

LIIA NEWSLETTER

December 2025 Issue

Dear colleagues,

I'm pleased to share with you the bi-annual LIIA newsletter which captures the wide range of innovative work that LIIA undertakes on behalf of ALDCS.

I don't need tell how busy the children's landscape is at the moment. The Families First reforms are designed to transform our approach to child protection and safeguarding; at the same time health partners are undertaking fundamental restructure and change in how services are delivered; and we are also preparing for what we know will be a wholesale reform of our responses to children with special educational needs and disabilities.

You will see many examples in this newsletter of how LIIA is supporting the reform agenda, but you will also see much more as we work together, across our boroughs and through our partnerships, to continuously improve our collective impact. Do take a look at the rich variety of ways that we are collaborating, with LIIA's support, to create the conditions in which we can all do our best work to improve the lives of children and families in London.

Very best wishes,

Florence Kroll CBE

DCS Royal Borough of Greenwich, ALDCS Adolescent Safeguarding policy lead and chair of the London Adolescent Safeguarding Oversight Board (LASOB) chair of the ALDCS



THIS NEWSLETTER

- LIIA's core activity updates
- A whistlestop tour of the 5 ALDCS priorities
- Resources and programme newsletters

LIIA'S CORE ACTIVITIES

ABOUT THE CORE ACTIVITIES

- LIIA 25/26 Annual Plan
- London Families First Pathfinder
- Health
- Racial, Equity and Leadership (REAL)
- Practice Spotlight
- Making Data Speak for London's Children

Review of LIIA & 2025/26 Annual Plan:

- [LIIA's Annual Plan](#) represents the ambition ALDCS have for tackling the most pressing issues for London's children, young people, their families and the diverse workforce that serves them.
- Our [2025/26 DfE Delivery Plan](#) sits alongside the Annual Plan, catalysing regional work and strengthen cross-regional learning and collaboration.
- LIIA's core activities enable progress and carry [ALDCS Five Priority Areas](#).

London Families First Pathfinder (FFP):

- **This year, LIIA launched the FFP Regional Support Programme, initially events were held fortnightly and now every three weeks, bringing together over 100 colleagues from across London LAs and multi-agency partners to share learning** and progress in implementing the Families First reforms.
- Each session focuses on a different theme, with Lewisham and Redbridge offering their perspectives as pathfinders to support the discussions.
- We have created a dedicated resource page in the [members' area of our website](#), where you can find recordings of past sessions, details of upcoming events and the full Reform Programme Lead/SRO distribution list to help strengthen peer connections.
- **The We Train Together Programme - a collaborative train-the-trainer initiative has also been launched as a pilot this year** with Family Group Decision Making the first training session attended by 57 colleagues from 25 London LAs attending. The programme aims to expand in 2026, and seeks to support Local Authorities to work together to pool resources and learning to strengthen training and development opportunities of alternatively qualified and skilled workforce.

Health:

- **In a year of considerable disruption for and within the health landscape, the LIIA health leads have sought to help ALDCS to remain up to date with latest developments at the national and regional levels**, working with the lead DCSs for health to ensure a proportionate approach to engagement, and continuing to represent ALDCS at key strategic meetings (with relevant follow up).
- **Input into LIIA transformation programmes has expanded to include SEND, alongside Commissioning and Continuing Care, and Ian Lewis and Kate Kewley continue their focus on key relationship and insight building**, with additional resource to support core LIIA work from a health perspective. Information from key meetings attended is circulated to DCS on a quarterly basis, and saved online in the LIIA Resources Area.

Racial Equity and Leadership (REAL):

- **This year we launched the Racial Equity And Leadership programme - R.E.A.Lising Potential** - commissioned by the Association of London Directors of Children's Services (ALDCS) and the London Innovation and Improvement Alliance (LIIA) and delivered by DWC Consulting.
- **The programme aims to support Black and Global Majority (BGM) professionals aspiring to senior leadership.** Tackling underrepresentation will in turn assist the fairness, quality and relevance of services for London's diverse communities. This programme helps to enact that change.
- **We received two nominations from each local authority and have held a series of leadership sessions this year.** In 2026 we will also pilot our Shadowing Plus initiative, an 'active-shadowing' offer from participating LAs to alumni of the REALising Potential programme to complement their time on the programme and support exposure and application of learning and mutual benefit knowledge share.



