

WORKFORCE NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2026 ISSUE

As we begin a new academic year, children's services across London are once again balancing the opportunities and optimism that September brings with the continued pressures and pace of change across the sector. Colleagues are supporting children, young people and families through a period of significant transformation, whilst implementing major reforms, responding to rising and increasingly complex needs, and maintaining a steadfast focus on improving outcomes.

Against this backdrop, I am particularly pleased to share the publication of The Big SEND Conversation report. The report gives voice to almost 600 SEND professionals from across local authorities, education, health and partner organisations, providing invaluable insight into the experiences, aspirations and challenges. The findings remind us that successful reform cannot be achieved through policy alone. It depends upon a skilled, supported and sustainable workforce. Thank you to everyone who took part and the recommendations included will help shape our regional priorities and contribute to the wider national conversation about the future of SEND services.



Julie Kelly, Corporate Director of Children's Services for LB Hillingdon and ALDCS Workforce Policy Lead

This newsletter also reflects the breadth of activity taking place across the ALDCS workforce programme. You'll find updates on our Families First workforce development offer through the launch of We Train Together, progress on London's approach to Children's Social Worker agency workforce stability, developments in the Educational Psychologist London Pledge and considerations for Experts at Hand, and encouraging momentum across London Social Work for Children and Jobs in Children's Homes as we continue to strengthen recruitment and retention across the sector.

Alongside this, we share learning from a recent Local Government Reorganisation event focused on children's services, highlighting the importance of leadership, workforce resilience and partnership working during periods of system change. We also look ahead to upcoming Communities of Practice, including Experts at Hand, Families First and Safeguarding Adolescents in London (SAIL), which continue to provide vital opportunities for collaboration, reflection and shared learning across the capital.

Thank you, as always, for your leadership, commitment and dedication. As a new school year begins, there is much to reflect on, but also much to be optimistic about. If you wish to discuss anything about the programme please reach out to [Rula Tripolitaki, Head of Delivery & Workforce \(LIIA\)](#).

Julie Kelly
Corporate Director of Children's Services, LB Hillingdon
ALDCS Workforce Policy Lead

THIS MONTHS EDITION INCLUDES;

- **The Big SEND Conversation report 2025/26:** the voice of the SEND workforce
- **The London Pledge:** reflections from NAPEP and considering Educational Psychology & Experts at Hand
- **We Train Together:** regional learning offer responding to Families First
- **Children's social worker agency guidance:** first national price cap review and sustained compliance
- **London Social Work for Children (LSWC):** expanding to include Families First roles and Personal Advisors
- **Jobs in children's homes (JICH):** positive engagement, clickthrough rates and career stories
- **Local Government reorganisation (LGR) webinar:** key messages for children's services
- **LIIA Communities of Practice:** upcoming events for Experts at Hand, Families First and Safeguarding Adolescents in London (SAIL)
- **Reunification Practice Guide webinars:** Foundations hosting two webinars in September

THE BIG SEND CONVERSATION - FULL REPORT PUBLISHED!

We are pleased to publish **The Big SEND Conversation 2025/26**, the largest regional workforce engagement exercise of its kind undertaken across London's SEND system.

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 the opportunities and challenges facing the SEND workforce, including workload pressures, wellbeing, recruitment and retention, multi-agency working, inclusion, digital innovation and hopes and fears for reforms. Successful system reform and workforce reform must go hand in hand.

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 successful reforms implementation and lasting impact. The report contains 6 recommendations – both regional and national.



[READ 'THE BIG SEND CONVERSATION' REPORT HERE](#)

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

EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGISTS & EXPERTS AT HAND

EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SERVICES & EXPERTS AT HAND

We are pleased to share this briefing from National Association of Principal Educational Psychology (NAPEP), exploring workforce considerations for Educational Psychology Services within the development of Experts at Hand.

This 'PEP to PEP' briefing has been developed by the NAPEP Executive with the intention *"to support local workforce planning and wider SEND reform discussions, while highlighting the importance of maintaining a sustainable and integrated Educational Psychology workforce."*

Click here to read the 'Workforce Considerations for Educational Psychology' briefing here.

Many thanks to [Dr Sue Franklin, Principal Educational Psychologist and Manager of STEP's at Lewisham \(Past Chair, NAPEP Executive Committee\)](#) and [Suzy Francis, Principal Educational Psychologist at Enfield \(Secretary, NAPEP Executive Committee\)](#), who can be contacted by email should you wish to discuss anything further.

