

Dear RIIA colleagues,

As you know, Research in Practice is working with Foundations (the What Works Centre for Children and Families) to support the use of the DfE commissioned Practice Guides Foundations produce. The work aims to assist Foundations in understanding the applicability of Practice Guide recommendations at regional level and explore how best Foundations might support system leaders to implement Practice Guide principles and recommendations in local and regional systems.

Foundations' Practice Guides are commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) to summarise the strongest available evidence from the UK and abroad to help local leaders achieve the outcomes specified in the Children's Social Care National Framework. Each Practice Guide is underpinned by a new systematic review of existing evidence that explores what works, for whom and in what context. This is then in turn translated into actionable key principles and recommendations for local system leaders.

Our first piece of work was to map the regional priorities you shared against the topics of the published Practice Guides. Thank you very much for sharing your plans and upcoming priorities as the first step in this work. We are keen to share this mapping work and to discuss with you (and/or colleagues you would suggest) in a series of **four** online Community of Practice sessions. The dates for which are:

- 17th September 2026, 9:30-11:30
- 29th October 2026, 9:30-11:30
- 26th November 2026, 9:30-11:30
- January 2027, date TBC

Our emerging assessment finds areas of alignment and divergence between the priorities articulated regionally and the scope of the Practice Guides. We are keen to explore these alignments and divergences with you and hear from you on your

experience in using Practice Guide evidence to address regional priorities. We will also explore your ideas on how Foundations might support local authorities in areas where it is not possible to produce Practice Guides because of the limitations of the existing evidence base.

One example of alignment between regional priorities and the Practice Guides was foster care which is consistently identified as a priority in regional plans. The [foster care Practice Guide](#) published in May provides principles and recommendations in relation to interventions focused on foster carers and foster family relationships, with emphasis on trauma-informed and relationship-based fostering practice. The evidence spans both carer wellbeing and behavioural support, both elements with clear potential to contribute to improved foster care retention and placement stability.

As will be no surprise to you, SEND is a strong and consistent priority across all regions. In addition to the Practice Guide on Parenting disabled children, Foundations is exploring ways to draw together relevant evidence relating to SEND across existing Practice Guides based on your key areas of focus.

Research in Practice will continue detailed mapping of regional priorities against Practice Guide evidence and produce a full synthesis later this year.

Best wishes,

Susannah Bowyer (Deputy Director, Research in Practice)

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Nimal Jude (Head of Practice Development, Foundations)