Making Data Speak for London's Children:

- Benchmarking data up to Q2 2025/2026 has been published on the [LIIA members area](#). These dashboards are widely used across London. We redesigned the overview one for the beginning of this financial year so it is a little more concise than the previous 56 page behemoth!
- **Other dashboards have been updated and further developed;** covering the ALDCS main thematic areas, including SEND, Disproportionality, Commissioning and others.
- **The data in the CLD (Child Level Data) dashboards has been refreshed with the data right up to March 2025.** We have also collected five years of child in need census data from the London LAs and will be publishing a series of dashboards throughout 2026.
- **The Dynamic Sufficiency Tool is now on version 3 of the dashboard,** including the CLD data already mentioned. Many new elements have been added and used as part of the work on strategic commissioning.
- The ALDCS Intelligence, Data & Research steering group has been meeting regularly throughout the year, providing valuable input into the Data workstream.
- **With the secure data sharing platform fully operational,** we are now closer to realising our ambitions to use more of the LA data creatively to support the ALDCS work. Next up are School census, children's social work workforce census and the SEN2 statutory returns.
- We have created a public '[Making data speak for London's children' public data space](#). This is so we can be really transparent about the kind of work we do with data and share those dashboards developed on published data for a wider audience to use.
- **Merry Christmas and a dataful new year!**

Practice Spotlight:

- **The London Children's Services Practice Spotlight will reopen for submissions in early 2026** inviting all London local authorities and partners to share their most innovative and impactful practice.
- **The 2025/26 theme is *New & Emerging Practice*** which is generating excitement about the opportunities for shared learning and improvement during a period of significant change.
- **Look out for details on how to submit your examples** of practice soon!

London Children's Services

Practice Spotlight

PRACTICE SPOTLIGHT MILESTONES



END OF YEAR MESSAGE FROM THE LONDON PRINCIPAL SOCIAL WORKER NETWORK



As the year comes to a close, I want to take a moment to reflect on the journey we've been on together. The Families First reforms remind us of what has always mattered most in social work: strong relationships, ethical and reflective practice, and a belief in the strengths and potential of children and families.

For me, partnership is at the heart of this – not just consultation, but genuine collaboration where children and families shape decisions and influence the support around them. This is how we build trust and create change that lasts.

I know this vision comes at a time of real challenge. Across London, we're managing financial pressures, workforce strain and the complexity of change. It's not easy, and it's important to acknowledge that. Doing so doesn't weaken our ambition—it makes it honest and grounded.



What inspires me most is the resilience and creativity I see every day. The way colleagues share ideas, tools and encouragement is one of our greatest strengths. It reminds me of the proverb: *"If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."*

That feels true for our work with families—and for how we support each other as practitioners and leaders.

This year, I was especially pleased to see LIA pilot Family Group Decision Making through the We Train Together approach. It's already building confidence and consistency, and I hope it becomes a model for how we share learning and resources across London.

Looking ahead, the London Practice Spotlight will give us a chance to showcase innovation and celebrate great practice. I'm excited about seeing the ideas and examples that will come forward.

I also want to highlight the value of networks. For me, the Regional Principal Social Worker network has been a real source of strength—offering space for honest reflection, problem-solving and mutual support. These conversations remind me that none of us are navigating this alone, and that collective wisdom is one of the most powerful tools we have.

A huge thank you to the pathfinder authorities for sharing learning so openly, and to every colleague who has contributed ideas, energy and commitment this year.

Thank you for your compassion, professionalism and unwavering focus on children and families. I hope you find time to rest over the coming weeks, and I look forward to continuing this journey with you in the new year.



Warm regards,

Shalini Abrol

**Children's Principal Social Worker for Royal Borough of Greenwich
Co-Chair of the London Principal Social Worker Network**

ADOLESCENT SAFEGUARDING

The Adolescent Safeguarding workstream, led by Florence Kroll, focuses on the following areas:

- Dissemination of the Guidance: training, webinars, bite-sized products
- Maintain and develop the dashboard for London adolescent safeguarding oversight board (LASOB) and London safeguarding partnership executive
- Your Choice
- Supporting inclusion to promote safeguarding adolescents in education.