THE EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY LONDON PLEDGE

The Pledge continues to support local recruitment practices with suppliers and is enabling improved shared principles across the region, with other regions progressing with similar agreements. Feedback from local authorities is encouraging about the local support the agreement provides, and work continues to develop case studies that can help share effective local approaches.

A complete, representative dataset of regional locum resource – both via agency and commissioned services – is more complex. Positive progress has been made in 'collection 1 – agency EPs' through 3 quarterly collections supported by Managed Service Providers. A dashboard has now been introduced to visualise this data, support monitoring and enable trend analysis, with ongoing improvements. A 'collection 2 – commissioned EP resource' data collection methodology has been developed with 8 pilot LAs supporting local testing. We aim to roll out the collection 1 template once tested, with the objective of improving data quality and enabling a complete picture of local EP usage across London.

→ LIA's data and intelligence team have also created a dashboard for the Schools Workforce Census to support an understanding of EP workforce trends nationally.

→ If you'd like to discuss this work in more detail please contact [Rula Tripolitaki](#) or [Madeline Oakes](#).

WE TRAIN TOGETHER: NEW REGIONAL LEARNING OFFER LAUNCHES THIS OCTOBER

We are delighted to confirm that London's Principal Social Worker Network have co-designed **We Train Together**, an exciting new regional Family Help Lead Practitioner (FHELP) Train-the-Trainer sector-led learning offer designed to support local authorities in delivering high-quality learning and development for the evolving Family Help workforce, responding to the Families First for Children reforms.



Delivered through a series of half-day online train-the-trainer sessions, the programme will provide resources, training materials and expert-led development that local authorities can adapt and deliver within their own organisations. The first four priority modules will be rolled out across 2026-27, starting with Module 1: Role of the Family Help Lead Practitioner on Tuesday 13th October 2026.

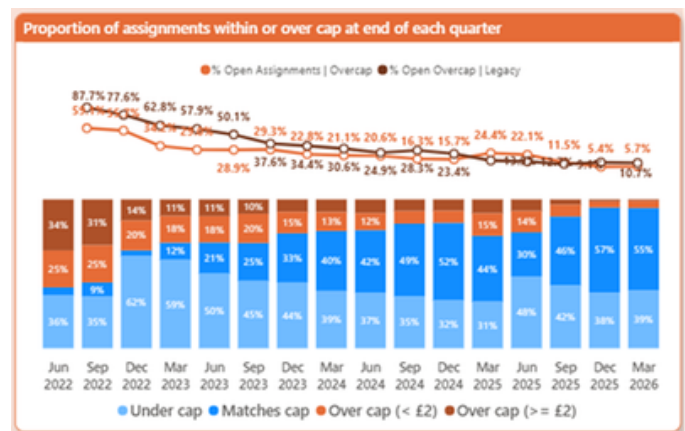
The wider programme will also cover topics including domestic abuse, mental health, neglect, child exploitation, anti-racist practice, neurodiversity, AI in social work, and supervision for Family Help teams. We are grateful for Research in Practice who have independently reviewed the programmed and mapped a wide range of resources and tools to support consistency of access to the latest research.

→ For booking information please contact [Nafisa Abdiressak](#). To learn more about the learning offer please contact [Rula Tripolitaki](#).

CHILDRENS SOCIAL WORKER AGENCY GUIDANCE

London local authorities have agreed to maintain the existing regional agency Children's Social Care (CSC) social worker price caps following the first annual review under the new statutory guidance. The decision was evidence-based and reflects strong regional collaboration, with London continuing to demonstrate:

- **The lowest levels of price cap non-compliance**, with ~5% of assignments exceeding caps.
- **Sustained under-cap pay rates**, with 39% of assignments paid below the cap.
- **The lowest agency reliance reported**, with increasing workforce stability.
- **Alignment with neighbouring regions**, all of which are also retaining their current price caps.



The **London Agency CSC Social Worker Dashboard** remains available for boroughs to review their local workforce position. Collection 6 returns closed on 31 August 2026 and will be added to the dashboard this month.

LONDON SOCIAL WORK FOR CHILDREN



FAMILIES FIRST FINDS A HOME ON LSWC

As children's social care continues to evolve through the Families First reforms, the **London Social Work for Children (LSWC) website** is expanding to include a wider range of case-holding roles. In addition to social work positions, LSWC will now advertise Lead Practitioner roles (including variants such as Lead Child Practitioner, Lead Family Practitioner and Lead Child Protection Practitioner) and Personal Advisor roles.

It is important that LSWC is responsive to developments in children's services practice in order to remain relevant and impactful to recruitment effectiveness. Local authorities interested in promoting these roles are encouraged to contact the LSWC team to discuss recruitment plans and tailored promotional support

AI JOB SCRAPER NOW LIVE!

