

# RESOURCES AND COMMISSIONING BULLETIN

NOVEMBER 2023



**Dear colleagues,**

I am delighted to present our first bulletin from the Association of London Directors of Children's Services (ALDCS) Resources and Commissioning Programme. This bulletin describes recent achievements, highlighting milestones such as the successful launch of the Dynamic Sufficiency Tool, opening of the first two London Accommodation Pathfinders and our recent bid to become a Regional Care Cooperative Pathfinder - The bid is available [here](#).

ALDCS established the Resources and Commissioning Programme, chaired by Chris Munday, in response to increasing financial pressures on placement budgets, particularly in relation to high cost low incidence provision and the lack of suitable local provision resulting in placements at great distances from the home local authority. We are committed to deepening our understanding of the factors leading to these pressures and working with local authorities to improve sufficiency, value for money and outcomes for children.

The scale of the challenge is considerable - the placement spend across London now totals over £430 million, with over a quarter of that spend deployed on the top ten most expensive placements in each borough. Placement costs are continuing to increase with four London placements now costing the equivalent of over £1 million per year.

For more information, please check the Resources and Commissioning webpage, or contact our LIAA Commissioning and Resources Programme Lead, [Frank Offer](#).

**Chris Munday**

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

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# THE PAN-LONDON PLACEMENT COMMISSIONING PANEL AND NETWORK

The Pan-London Placement Commissioning Panel (PLPCP) chaired by Chris Munday, drives the work of the Resources and Commissioning programme for ALDCS.

The Pan-London Placements Commissioning Programme aims to:

- Address the shortfall of provision for children requiring high-cost low incidence placements.
- Improve outcomes for London's children.
- Secure better value for money.
- Build a strong understanding across London of the factors which are putting pressure on commissioned services.
- Build an evidence base in support of sub-regional and regional collaborative commissioning as a solution to the pressures London is facing.
- Strengthen partnership arrangements for specific commissioned services across London and the sub-regions.
- Open new, high quality London provision for London children.

There is also a Pan-London Commissioning Network, which is open to all commissioning managers in London - the next meeting is on 14/12/23, 10.00-11.30, via MS Teams. A key focus will be London's bid to be a Regional Care Co-operative Pathfinder. Further information and invitations are available from [Frank Offer](#).

## The Pan-London Placement Commissioning Panel

**Chair:** [Chris Munday](#)  
**NEL Lead:** [Christina Pace](#)  
**NCL Lead:** [Angela Elliott](#)  
**NWL Lead:** [Adrian Rocks](#)  
**SEL Lead:** [Dave Borland](#)  
**SWL Lead:** [Lucy Pennie](#)

The next PLPCP meeting takes place on Friday 8 December. Please get in touch if you are interested in taking part in future meetings.

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## EVIDENCE BASED COMMISSIONING

### REES CENTRE: REVIEW OF SUFFICIENCY STRATEGIES IN LONDON



We commissioned the Rees Centre at Oxford University to conduct a comprehensive review of London Local Authorities' Sufficiency Strategies.

This [review](#) highlighted key areas where a coordinated approach at the pan-London level could lead to more effective solutions for the shared challenges faced by London authorities. Subsequently, the Pan-London Placement Commissioning Panel (PLPCP) established a clear definition for High - Cost, Low-Incidence (HCLI) placements and a programme of work to improve sufficiency, value for money and outcomes for children.

Please contact [Frank Offer](#) for more information.