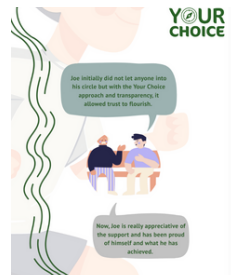
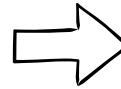
Safeguarding Adolescents in London (SAIL):



- **SAIL** brings together theory, practice, and policy to provide practical tools and information for those working with young people. While not an exhaustive guide, it's a growing platform that we will continue to develop collaboratively.
- We are introducing the **SAIL Community of Practice** in January 2026: This collaborative network brings professionals from different organisations and sectors together to share knowledge, learn from each other and improve practice around shared priorities and challenges.
- Book your place [here](#).

Your Choice:

- In advance of the trial results, The Your Choice central team continue to work with London's local authorities as they embed Your Choice into their practice.
- **Click on the image to read an inspiring case study!**



MACE Protocol (fifth edition):

- The updated London MACE Protocol (fifth edition) will be published early January 2026.
- It strengthens our focus on joined-up oversight, helping us see the whole child and their circumstances, not just one part of their story, so that no child is missed or left without the right support.
- We will be working with our communities of practice and offering training and continued learning opportunities to move the Protocol from paper to practice.

Reducing Criminalisation of Children Looked After and Care Leavers Protocol Launch:

- On Tuesday 18 November, the Pan-London Protocol for Reducing Criminalisation of Children Looked After and Care Leavers was hosted by the **Mayor's Office for Policing and Crime (MOPAC)** in partnership with the **London Innovation and Improvement Alliance (LIIA)**.
- This protocol is more than a document – it represents a collective commitment to creating safer, fairer futures for children and young people across London.
- Watch the event recording [here](#).

HMIP Webinar with Camden and Merton:

- In September, LIIA hosted a London-wide webinar focused on sharing learning and good practice around the HMIP inspection framework.
- Colleagues from **Camden** and **Merton** shared their experiences of recent inspections, offering valuable insights into both strategic and operational preparation.
- This session provides a rich overview of how services can approach inspection readiness, with practical examples and reflections from across the system.
- Watch the webinar [here](#).

VESS London (Violence & Exploitation Support Service):

- As well as supporting the coordination of how LAs are engaging with VESS, LIIA also play a role in strategic data analysis and have just published a series of VESS related data dashboards. Our key VESS SPOCs in each LA have been given access to the dashboards, which include VESS referral breakdowns, County Lines data from the National County Lines Coordination Centre and MPS data related to knife crime and stop & search. Enquire about access to the VESS data dashboards [here](#).
- From November 2025, the role of VESS commissioner has transitioned from MOPAC to the London VRU.



SEND

The ALDCS SEND Programme is chaired by Elaine Allegretti, and works across four cross cutting priorities:

- Enhancing Provision and Support for Children and Young People with SEND.
- Supporting pan-London Collaboration and Joint Working.
- Building Capacity and Capability within the SEND Workforce.
- Supporting Developments and Sharing Learning across SEND.

London SEND Leadership programme:

- **The London SEND Leadership Programme has made strong progress in 2025**, completing three cohorts and launching a fourth in January 2026. Each cohort has been oversubscribed, highlighting high demand for this pan-London leadership programme.
- The programme designed in January by Newton and nasen with input from SEND Leads, has been widely praised. Key statistics include 95% satisfaction, increased confidence in sustaining SEND improvements in local area from 37% to 87% and longitudinal evaluation is now also planned. All 33 London Local Authorities and 5 ICBs now have representatives attending the programme.



SEND Workforce:

- **The SEND Programme continues to collaborate with the Workforce Programme to address key challenges in the London SEND workforce.** Recent activity has included the development of the London EP Pledge and a series of LA-led workshops on recruitment and retention in Local Authority SEND Services. Further information is available on the Workforce page including on the launch of the [**"Big SEND Conversation"**](#)

Regional Diagnostics:

- As part of the LIIA SEND Regional Diagnostics Offer, **the team is developing the State of the Capital: SEND report.** This brings together multiple sources of data to create a regional benchmark, highlighting key pressures, challenges, and trends. The report, providing a London-wide picture of current priorities, will be published in the new year. The report will then inform the ALDCS LIIA SEND Plan for 2026/27.
- **Current work focuses on thematic data deep dives and engagement with sector partners.** To ensure insights reflect the experiences of those working in the system, we are hosting a series of Listening to London lunchtime sessions to explore report themes and gather reflections – [**sign up for the sessions here!**](#)