LSWC is also pleased to announce the launch of its new AI-powered job scraper. As part of the platform's ongoing development programme, the tool will automatically scan local authority recruitment websites each morning, identifying and uploading new vacancies directly to LSWC. This innovation is designed to reduce manual upload, improving vacancy visibility, and will enable local authorities to focus more time and resource on strategic recruitment and workforce attraction activities. **Get in touch with [Eliana Neyhus](#) to plan your next campaign.**

The business case for the continuation of LSWC beyond 2026/27 will be prepared or ALDCS decision in Nov 2026.

JOBS IN CHILDREN'S HOMES (JICH) UPDATES

ENGAGEMENT IN JOBS IN CHILDRENS HOMES SO FAR

Since launching in May 2026, Jobs in Children's Homes recruitment platform has had **7,700 visitors and 10,200 views**, including 1,588 views of the 94 individual job listings which produced 474 clicks through to apply - resulting in a 'clickthrough' rate of just under 30%.



LinkedIn has also generated 62,783 impressions over the same period. The project is still in its infancy, and the absolute numbers are modest at the moment but this first quarter presents a strong foundation with exciting steps planned to utilise the new dataset and explore scope in the coming months ahead.

CAREER STORIES FROM THE CHILDREN'S HOMES WORKFORCE

We are delighted to share the first career case study featured on Jobs in Children's Homes (JICH), highlighting the experiences of Chris Stevenson, a self-described "**Corporate Grandparent**" working in a children's home at Surrey County Council. In his story, Chris reflects on the **rewards and challenges of working in residential care and the unique opportunity to make a lasting difference in the lives of children and young people.**



"Our superpower as a group is that when the going gets tough with the kids, as it will do from time to time, we can model what loving, mutually respectful relationships between adults look like. When we do that effectively and relentlessly in front of the kids, there's a chance it becomes infectious for them over time."

[READ MORE HERE](#)

→ Get in touch with [Eliana Neyhus](#) to discuss career stories and your local recruitment campaigns.

CSC

SEND

CH

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION (LGR) WEBINAR: KEY MESSAGES FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES



A recent webinar, "What LGR Means for Children's Services: Models, Risks and Opportunities", explored the potential impact of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) on children's services, drawing on lessons from Northamptonshire's experience of restructuring and establishing Northamptonshire Children's Trust.

[WATCH THE SESSION RECORDING HERE](#)

The central message was that organisational restructuring alone does not improve outcomes for children and families. Success depends on strong leadership, effective governance, workforce stability, partnership working, and maintaining a clear focus on children and young people's needs throughout periods of change. Speakers also highlighted the significant national workforce implications of LGR, with increased demand for Directors of Children's Services and senior leaders likely to intensify recruitment and retention pressures across the sector.

While London is not currently undergoing LGR, the discussion highlighted several important considerations including; succession planning, leadership development, workforce resilience, and the value of collaborative service models.

A key takeaway from the Northamptonshire case study was that successful transformation is driven by relationships, leadership, and culture rather than organisational form. As children's services continue to navigate wider reform programmes and growing demand pressures, these lessons remain highly relevant across London and the wider sector.

→ On 7th September the government announced the launch of a [review of local government reorganisation](#) which aims to streamline local government and ensure the process is robust and aligns with the new government's plans to [rewire the state](#).

[READ THE KEY CONSIDERATIONS PAPER HERE](#)

COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE EVENTS

SEND

EXPERTS AT HAND COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE WEDNESDAY 16TH SEPTEMBER

The next London Experts at Hand (EAH) Community of Practice will take place on 16 September 2026, from 1:00pm to 2:30pm (online).

The session will continue to provide a collaborative multi-agency space for local authorities, health partners, education settings, the DfE and wider SEND partners to share learning and explore implementation of the SEND reforms.

Building on feedback from members at the previous sessions, discussions will focus on emerging themes and data analysis from local SEND delivery plans, examples of developing practice across London gathered from the Experts at Hand 'deep dive' field work undertaken over the summer, including workforce considerations and opportunities for partnership working.

→ **Join the EAH COP:** Please contact [Madeline Oakes](#) if you wish to discuss further.

CSC

REGIONAL FAMILIES FIRST COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE TUESDAY 29TH SEPTEMBER

The LIIA Families First Reform Community of Practice is back after a summer break. We have been running this event for over a year and covered most of the key areas of Families First for Children reforms programme, with a lot of helpful input from our pathfinders and space for continued LA and partner sharing and learning.