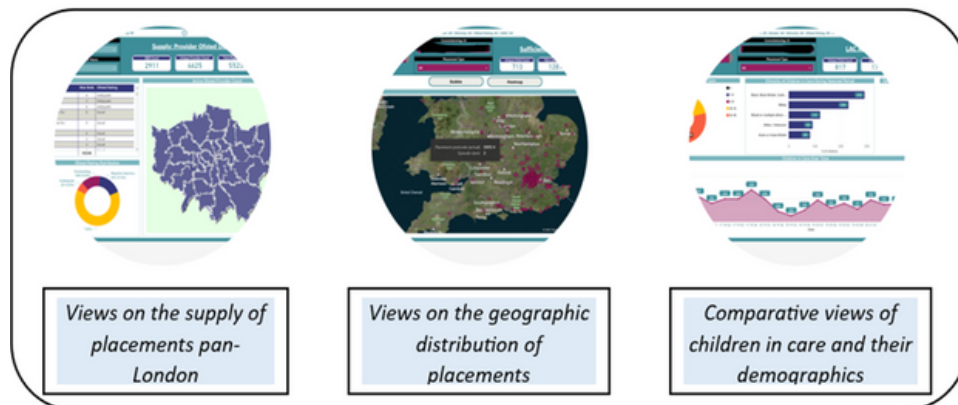
# PAN-LONDON SNAPSHOT OF COMPLEX ADOLESCENTS

The Rees Centre Review highlighted the need for a common understanding and shared data sources for placements in London. In response the PLPCP conducted a snapshot of placement, provision and cost data. The analysis revealed that 91% of residential placements were made outside the borough, with an average distance of 53 miles from the local authority placing the child. Further, only 41% of residential beds in London were occupied by London children, leaving 59% of residential beds in London either vacant or utilised by local authorities outside London.

For more information please contact [Frank Offer](#).

## DYNAMIC SUFFICIENCY TOOL

Expanding on the insights derived from the Pan-London Snapshot of Complex Adolescents, the PLPCP, in collaboration with LIIA, the Commissioning Alliance, and Social Finance, has developed the Dynamic Sufficiency Tool. This resource provides valuable data for London Local Authorities, to support sufficiency planning and enabling them to make well-informed commissioning decisions.



**The diagram includes additional examples of how this tool can support your understanding of placements in your local authority.**

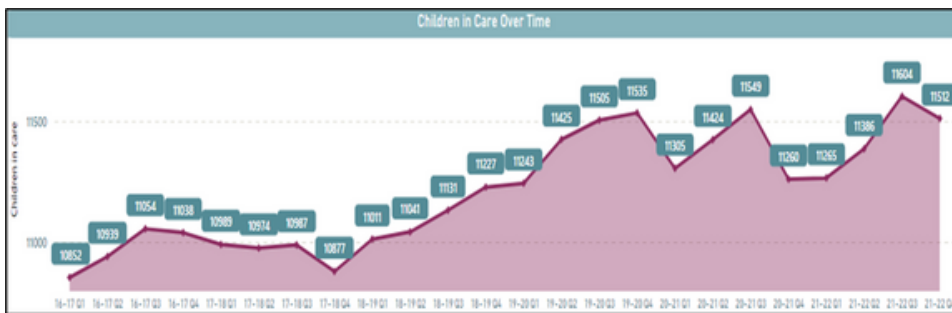
With this tool, you can develop insights that inform evidence-based commissioning strategies and targeted market-shaping activities. For instance, in partnership with Health and Youth Justice, we've designed provisions to specifically address the over-representation of 16-17-year-old Black British, Black African, and Black Caribbean boys in custody.

The Dynamic Sufficiency Tool is a significant leap forward in ensuring that London's commissioning decisions are well-informed, equitable, and responsive to the evolving needs of children in care across the city.

For more information and access, contact [Chris Corbett at the Commissioning Alliance](#).

## DEVELOPING A COHERENT APPROACH TO SUFFICIENCY PLANNING

The PLPCP plans to develop a Pan-London Sufficiency Strategy, with supporting Sub-regional Sufficiency Strategies, linked to local authorities' planning and actions, based on the London Sufficiency Strategy Report, which forms part of London's bid to be a Regional Care Co-operative (RCC) Pathfinder.



The report highlights London's data insights across critical areas including numbers of children in care, unaccompanied asylum seekers, and those in secure accommodation- a sample analysis is shown in the chart.

### Children in Care 2016-2020

The strategy will guide future development of new provision and market shaping to address sufficiency shortfalls. It also has a national vision, aiming to share London's data tools with other regions to promote data standardisation and sector-wide improvements. You can find the strategy as part of [London's RCC bid](#). If you would like further information, please contact [Jonny Woodthorpe](#).

## LONDON CHILDREN, LONDON LIVES: RESEARCH INTO UNDER-UTILISATION



Map of London's Residential Care Placements 2021/22

Expanding on the learning of under-utilisation from the Pan-London Snapshot, LIAA commissioned the National Children's Bureau in collaboration with the ISOS Partnership for an in-depth study, titled "[London Children, London Lives: Research into Under-Utilisation](#)."

This research sought to test various hypotheses regarding the underutilisation of children's homes in London and develop a shared understanding of the reasons behind the underuse of available beds. It also aimed to provide recommendations to ensure that more children could be placed closer to their homes in the future.

It identified specific categories of young people who were more likely to be placed outside of London, including those at risk of Child Criminal Exploitation/Child Sexual Exploitation, young people with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)/Social, Emotional, and Mental Health(SEMH)/Learning Disabilities , or young people with mental health issues who had been discharged from Tier 4 services.