SEND Inclusion:

- **Following the launch of the Investing in Inclusion programme in September**, The panel is now reviewing a diverse range of applications. Successful bids will be announced shortly, and funded projects will share their learning with pan-London colleagues in the summer term.
- Across this year, we have continued to work closely with partners through the **RISE Programme and the Change Programme Partnership** to align and strengthen inclusion work across London

SEND Commissioning:

- **The recently launched London Specialist Provider Identification Tool**, is accessible via the LIIA Members Area. The tool brings together multiple public data sources to help SEND commissioners across London identify appropriate local specialist provision.
- LIIA has also launched the **Pan-London SEND Commissioning Forum**, providing a space to share intelligence, address commissioning pressures, and collaborate regionally.

SEND Data dashboard:

- **LIIA 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.**](#)

Supporting Networks and Sharing Practice:

LIIA continues to support system leadership and shared learning across London through its SEND networks and targeted thematic workshops. Recent and upcoming activity includes:

- **ALDCS SEND Summit 17th March 2026 (Save the date!)** – Invitations for the summit will be launching imminently, with a request for organisations to nominate representatives from across London's SEND System including LA, Health, Education and PCF leads.
- **SEND Strategic Manager/Parent Carer Network** – hosting focused sessions on innovation, AI and diagnostics to inform future system development.
- **London SEND Heads of Service Network** – launching on 27 January to strengthen LA leadership collaboration.
- **SEND Commissioning Forum** – convened on 20 November, with termly meetings supporting more aligned commissioning practice.
- **London SEND Finance Network** – next meeting on 19 January, focusing on home-to-school transport pressures and financial sustainability.
- **AI Innovation in SEND Workshop** – taking place on 21 January to explore emerging opportunities for service improvement.
- To find out more and engage in the networks listed above, please contact the [**LIIA SEND Team.**](#)

RESOURCES AND COMMISSIONING

The Resources and Commissioning Programme chaired by Tim Aldridge, Jonathan Williams and Robert South, focuses on the following areas:

- Increasing financial pressures on placement budgets.
- High cost low incidence provision and lack of suitable local provision resulting in placements at great distances from the home local authority.
- Pan-London collaboration with local authorities to improve sufficiency, value for money and outcomes for children.

Regional Cooperation Arrangements (RCA) – Preparing for Change:

- With the **forthcoming Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act** expected to mandate **Regional Cooperation Arrangements** across England, local authorities will need to **work together on commissioning, sufficiency planning, and fostering support**. While details and funding are still unclear, London is preparing to help shape how this will be implemented.
- At the November ALDCS meeting these 6 Priorities were agreed. They aim to give **every child a safe, stable home and the support they need to thrive**.
- **Task-and-finish groups are now being established** to drive these priorities forward and support development of the RCA Business Case.
- Want to find out more or get involved? Please read our [monthly briefing here](#) or email [Jonny Woodthorpe](#)
- To join the RCA mailing list, please fill out this [form](#).



Pan-London Sufficiency:

- **Ensuring that London understands its collective need for sufficient, high-quality homes for children in the care of London boroughs is at the heart of this work.** It has drawn on the views of children, providers, and DCSs.
- The project has three core elements:
 - A **pan-London sufficiency strategy** using data and insights from across the capital;
 - A **theory of change document** to help London council's identify key success factors; and
 - A **guidance document for providers** outlining what London wants and needs for its children.
- **Workshops and engagement activities have shaped these documents.** Emerging priorities include acting as one customer, engaging with social finance, re-imagining fostering, tackling disproportionality, and ensuring appropriate residential provision. *Draft documents are expected in January 2026.*

Pan-London Secure Children's Home with Community Reintegration Service & Pan-London Vehicle for Children's Complex Commissioning Ltd (PLVCCC Ltd):

