

ALDCS SEND BULLETIN

OCTOBER 2026 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](#).

Dear Colleagues,

We are pleased to share the October edition of the ALDCS SEND Bulletin, bringing together updates on activity over the summer and our planned work for Autumn 2026. As we move into a new academic year, we would also like to remind colleagues of the ALDCS SEND Programme Delivery Plan, [*a summary of which can be found here*](#), setting out our key areas of activity and priorities for the year ahead.

This bumper edition celebrates the launch of several key reports, including the Big SEND Conversation report, which engaged more than 600 members of the SEND workforce, and the Coproduction in London report, which provides a pan-London overview of coproduction arrangements. Both reports are timely, offering an important picture of the current landscape across the SEND system and setting out thoughtful, considered next steps that will help shape our work programme over the coming year.

We are grateful to colleagues for their openness and willingness to share their Local SEND Reform Plans, which enabled us to collect all 32 plans and analyse them to assess common themes and areas for support across London. We are reviewing our plans to ensure our support is targeted to the themes where there is greatest need.

Work has also continued across SEND commissioning, with a number of developments underway. Our Inclusion work has expanded significantly this year, with the team extending its networks and developing new opportunities for engagement - more on this below and in the link to the newly launched Inclusion Termly Update.

Elsewhere in this edition, we remind you of the data and insights LIIA holds to support SEND service planning and review, share our upcoming event calendar, and highlight the consultation responses we developed over the summer.

Thank you, as always, for your continued engagement across the LIIA programme. If you have any questions about the work in this bulletin, please do get in touch with the team.

*[If you'd like to discuss this further please contact **Frank Offer - Head of SEND, LIIA**](#)*

Programme Updates: SEND Reform Readiness

SEND Reform Plan Reviews

Over the summer, LIA reviewed **SEND Reform Plans from all 32 London local areas** to identify common themes, emerging practice, risks and opportunities across London. The review highlights strong commitments to co-production, inclusion, earlier intervention, improved use of data and intelligence, and the development of more locally based approaches to support children and young people.

It also identifies some **shared challenges, including specialist workforce capacity, partnership and governance, data and demand modelling, financial sustainability, and the pace of wider health and social care reform.** Our next step is to bring together feedback once local plans have been reviewed by the DfE, and to continue supporting local areas with implementation and delivery.

The pan-London review also gives us an opportunity to share emerging practice and identify where regional or sub-regional collaboration can add value.

[See Headlines from Reviews Here](#)



Experts at Hand - Deep Dive

The **Experts at Hand Discovery Deep Dive** took place over the Summer, building on the launch of the **Experts at Hand Community of Practice** earlier this year. The deep dive involved nine London local areas, alongside wider stakeholder engagement, to explore how EaH is being designed and taken forward in practice.

The deep dive found a number of **common approaches emerging, including locality and cluster-based models, multidisciplinary teams, earlier intervention and needs-led access to specialist expertise.** At the same time, workforce recruitment and retention — particularly for EPs, SaLTs and OTs — remains a consistent challenge across the areas engaged. The findings are now informing the next phase of the Experts at Hand Community of Practice work on a pan-London SEND recruitment and retention strategy, and further development of the LIA resource offer to support sharing of models, frameworks and emerging practice.

[See Headlines from Reviews Here](#)



Thank you to all London local areas and the parents, carers, children, young people and partners who have contributed to both pieces of work.

ALDCS Consultation Responses Submitted

Over the summer, **ALDCS submitted responses to three Department for Education consultations:** Upfront Funding for Mainstream Schools, Early Years Funding: Proposed Changes to the Entitlements Funding System, and Education Otherwise Than at School (EOTAS). The responses were informed by a series of engagement sessions attended by partners from across London and shaped by feedback from local authorities and wider stakeholders.

Upfront Funding for Mainstream Schools:

Broad support for strengthening inclusion and earlier intervention in mainstream settings, alongside calls for sustainable funding arrangements, clear national expectations, and a pan-London test-and-learn approach.

