

# ALDCS SEND BULLETIN

DECEMBER 2024 ISSUE

The ALDCS SEND Bulletin highlights events and news for colleagues in local authorities who work with children and young people with SEND. Find out more about LIIA's work in SEND [here](#).

## NEWS

### London SEND Leadership Programme Concludes First Cohort!

The London SEND Leadership Programme has progressed significantly, with the first cohort successfully concluded and the second launched in October 2024. The programme began its design phase in January 2024 and is delivered by Newton Europe and nasen (National Association for Special Educational Needs). A design group consulted key audiences for the programme, including SEND Leads through to Team Managers, to identify areas of demand and preferences for the programme's structure and modules. The programme has been widely praised for its relevance and effectiveness.

Feedback from the first cohort indicated that 100% of participants found the training relevant to their learning needs, felt they had strengthened their peer support networks, and 95% recommended the programme to a peer. Pre and post programme evaluation has also indicated a significant increase in participants of Cohort 1's confidence in delivering and sustaining change in their Local Area. Highlights from programme attendees included:

- “Networking and getting the opportunity to explore some of the challenges in SEND with colleagues from across the sector and across the region”
- “Time to reflect on the current landscape and understand shared challenges across London and to consider some models of best practice”
- “Finding out about the variation in London- where there is good practice and understanding more about SEND”



# 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**



# ALDCS PROGRAMME UPDATES

## SEND STRATEGIC MANAGER PARENT CARER NETWORK



The SEND Strategic Manager Parent Carer Network held its annual in-person meeting in October – with a thematic meeting on Social Care. During the session, attendees heard from guest speakers including:

- Caroline Coady – Deputy Director of Social Care, CDC, on national developments relating to Social Care.
- Rodney Grey and Crina Popa – Co-Chairs of the London DSCO Network.
- Ian Lewis – NHSE Senior Intervenor
- Connor Johnston and Efa Jones – Law Commission

A key focus of the session was the Law Commission’s Consultation into Disabled Children’s Social Care legislation, particularly the implications and opportunities for reform to funding, workforce and assessments. You can [access the slides from the event here](#).

### OUR NEXT MEETING...

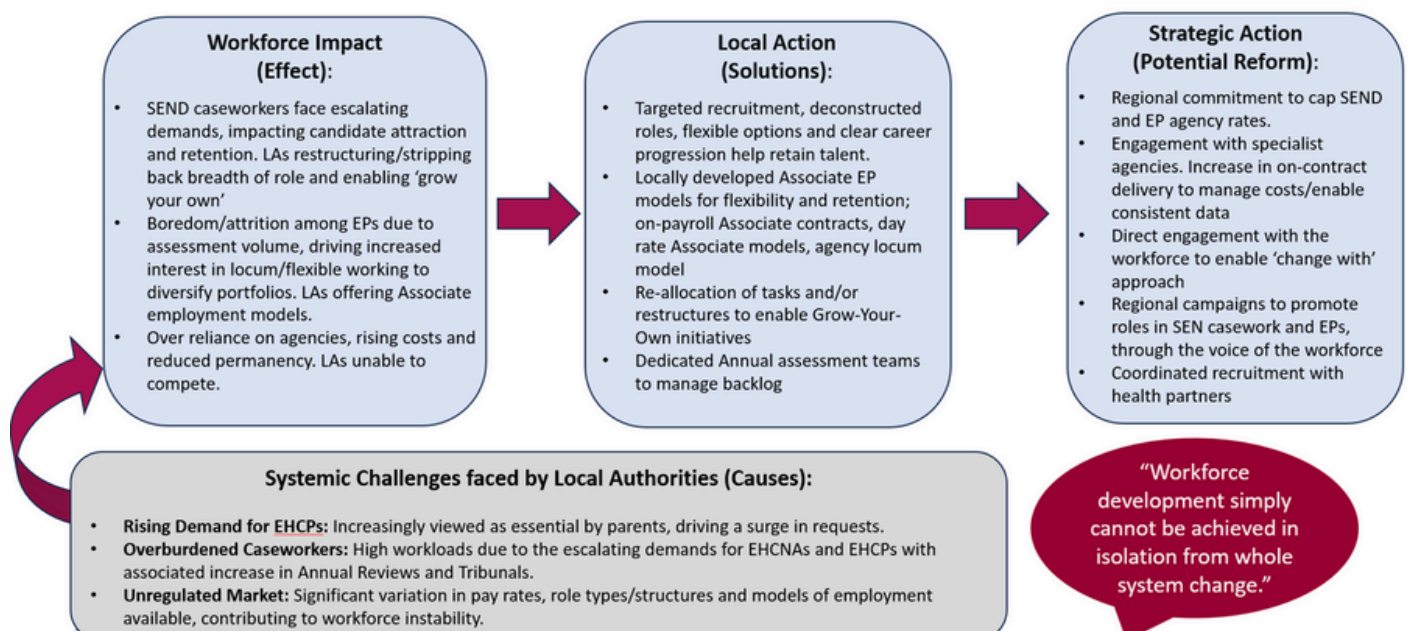
Our next SEND Strategic Manager Parent Carer Network Meeting will be taking place on Thursday, 5th December, from 9:30 AM to 12:00 PM.