The report set out proposals to increase the proportion of London children in London provision through practice change, commissioning development and challenging some of the 'blockers' in relation to regulation.

For more information contact [Frank Offer](#).

## CHILD LEVEL DATA

The Child Level Data project (CLD) led by LIAA has issued revised Information Governance documentation for sign off through the Information Sharing Gateway. The new information governance has been approved by IGfL (Information Governance for London). Many thanks to the 15 Local Authorities that have already signed this off.

The CLD project feeds the pan-London sufficiency work by the Commissioning Alliance and will also feed into the work on Disproportionality, Adolescent Safeguarding, Workforce, Special Educational Needs (a new addition) and Care Leavers undertaken by the LIAA data & intelligence team.

Your support in getting the Information Governance signed off for the remaining Local Authorities is very much appreciated.

For more information, please contact [Rashid Jussa](#).

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# MEETING CHILDREN'S COMPLEX NEEDS

## LONDON ACCOMMODATION PATHFINDER

The Rees Centre Sufficiency Review also identified a particularly vulnerable group of children at risk of being remanded into custody. Further analysis highlighted the disproportionately high numbers of black boys aged 16-17 in this cohort. In response, LIA supported LB Camden as hosts in the development of a business case and a bid which secured funds from the Youth Justice Board to develop the London Accommodation Pathfinder model, offering a safe and psychologically-sensitive alternative to custody for these children.

The London Accommodation Pathfinder can be accessed through court remands into local authority accommodation, as part of a Youth Rehabilitation Order with a residency requirement and via the resettlement pathway as a licence condition. The first two properties opened in August and September and cover the North Central London and East London sub-regions, adding 10 additional beds to accommodate children across 12 Local Authorities within those areas. Provision is currently available for children meeting the criteria for placements.

Please contact [Louise Wakelin](#) for more information.

## SECURE CHILDRENS HOME & PAN LONDON VEHICLE FOR CHILDREN'S COMPLEX COMMISSIONING

### Secure Children's Home (SCH)

Using significant capital funding, awarded to London Boroughs by the Department for Education, work is well underway to design and subsequently build a secure children's home in London that will prioritise places for London's children.

The secure children's home project responds to the following issues:

- Nationally, there is a significant shortage of secure children's home provision, and the situation is particularly stark in London as there are no secure children's homes in the capital;
- Often, places are not available for London children when referrals are made, leading to a wait of several months or the use of alternative, high-cost and less suitable provision and an over reliance on the use of deprivation of liberty orders;
- When a secure children's home place is available, despite their complex needs, these children are often placed the furthest from their home - on average around 200 miles away, meaning some children lose regular contact with their families, friends and communities;
- When children are placed at this distance it impacts negatively on the outcomes that can be achieved for the child.

The facility is currently being designed to provide 24 secure welfare placements with 4-bed accommodation that will help children transition and reintegrate safely back into the community. Subject to achieve planning permission and meeting other key milestones, the construction element of the project is expected to be completed by the end of 2027.

London boroughs will oversee the development and running of the new provision, and share the associated benefits and risks through a not-for-profit company known as the Pan London Vehicle for Children's Complex Commissioning Ltd.

## Pan London Vehicle for Children's Complex Commissioning Ltd (PLV)

We are developing a not-for-profit company, known as the Pan London Vehicle for Children's Complex Commissioning Ltd (PLV) which will enable benefit/risk sharing and pan-London engagement with the placement market to secure new provision, improve value for money and achieve enhanced outcomes for children. 31 Local Authorities have already agreed, in principle, to join the PLV, with the remaining two committed to collaborative commissioning and potential future membership.

The PLV presents a significant opportunity for London Local Authorities to engage more effectively with the placement market, promoting collaboration that aims to improve outcomes for our most vulnerable children. The PLV is also expected to be the governance body for London's Regional Care Co-operative (RCC) Pathfinder, should our bid be successful - more information about the RCC is in the section below.

For more information about the SCH and PLV projects, please contact [Queensley Uzomba](#).

## DFE CAPITAL BIDS FOR LOCAL AUTHORITY RESIDENTIAL CHILDREN'S HOMES

The PLPCP, in collaboration with LIA, supported London Local Authorities with their submissions for the 2022 Capital Funding round from the DfE. Their collective efforts were aimed at the development of new children's homes in the region. As a result, seven London Local Authorities successfully secured funding from the DfE, supporting the creation of more than 30 new bed spaces within the next few years.

Although this support is facilitated at a local borough level, the impact is wider, benefiting the entire region in our work to address the shortage of children's home placements in London.

