

# ALDCS SEND BULLETIN

APRIL 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 bring you the April edition of the ALDCS SEND Bulletin. It has been an extremely busy period since our last quarterly update in December, with significant developments across the national and London SEND landscape.

Since our last bulletin, we have seen the long-awaited publication of the Every Child Achieving and Thriving Schools White Paper and the proposed SEND reforms. We have also delivered the annual ALDCS London SEND Summit, brought the BIG SEND Conversation to a close, and launched the second series of the London Children's Services Practice Spotlight, all alongside the many ongoing programmes and projects across the ALDCS SEND Programme.

Local authorities and partners are now working hard on shaping their Local Area SEND Reform Plans, reflecting the proposals set out in the Schools White Paper and the SEND reform consultation. The LIIA team has been working at pace to understand and digest these policy changes so that we can best support Local Areas during this transition period.

In this bulletin, we share updates on our understanding of the Schools White Paper and SEND reform proposals, alongside a number of updates on pan-London programmes of work. We hope these insights are useful as you continue to navigate the emerging national direction and its implications for local systems.

We have also included a calendar of upcoming engagement opportunities, which we hope will help colleagues stay connected with regional activity and make the most of the support available.

We hope you enjoy this edition, and as always, please feel free to contact the LIIA team if you would like to find out more or get involved.

# Every Child Achieving and Thriving: Schools white paper & SEND Reforms

## What are the headlines and what do they mean?

On 23 February, the Government published the **Schools White Paper alongside their proposals for SEND Reform**. Both documents set out a programme of change over the next decade, touching every part of the system – from early years and mainstream inclusion to specialist provision, workforce development, accountability, and funding reform.

Alongside this, the Department for Education has announced the Experts at Hand and Local Authority SEND Transformation Fund, providing over £429 million nationally to support local authorities, working with ICBs and partners, to strengthen inclusive practice across early years, mainstream schools and further education through access to specialist expertise. Provisional allocations indicate that London will receive £70.6 million. **Guidance on the fund has now been published and can be accessed here.**

To support London local areas in digesting these policy and funding announcements, LIA has produced a summary deck bringing together the key headlines and implications from the Schools White Paper, the SEND consultation and associated funding announcements including:

- The stronger national emphasis on inclusive mainstream education, with funding flowing directly to schools
- Introduction of Individual Support Plans, Targeted and Targeted Plus support, and new Specialist Support Packages
- Changes to the SEND Code of Practice, new National Inclusion Standards, and proposals for Trust-led systems
- Expanded roles for Experts at Hand, Family Hubs, and multi-agency teams
- New expectations around accountability, oversight, price banding, and independent special school standards
- A significant emphasis on early intervention, particularly across Early Years
- Opportunities and risks for local areas, including sufficiency, culture change, and system-wide planning

This resource is designed to help leaders quickly understand the direction of travel, reflect on potential local implications, and support conversations with political leaders, schools, health partners and wider SEND stakeholders.

**[Read the School's White Paper & SEND Reform Summary document here!](#)** 

## Consultation on SEND Reform

Alongside the Every Child Achieving and Thriving White Paper and the proposed SEND reforms, the Government has also launched a consultation on the SEND reform proposals. The consultation is now open and will close on 18th May, inviting views from across the sector on the direction and design of the reforms. LIA will be coordinating a response on behalf of ALDCS.