This session will focus on Inclusion in London and feature a presentation from London Councils on their recently published Inclusion in Schools report. Additionally, School Heads from across London will share practical insights and strategies they are implementing to foster inclusion in their schools.

Please **get in touch** if you’d like to attend.

## SEND WORKFORCE

Following earlier research by LIA, interviews with a range of London Local Authorities are progressing. So far, four case studies have been completed, with five more in development. Early findings reveal significant challenges, such as shortages and high costs of Educational Psychologists, alongside examples of positive practice. Notable successes include Local Authorities reducing reliance on agency staff within a year and improving retention through targeted training and clear career progression pathways. A summary of these insights is presented in the figure below:



## ***Collaboration on Workforce with the South East Region***

In November, LIA colleagues and Local Authority representatives participated in the South East SEND Workforce Summit, which underscored common workforce challenges across regions and highlighted the importance of collaborative approaches to address these issues effectively and prevent unintended consequences.

The Summit also facilitated discussions on shared challenges and opportunities for cross-regional collaboration. A key outcome was the identification of potential for a SEND 'Big Listen', designed to capture workforce perspectives and ensure strategies are co-designed with those directly involved and potential for supporting the development of SEND Caseworker Apprenticeships.

## ***SEND Caseworker Apprenticeships***

Surrey County Council is leading the development of apprenticeships for SEND caseworkers to build a skilled workforce and address challenges in recruitment, training, and career progression within the sector. This initiative aims to create a more stable and capable workforce while improving career opportunities and making better use of funding through the Apprenticeship Levy.

The proposal includes a phased approach to developing a clear progression pathway with three levels of roles. At the entry level, Case Officers (Level 3 or 4) will focus on core responsibilities such as managing and updating EHCPs. Senior Case Officers (Level 4 or 5) will take on more advanced responsibilities, providing oversight and expertise. SEN Managers (Level 6 or 7) will lead teams and shape strategic priorities for SEND services. While job titles may vary between Local Authorities, the training content will reflect the core skills required for these roles.

Surrey County Council has received approval from SE19 and initial feedback from the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) to move forward with this work. Next steps include demonstrating why existing apprenticeship standards do not meet the needs of SEND caseworker roles, securing further approvals, and collaborating with partners to develop the training content for the first apprenticeship level.

45 Local Authorities have already expressed interest in supporting this initiative. Surrey County Council is now inviting other Local Authorities and stakeholders to join as collaborators, critical friends, and contributors. Input from partners will be essential to ensure the success of this project.

If you are interested in supporting this work, **[please contact Jo McSherrrie](#)**. An initial meeting will be arranged to discuss the project and the next steps.

# **SEND COMMISSIONING**

Following Treow's report on SEND Commissioning across London, Mime Consulting has been commissioned to deliver key recommendations, including the development of a pan-London commissioning framework, a London shared data system for provision and costs of placements in Independent Non-Maintained Special Schools, and tools to streamline SEND placements.