[Read more here!](#)



Early Years Funding:

Support for reforms that strengthen SEND inclusion and target disadvantage more effectively, while highlighting concerns about the proposed funding formula's impact on London authorities and the need for robust transitional protections.

[Read more here!](#)



[Read more here!](#)



EOTAS:

Emphasis on the importance of early intervention, inclusive practice, clearer accountability, and ensuring reforms are informed by the experiences of children, young people and families who rely on specialist support.

The responses have now been submitted to the DfE and can be accessed via the links above. We would like to thank all colleagues and partners who contributed their expertise and feedback throughout the process.

Programme Updates: Inclusion

LIIA Termly Inclusion Update

Our support for inclusion has grown significantly and further details can be accessed [here](#), including the **Inclusion Base Call for Effective Practice**.

Below are some of the key highlights from the September Update:

Inclusion and Belonging Programme 2026/27

The **LiiA SEND Inclusion & Belonging Programme 2026/27** showcases and celebrates effective inclusive practice across London that supports children and young people with SEND to thrive and feel a sense of belonging. **Schools, colleges, early years and local authorities are invited to sign up** and share their best practice to showcase innovative approaches and positive outcomes.

[Local Authorities Application Form](#)

[Educational Settings Application Form](#)

London Schools Inclusion Network

A new pan-London School focused **SEND and Inclusion** network will meet half-termly, providing school leaders with a collaborative space to share best practice and discuss key developments. The first meeting will take place on **Tuesday 13th October, 10am -11:30am**.

[Register as a member here!](#)



Promoting Inclusion Professionals Network (PIPn)

The **Promoting Inclusion Professionals Network (PIPn)** brings together local authorities and partner organisations to share effective practice, address trends in school exclusions and strengthen collaborative approaches to inclusion, attendance and exclusion prevention. LiiA is supporting the development and delivery of this growing pan-London network.

[Register your interest here!](#)



Local Authority Trust Support Offer

The **Local Authority Trust Programme** supports local authorities to explore and develop **collaborative school partnership models** through peer learning, workshops and targeted support. Participants can learn from national best practice and strengthen system leadership, school collaboration and inclusive outcomes for children and young people.

[Express interest here!](#)



Inclusion & Belonging Tools and Dashboard

The **LiiA Inclusion & Belonging Data Dashboard** and **Self-Review Tool** are designed to help schools evaluate and strengthen inclusive practice through data-driven insights, benchmarking and self assessments. Together, they support evidence-informed school improvement, helping leaders identify strengths, address barriers and develop effective inclusion strategies. **Schools can register their interest for a demonstration and take part in initial testing ahead of launch.**

[More information on this signup form!](#)



What Works Well in SEND Inclusion

Following **over 30 submissions from across London**, we are pleased to share a collection of inclusive best practice examples, showcasing innovative approaches that support children and young people with SEND.

[Read more here!](#)



SAVE THE DATE: 2027 LIIA SEND Inclusion & Belonging Conference

Join us on 18th March 2027, at the **Kensington Conference and Events Centre**. Building on the success of 2026, the event will bring together education and local authority leaders, featuring 60 exhibitors, keynote speakers, practical workshops and networking opportunities to share and celebrate effective and inclusive practice. **Free tickets will be available from Monday 12th October 2026.**

Further details will be shared via the LiiA website and other communications.

[If you'd like to discuss this work further please contact Andy Higgs or Matthew Rees](#)

Programme Updates: SEND Workforce

The Big SEND Conversation - Full Report Published!

The Big SEND Conversation 2025/26, is now published! The report contains 6 recommendations – both regional and national.

Almost 600 SEND professionals from local authorities, education, health and partner organisations shared their experiences, perspectives and aspirations, creating a unique picture of the workforce that supports children and young people with SEND across the capital.

The report represented the voice of the SEND workforce, exploring their opportunities and challenges, including workload pressures, wellbeing, recruitment and retention, multi-agency working, inclusion, digital innovation and hopes and fears for reforms. The report demonstrates that system reform and workforce reform must go hand in hand to be successful.