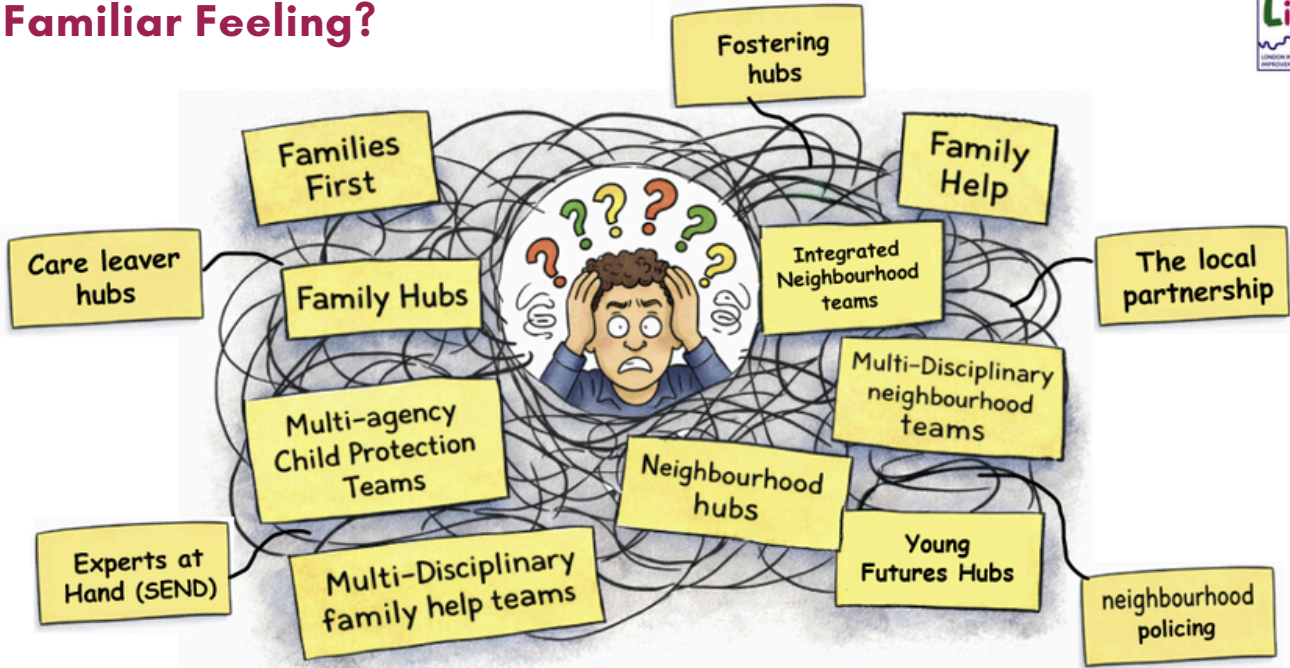
LIA will be working over the next month to gather sector-wide feedback –from DCS through to operational staff, and from parents and children where possible, to shape key messaging on both national plans and what may need to differ for reforms to work effectively in London.

We are already capturing feedback through upcoming meetings and have identified early themes. Our response will be concise, focusing on the areas most relevant to London rather than addressing all 39 consultation questions in full.

We recognise that other bodies (e.g. ADCS and LGA) are also collecting responses. To avoid duplication, please feel free to share copies of any submissions you are already completing, and provided these are sent to us by 1<sup>st</sup> May – and we will incorporate them where possible.

**[Contribute directly to the ALDCS Response here](#)** 

# The LIA Support Offer: SEND Reforms & White Paper A Familiar Feeling?



## Reform overload? Or already on top of the golden thread...

LIA is working at pace to help make sense of the many reforms underway – and, crucially, how they connect so the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

This bulletin focuses on the support available to London LAs – what you can use now, the tools currently available, and what’s in development over the coming months. Our growing suite of resources offers cross-cutting support across the reforms, with a focus on workforce, data and intelligence, diagnostics, co-production, and more.

As we continue to support alignment and build understanding of how inspection and reform expectations fit together, we’ll be sharing practical tools and insights to support you and your teams. If there’s something missing, let us know, and watch this space for more tools, resources and support.

## The LIA Support Offer: Ready-to-use support and tools

### DATA AND INSIGHTS

#### Making Data Speak for London’s Children \*DASHBOARDS\*

The Making Data Speak for London’s Children area brings together a wealth of data and insights to support local areas in better understanding children and young people, including key insights on SEND. As data will be central to the reform agenda, these tools will help inform local responses.

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**LIAS SEND Dashboard - London**

To support the innovation and improvement of SEND provision in London. To know our children and generate robust conversations that enable rigorous challenge to inform and drive action to improve.