The project will focus on tackling key challenges, including the rising costs of high-cost placements, insufficient specialist provision, and increasing demand for SEND services. It will also prioritise developing strategies to improve SEND data management, enhance commissioning practices, and reduce reliance on expensive placements.

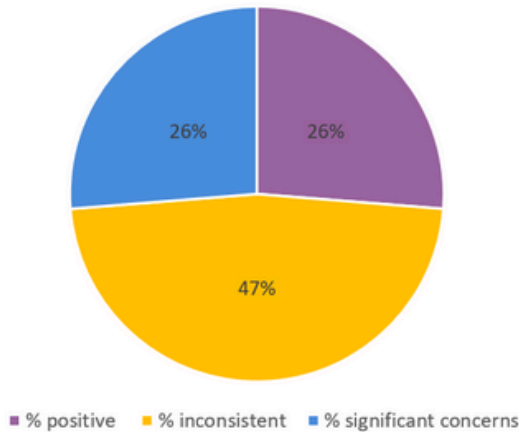
A key objective is to identify opportunities for collaborative commissioning at both the Integrated Care Board (ICB) level and across London. Additionally, the project will establish a data system to highlight gaps in provision and the costs of the most expensive placements. This system will support efforts to address these gaps, deliver better value for money, and achieve improved outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

# LOCAL AREA SEND INSPECTIONS

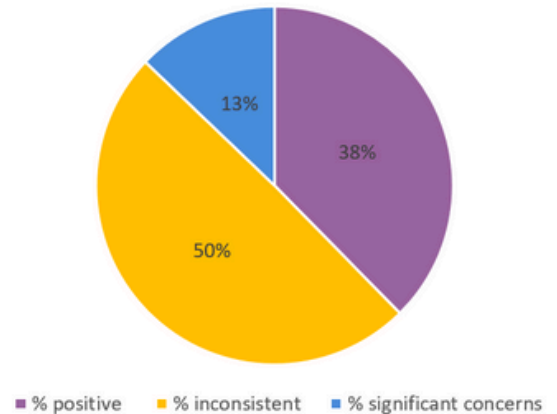
The Ofsted SEND inspection framework has provided valuable insights into the performance of Local Authorities. Since the framework's introduction in January 2023, 43 inspection reports have been published nationally, including eight from London Boroughs.

LIIA continues to monitor outcomes, analysis shows that London is performing above the national average, with 38% of boroughs achieving Outcome 1 compared to 26% nationally.

National Outcomes of Area SEND Inspections



London Outcomes of Area SEND Inspections



LIIA also host a bank of Local Authority SEFs on our SEND Members area, if you have recently completed a SEF for your Local Area and would like to add this to our bank - **please get in touch!**

## COMMISSIONING FOR ASD SEMH

Children with Autism and mental health challenges often find themselves placed in costly, distant settings that fail to meet their needs. These placements highlight the struggle of services to intervene effectively and early.

LIIA, in partnership with NCB, has been working to address these challenges. This collaboration emphasizes the importance of early intervention, stronger coordination between councils and the NHS, and enhanced local care options. Investing in early support has the potential to save councils and the NHS up to £175 million over five years, by reducing reliance on high-cost placements and secure mental health beds.



### Developing a new model of care for children and young people in London.

Meeting the needs of children and young people with Social Emotional and Mental Health Needs (SEMH), learning disabilities, or autism and mental health conditions.

A pan-London business case – May 2024.



NCB's recently published business case for Phase 2 of this work recommends:

- Redirecting resources toward prevention through improved early intervention strategies.
- Creating new local pathways, including enhanced support through short breaks and other initiatives.
- Developing additional local residential provision to reduce dependency on out-of-area placements.

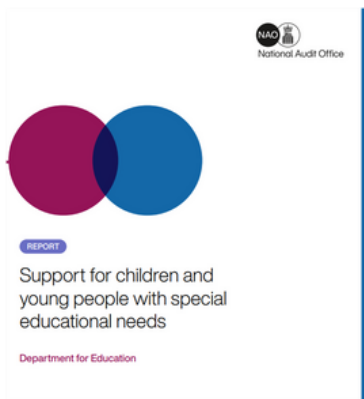
Phase 3 of the ASD/SEMH project is now underway, with pilots and residential school provisions being scoped to address service gaps and improve access for children with complex needs.

