

RESOURCES AND COMMISSIONING BULLETIN

DECEMBER 2024

Dear Colleagues,



I am delighted to present the December Edition of the ALDCS Resources and Commissioning Bulletin, highlighting the significant progress and exciting opportunities within the Pan London Commissioning Programme.

Since our last bulletin, we have witnessed several significant developments within the Pan-London Resources and Commissioning Programme. Highlights include detailed research on the top 330 placements across London, the launch of phase 3 of the ASD SEMH Workstream, and the announcement of additional funding for the LAP, which will enable its expansion. Additionally, we have seen the establishment of a new network in London that supports colleagues managing and developing local authority-owned children's homes. The Dynamic Sufficiency Tool has also been refreshed and relocated; further information on accessing the updated tool can be found in this bulletin.

With the new government now in place, and the publication of **Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive**, we have fresh opportunities to influence and shape policies impacting London's Children's Services. At our recent in-person commissioning workshop, we were delighted to hear from Jonathon Bacon, Deputy Director for Social Care at the DfE, who shared insights on the forthcoming reforms, and from Mark Evans, who provided an inspiring update on the establishment of the South East Regional Care Cooperative, reflecting on the progress made so far and outlining the next steps. As part of our ongoing advocacy efforts, the PLPCP is actively engaging in discussions on key issues such as High Cost Low Incidence Placements, 'cost shunting' from health and justice to social care, profiteering in the Children's Social Care Placements Market, and the critical need for sustained SEND funding. These priorities align with the broader submissions from London Treasurers, London Councils, and ADCS, and we will continue to lobby for further funding, and have welcomed the news of the Children's Homes Capital Round.

I hope this bulletin provides you with valuable insights into the ongoing work and projects under the ALDCS Resources and Commissioning Programme. As always, if you would like to learn more or get involved, please feel free to **reach out**.

Chris Munday

**DCS Barnet, Resources and Commissioning Policy Lead for ALDCS and National Chair,
Resources and Strategy for ADCS**

KEY UPDATES

DfE Capital Round Announcement

The Department for Education (DfE) has announced a new capital funding programme, confirmed in the recent Autumn Budget, providing up to £60 million in match funding for local authorities to expand open children's home placements. This funding aims to support the development of up to 200 new placements specifically for children with complex and multiple needs who are, or are at risk of being, deprived of their liberty. You can find more about how to bid [here](#).

Administered as a 50/50 match-funded programme, Local Authorities are required to submit applications demonstrating alignment with the DfE's strategic objectives. Key components of each application should include:

- **Local Needs Analysis:** Clear evidence of the needs within the local looked-after children population, with a focus on children with high-complexity needs who are the target of this funding.
- **Current Provision and Projected Outcomes:** An assessment of gaps in existing local provision, explaining how the proposed project will address these gaps and the expected outcomes for the children served.
- **Collaboration with Health Services:** Demonstrated strategic partnerships with health services, particularly through Integrated Care Boards, to ensure coordinated support for these placements.

Eligible projects under this programme include the purchase of new properties, refurbishing or upgrading existing facilities, or creating specialised annexes within existing children's homes. All projects must be designed to accommodate the specific needs of children with high-complexity needs, with features supporting solo placements and enhanced safety specifications. DfE funding cannot be extended past 31st March 2029. Key timelines for the capital round can be found below:

Milestones	Dates
Programme launch: Information for applicants circulated	1 November 2024
Deadline for all applications	28 February 2025
Notify applicants of outcome	From 24 April 2025
Grant letters issued to successful bidders	May 2025
DfE funding ends	31 March 2029



Capital investment to develop provision for children with complex mental health needs and challenging behaviour 2025-29

Information for applicants

November 2024

Next Steps

LIA is supporting a network of London boroughs planning to bid in the upcoming capital round. The network convenes every three weeks to discuss developments across London, support bid preparation, and provide peer support to local authorities working on bids and join this up with ongoing work focused on ASD SEMH across London.

Register your interest in the network here!

KEY UPDATES

Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive

Recently DfE published a new policy paper, Keeping children safe, helping families thrive, which sets out the children's social care measures to be included in the Children's Wellbeing Bill due to be introduced in the coming weeks.

The Secretary of State for Education made an oral statement to the House of Commons, on Monday 18 November, setting out the new government's reform agenda. She also announced:

- the suspension, with immediate effect, of the payment by results aspect of Supporting Families funding, with local authorities receiving the totality of their 2024/25 allocation of supporting families funding by 12 December.
- the consolidation of more than £400 million of children's social care funding within the local government finance settlement (LGFS) and indicated that there will be additional funding in the upcoming LGFS to support preventative services.



Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive

Breaking down barriers to opportunity

November 2024

The policy paper outlines key reforms to improve placements and children's commissioning, focusing on better data, strategic collaboration, and provider accountability. The proposals include:

- **Data-Driven Planning:** Enhancing data on placements to help local authorities assess regional needs and plan for long-term demand.
- **Regional Care Cooperatives (RCCs):** Supporting local authorities to establish RCCs to analyse regional data, develop sufficiency strategies, and collaborate with health and justice partners to improve placement provision.
- **New Semi-Secure Provision:** Introduction of semi-secure accommodation to provide flexible, therapeutic care for children needing deprivation of liberty, with clear statutory criteria and mandatory reviews to ensure restrictions are only used when necessary.
- **Diverse Placement Supply:** Encouraging non-profit providers to return to the market to reduce costs and ensure placements meet children's needs closer to home.
- **Streamlined Registration:** Introducing a fast-track process for registering new children's homes to address local placement shortages more efficiently.
- **Provider Accountability:** Implementing a financial oversight scheme to improve transparency among key providers, ensure contingency planning for financial risks, and provide early warnings to local authorities.
- **Profit Control and Ethical Standards:** Exploring new requirements for companies providing placements, such as responsible tax practices, and considering a cap on provider profits to tackle excessive profiteering.
- **Strategic Leadership and Collaboration:** Embedding a national framework for children's social care, supported by a real-time dashboard to monitor progress, and strengthening multi-agency safeguarding through improved accountability and shared learning.

The document in full can be accessed [here](#).

Practice Spotlight

Submit your practice by Friday 20th December!

Click here to access the **Practice Spotlight** area and resources

We are very excited to announce the launch of the London Children's Services Practice Spotlight, inviting all London Local Authorities submit their most innovating and impactful practice!

What is the purpose of Practice Spotlight?

Practice Spotlight will shine a light on London's most innovative and impactful practice, with 3 core purposes;

- To identify the practice that is making a difference, often around very complex and challenging areas of work
- To boost opportunities for sharing and learning across London's LA's, which underpins a positive culture of collaboration
- To recognise and celebrate the individuals and teams who have done this work and raise awareness of London's amazing work with broader audiences.

What are the submission categories?

All Local Authorities are invited to submit their best examples of practice against 9 categories. Each category will recognise a Local Authority or group of Local Authorities that has shown best practice through innovative and impactful approaches within the area outlined. The 9 categories are:

1. **Reducing racial disparities and tackling racism**, sponsored by the Leadership in Colour Reference Group
2. **Impact for children with special educational needs and disabilities**, sponsored by the London SEND Steering Group
3. **Building safety for young Londoners**, sponsored by the London Adolescent Safeguarding Oversight Board
4. **Supporting and strengthening the workforce**, sponsored by the Workforce Steering Group
5. **Delivering excellence for care leavers**, sponsored by the Care Leavers Trust Board
6. **Improving outcomes for children with complex needs who are in care or on the edge of care**, sponsored by the Pan-London Placements Commissioning Panel
7. **Delivering together with health services**, sponsored by the Children's Social Care Practice Leaders
8. **Making data speak for London's children**, sponsored by the Intelligence & Data Research Steering Group
9. **Delivering positive impact through early intervention**, sponsored by the London Early Help Network.

How do you submit your practice?

Please visit the newly created **Practice Spotlight area of the LIA website** to learn more about this exciting opportunity to submit and celebrate your practice.

The website area houses all the information and resources needed to support you in sharing the opportunity locally and submitting your work including; an introduction pack, full submission guidance and links to the submission template.

We very much look forward to receiving your LA's submissions and if you need any further support please contact [Rula Tripolitaki](#) or [Matt Raleigh](#)

The deadline for submissions is 20th December 2024



Pan-London Commissioning Workshop: 10th December



The Pan-London Placement Commissioning Panel held a joint workshop with the London Commissioning Network on Tuesday, 10th December 2024, from 14:30 to 17:00, hosted by LB Camden at the Crowndale Conference Suite. It marked the first in-person meeting of both the Panel and Network in 2024! It was fantastic to see so many colleagues from across London in person.