**Special Educational Needs**  
The number of pupils in England receiving SEN support (without EHCP) in 2025 was 1,284,284 an increase from 1,238,851 in 2024, up by 3.7%

**Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans**  
The number of Education, Health and Care Plans in England in Jan 2025 was 638,745 an increase from 576,474 in 2024, up by 10.8% (last year was 11.5%)

**NEW - Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans**  
The number of NEW Education, Health and Care Plans in England started in 2024 was 97,747 an increase from 84,428 in 2023, up by 15.8% (last year was 26.6%)

**Requests - Education, Health and Care (EHC) Plans**  
Initial requests for an EHCP in England increased to 154,489 in 2024, from 138,242 in 2023, up by 11.8% (last year was 20.8%)

**London figure increased in 2025 to 189,608 from 184,980 in 2024, up by 2.5%**

**The London figure in Jan 2025 was 100,917 an increase from 93,539 in 2024, up by 7.9% (Newham Censused 2020 used) (last year was 9.3%)**

**The London figure for 2024 was 14,037 an increase from 12,799 in 2023, up by 9.7% (last year was 27%)**

**Initial requests for an EHCP in England increased to 154,489 in 2024, from 138,242 in 2023, up by 11.8% (last year was 20.8%)**

**The London figure increased to 21,583 in 2024, from 19,488 in 2023, up by 10.8% (last year was 15.1%)**

Combines information from the school census (state-funded schools), school level annual school census (independent schools) and general hospital school census on pupils with SEN.

Based on data collected in the SEND data collection for children and young people with an education, health and care (EHC) plan in England (for 2024, the total figures include 2,125 EHC plans for Haringey (updated Feb 2025); however some details not available for some plans) (2023 - due to an issue caused by the migration to a new IT system, Newham's EHC numbers are under-reported by 600 and similarly affect the figures for the East sub-region and London. We have amended the 199 figure in some visuals for Newham, from 12,600 to 13,200).

**Data School Census** School Census published 12/6/25

**SEN2 published** 26/6/25

**Data SEND Return** Contact: sherran.bateson@londoncouncils.gov.uk Last updated 10.12.25

- The London SEND Data Dashboard** provides publicly accessible School Census and SEN2 data, helping you understand what SEND looks like across London and within your local area.
- LIA Section 251 Dashboard** provides detailed information on SEND funding.

Access the Making Data Speak for London’s Children Dashboards here!



## TOOLS & SUPPORT ON REFORM PLANS

### SEND Reform Plan Support \*TOOL\*

We are pleased to launch the **London Local SEND Reform Plan Support Tool**, developed by the LIA team and now available for use by Local Authorities.

This data and insight tool has been developed to support Local Area SEND Partnerships to develop their Local SEND Reform Plans in a consistent and evidence-led way.

The tool brings together maturity assessment findings, key data lines and structured insight prompts, showing how the SEND Local Partnership Maturity Assessment Tool can be practically applied and embedded within reform planning.

For each section of the Local SEND Reform Plan, the tool sets out relevant pillars, suggested data indicators and focused insight questions, helping partnerships interpret their evidence and translate it into a clear, coherent reform narrative. It supports a systematic approach to planning by enabling the direct conversion of diagnostic insight into priorities, actions and success measures, strengthening the link between evidence, strategic decision-making and delivery.

To support local areas in using the tool, we are hosting lunchtime drop-in sessions on the 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> April. These will offer practical support with accessing, interpreting and applying the data and insight within the tool. We encourage all Local Area SEND Partnerships developing SEND Reform Plans to attend where possible.

**SEND Reform Plan Support Tool**  
**Available Now!**

**LiA**  
LONDON LOCAL AREA SEND PARTNERSHIPS

- Brings together maturity findings, key data and insight prompts
- Helps you turn evidence into clear priorities, actions and success measures
- Shows how to apply the Maturity Assessment within your Local SEND Reform Plan

**Drop-in sessions: 27 & 28 April**  
Ask questions and get support accessing, interpreting and applying the data and insight.

The graphic includes an illustration of a laptop displaying 'SEND REFORM PLAN' with 'DATA', 'INSIGHT', and 'ACTION' icons, a calendar icon, and a group of people talking.