Five sub-regional projects across London are focusing on early support, crisis intervention, short breaks, and improved local care, alongside developing residential schools for high-need children.

If you'd like to learn more on how this work is progressing in your area, **please get in touch.**

# REPORTS

## NATIONAL AUDIT OFFICE REPORT: SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS



The National Audit Office (NAO) report states that the national SEND system is financially unsustainable and failing to improve outcomes for children. It highlights the sharp increase in demand for EHCPs, rising by 140% since 2015, which has placed significant pressure on local authorities.

The report also identifies limited communication and coordination between education, health, and local government, adding to the system's complexity. To address these issues, it calls for whole-system reform, a strategic vision for inclusivity, and better integration across services to ensure sustainable improvements.

## ISOS REPORT: TOWARDS AN EFFECTIVE AND FINANCIALLY SUSTAINABLE APPROACH TO SEND IN ENGLAND



The ISOS report, "Towards an Effective and Financially Sustainable Approach to SEND in England," commissioned by the Local Government Association and the County Councils Network, identifies a significant rise in children with SEND and increasing reliance on special schools due to insufficient places. Local authority spending on SEND is projected to triple by 2025-26, creating unsustainable deficits. It highlights systemic challenges in demand, decision-making, and market capacity, compounded by unclear responsibilities and inadequate market shaping.

The report calls for bold systemic reform, including a national ambition for inclusion, investment in early intervention, mainstream education support, statutory framework reforms, Local Inclusion Partnerships, and a national workforce strategy.

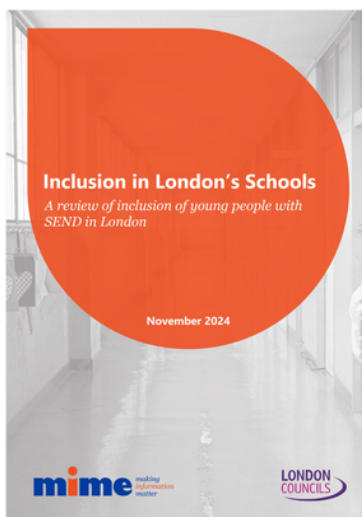
## WHAT WORKS IN SEND REPORT: INCLUSION OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND DISABILITIES IN SCHOOLS



The What Works in SEND: Inclusion of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities in schools - how can local areas support schools report, examines how local areas can support schools to foster inclusivity for children and young people with SEND. The research identifies systemic barriers such as fragmented policies, funding disincentives, and inconsistent support and training for staff. Facilitators of inclusion include values-based leadership, multi-agency collaboration, and strategic local area plans. Recommendations include a national vision for inclusion, reforms to funding and accountability frameworks, improved teacher training, and better support for families.

Local areas and schools are encouraged to adopt inclusive strategies, enhance staff expertise, and ensure smooth educational transitions for children with SEND.

# LONDON COUNCILS REPORT: INCLUSION IN LONDON SCHOOLS



The Inclusion in London Schools report by London Councils highlights the growing proportion of pupils with SEND in the capital, now over 17% of the school population. Inclusive education, which integrates SEND and non-SEND pupils, benefits children by reducing distress, improving attendance, boosting educational outcomes, and fostering long-term employment opportunities. However, barriers such as inadequate funding, insufficiently trained staff, and disparities in outcomes—especially for black pupils with SEND—hinder inclusion.

Recommendations include increased funding, professionalisation of teaching assistant roles, enhanced training for SEND specialists, updated performance frameworks, and stronger collaboration among schools, local authorities, the NHS, and parents.

## RESOURCES

### NHSE LONDON REGION CO- PRODUCTION VIDEO



Strategic co-production for Young  
People and Families with  
SEND

NHSE London Region, working alongside London's ICBs, Parent Carer Forum leads, and Local Authority SEND colleagues, ***has developed a new video resource*** to highlight the benefits and importance of co-production in improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND in London.

