

ALDCS SEND BULLETIN

SEPTEMBER 2025 ISSUE

The ALDCS SEND Bulletin highlights events and news for colleagues across London who work with children and young people with SEND.

Find out more about LIIA's work in SEND [here](#).

NEWS AND UPDATES

Dear Colleagues,

Our SEND Team is expanding following additional DfE funding, and in anticipation of a busy year as we look forward to the issue of the Schools' White Paper. This Bulletin introduces key new managers in: Inclusion and Universal Support; Innovation and Targeted Support; and SEND Resources and Commissioning as well as other new key posts, all seen as priority areas as we work with you to improve value for money and outcomes for children with SEND.

I'm pleased that we're also running a fourth cohort of the London SEND Leadership Programme, building on the success highlighted in evaluations to date.

There's also an important opportunity to highlight and share good practice in inclusion of children with SEND in London, which we expect to be a key focus of the White Paper.

We will be holding a further pan-London SEND Summit which will ideally be after the White Paper - please watch out for further announcements.

Please do read on for more on these developments and other opportunities.

Frank Offer, Head of SEND - LIIA

KEY UPDATES WITHIN THIS BULLETIN

FORTHCOMING INCLUSION FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

Inclusion Funding: Shaping London's Future

LIIA invites schools and local authorities to apply for a funding opportunity to strengthen SEND inclusion, share best practice, and reduce reliance on high-cost placements and travel.

This funding will support collaborative, partnership-based improvement across London in preparation for wider national reforms.

Deadline for applications: 17th October 2025

[More information on page 6.](#)

DATES FOR THE DIARY

SEPT

25

SEND STRATEGIC
MANAGER PARENT CARER
NETWORK

SEPT

30

SEND WORKFORCE
RECRUITMENT AND
RETENTION WORKSHOP

OCT

17

INCLUSION FUNDING
APPLICATIONS DEADLINE

SEND LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME – COHORT 4

Building on the success of cohorts 1-3 and ongoing need to support development of leadership for SEND, **we are continuing to partner with Newton and nasen to run a further cohort this spring - further details on how to apply are available on page 8!**

NEW STARTERS IN THE SEND TEAM

- **Catherine Kane** - SEND Resources and Commissioning Programme lead
- **Andy Higgs** - SEND Inclusion and Universal Support Programme lead
- **Kirsty Reed** - SEND Innovation and Targeted Support Programme lead
- **Maddy Oakes** - Project Support Officer, Send and Workforce
- **Marissa Kodikara** - Project Support Officer, Send and Workforce

SEND COMMISSIONING WORKSHOPS

Online training sessions for the London Specialist Provider Identification Tool

- **Thursday 18th September** - 10am-11am
- **Monday 29th September** - 1pm-2pm
- **Tuesday 14th October** - 4pm-5pm

MEET THE LIIA SEND TEAM!

We're excited to share that the LIIA SEND Programme Team has expanded!

On this first page, we introduce the new members of the LIIA SEND Programme Core Team, and re-introduce some familiar faces who will continue to support our ongoing and expanding work with London local authorities, supporting SEND services.



Frank Offer - Head of SEND Programme

Leading the overall SEND Programme for LiiA to support local authorities in innovation and improvement, delivering better value for money and improved outcomes for children. A key priority for us all in 2025-26 will be responding to and building on proposals in the White Paper which we expect to bring significant change across the system.



Catherine Kane - Programme Lead: SEND Resources and Commissioning

Leading the development of a pan-London SEND commissioning strategy, workplan, and network (2025–29), aligned with DfE reporting, White Paper reforms, and regional priorities.

With two decades of expertise in commissioning across Local Authority and NHS - I was previously involved in the development of London Acute Care Standards for Children, Pan London Mental Health Toolkit for Schools and am currently designated as a National Lead for Social Care by Department for Education.