Chaired by Chris Munday (DCS LB Barnet and ALDCS Lead for Resources and Commissioning), the workshop explored future priorities for pan-London collaboration in placements and children's social care. Attendees heard from:

- Chris Munday: Chair of the ALDCS Resources and Commissioning Programme, on Pan-London Commissioning and key achievements this year.
- Jonathan Bacon: DfE Deputy Director of Social Care, on the new government's social care reforms, namely "Keeping Children Safe, Helping Families Thrive".
- Mark Evans: Manager, South East Regional Care Cooperative, on the South East region's implementation of their RCC.

This was followed by a panel discussion with the speakers and co-chair of the commissioning network, Julia Mills (LB Camden) and Dave Borland (RB Greenwich).

Colleagues also contributed to a forward plan for the Network and Panel for 2025, identifying key areas of focus for future meetings and activities in the year ahead. It was a highly positive session—special thanks to LB Camden for hosting and to all those who attended.

A Big Thank You...



The session also marked Chris Munday's final PLPCP as Chair of the ALDCS Resources and Commissioning Programme. After 10 years as DCS at LB Barnet, Chris will be taking a well-earned break!

We would all like to thank Chris for his leadership and drive as Chair of the Programme, and for all his hard work in promoting pan-London commissioning across the city. During his tenure in London, Chris has also served as the national Chair of the ADCS Resources & Strategy Policy Committee. In this capacity, he has written a blog reflecting on his 10 years as DCS at LB Barnet—Bravery, Not Blame.

[You can read Chris's blog here:](#)

PROJECT UPDATES

LONDON ACCOMODATION PATHFINDER

The London Accommodation Pathfinder (LAP) has been operational for over a year, making substantial progress since its launch. A significant milestone has now been reached with the **first evaluation of the project now published**. Please see the note below from Tim Aldridge (DCS LB Camden) updating on the progress on the LAP since its launch in August 2023.

Dear colleagues,

The first full evaluation of the London Accommodation Pathfinder (LAP) project has now been published following the interim evaluation report completed in May 2023.

This evaluation, which concluded earlier this year, continued to focus on the setup and implementation of the LAP, providing us with early insights into the project's delivery. The aims of the LAP are to provide an alternative to custody for some of London's most vulnerable children, and while it has not been without its challenges, as illustrated in the report, it has also demonstrated growth and resilience in its first year. Since its launch in August 2023, sixteen children have used the LAP as an alternative to custody. Only three were remanded back due to new offences or breaches, and one received a custodial sentence.

We will continue working with our stakeholders, project providers, and the children and young people involved to drive further improvements and align the service with the LAP's objectives and goals.

The second evaluation is set to commence in December 2024, with a greater focus on the experiences and benefits for the children and young people, as well as consideration of the future expansion of this service.

Below is some feedback from the children and young people who have lived in the LAP this year:

- "I'm more financially stable, I've learnt how to budget, how to cook"
- "It's helping me to be more independent"
- "I feel like I'm one step closer to being a man"
- "the support has stopped me wanting to do bad"
- "being here has changed my approach to people, thinking about them as a mother, father, brother or sister"
- "I'm leaving here with some driving lessons under my belt, leaving here with some AQAs, not breaching or offending once, no arrests, that's leading to me coming off tag at an earlier time, I'm a bit smarter"
- "I'm looking forward to having my full independence again"

This work is only possible through continued collaboration as a partnership, supporting an alternative pathway that helps children build pro-social identities and thrive within and as part of their communities.

Tim Aldridge
Executive Director
Children and Learning
London Borough of Camden

PAN LONDON DYNAMIC SUFFICIENCY TOOL

Pan-London Dynamic Sufficiency Tool

Supporting commissioning and strategic planning through access to child-led data and meaningful insights

Now updated
with 2022/23
data



In early 2023, Commissioning Alliance launched the **Pan London Dynamic Sufficiency Tool (DST)**. Funded by DLUCH & DfE and working in partnership with LIIA, the project was launched to **provide London with secure access to child-led data in the Dynamic Sufficiency Tool**. This interactive tool grants London's Commissioners meaningful insight to support commissioning and strategic planning.

From August 2024 the Dynamic Sufficiency Tool has been hosted alongside the rest of the LIIA centralised reporting, accessed through the **Members Area** on the LIIA website. Access to the Member's Area is restricted to professionals working with the 33 Local Authorities (LA) in London nominated by the Director of Children's Services (DCS) or other senior Leaders within the LA.

With this change of home, the LIIA Data & Intelligence team has assumed responsibility for the maintenance and further development of the DST.

Version 2.0 (September 2024) has been **updated to include data from the 2022/2023 statutory returns** plus an additional table on the 'Data Submission Summary' page to anchor DST to the numbers on other publications.

Further enhancements will be carried out iteratively over the autumn and winter to improve the content and functionality.

