THE EAST MIDLANDS has ‘enjoyed’ yet another extremely busy year, focusing on the improvement agenda with a joint approach across the nine local authorities. Mick Connell took over the Chair from Sallyanne Johnson in the summer.

DASSs in the region have been very grateful for the valuable leadership Sallyanne showed during her period in the role. 2009 also saw us welcome Kim Curry as the new DASS for Leicester City.

The region has sustained its strong stance on partnership working with all agencies, especially with the RIEP programme and via Rachel Holynska the deputy regional director from the DH. Quarterly joint improvement meetings involving representatives from regional agencies have continued, together with the establishment of the regular JIP Executive (incorporating all nine directors) driving the various improvement programmes outlined below:

- Personalisation
- Prevention and early intervention
- Valuing People Now
- Market development
- Safeguarding and dignity
- Workforce and leadership
- Performance

Although many projects are still in the early stages, some have already achieved considerable efficiency savings across the region, e.g. the use of the Care Funding Calculator will save £4.5m over three years. This success has been shared more widely within regional events, raising the profile of adult social care. There is positive, and rightly challenging, political oversight of the programmes which adds value to the process.

We have continued to try actively to engage local and strategic health partners with some success, but this is an area we would wish to build on in 2010, recognising the huge challenges for all public services in delivering savings and rolling out personalised approaches.

We had a less dramatic time with performance assessment this year, but continue to share good practice effectively and learn from each other. We have encouraged and welcomed active and positive dialogue with new CQC colleagues and will continue to do this in 2010.

A successful regional budget event was held in the autumn where DASSs actively considered the effects of the recession and the inevitable impact on future available finance. Plans and options were shared, and possible strategies developed, as we will all experience similar problems of having to manage higher expectations, increased demand and achievement of enhanced quality standards with significantly reduced resources. We will undoubtedly return to this theme as a region in 2010.

We also intend to build on an initial joint event with the local DCSs to explore further the ‘think family’ agenda and mutual issues around safeguarding.

Finally, the region wished Sallyanne well as she moved on to her new consultancy role. She will be greatly missed by her DASS colleagues but will continue to have an influential presence in ADASS as an associate member.