

Involved local authorities:

Essex
Suffolk
Southend-on-Sea
Thurrock



Essex & Suffolk

DFJ Trailblazer Pilot Area

Key intervention themes:

System governance ✓

Pre-proceedings practice ✓

Improving data ✓

Multi-agency collaboration ✓

Baseline information:



55 weeks

Average Section 31 case duration

National average: 44 weeks



7
Section 31 care applications per 10,000 children

National average: 9.2

Based on Cafcass statistics for 2023-24

Local challenges and the rationale for change:

- There is a lack of confidence in the quality of social work assessments and social workers’ place in court. The quality of assessments varies, and court time is wasted and lost when assessments are incomplete, challenged, or need to be repeated.
- Communication across the system can be slow between forums, duplicated, and does not enable effective practice. The existing forums do not always join up the right contacts or provide the right information to inform discussions at the LFJB.
- Data is not tracked consistently across the region, changing drivers of delays are not consistently assessed, and there is often conflicting terminology across system partners.

Implemented solutions:

Improve Tracking and Case Management

The four LAs and other system partners will undertake a regional data exercise to assess their data collection and terminology, target gaps, and develop a consistent approach to PLO tracking for all LAs.

Capacity Building and Training

All training materials currently on offer across the region will be reviewed. An on-demand training offer will be developed. ParentAssess training will be rolled out more widely.

Improve Communication and Coordination

Improving cross-system communication, forums, culture and understanding i.e. ‘how we work’, will include: streamlining regional forums; developing consistent processes and standards for planning for the court process; and developing an agreed set of principles, informed by the recent local PLO Relaunch plan.