The findings highlight a workforce that is highly committed to improving outcomes for children and families and emphasises their role as one of the most significant factors of lasting impact through reform.



[Read 'The Big SEND Conversation' Report here!](#) 

Experts at Hand - Community of Practice

On 16th September 2026, we welcomed colleagues to the third Experts at Hand Community of Practice session. **Thank you to everyone who joined and contributed to the discussion!**

The session explored emerging themes from **SEND Reform Plans**, reflections from the **Experts at Hand Deep Dives** completed over the summer and key considerations around workforce development, commissioning, health engagement and implementation approaches. Participants also had the opportunity to share learning and highlight emerging practice from across boroughs.

Future sessions will continue to focus on emerging themes from SEND Delivery Plans, with dedicated discussions on workforce development, sustainability, data and intelligence, inclusion, and the connection between the Experts at Hand programme and broader system reform. The next Community of Practice session will take place on Wednesday 25th November, 1.00pm–2.30pm.

[Register your place at the next Community of Practice here!](#) 

If you'd like to discuss this work further please contact [Rula Tripolitaki](#) or [Fatima Sharif](#).

Programme Updates: Co-Production

LIIA has published a research report on co-production across London's SEND system. Commissioned by LIIA, NDTi explored how co-production with parent carers, children and young people is working across London's Local Areas, drawing on insights from over 100 participants and a review of all 33 Local Offers.

[Read the Co-Production in London Report here!](#) 

What did the research tell us?

The research found a strong commitment to co-production across London, but significant variation in how it is understood and experienced in practice. While there are pockets of good practice, co-production is not yet consistently embedded and can be affected by wider pressures, staff turnover and financial constraints.

What next?

The report sets out six recommendations to strengthen coproduction across London, focusing on a shared approach, stronger engagement with children and young people, and the need for greater support, leadership and capacity across local areas.

LIIA is establishing a Co-production Development Group to help shape and oversee the next steps arising from the report.

[Please contact Bethan Evans for more information](#)

Programme Updates: SEND Commissioning

This update builds on the July bulletin and **sets out progress against the 2026-27 commissioning programme.** Work is moving from the scoping of commissioning priorities, INMSS pilot into borough rollout, market mapping and the development of shared commissioning intelligence. The priorities are independent special school placements, paediatric therapies, SEND transport, financial resilience and stronger joint commissioning with health.

LIIA SEND Financial Resilience Support Offer

LIIA is inviting boroughs to access flexible financial resilience support at no additional cost. Starting with a local priority – such as SEND demand, placement costs, sufficiency, DSG pressures, or delivery of an existing savings plan – the support can provide a rapid issue test, a focused challenge, or help turn previous review findings into deliverable action, with clear ownership, timescales and finance-validated benefits. This approach has already supported Ealing's Children's Best Value Challenge, which is now expanding the methodology to Adult and Corporate Services. The support is designed to complement, rather than duplicate, any existing plans or reviews.

[Read more here!](#)

[Interested? Contact the team to find out more](#)



SEND Commissioning Programme

Following the multi-agency commissioning workshop and the priorities identified through the 2025-26 commissioning report, the SEND Commissioning programme is moving into delivery phase. The ALDCS SEND Steering Group and Pan-London SEND Commissioning Forum provide strategic oversight and commissioner engagement respectively.

The programme will progress agreed collaborative projects, including paediatric therapy market mapping, the London SEND INMSS Benchmarking Tool, and a defined area of work on SEND transport. Updates will be presented to the ALDCS Steering Group.

INMSS Benchmarking Tool

As reported in July, the London SEND INMSS Benchmarking Tool was piloted with Greenwich, Enfield, Southwark and Wandsworth. **Learning from the pilot has been incorporated into the tool and accompanying guidance, and the London survey has identified a strong group of boroughs for wider rollout.**

The Quarter 3 rollout will give boroughs access, guidance and support to complete their return. The resulting intelligence will examine placement use, fees and costs, patterns of need, and market dependencies. By the end of the 2026-27 financial year, we intend to produce a consolidated market intelligence report, including fee and placement benchmarking, to support pan-London market intelligence, service engagement and commissioning activity.

