

Practice Spotlight

Practice Spotlight shines a light on practice that is happening across London's children's services and is making a difference to children and families.

Welcome to Practice Spotlight 2026

Background

Local Authority Children's Services in London are working to transform the lives of our children and families across the capital, both locally and through regional collaboration. This motivation binds us together and cements our connection to one another and the children, young people and families we serve.

Launched in November 2024, Practice Spotlight received over 100 submissions of practice, each hosted in [the Practice Spotlight digital hub](#). The initiatives served to raise awareness, catalyse shared learning opportunities across the system and inspire creativity and change.

The Practice Spotlight initiative is championed by the Association of London Directors of Children's Services (ALDCS) and the London Social Care Practice Leader Network, and delivered by London Innovation and Improvement Alliance (LiiA).

Purpose

- To **discover** the practice that is making a difference, often around very complex and challenging areas of work
- To **boost engagement** opportunities for sharing and learning across all of London's LAs and partners, underpinning the positive culture of collaboration
- To **recognise and celebrate the individuals and teams** who have delivered this work and raise awareness with broader audiences

"Practice Spotlight is an excellent opportunity to showcase the work being done, in partnership, with the aim for other Local Authorities to consider their response, the need for consistency and the opportunity to work in collaboration"

2026 Theme: New & Emerging Practice

This year the focus is on **New and Emerging Practice**; enabling developing areas of practice to benefit others through shared learning at the earliest opportunity.

We also want to hear how your practice is shaping or responding to key areas of national reform across the Children’s Social Care and Special Education, Needs and Disabilities spectrum with effective partnership working and multi-agency collaboration as a central feature.

“An idea can be a small spark – a passing thought, a quiet moment of insight – but its power is limitless. Every breakthrough, every improvement, every leap forward begins with a single idea held by someone willing to believe that things can be better and different. Ideas invite us to imagine more, to challenge what is familiar, and to build what does not yet exist.

What inspires me most about the Practice spotlight is that ideas don’t need to arrive fully formed. They grow in conversation, collaboration and curiosity. They take shape when people share their experiences, their frustrations, their hopes. And when we create the space for ideas to flourish, we unlock the creativity and potential that sits within every member of our organisation - it turns possibility into progress.”

Bev Hendricks, Director of Children’s Services, Merton

9 Categories

Each of the following categories aims to 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 Racial Equity And Leadership (REAL) Reference Group

This category is for those that are actively working to eliminate discrimination and disproportionality. Best practice examples may be related to new and emerging practice undertaken in recruitment and retention of the workforce, or directly related to practice with children and families.

2. Impact for children with special educational needs and disabilities, sponsored by the London SEND Steering Group

This category is for those that are actively working to make a positive impact on outcomes for children and families with special educational needs and disabilities. Best practice examples may relate to new and emerging practice with children and their families and/or effective partnership working with schools, colleges, parents/carers, health bodies and other organisations.

3. Building safety for young Londoners, sponsored by the London Adolescent Safeguarding Oversight Board

This category is for those that are actively working to safeguard children and young people. Best practice examples may relate to new and emerging in practice to build safety for children and young people and/or demonstrate effective partnership through multi-agency safeguarding practices.

4. Supporting and strengthening the workforce, sponsored by the Workforce Steering Group

This category is for those that are actively working to positively impact recruitment, retention and the experience of the workforce. Best practice examples may relate to new and emerging practices that embed equitable recruitment practices, demonstrate commitment to understanding and responding to the experiences of staff, or providing enhanced training and development opportunities.

5. Delivering excellence for care leavers, sponsored by the London Children in Care Council

This category is for those that are working to make a positive difference to outcomes for care leavers. Best practice examples may relate to the development of new support offers, new and emerging practice with care leavers, including through partnership working.

6. Improving outcomes for children with complex needs who are in care or on the edge of care, sponsored by Regional Commissioning Arrangements (RCA) Development Board

This category is for those that are actively working to improve outcomes and value for money for children who have complex needs and/or would have been in high cost placements. Best practice examples may relate to new and emerging practice that has improved the experience, quality and stability for children in residential care and/or that have demonstrated improvements in placement sufficiency and quality.

7. Delivering together with health services, sponsored by the Children's Social Care Practice Leaders

This category is for those that are actively working to develop integrated working between Local Authorities and health organisations. Best practice examples may relate to new and emerging practice that shows effective engagement and partnership working that has made a difference to the collective responsibility for planning services, improving health for children and young people, and reducing inequalities.

