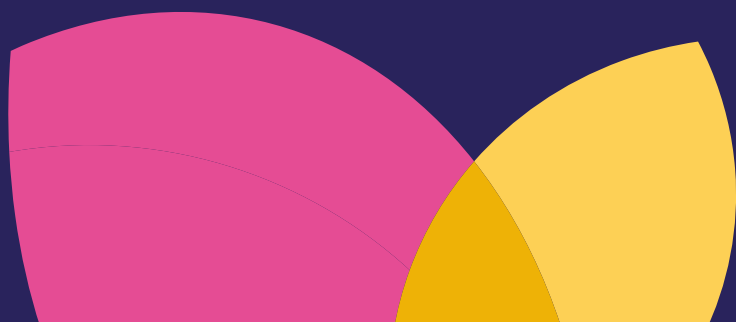
In 2024, Norfolk Children's Services were selected as a DfE Sector Led Improvement Partner. Sector led improvement partners are local authorities who have expertise in specific areas and can provide peer support to other local authorities who are working to improve their services. Should you be interested in receiving support from Norfolk, please contact cs.transformation@norfolk.gov.uk for an informal conversation about how we might be able to help.

We are offering support around:

- leadership and setting a departmental vision.
- establishing an ambitious transformation programme and undertaking service redesign.
- developing robust quality assurance and performance frameworks informed by:
 - data
 - the child's voice
- strategic partnership arrangements and system collaboration.
- inspection readiness and other diagnostic activities.
- meeting the needs of UASC.
- support for:
 - children in care
 - care leavers
- growing residential and semi-independent accommodation services
- the approach to:
 - edge of care
 - exploitation
- delivering independent statutory services.
- developing a participative approach.
- family networking.
- sufficiency and valuing care.
- family help multi-disciplinary approach.



About our presenters.



Sarah Adams

As Head of Service for protection in West and Breckland, Sarah leads the strategic delivery of support for children, young people, and families across the region. She has been instrumental in shaping and implementing the Family Help model, driving early intervention and integrated support to improve outcomes and reduce the need for statutory intervention. Her work is rooted in collaboration, innovation, and a deep commitment to safeguarding and empowering families.

Rob Cole

Rob is the Assistant Director for Partnerships, Communities, and Inclusion leading services that deliver early intervention and prevention to Children, Young People & Families. Key to Rob's work is supporting relationships and collaboration between services that delivers effective partnership working so families, professionals and communities experience the collective support we offer.

Eve Cronin

Eve is a Programme Manager in our Strategy, Planning and Change team. This team works closely with our senior leaders and operational teams to deliver strategic innovation, national programmes of activity and ensuring that all our projects deliver the outcomes that are most important for children and Families.

With extensive experience in managing complex programs, as the Programme Manager for Family Help, her focus is on aligning project outcomes with the organisation's key goals. Her role in implementing Family Help involved coordinating cross-functional teams, managing resources, and mitigating risks to deliver impactful results. By fostering collaboration and innovation, she strives to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of our projects, ultimately contributing to the organisation's growth and success.

Jenifer Dewar

Jen is the Assistant Director of Family Help and Child Protection. Since 2009, she has worked across various domains including residential children's homes, safeguarding, and corporate parenting in Norfolk. Her extensive experience in these areas has equipped her with a profound understanding of the complexities involved in child protection, family support and as a corporate parent. Jen is known for her ambition and pride in her work, consistently striving to improve the lives of children and families she serves. She embraces family help with a fervent passion for achieving positive outcomes and cultivating a strong, committed workforce. Her leadership is marked by a dedication to excellence and a relentless drive to ensure the well-being and safety of children under her care.

Lauren Downes

Lauren Downes is currently the Head Youth Justice and Targeted Youth Support Services in Norfolk and holds some strategic responsibility for children's services response to child exploitation and serious violence. Lauren has spent 25 years delivering developing and leading services for adolescents in both London and Norfolk.

Michelle Dunsire

Having been a Social Worker since 2009 and been in a number of different roles both operational and strategic, Michelle has a wealth of experience and is passionate about ensuring the best outcomes for children and families in Norfolk. In her role now as Head of Protection within Family Help Michelle works with a number of different practitioners, managers and other agencies to embed this way of working to offer the right support at the right time for families.

Gary Hackett

With over 35 years' experience in the public sector working with communities, Gary has proudly spent the last 12 years leading Norfolk's response to preventing the escalation of need - working alongside passionate teams, partners, and communities to make Family Help more than just a service, but a shared commitment to children and families.

His role as Head of Service for Prevention is rooted in a belief that the right support, at the right time, can change lives. From shaping strategy to driving frontline innovation, Gary has helped Norfolk evolve its early help and preventative offer into a dynamic, responsive network that supports thousands of families each year.

Gary is driven by a simple goal - to make sure no child or family falls through the cracks – and is constantly inspired by the resilience of the people we serve and the dedication of those he works with.

Charmaine Hannant

Charmaine is Head of Service for Just One Number & The Mental Health Support Teams (MHST) in School Norfolk & Waveney CYP health services. Just One Number is the clinical single point of clinical access for the Norfolk and Waveney CYP Health services as well as delivery of the Mental Health Advice, Support and Access Team providing the single access point to mental health services (0-25) across Norfolk and Waveney. MHST provide easy access for mental health support in schools

Sian Larrington

Sian is Deputy Director for Norfolk and Waveney CYP Health Services. With over 30 years' experience of providing services for children and families in both health and the voluntary sector Sian is committed to working as part of an integrated system focusing on meeting needs and improving outcomes for children and young people.

Martin Mander

Martin Mander is a Business Insights Manager in the Insight & Analytics service, supporting Children's Services with data and analytics by following an embedded working model. He and his team have experience of Children's Services alongside their technical skills, and are driven by the potential to make a difference to children & families through better use of data & intelligence.

Lee Napper

Lee Napper has had a career in Children's Services at Norfolk County Council, spanning over 29 years. Lee began working in a residential setting in 1996 and has since progressed to the role of Assistant Director for Residential, Resources and Youth Services.

In this capacity, Lee oversees all residential homes, including New Roads, Emergency homes, Solo/Dual homes, and Short Breaks for Children with Disabilities and Adolescents. Lee is also responsible for supported accommodation, outreach services, the housing support team, and youth justice and youth services.

Throughout Lee's career, he has demonstrated a wealth of knowledge and understanding in supporting young people, with a focus on achieving excellent outcomes and ensuring that services remain child focused.

Jo Todd

As a strong advocate for co-production, Jo strives to amplify the voices of people receiving services in the design and delivery of those services, to ensure they are fit for purpose. With a background of resident engagement within a housing context, she is currently manager of the participation team within Norfolk Children's Services. The team aims to empower children and young people to participate meaningfully, leads projects which have a positive impact on the service they receive, and educates and enables social care colleagues to embed participation in everyday practice.

Kelly Waters

Kelly is the Senior Safeguarding Adviser within Norfolk County Council's Children's Services Department with responsibility for education safeguarding, school attendance and children missing education. With over 20 years' experience of providing support, training and guidance to schools and colleges, she is passionate about ensuring children have access to a full-time education, supporting staff to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and engaging education in multi-agency safeguarding arrangements.

Paul Webb

Paul is Strategic Lead for Youth and Participation at Children's Services. Paul is qualified youth worker and has 20 years of experience in youth work practice, management and leadership, particularly playing a key strategic role in the progression and development of Norfolk's Youth Advisory Boards (YABs). Paul is responsible for leading and coordinating Children's Services internal Participation Strategy, as well our partnership approach to developing a sector wide Youth Strategy with partner organisations in the youth work sector.