Kirsty Reed - Programme Lead: SEND Innovation and Targeted Support

Responsible for coordinating and delivering pan-London targeted support and the development of innovation opportunities relating to the SEND Programme across London. Experienced in leading, improving and transforming services for babies, children and families nationally. I am passionate and focused on improving outcomes for children, young people and their families and am looking forward to the opportunities of collaboration and innovation across London.



Andy Higgs - Programme Lead: SEND Inclusion and Universal Support

Developing, facilitating, and enhancing inclusive systems across children's services to ensure positive opportunities for young people pan-London.

I have previously been in education for twenty years, including time as a Headteacher of a SEND provision whilst also working on the SEND & AP Change Programme prior to joining LIIA.



Kate Kewley - Health Strategic Consultant and SEND Development Lead

With experience bringing people together across different fields, organisations and sectors, I will be supporting the SEND Programme to develop and grow - particularly with consideration to partnerships with other sectors such as health.



Sherian Bateson - LIIA Intelligence Analyst

I joined LIIA in 2022 having previously worked in Education. I am a member of the Data Team with a focus on SEND and Care Leaver data.



Beth Evans, Principal Programme Officer

I'm excited to be starting my new role as Principal Programme Officer within the LIIA SEND Programme, focusing particularly on Early Years and Voice. Since joining LIIA in October 2023 as Project Support Officer for SEND and Commissioning, I've valued working with colleagues across London and look forward to continuing to support local authorities and partners in this new role!



Maddy Oakes - Project Support Officer (SEND and Workforce)

I'm passionate about ensuring children and young people with SEND and those in care are fully supported, and I'm excited to contribute to LIIA's mission of driving collaborative, positive change across London. My background as a family foster carer, alongside my experience as an SEN/SEMH teacher during university, has given me a strong foundation in understanding the challenges and opportunities within this space.



Marissa Kodikara - Project Support Officer (SEND and Commissioning)

I'm looking forward to working closely with team leads on research and project delivery, with the aim of making a real difference to outcomes for children, young people, and families across London. I'm new to the children's services field, but experience in a Hertfordshire local authority has given me a strong foundation, and I'm excited to bring fresh ideas and energy to help drive positive change in the SEND space.

ADDITIONAL CAPACITY FROM THE WIDER LIIA TEAM TO SUPPORT SEND PROJECTS

QUEENSLEY UZOMBA

DAVID GARLAND

ALDCS SEND PLAN - 25/26

The ALDCS SEND Plan 2025/26 builds on strong foundations to improve SEND and AP outcomes across London LAs through enhanced data, diagnostics, collaboration, and support. It focuses on four key strands:

DATA CAPACITY & CAPABILITY

Aims to strengthen and support London's capacity to use high-quality data to build a clearer picture of needs and provisions, which enables more informed decision-making and continuous improvement.

Key activities include developing London-focused quarterly and annual benchmarking data collections, creating the 'Making Data Speak for London's Children' programme, supporting multiagency data sharing projects, and engaging with national and regional networks to promote strong data practice.

SEND REGIONAL DIAGNOSTICS

Aims to support and identify systemic and local challenges to inform targeted interventions and shared learning across London.

Key activities include enhancing diagnostic approaches with qualitative research and SEND enablers, delivering regional diagnostics through data and Practice Spotlight, expanding stakeholder networks and communities of practice, maintaining strong communications across newsletters and events, and aligning regional diagnostics with SEND Targeted Support and national bodies.

SEND INNOVATION & TARGETED SUPPORT

Aims to support and accelerate progress in LAs through bespoke, evidence-informed support offers.

Key activities include developing a SEND Targeted Support model for London, creating criteria for targeted support packages informed by diagnostics, delivering a second phase of Practice Spotlight focused on SEND reform readiness, delivering thematic peer reviews, analysing examples of strong local practice, coordinating with DfE, LGA, and NHSE, and exploring opportunities for AI innovation in SEND services

UNIVERSAL IMPROVEMENT

Aims to support improvement needs and reform-readiness across the whole SEND system.