8. Making data speak for London's children, sponsored by the Intelligence & Data Research Steering Group

This category is for those that are actively working to use data and intelligence as the catalyst to make a positive difference to outcomes for children. Best practice examples may relate to new and emerging practice that shows a creative use of data to provide fresh insights, build a robust picture and enable effective practice and/or demonstrate an impact in engagement levels through the introduction of data products, reports or visualisations.

9. Delivering positive impact through early intervention, sponsored by the London Early Help Network

This category is for those that are actively working to make a positive difference to outcomes for children and young people through early support initiatives with those at risk of poor outcomes. Best practice examples may relate to new and emerging practices used in the identification of need and preventative intervention practices and approaches that demonstrate improved support for children and families at the earliest point.

Submitting your practice

Who can submit?

Applications are open to all individuals and teams working in a London Local Authority or multi-agency partner. We welcome both single and group Local Authority applications as well as collaborative multi-agency partnership submissions. All submissions must be submitted in partnership with at least one London Local Authority to qualify.

****All submissions must be approved by the LA's Director of Children's Services (DCS) or Practice Leader/Assistant Director in order to be accepted****

“Practice Spotlight increased the drive of our area of practice across the Local Authority, and the drive in partnership meetings encouraging the engagement of partner agencies. Other London Local Authorities have also reached out to discuss and learn from our approach”

Submission framework

All submissions should follow the S.H.I.N.E framework:

- S** **Setting the Scene:** the context and problem you are solving
- H** **How:** what you did and how it was delivered to meet the identified need
- I** **Impact:** evidence of the difference it has made to children and families
- N** **Next Steps:** what you are doing next to develop or expand this practice
- E** **Evolve:** advice you would give to others seeking to replicate your model

Common themes

We recognise there are common themes that cut across all areas, such as such as: **racial equity, participation, partnership working, voice of the child, value for money.** Where not explicitly

requested through the submission process, we encourage you articulate these themes within the body of your submission.

Multiple or duplicate submissions

We encourage LAs to submit examples of practice to as many of the 9 categories as you can. If you feel your practice example parallels with more than one of the 9 categories they you can submit the same example of to more than one category.

Supporting materials

You are welcome to provide supporting materials as part of your submission. However, the critical information should be included within your main submission, aligned to the SHINE framework, and any supporting evidence should therefore serve to augment your entry. We welcome any images, logos or links as part of your submission where relevant.

Benefits to sharing your practice

Regional Peer Review

All examples of practice will be peer reviewed by a cross section of colleagues from the regional sponsoring network or group. This is an important feature of Practice Spotlight that provides peer review at a regional level, which is directly fed back to those who have shared their practice through 'Recognition Letters', and to raise awareness of excellent practice at a regional level and to directly inform and strengthen priority areas.