Recoupment of SEND related costs for LAC children placed out of borough

The Inter-Authority Recoupment Regulations 2026 came into force on 1st September 2026 and update the arrangements for recouping education costs between local authorities for looked after children with SEND who are placed out of area. The amendments introduce a new requirement for the local authority responsible for looking after the child to meet costs incurred by the authority providing education where the child has an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan, or attends a special school, and agreement on costs has not been reached within six months.

The regulations can be accessed here: [Inter-Authority Recoupment \(England\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2026](#). The Department for Education has also published accompanying guidance, Local authorities' recoupment of the education costs of looked after children, to support implementation of the new arrangements.

Pan-London SEND Commissioning Forum

The **next Pan-London SEND Commissioning Forum will take place online on Thursday 26th November from 3.30pm.** The forum will continue to give SEND commissioners, NHS colleagues and partners a space to share practice, test London-wide priorities, and use collective intelligence to identify practical opportunities for collaboration and market development. The agenda will be sent out in advance of the meeting.

SEND Transport

Areas for collaborative work on SEND transport are being scoped by Liia, working with Richmond and Wandsworth Councils, including alignment with LGA SEND transport reviews and emerging sub-regional activity. The immediate task is to develop a sufficiently focused area where shared analysis or commissioning action can add value. Further detail will follow through the commissioning programme as this work develops.

London SEND Finance Network

The **next London SEND Finance Network meeting will take place online on Thursday 8th October, 2.00pm-4.00pm**. The network continues to provide a platform for SEND finance leads across London to discuss opportunities and challenges together, with this meeting focusing particularly on Early Years funding, increased inclusion initiatives in mainstream settings, and developing sufficiency of places and the associated planning process.

Paediatric Therapies

The July bulletin highlighted **common pressures in paediatric occupational and speech and language therapy provision, including workforce availability, specialist expertise, market visibility and demand pressures**. Subsequent engagement has reinforced the case for a stronger shared evidence base in commissioning of independent paediatric therapy, as boroughs use a range of NHS, school-led and independent commissioning routes.

The **proposed next phase is to roll out the mapping of the independent speech and language therapy and occupational therapy market in Quarter 3**. This will consider provider reach, specialist offer, indicative capacity and gaps. NHS and ICB therapy leads and relevant professional bodies will be engaged so the work also clarifies how independently commissioned provision relates to NHS-commissioned pathways.

The mapping will inform options for market development, shared assurance, benchmarking and future commissioning. It does not presuppose a single pan-London procurement solution. **It is planned to launch this survey in November**.

Alongside this work, LIIA continues to work with NHS England London Region on the project which aims to establish clearer joint funding arrangements for children, initially through work in North East London. The scope includes Children's Continuing Care supported by consistent policies, operating procedures and data.

Autism and SEMH Sufficiency Work

The **autism and SEMH sufficiency review** and the related INMSS collaborative commissioning work with Newton **are nearing completion**. The reports are being finalised and will be presented to the ALDCS SEND Steering Group in November.

The **findings will help to strengthen the evidence available to boroughs on demand, specialist sufficiency, placement patterns, market pressures and opportunities for collaboration**. LIIA are currently reviewing the recommendations with proposed actions to be set out to progress the insights.

Programme Updates: Insight to Impact

LIIA SEND Insight to Impact - Collaborative Peer Development Workshops

LIIA is offering Local Areas the **opportunity to take part in a bespoke, facilitated SEND Insight to Impact workshop, designed around local strengths, challenges and improvement priorities**. The offer provides a one-day, independently facilitated peer development workshop, with some preparation and follow-up support. LIIA will work with the Local Area in advance to understand local intelligence, diagnostics, self-evaluation and priorities, helping to identify a focused theme for the session. One workshop will take place each term.