Key activities include promoting effective inclusive practice across London, developing SEND guidance and benchmarking for Case Officers, improving understanding of reciprocal arrangements and Early Years support, expanding the London SEND Leadership Programme, delivering a pan-London Educational Psychology agency pledge, running the SEND Big Conversation, and enhancing joint training with health colleagues.

SEND INCLUSION GRANT OPPORTUNITY

TWO DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION (DFE) - FUNDED STRANDS OF ACTIVITY

“SEND inclusion in mainstream settings and reduce high-cost placements and home-to-school travel opportunity”

**FIND OUT
MORE AND
APPLY HERE!**

This is an exciting opportunity to highlight best practice and help shape inclusion across London through supported funding.

The aim of this funding round is to enable both Local Authorities and educational settings to share their experiences of delivering positive outcomes for young people with SEND across the region, demonstrating impact and endeavour to share their experience in expertise.

There are two Inclusion strands, both designed to prepare London for upcoming larger-scale reforms, while staying flexible enough to adapt to emerging enablers and policy priorities set by the Department.

Who is eligible for the funding?

Schools and Local Authorities are invited to submit nominations

Up to 15 schools can receive £2000.
5 local authorities can receive £25,000.

What is expected from the funding?

Schools selected will be expected to:

- Demonstrate and share strong, impactful inclusive practice
- Showcase their approaches through an online publication
- Participate in school-based events to support wider learning and collaboration

Key Dates & Requirements

All funded activity must:

- Start no earlier than Monday, 3 November 2025
- Be completed by Friday, 17 April 2026

Application deadlines:

- Monday 22nd September - Friday, 17th October 2025

Each local authority is encouraged to submit applications for both strands. The application process will launch on Monday 22nd September 2025. [Full details are available here.](#)

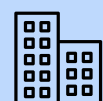
Schools - APPLY HERE!



Can receive up to a maximum of £2,000 per school for 15 schools.

Each local authority is invited to nominate **one** school and **three** will be selected from each of the five London sub-regions.

Local Authority - APPLY HERE

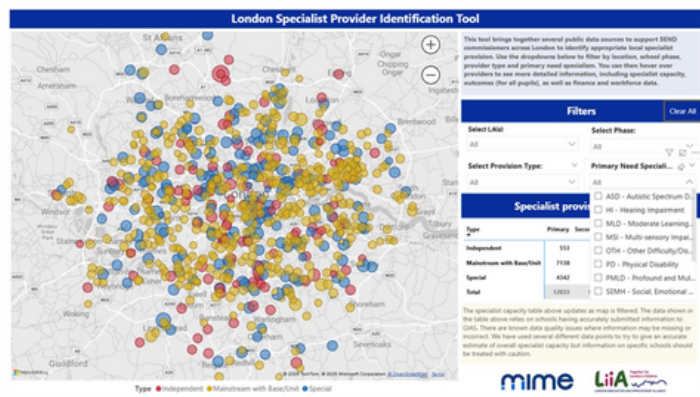


Can receive up to a maximum of £25,000 per local authority.

Five in total, one per sub-region.

PROGRAMME UPDATES

SEND COMMISSIONING



Mime, in partnership with LiA, has developed the **London Specialist Provider Identification Tool** – a one-stop resource combining key datasets on specialist state and independent provision across London. The tool brings together information on capacity, need specialisms, outcomes, workforce and finance to support more effective commissioning.

Online training sessions are available for SEND Commissioners, placement teams and others involved in SEND commissioning. The sessions will cover how to access and use the tool, filter for specific requirements, understand the data included, and provide feedback to inform future updates.