[Access the SEND Reform Plan Support Tool here!](#)



[Sign up to the drop-in sessions here!](#)



### Maturity Assessment Matrix & State of the Capital Insights \*TOOLS\*

LIA has developed the London State of the Capital Report as a regional diagnostic & core resource to support local area SEND diagnostics. The report provides a comprehensive overview of London-wide SEND data, key system trends and pressures, helping local areas understand their context and benchmark performance across the capital. The reports draw on a wide range of data sources, insights from the pan-London review of Self-Evaluation Frameworks (SEFs), and feedback from the "Listening to London Series" conducted in late 2025. When used alongside the London Maturity Matrix Assessment Tool, it supports structured self-reflection and evidence-led SEND reform planning.

[Access the London State of the Capital Insights here!](#)



[Access the Maturity Assessment Tool here!](#)



## THEMATIC WORKSHOPS

### Experts at Hand: London 'Experts at Hand' Practice Sharing Session

Join us on **Tuesday 21st April at 11am** for a regional event exploring the emerging Expert at Hand (EAH) offer – a key part of SEND reforms to strengthen early support for children and young people with SEND.

This session will bring together Local Authorities and partners to share practice, explore the EAH model and future need, discuss commissioning and workforce challenges, and identify opportunities for regional collaboration.

[Register for this event here!](#)



### Listening to London: SEND & Social Care Connections - What the Data Shows

Join us on **Thursday 30 April at 12:30pm** for a Listening to London session exploring how SEND and Children's Social Care intersect, and what the data shows.

This session will bring together partners to share key insights from London data, explore patterns and pressures across SEND, CIN and CP cohorts, and reflect on the implications for practice, commissioning, and cross-system working to improve outcomes for children and families.

[Register for this event here!](#)



# Reflecting on the ALDCS London SEND Summit:

The ALDCS London SEND Summit was held on 17th March, bringing together colleagues from local authorities, health, parent carer forums and schools colleagues for a timely and energising day of learning, reflection and collaboration.



Delegates heard powerful examples of partnership in action, including West Lea School's internship programme and multi-agency perspectives on PINS shared by NHS North East London and the London Borough of Newham. Representatives from the NNPCF emphasised the vital role of co-production, curiosity and kindness in strengthening the SEND system.



The Summit was also joined by Georgia Gould MP, Minister of State for School Standards, who provided an address on Every Child Achieving and Thriving and the proposed SEND reforms, followed by a constructive Q&A with attendees. We also heard from Tom Rees, CEO of Ormiston Academies Trust and Chair of the DfE Advisory Group on Inclusion, offering helpful reflections on how national policy direction connects to local delivery across London.

An afternoon panel discussion, chaired by Elaine Allegretti (DCS/DAS, London Borough of Barking and Dagenham), brought together voices from the NNPCF, South West London ICS, Islington Council, RISE London and the Connected Futures Partnership. The panel explored both the challenges and opportunities currently shaping the SEND landscape in London, highlighting a shared commitment to improving outcomes through genuine system partnership.

The Practice Spotlight marketplace also showcased the breadth of work taking place across boroughs and partners, including Enfield, Southwark, Redbridge, Hillingdon, Barnet, NHS North East London and organisations such as Newton, nasen and Mime.

**[You can access all Summit resources here.](#)**

Delegates fed back on the value of the opportunity to exchange ideas, connect with peers and explore approaches being trialled across the capital.

The day underlined the strength and ambition of London's SEND partnerships, and the collective determination to improve the experiences and outcomes of children, young people and families.



**A huge thank you to everyone who attended and contributed to the Summit!**



# Programme Updates: SEND Workforce

## THE BIG SEND CONVERSATION: EARLY INSIGHTS

We are pleased to share early insights from the Big SEND Conversation. This London-wide workforce research programme is designed to better understand the experiences, pressures and strengths of the workforce supporting children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).



Led by the London Innovation & Improvement Alliance (LIIA) on behalf of the Association of London Directors of Children's Services (ALDCS), this work aims to elevate the voices of those delivering SEND services every day.