The workshop **brings together relevant partners across local authority, education, health, parent carer forums and wider system partners**. The day provides space for honest discussion, constructive peer challenge and practice sharing, before moving towards practical action planning and agreed next steps.

A range of themes is available, and can be tailored to local need, such as:

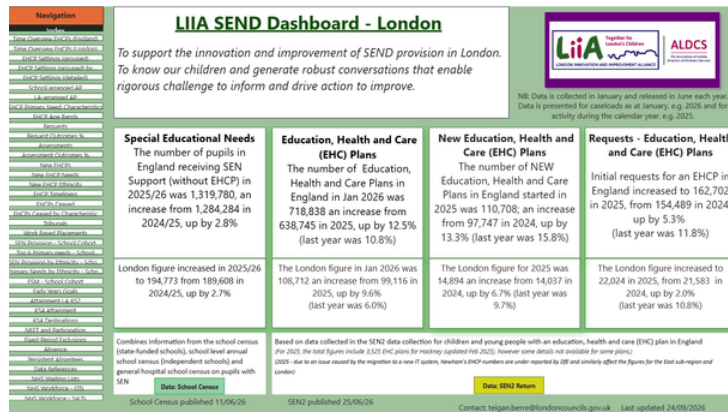
- Building the conditions for partnership change
- Inclusion that works
- Early support, early intervention and emerging need
- Experts at Hand
- Workforce capacity and system capability
- Co-production beyond consultation
- Data, intelligence and strategic decision-making
- Commissioning for impact
- Preparing for Adulthood and post-16 success
- Disproportionality, equity and belonging

The workshops are not a fixed programme. The focus is agreed with the LA Lead/SRO and can be tailored to local priorities, with LIIA bringing relevant sector expertise, peer learning, practice examples and facilitation. Following the workshop, LIIA will provide a summary of outputs and reflections, with follow-up conversations and signposting to further support where agreed.

[To explore if an Insight to Impact workshop could support your local priorities, please contact Frank Offer](#)

Programme Updates: Intelligence & Insight

SEND Data and Benchmarking Update



The **SEND Dashboard**, continues to bring together data from Department for Education to provide a comprehensive borough-level review of SEND across London. The dashboard will continue to be updated as new national and regional data becomes available.

Newly developed restricted dashboards

The first full collection of the SEND Quarterly Data Collection took place in August, with **27 local authorities submitting Q2 2026 data**. This is already providing early insight into the impact of SEND reforms, including highlighting that the rate of EHCNA requests received has reached its highest level since 2022.

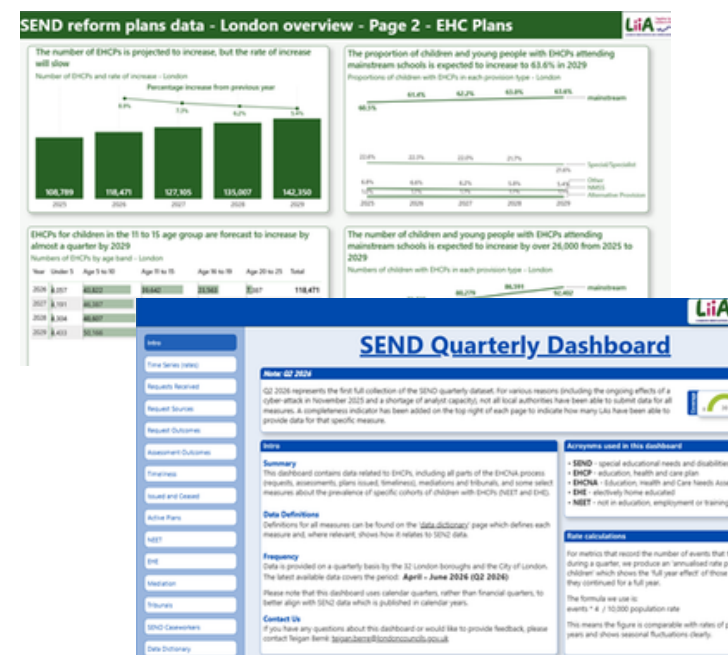
For local authority colleagues, the newly launched **SEND Quarterly Dashboard** and **Local Area SEND Reform Dashboard** are also available via the App, providing more detailed benchmarking and analysis.