- **This project fully remobilised in November 2025.** Workstreams include development of business cases; development of legal agreements; land transaction; service design, commissioning and implementation; PLVCCC Ltd development/implementation and building design/construction.
- **An important milestone planned for 2026 is for LAs to take the next key decision on the future of the project,** based on the full business case, legal agreements and other project developments – the project team will continue to engage with LAs in preparation for this.
- *For more information about this project contact [Queensley Uzomba, LIIA Project Lead](#) or find out more on the [project website](#).*

Joint Commissioning with Health:



- **The Children's Continuing Care and Children in Need Joint Working Group held a cross London workshop, with LAs and NHS Staff,** on November 10, 2025, introduced by Jonathan Williams (DCS Sutton) and Gwen Kennedy (Chief Nursing Officer, NHSE London), showcasing good practice from West Berkshire.
- From this event, **we will be sharing a set of principles for effective joint funding arrangements and developing an action plan for each of the ICS footprints.** We are continue to ensure strong links with the SEND programme, where joint support arrangements are equally important.

London Accommodation Pathfinder:

- **The contract is currently undergoing a tender process to award a new provider from April 2026.**
- Currently as a partnership we are considering workstreams around improving the practice set out in the LAP manual, exploring ways to expand the LAP sustainably, and the development of a care model for children on remand.

Capital Round Updates:

- The Peer Support Group for successful children's home capital bidders **meets monthly** to help commissioners and project managers **share experience and improve practice**.
- The group has expanded to include Local Authorities developing homes outside the Capital round and continues to strengthen links with the Children's Homes Managers Network.
- *Please email [David Garland](#) if you are interested in joining this group.*

Commissioning for ASD/SEMH:

- **Pilots in North Central and North East are due to go live in February,** with the remaining elements of funding and recruitment between the provider collaboratives and local authorities being finalised.
- London to establish early stages of potential projects, and explore the proposed integrated care and education solution.

The Commissioning Programme supports collaboration across London through networks, including:

- The Pan-London Commissioning Network
- The London Children's Homes Managers Network

To find out more, and join the networks, [please get in touch](#).

WORKFORCE

The ALDCS Workforce Programme is chaired by Julie Kelly and works across six strategic objectives;

- Lots has happened this year, with thanks to our dedicated Workforce Steering Group and the continued regional commitment. The programme continues to grow with alternatively skilled and qualified, SEND and Children's Homes now active workstreams. Included within this newsletter are just a few of the key projects from 2025. Some other acknowledgements include;
 - **In October 2025 the DfE's national statutory guidance for agency child and family social workers came into place**, with London's LAs at the forefront of this work. We are proud to have this guidance in place and continue to work transparently together.
 - **In October 2025 we successfully launched our 'We Train Together' Pilot programme**, a collaborative train-the-trainer workforce development offer to support alternatively qualified and skilled members of the workforce. More to come in 2026!

SEND

The Big SEND Conversation – Now Live!

- **We're pleased to launch The Big SEND Conversation**, a London-wide, multi-agency SEND Workforce research programme that seeks to listen directly to the workforce to inform regional priorities and influence national policy and the reforms.
- **Have your say - the [survey is now open](#) with optional [focus groups](#) planned for the new year. We want to hear from local authorities, education, health and partner agencies!**



Launch of the London Pledge for Educational Psychologists (LPEP):



- **Together with the National Association of Principal Educational Psychologists (NAPEP), the Association of London Directors of Children's Services (ALDCS) have developed a [London Pledge for Educational Psychologists \(LPEP\)](#) to which all 33 London LAs have agreed to.** The agreement sets out three 'rules'; pay rates, PQE and remote working and is effective 1st January 2026.
- **We are grateful for the input of the Association of Educational Psychologists (AEP) and colleagues across regional and national networks.**
- **This work forms part of the wider SEND Workforce Programme**, including benchmarking permanent offers and supporting sufficiency and supply priorities.

[Click here to access the full London Pledge for Educational Psychologists \(LPEP\) agreement.](#) Contact [Rula Tripolitaki](#) or [Madeline Oakes](#) for resources.