If you have any ideas or comments for improvement please contact the LIIA Data & Intelligence Team.

In early 2023, Commissioning Alliance launched the Pan London Dynamic Sufficiency Tool (DST). Funded by DLUCH & DfE and working in partnership with LIIA, the pilot project was launched to provide London with secure access to child-led data in the Dynamic Sufficiency Tool (DST). This interactive tool grants London's Commissioners meaningful insight to support commissioning and strategic planning.

For the pilot phase the DST has been hosted in the CASA portal run by the Commissioning Alliance. Following a highly successful 18 months, we're delighted to announce that a permanent home for the interactive sufficiency tool has been agreed, ensuring continued secure access to the dashboards which have proved so useful. The Dynamic Sufficiency Tool is now hosted alongside the rest of the LIIA centralised reporting, accessed through the Members Area on the LIIA website. Access to the Member's Area is restricted to professionals working with the 33 Local Authorities (LA) in London nominated by the Director of Children's Services (DCS) or other senior Leaders within the LA.

LIIA's vision is to use data & intelligence as the catalyst for improving the outcomes for all children with a particular focus on the most vulnerable children, young people, and their families living in London. The Dynamic Sufficiency Tool is going through a number of enhancements to improve functionality. An update of the data is also in the programme of enhancements which will be carried out iteratively over the summer and autumn. The DST will be available in its new home from the beginning of August, but for those who have previously accessed the report via the CASA portal, please note this will remain until 23rd August 2024.

If you do not already have access to the LIIA Members area, please get the authorisation from the relevant senior leader in your LA and register your interest in accessing the Dynamic Sufficiency Tool via the LIIA portal, by following [this link](#).

Please get in touch with any issues [here](#).

DATA REQUESTS



Following on from the Children's Commissioner's request for information regarding the use of unregistered accommodation for looked-after children, LIIA is coordinating efforts to collate data from London Local Authorities to support further analysis on placement sufficiency. A request for London Local Authorities submissions to the CCO data request on unregistered placements has been circulated to DCS' with a deadline of 20th December. LIIA is looking to collate London's response and conduct regional analysis on unregistered placements.

In addition, LIIA is conducting a second data collection round, focusing on the Top 10 most expensive placements across London. This builds on the national ADCS data collection from 2023, which contributed to the London Top 330 Placements report and strengthened funding advocacy efforts. The 2024 initiative aims to refine the evidence base for high-cost placements and support London Local Authorities in developing Capital Round funding bids. Insights from both data collections will be shared in the new year.

SECURE CHILDREN'S HOME (SCH) WITH PAN-LONDON VEHICLE FOR CHILDREN'S COMMISSIONING LTD (PLV LTD)

The London SCH project, which is now close to the end of the current architectural design development and pre planning application stage, has been on hold since August '24. While the project has been on hold, the main focus has been on working with the DfE to review and make changes to the project delivery approach in order to give this complex project, and the future planning application for the SCH, the greatest chance of success.

Delivering a secure children's home in the capital remains a key priority for London boroughs and the Department for Education as there is still a national shortage of welfare placements in secure children's homes and currently there is no service of this kind in London. This means London's most vulnerable children are waiting several months for a placement, and these are usually hundreds of miles away - far from their families, carers, friends and other people that are important to them. By keeping these children closer to us, here in London, we can provide them with greater support when they are ready to leave secure care and settle back into the community.

Boroughs will be updated, via their DCS, should there be any significant changes to the status of this project before the next bulletin.

For more information about this project, including PLV Ltd, please contact the [Project Lead](#) or go to <https://www.liia.london/plv-and-londons-secure-childrens-home/>.

LONDON COMMISSIONING NETWORK



Register your
interest in
joining the
network here!

The Pan-London Commissioning Network is open to all commissioning leads across London, offering a collaborative space to share experiences, best practices, and challenges.

Jointly chaired by Dave Borland (LB Greenwich) and Julia Mills (LB Camden), the network has recently refreshed its terms of reference to renew its focus and purpose.

Recent discussions have centred on joint commissioning, with upcoming thematic meetings set to explore areas like ASD, SEMH, SEND commissioning, and updates from national government on policy changes.

CHILDREN'S HOMES WORKFORCE

Earlier this year LIIA undertook regional Children's Homes Workforce (CHW) research with current and existing LA owned and run Children's Homes to help us better understand recruitment and retention challenges. As part of this work, we also learned of the ambition for a regional Children's Homes Managers network to be developed to bring peers together to share learning and drive progress.