***"Co-production means everything to me.  
It's been a lifeline to me professionally and personally.  
Personally, because it has shown me that I can regain that trust in  
professionals in the system I'm working in."***

**Chloe Apter, Commissioning Officer SEND, Integrated Commissioning,  
Southwark Council and SEL ICB**

The video explores:

- The challenges faced by families, such as feeling unheard, undervalued, and encountering systemic barriers that lower expectations and hinder aspirations.
- Strategic co-production as a model where families and professionals work as equals, sharing decision-making from the very beginning to create meaningful change and build mutual trust.
- The benefits of co-production, including better-designed services, reduced inequalities, improved outcomes for children and families, and stronger, more inclusive communities.
- The need to go beyond tokenistic engagement by embedding lived experiences at the heart of planning and ensuring services reflect the diversity of SEND families and their needs.
- A call for broader, more inclusive engagement, focusing on understanding the perspectives of those both within and outside traditional service structures, to co-design effective and resilient solutions.

# ACCESS THE LIA SEND DASHBOARD



LIA is continuing to develop the London SEND Data Dashboard as part of the SEND programme to support Local Authorities. The dashboard offers valuable tools for London Authorities to facilitate both local and regional monitoring of SEND Services.

[You can access the Dashboard here.](#)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### LAW COMMISSION, LONDON CONSULTATION EVENT: 7TH JANUARY

The Law Commission is currently reviewing the legal framework governing social care for disabled children in England. Its goal is to ensure the law is fair, modern, and accessible, enabling children with disabilities to access the support they need. ***As part of this review, the Commission has published a consultation paper*** outlining provisional proposals for reform and inviting feedback on these proposals from stakeholders. The consultation is open until January 20, 2025.

To further engage with local authorities, the Law Commission is hosting an in-person consultation event for professionals based in and around London. The event will provide an overview of the consultation paper and proposed reforms, offering attendees the opportunity to ask questions and share their views. Local authority professionals working in disabled children's social care, such as DSCOs, heads of service, and social workers, are encouraged to attend, as well as health and education colleagues with relevant expertise.

The event will be hosted at London Councils, 12 Arthur Street - ***Please do register here if you'd like to attend.***

### FOCUS GROUP: HOW CAN OFSTED CONCEPTUALISE 'VULNERABILITY' IN ITS WORK WITHIN THE EDUCATION AND SOCIAL CARE SECTORS?

Ofsted is increasing its focus on how providers meet the needs of vulnerable children, learners, and young people, including a new inspection criterion on inclusion. This aims to direct resources to those with the highest needs. To support this, Ofsted has commissioned Research in Practice to lead a project on vulnerability and inclusion, developing an evidence-informed definition for use in inspections across education and children's social care.

As part of this, Ofsted is hosting a series of online focus groups with professionals from education and social care. The sessions will share findings, test the working definition of vulnerability, and discuss practical ways to support vulnerable children and learners. These focus groups are open to professionals at all levels, you can request a place at each group ***here.***

#### Focus Group Dates:

- Group 1 - 23 January 2025, 09:30-11:30 (Early years)
- Group 2 - 8 January 2025, 11:00-13:00 (Further education and skills)
- Group 3 - 12 January 2025, 13:30-15:30 (Primary, Secondary, and alternative provision)
- Group 4 - 20 January 2025, 10:00-12:00 (Children's social care, including Early Help)



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**THANKS FOR YOUR CONTINUED  
SUPPORT OF THE ALDCS SEND  
PROGRAMME.**

**THE LIA TEAM WISH YOU A HAPPY  
FESTIVE BREAK AND LOOK  
FORWARD TO WORKING WITH YOU  
IN 2025!**

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## **GET IN TOUCH**

Please visit our website: [liia.london](https://liia.london) for more detailed information on each of the ALDCS priorities, or [contact the team directly](#) to discuss anything in greater detail. As always, [you can click here to register for access to our dedicated](#) SEND Members' Area.

### [EXPLORE THE ALDCS SEND 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 LIA SEND Programme Lead, [Frank Offer](#).

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LONDON INNOVATION AND IMPROVEMENT ALLIANCE

Together for  
London's Children

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The Association of London  
Directors of Children's Services