

MONTHLY BRIEFING: LONDON RCA (DECEMBER 2025)

Introduction

LIA, on behalf of ALDCS, is developing a business case for establishing a London Regional Co-operative Arrangement (RCA). This is the first in a series of regular briefing notes to keep partners informed and highlight opportunities to help shape this work. Please feel free to share this briefing with colleagues. If you would like to be added to our distribution list for future updates, please complete your details [here](#).

What are RCAs?

The concept of **Regional Co-operative Arrangements (RCAs)** was first introduced in the 2022 [Independent Review of Children's Social Care](#), led by Josh MacAlister. These regional bodies were envisioned to take on commissioning responsibilities across broader geographical areas, giving local authorities greater purchasing power and supporting more effective market management in the context of limited sufficiency and rising costs.

Following the review, the Department for Education (DfE) funded two pathfinder projects in Greater Manchester and the South East. The forthcoming Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act is expected to introduce legislation mandating RCAs across England. Once enacted – anticipated in early 2026 – the Secretary of State will have powers to direct local authorities to form regional commissioning arrangements.

The initiative continues to gain momentum, championed by Josh MacAlister, now the Children's Minister.

**Note: The term "RCA" (used in legislation) is often used interchangeably with "RCC" (Regional Care Co-operatives). They refer to the same initiative.*

National Update – Pace of Change

At the NCASC Conference last week, Josh MacAlister confirmed the Government's commitment to **"speed up the rollout of RCCs and for this to be the future model of the care system"**. He also stated he would **"set out plans imminently to explain how the system will move towards regional care co-operatives."**

We await further details on the rollout and any associated funding, but the direction of travel is clear. The DfE is also in the process of establishing an RCC Delivery Unit.

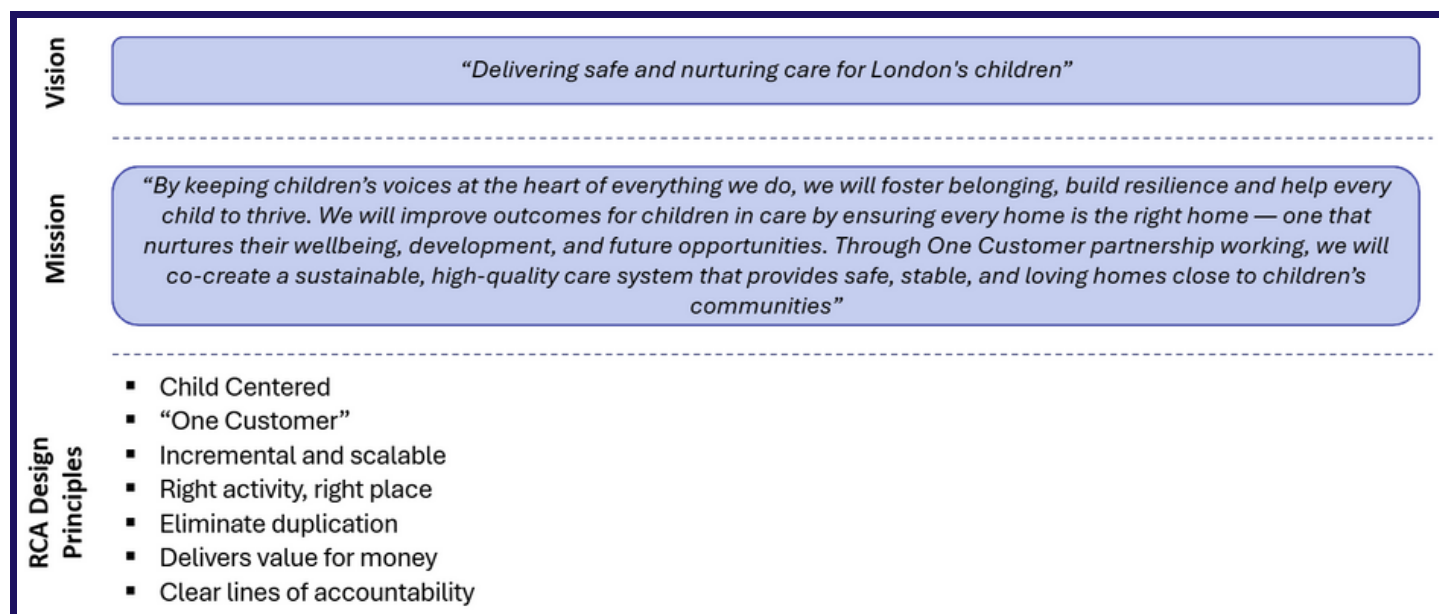
The DfE recently published [Phase 1 of the Evaluation](#) for the RCC pathfinders. While still at an early stage, the evaluation highlights progress and key learning:

- Transformative potential of **data to understand need**
- Importance of **robust governance** which build on existing structures
- Creating space for **stakeholder collaboration**
- **Co-production** with young people
- Developing a **small core team** with partnership experience
- Early engagement with **health partners**

London RCA

Following the November ALDCS meeting, we have agreed the foundations for developing the London RCA. This includes:

- Our vision (co-produced with young people)
- Design principles
- Our six priority areas
- Delivery of a Pan-London RCA, through a **Hub and Spoke** delivery model which emphasises the role of sub-regional delivery alongside pan-London co-ordination.



Governance

An **RCA Delivery Board** has been established to oversee development of the business case. The Board includes Directors of Children's Services and Commissioners from each sub-region, alongside wider partners including Health, Justice, and the Society of London Treasurers.

Next Steps

We will establish **task and finish groups** of subject matter experts to develop proposals that will inform the business case. More details on these groups will be shared in the coming weeks.

Over the coming weeks, we will also share **key insights from the pan-London Sufficiency Strategy**, which is still in development. This analysis will help to inform the project as we progress.