[Book your place on one of the three training sessions here!](#)

SEND WORKFORCE

Together with the National Association of Principal Educational Psychologists (NAPEP), the Association of London Directors of Children's Services (ALDCS) we have developed a London Pledge for Educational Psychologists (LPEP). The agreement outlines three shared principles - pay rate, PQE and remote working - designed to address challenges in the recruitment and retention of EPs, with a focus on embedding consistent recruitment practices in the supply and quality of agency workers using evidenced protocols adapted from the Child & Family Social Worker London Pledge and subsequent DfE Statutory Guidance for Child & Family Social Workers.

The LPEP recognises the need for Local Authorities to respond collectively and in cooperation and seeks to provide clear protocols and mechanisms of control, whilst also ensuring Local Authorities can respond to their own needs in times of significant pressure locally. We have been grateful for direct input and support from the Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP) alongside a wide range of regional and national networks, and we continue to work collaboratively with other regions who are moving forward on parallel activities on the same three principles. The final agreement will be circulated in coming weeks.

This work forms part of a wider SEND Workforce Programme that in parallel involved better understanding and benchmarking the permanent offer for EPs across London alongside hearing from the workforce directly.

[Book your place on the regional SEND Workforce Recruitment & Retention Workshop](#)

On **Tuesday 30 September from 12-2pm**, LiA is proud to be hosting a regional shared learning event – part of our shared mission to secure a sustainable, high-quality SEND workforce. It will draw on the findings from the SEND Fieldwork Report and Practice Spotlight, with leadership from several LAs who will share their experiences.

The workshop will be led collaboratively by 4 London LAs who will share their insights and practical solutions that have helped address the pressing challenges of attracting, retaining, and developing the SEND Workforce. This event is not just about today's challenges but shaping the future of the SEND workforce together!

LONDON SEND LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME



England

NEWTON

nasen
Helping Everyone Achieve

After the huge success from the first 3 cohorts, we are delighted to announce that the **fourth cohort of the London SEND Leadership Programme**, launching in January 2026.

Developed by LIIA, ALDCS, NHS England and the Department for Education, this **fully funded programme** is a unique opportunity for current and aspiring leaders to drive change across the SEND sector.

What's in it for you?

Designed and delivered by Newton and nasen, the programme equips participants with the skills, knowledge and networks needed to drive meaningful change. You'll have:

- Access to a strong professional network
- Coaching from influential SEND leaders
- Practical tools for leading complex change

You can also read the [Evaluation Report](#) from the first three cohorts to see the positive impact the programme has already made

Nominations are now open!

Places are limited and allocated on a first-come basis. If you are interested, please express interest to your senior leader, who will put forward nominations. Senior leaders can nominate 1 per LA, 1 per ICB, and 2-3 from Parent Carer Forum leads via the NNPCF.

Find out more on how to apply for [Local Authorities](#) and [Health Partners](#) in the linked documents

Please note - the deadline for applications for Cohort 4 is 24th October 2025.

PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT

THE HEART OF SECTOR-LED IMPROVEMENT IN LONDON

Following the launch of Practice Spotlight earlier this year, we are proud to support the Practice Spotlight Digital Area - a growing resource that showcases the innovative and impactful work taking place across London. This platform not only celebrates local initiatives but also offers stakeholders and partners the opportunity to explore, learn from, and engage with a wide range of practical examples that are driving real change for children and young people across London.

With the completion of the first series of Practice Spotlight submissions, we now have a strong collection of good practice that reflects the creativity, effectiveness, and dedication of London Local Authorities - which you can now explore using the link below.

[CLICK HERE TO EXPLORE THE PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT DIGITAL RESOURCES AREA](#)

NEW REPORTS

We'd like to highlight the following recently published reports on SEND, which may be of interest to you.

- [NHS England Statutory SEND \(Special Educational Needs and Disability\) Framework for Model ICB Good practice Document](#)
- [The Education Committee has published its report Solving the SEND Crisis, calling for urgent reform to increase inclusion across the SEND system \(September 2025\)](#)

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.](#)

GET IN TOUCH

Please visit our website: liaa.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 Head of SEND, [Frank Offer](#).

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