CSC

London Social Work For Children (LSWC):

- **The LSWC programme has continued to positively impact candidate attraction and recruitment** with high levels of engagement and great content and [case studies](#) highlighting the excellent practice in London.
- **Earlier this year we launched a new AI feature that enhances the clarity and visibility of job postings**, alongside a series of high-performing video case studies that have driven strong engagement.
- **Our enhanced engagement plan launched in October has been well received** and is having a positive impact on content and job posting, as well as enabling practice sharing between LAs
- **In 2026 we will be exploring new developments** to strengthen efficiencies for users, developing the business plan for continuation of the programme beyond 26/27 and focusing on supporting [London's Children's Homes](#)



To discuss your recruitment campaigns, content or case studies please contact [Eliaana Neyhus](#) or [Rula Tripolitaki](#).



International Recruitment Framework for Adults & Children's Social Workers:

- **[ALDCS launched a national framework](#) to support a trusted and ethical route to market with expert providers for the international recruitment of adults' and children's social workers**, in partnership with London Councils, LIA and YPO.
- **This first-of-its-kind framework provides local authorities with a compliant route to market, offering access to six specialist international recruitment providers** who have been fully evaluated and meet NHS Ethical Recruiter standards.
- **The framework supports authorities to recruit experienced, fully vetted social workers from overseas**, with consistent pricing, clear quality standards and a single point of contact for local delivery.
- *To discuss your recruitment campaigns contact our framework SPOC [Sabine Stolwijk](#) or [Rula Tripolitaki](#).*

Visit liia.london to learn more

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CARE LEAVING

The ALDCS Care Leaving Programme is led by Jacqui McShannon and Stephen Kitchman. It works to meet care leaver needs across six priority areas:

- Housing
- Education, Training and Employment
- Health
- Criminal Justice

It's been a busy and exciting year for the ALDCS Care Leaving programme, which joins forces with partners via the Pan London Care Leavers Trust Board to develop new and improved support offers for London's care leavers.

Key milestones for the year include:

- In March, young people and partners met with **Minister Janet Daby** to discuss London's regional care leaver work programme. They discussed the potential stemming from upcoming legislation to extend corporate parenting responsibilities to all government departments and relevant public bodies. A key focus was the 'fit' between London and national programmes, including how national positions on key areas such as mental health support, travel costs, and utilities and council tax bills could transform young lives.
- **Housing** - We were delighted that **Sophie Konradsen**, Lead Commissioner in Housing/ASC in Lambeth, **joined as chair of the housing group**. Lambeth's Routes to Independence commissioning strategy has transformed housing provision for their young people, increasing quality and reducing cost. The group is mapping the detail of different LA CL housing models and developing opportunities with Housing Associations and the charitable sector.
- **Education, Training and Employment** - 2025 saw the **launch of the Family Business Model** across all London Local Authorities. LA's have committed to developing a strategic plan for care leaver ETE, overseen by corporate parenting boards. These will focus on developing offers within the LA, and through external LA relationships. The creation of a FBM leads network enables sharing of approaches and the opening up of offers to each other's care leavers.
- **Health** - Key priorities have been **mental health provision, transitions, co-location/hubs, and reducing the financial cost of healthcare (prescriptions, dentistry, ophthalmology)**. It is critical that the health needs of care leavers are embedded within current health restructures, which the health group advocates for this at ICB, regional and national levels. Growth of CL hubs and the co-location of services across London is welcome and should form part of neighbourhood strategies currently in development.
- **Criminal Justice** - The delivery of **MOPAC's Reducing Criminalisation of Children in Care and Care Leavers protocol** is a significant milestone, particularly in terms of the increased ambition for care leavers. This is accompanied by a MET 'arrest-referral' scheme which should go live in early 2026 and which will ask all 18-25 care leavers who are arrested if they wish to be reconnected with their LA. Partners will continue their work in 2026 to add practice detail to the principles of the MOPAC protocol.



KEY LIIA CONTACTS



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MEMBERS AREA ACCESS

As always, [you can click here to register for access](#) to our dedicated Members Areas.

OUR NEWSLETTERS

LIIA produces several newsletters to keep partners updated. You can read these on our website or click the below links to access the latest editions:

[**Adolescent Safeguarding and Youth Justice Newsletter**](#) (October Issue)

[**Workforce Newsletter**](#) (November Issue)

[**Resources and Commissioning Bulletin**](#) (December Issue)

[**SEND Bulletin**](#) (December Issue)

[**Care Leaving Newsletter**](#) (November Issue)

GET IN TOUCH



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

Please let us know your feedback on this newsletter [via email](#) so we can keep improving future editions.

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