For more information please contact [Frank Offer](#).

## RESIDENTIAL PARENTING ASSESSMENTS

The PLPCP also identified an opportunity for enhanced collaboration in the provision of Residential Parenting Assessments across London. Our initial research highlighted considerable variation in cost and quality with many assessments needing further work, which led to the development of a business case for change. Following agreement, a Framework was developed with a unified set of terms and conditions for all placements and the potential for block commissions. The Framework includes 12 service providers, reaching all London Local Authorities.

By laying the foundation for collective market management of parent and child arrangements, this project plays an important role in demonstrating the potential for frameworks and block contracts to help shape the market to align with the needs of London's children.

The Framework is now operational and accessible via the [Atamis TM portal](#), and through the contact below. 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](#).

# COLLABORATIVE COMMISSIONING, CREATIVE SUPPORT: COMMISSIONING FOR ASD/SEMH



## Collaborative Commissioning, Creative Support

This project will develop commissioning options and recommendation that will also improve our collaborative arrangements across local authorities, Health- Integrated care Boards (ICB) and Education for children in London who have Social, Emotional and Mental Health Needs (SEMH), learning disabilities, autism, and mental health conditions. Following analysis highlighting the shortfall of provision for children with ASD/SEMH, we commissioned the National Children's Bureau (NCB) to conduct in-depth research into the needs, pathways, provision and outcomes for this group

NCB's research aligns with the National Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel's report, "Safeguarding Children with Disabilities in Residential Settings." Building on these findings, the PLPCP is working to ensure that London is better able to meet the needs of these children through early intervention, improved crisis pathways, new specialist provision and individualised support.

A [first phase report](#) drew on the experiences of children and their families as well as partners and providers to highlight key areas to be addressed. The second phase is now developing a pan- London business case for new commissioning approaches for this cohort, with up to five sub-regional pilots to test different elements, including new specialist provision. We believe that strategic investments and stronger commissioning relationships can lead to reduced cost pressures for Local Authorities and Health, while also improving outcomes for children. This is a key part of our RCC bid, where we have sought resources to progress this work.

For more information on this project, please contact [Angela Elliot](#) or [Daniel Stoten](#).

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## NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT REDEVELOPING THE SECTION 251

LIA, in collaboration with the London Borough of Barnet, secured £450,000 from the Department for Education's Data and Digital Solutions Fund. This funding was allocated for a national research project aimed at redesigning and enhancing the statutory Section 251 financial return process. This project will review the Section 251 return and make recommendations for improvement, working with local authorities across England. This project aims to improve the value of the financial data to support more reliable benchmarking and improved commissioning in future.

The project includes the development of the London Dynamic Sufficiency Tool, working with 5 local authorities to include placement financial data. Our RCC bid plans to expand this capability to encompass all 33 London local authorities. This will enable them to share financial information on placements alongside the existing data on placements and provision, supporting improved Pan-London, Sub-regional and local planning, commissioning and market engagement.

The significance of this pilot project lies in its direct benefits for London Local Authorities, as it extends these capabilities across the entire region. Moreover, it serves as a proof of concept for the Department for Education, showcasing the valuable insights that can be generated through collaboration.

For more information, please contact [Jonny Woodthorpe](#).

# REGIONAL CARE COOPERATIVE BID

LIIA and Barnet have submitted, on behalf of ALDCS and the 5 ICBs, London's bid to be a Regional Care Cooperative Pathfinder, as proposed in Stable Homes Built on Love. This provides an opportunity to draw in significant resource to help drive London's collaborative programme to the next level and for London to share learning to date and influence future national development of the RCC model.

The RCC bid builds on the insights from the projects outlined above, and will be overseen by ALDCS and the Pan-London Vehicle for Complex Children's Commissioning, with a focus on High-Cost, Low-Incidence needs. This is a pivotal moment for London, offering the opportunity to build on our work to date and test new collaborative, local, therapeutic, and sustainable models of care.

For more information please contact [Frank Offer](#) and [David Garland](#)

## ADCS TOP 10 PLACEMENTS SURVEY

Thank you to those local authorities which have returned their survey responses on their top 10 placements. From the 28 responses received to date, the following early headlines are evident.

- In the 2022/23 fiscal year, London spent more than £430 million on placements.
- London Boroughs collectively spent over £133 million on their top 10 most expensive placements.

Further analysis is being conducted and will be reported in the next Bulletin. If you have not yet returned your survey, please do so as this will strengthen the analysis and subsequent action in London and nationally - thank you.

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## THANK YOU FOR READING

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