Access to these dashboards is currently restricted to local authorities, due to Data Sharing Agreements. Access can be granted via Heads of SEND and/or DCS if not already in place.

SEND Reform Plans Data (RESTRICTED)

SEND Quarterly Dashboard (RESTRICTED)

LIA SEND Dashboard

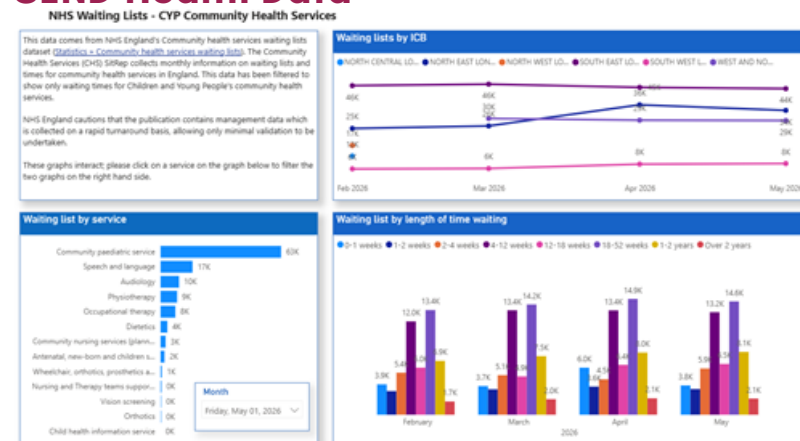


SEND Task and Finish Group

The 6th and final meeting of the group has taken place. **It has provided an opportunity to ensure that our products are useful and enabled us to prioritise our SEND data work.**

It has supported in a number of ways, for example with the creation of a Data Playbook, restructuring of the SEND area of the LIA website, updates to the SEND dashboard and an action plan to follow to enable data sharing with health colleagues.

SEND Health Data



LIA is keen to ensure that data from a range of partners is reflected in our dashboards. To this end, we have begun to incorporate some published NHS Waiting List and Workforce data into our **SEND dashboard**.

We would like to expand our use of health data further, so **if you are aware of any positive examples of data sharing between ICBs/NHS and local authorities we would love to hear from you.**

[If you require support to access the dashboard or have any questions/feedback please contact Teigan Berre & Sherian Bateson](#)

Upcoming Activity

EVENTS Network Meetings & Upcoming Workshops

LIIA continues to deliver a varied programme of networks, support offers, and practice-sharing workshops as part of our Pan-London Innovation and Improvement activity. The table below sets out the upcoming calendar, including themes, key focuses, and contact points should you wish to get involved.

Session	Date	Contact Point
London SEND Finance Network	8th October	Matt Rees
London Schools Inclusion Network	13th October	Matt Rees
SEND Heads of Service Network	3rd November	Fatima Sharif
ALDCS SEND Steering Group	9th November	Bethan Evans
SEND Strategic Manager Parent Carer Network	19th November	Fatima Sharif
Experts at Hand: Community of Practice	25th November	Fatima Sharif
Pan-London SEND Commissioning Forum	26th November	Matt Rees

Help us to improve to improve the LIIA newsletters!

We are reviewing our suite of LIIA newsletters and would really value your feedback. This short survey should take less than a minute. [Complete our survey](#)

THANK YOU!

Thank you for your continued support of the ALDCS SEND Programme. We recognise the scale of activity currently underway across the system and are grateful for your continued engagement.

As always, we welcome feedback on this bulletin and would be pleased to discuss any of the programmes referenced above in further detail.

Please visit our website: liia.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](#)

Links not working for you? To access some of our dashboards you will need to login to your account on the [LIIA Website Members Area](#). Or if you do not already have access you can register via the [LIIA website](#). Still experiencing problems, then please email our website [administrators](#).