The next meeting will be on Tuesday 29th September from 1am to 11am with future dates accessible. The sessions will continue to be monthly as requested, but will be shortened to 1 hour with a fixed format of: National, regional updates and useful resources, Questions and dilemma's, LA sharing - developments and learning. You can also access the London CSC Reform Members Area here: <https://www.liia.london/contact-us/>.

→ **Join the FF COP:** Please contact [Nafisa Abdirisak](#) or [Lucie Heyes](#) to ensure to gain access to the meetings, which are coordinated via direct

CH

CSC

SEND

SAFEGUARDING ADOLESCENTS IN LONDON (SAIL) COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE MONDAY 19TH OCTOBER



Colleagues are warmly invited to join the next SAIL Community of Practice on Monday 19th October from 1pm to 2pm, featuring a thought-provoking presentation from Dr Jahnine Davis, one of the UK's leading safeguarding researchers.

ABOUT THE SESSION

"Who's Protecting Us? Conditional Safeguarding and the Implications for Black Children Who Experience Harm In and Outside the Home," will explore the experiences of Black children and young people who face harm across different contexts.

Drawing on her extensive research and practice expertise, Dr Davis will examine how factors such as adultification bias can shape perceptions of vulnerability and influence safeguarding responses. Participants will have the opportunity to reflect on key findings from her research, consider the implications for practice, and engage in discussion with colleagues across children's services and partner agencies.

The SAIL Community of Practice provides a valuable space for learning, reflection and professional curiosity to support and strengthen practice. We are also looking for SAIL champions to help shape and strengthen the resource and support engagement across services.

→ **Join the SAIL COP:** Contact the SAIL team on [HelloSAIL@liia.london](mailto>HelloSAIL@liia.london) to gain access to the COP events.



REUNIFICATION PRACTICE GUIDE WEBINARS

The Foundations team will host [Reunification Practice Guide](#) webinars on **Monday 28th and Tuesday 29th September 2026** which will provide an overview of the key principles and recommendations set out in the Practice Guide.

Foundations

What Works Centre for Children & Families

The Guide highlights what local areas can do to strengthen assessment, planning, decision-making and support before, during and after reunification, to help improve outcomes and promote long-term stability for children and families.

[Click here to book your place here](#)

LIIA DATA AND INTELLIGENCE

WORKFORCE DATA DASHBAORDS

- [Children's Social Work Workforce Census Dashboard](#) (NEW Updates – as at 30 Sept 2025) (Public)
- [Leadership in Colour Dashboard](#) (NEW Updates – as at 30 Sept 2025) (Public)
- [Schools Workforce Census Dashboard](#) (NEW – as at Nov 2025) (Public)
- [Children's Social Work Agency Staff Dashboard](#) (NEW Updates – London Pledge) (Members Only)
- [Educational Psychology Agency Staff Dashboard](#) (NEW Updates – London Pledge) (Members Only)
- [London Social Work for Children Dashboard](#) (NEW Updates – updated monthly) (Members Only)

MAKING DATA SPEAK FOR LONDON'S CHILDREN

[Making Data Speak for London's Children](#) is the regional data and intelligence programme led by the London Innovation & Improvement Alliance.

You can now access all the publicly available data, categorised by the relevant regional priority in the new Making Data Speak for London's Children microsite.

This data is used alongside restricted data, to inform regional priorities and targeted activities needed to improve outcomes for children across the spectrum of ALDCS shared priority areas.

To access the 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](#).

Making Data Speak for London's Children: Public Data Area



WELCOME – Making Data Speak for London's Children is the regional data and intelligence programme led by the London Innovation & Improvement Alliance

EXPLORE – Contained within this resource you can access all the publicly available data, categorised by the relevant regional priority. This data is used alongside restricted data, to inform regional priorities and targeted activities needed to improve outcomes for children

Adolescent Safeguarding

Special Educational Needs & Disabilities (SEND)

Resources & Commissioning

Education Data

Workforce

Care Leaving

CiN outcomes Data

Other Data

[Click here to learn more about the ALDCS Data Insights Programme](#)

[Click here to access the LIIA Restricted Area Data Insights \(Membership Required\)](#)

GET IN TOUCH ABOUT WORKFORCE

If you would like to discuss any areas of the programme in more detail please reach out to our Workforce Programme Lead, [Rula Tripolitaki](#) or visit the [ALDCS Workforce Priority Area](#).

MORE ABOUT LIIA & ALDCS WORK

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.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT OF THE GROWING ALDCS WORKFORCE PROGRAMME!