We are therefore pleased to announce **the launch of the London Children's Homes Managers Network**, bringing together Registered Managers, Deputy Managers, and Responsible Individuals from LA-owned and run children's homes, as well as those involved in the opening of new homes.

The network held its first meeting in July, and has since held a focused session on Workforce recruitment and retention highlighting both challenges faced by Local Authorities but also examples of good practice and strategies used across London. LIIA will also be launching a 'CHW workforce demographics survey' with network members to help inform targeted pipeline and supply initiatives

To learn more, or join the network please contact [Bethan Evans](#) and [Rula Tripolitaki](#).

COMMISSIONING FOR ASD SEMH

Phase 2 of the ASD SEMH work has concluded, with the Pan-London business case for a new model of care being published – you can read the paper [here!](#)

Phase 3 of the ASD SEMH project is currently underway, Key activities include seeking partnership agreements in sub-regions to validate the pan-London business case and exploring opportunities for specialist residential provision, including options for new Free Special Schools.

Collaborative work is underway across ICBs, Local Authorities, and provider collaboratives to design pilot projects, building on existing innovations. Each ICB is supporting work on identifying local needs, cohort data, and potential interventions, with scenario modelling and securing funding being key steps. There is significant work being undertaken subregionally – key updates as below:

- **NCL:** A subregional case for change has been completed, with a multidisciplinary clinical team being established. There's potential for a children's home and vacant school sites are being considered for day provision.
- **NEL:** A case for change is also complete. A multidisciplinary team approach is being explored, along with ongoing projects such as a children's home, and residential school.
- **SEL & SWL:** Meetings with ICBs have taken place, and discussions are ongoing to coordinate regional and place-level activities. Planning has commenced for a joint South London DCS, ICB and PCF workshop.
- **NWL:** We are working with the region to establish the best candidate for a pilot project, and are hoping to build on the success of some promising work in Brent that has already achieved good buy in from the ICB, Provider Collaborative and a few councils in the region

Across London, a residential school or similar residential provision is also being scoped with potential providers. Workstreams will cover delivery models, capital works, and integration across health, education, and social care, with service user wherever possible, and provider input when necessary.

To find out more about how work is progressing in your subregion, please contact [David Garland](#).

RESIDENTIAL PARENTING ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORK

The Framework is now operational and accessible via the [Atamis TM portal](#), and through the contact below. Currently the framework is being utilised by 15 local authorities, with 13 more committing to join. Please do sign up as this will bring access to improved services at reduced cost for your local authority. Additionally, this helps to signal to the market a more collaborative approach across London local authorities which paves the way for wider collaboration in future.

For more information, please contact [Siju Raphael](#).



LIIA TRADED OFFER: Top cost placement analysis

With rising costs for High Needs, Low Incidence provision, LIIA is developing a cost-effective solution to support Local Authorities through our traded offer. Our recent "Top 10 Placements" analysis revealed that high-cost placements often correlate with increased overall costs in councils' top cohorts, with significant variations in how well placements meet needs. In fact, placements that don't meet needs may cost up to £100,000 more per year. LIIA is piloting a new support approach that will soon be available to other councils at an affordable, at-cost rate. The offer consists of two key phases, with potential for customisation based on local needs.

- **Phase 1: Benchmarking and Discovery:** This phase includes gathering financial and contractual data on top 10 placements, researching providers' financial health, and estimating staffing costs to create a comprehensive benchmarking matrix. The insights report will reveal potential margins for negotiation with providers, supporting councils in cost-effective planning.
- **Phase 2: Training and Implementation:** This phase offers targeted negotiation training for placements and brokerage teams, equipping staff with effective tools for navigating high-stakes negotiations with providers. Training will address both quick discussions and long-term negotiations, helping councils develop a more strategic approach to provider engagement.

Expanded Offer: Additionally, LIIA can provide tailored services, such as data analysis, documentation design, strategic policy development, and project management. This expanded offer supports councils in creating sustainable, cost-efficient strategies that better meet young people's needs.

For more information on the offer and costings, you can get in touch with the [LIIA team](#).

GET IN TOUCH

Please visit our website: liia.london for more detailed information on each of the ALDCS priorities, or [contact the team directly](#) to discuss anything in greater detail.

[EXPLORE THE ALDCS COMMISSIONING PRIORITY AREA](#)

If you would like to discuss any areas of the programme in more detail or support a particular area of work, please reach out to our LIIA Commissioning Programme Lead, [Frank Offer](#).

THANKS FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT OF THE RESOURCES AND COMMISSIONING PROGRAMME!