Sector-led Improvement

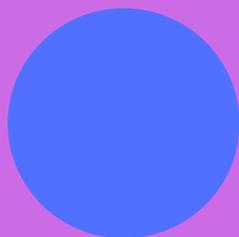
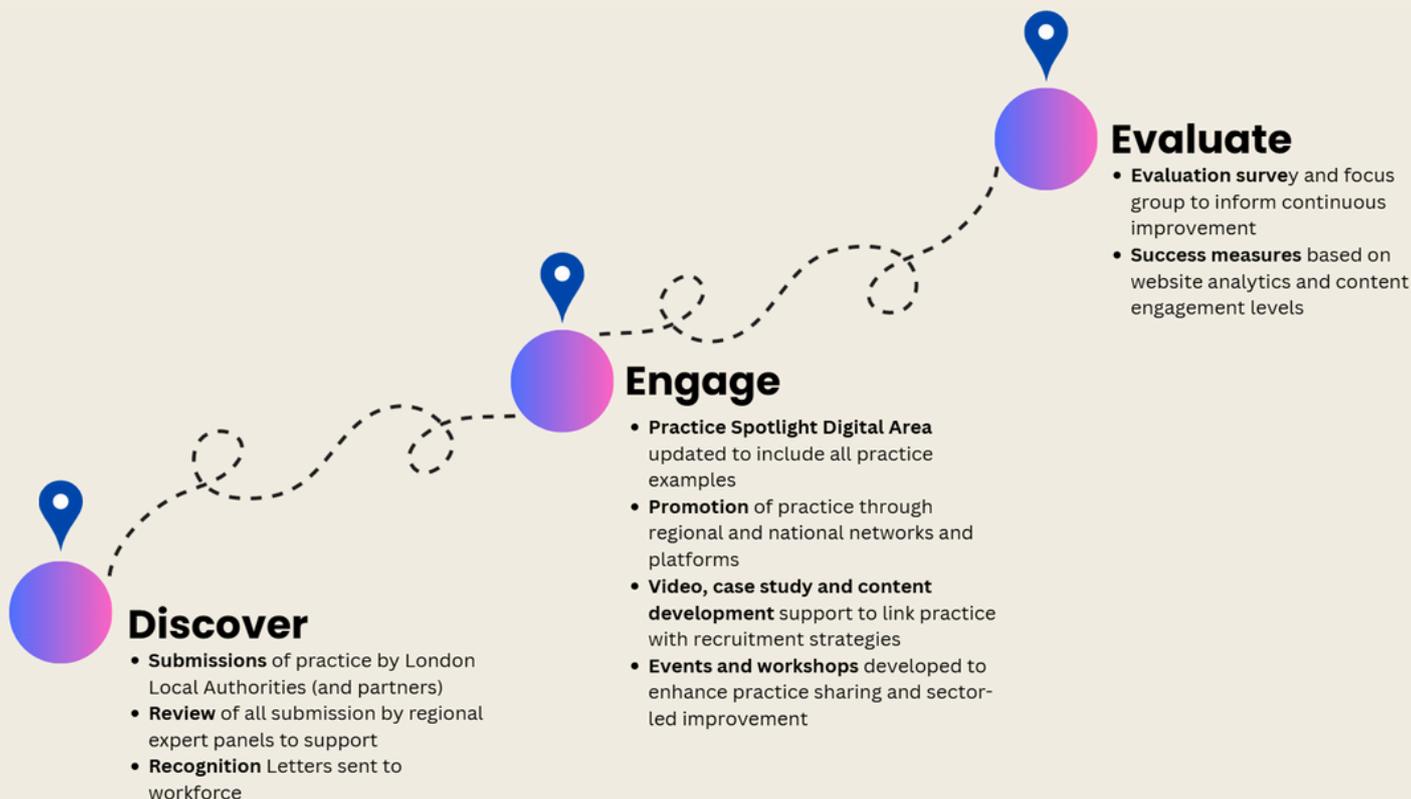
- **Share best practice across the London children's services community:** promoting and disseminating your work to help improve services and outcomes for children and families, with additional promotional press opportunities
- **Showcase your people and practice:** gain recognition for the innovative and excellent people and practice that you and your team are delivering together
- **Promote your Local Authority and partners:** the London Social Work for Children team will work with you to promote and share your best practice and the culture of your LA to strengthen local recruitment and retention campaigns to reach those considering their next career move in children's services
- **Network with your London peers:** connect with a range of colleagues from across the children's services community in London and expand your network of contacts
- **Keep the sharing going:** work with the London Innovation & Improvement Alliance (LIIA) to make sure your examples of best practice reach all the relevant networks across London and beyond, so that London can keep learning and sharing beyond the event

"Practice Spotlight is a great way of promoting what you do and generating conversation."

Next Steps

Key Milestones

Primary elements of Practice Spotlight.



[Click to start your submission](#)

Submission Deadline - Friday 24th April 2026

Timeframes

What's happening and when.

Milestone	Activity	Objectives	Timelines 2025/26
Discover	Submission	Practice examples submitted to 9 categories with an overarching theme of New & Emerging Practice , emerging practice and updates or removals of previous submissions	<i>February – April 2026</i>
	Review	Regional panel review and reflections	<i>May 2026</i>
	Recognition	Letters of recognition to workforce	<i>May – June 2026</i>
Engage	Digital Resource Area	Continuous promotion to wide ranging stakeholders	<i>May – June 2026</i>
	Promotion	Newsletters, social media (Linkedin), London Social Work for Children, video interviews, case studies and content development	<i>June 2026 ongoing</i>
	Events	Thematic events and workshops	<i>September 2026 ongoing</i>
Evaluate	Survey	Qualitative survey and focus group to support continuous improvement of the initiative	<i>January 2027</i>
	Success Measures	Quantitative analytics and engagement levels	<i>January 2027</i>