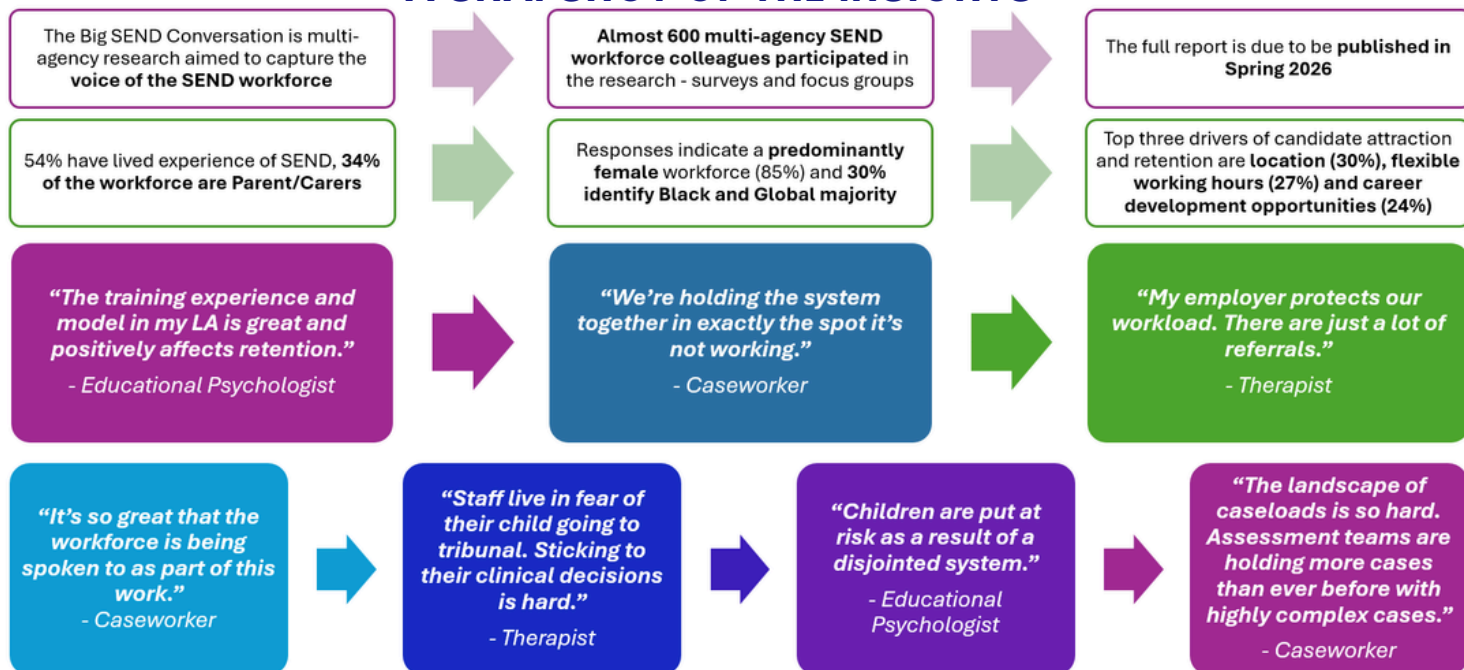
[Read the Early Insights Report here!](#)



### WHAT'S NEXT?

**The Big SEND Conversations - Early Insights Summary Report** provides an initial overview of what we have heard but a full report will be published in Spring 2026. The findings from the full report will inform regional workforce planning and improvement activity, support the development of emerging SEND workforce priorities, be shared with national partners and the DfE to inform future policy and the reforms

### A SNAPSHOT OF THE INSIGHTS



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

## Programme Updates: Investing in Inclusion

The Investing in Inclusion Programme continues with all three cohorts now engaged in a delivery programme via a network of 30 settings pan-London, spanning Early Education through to Further Education. Work is underway across participating settings to identify practical approaches that strengthen inclusive practice and reduce reliance on specialist placements.

An online area is currently in development to highlight and showcase learning from those involved across all cohorts of the Investing in Inclusion Programme. Findings will inform a London-wide "what works well" inclusion model, to be shared digitally and at the SEND Inclusion and Learning Conference in July 2026, where the next phase of inclusion work will be set out.

Save the date for the conference will be circulated to colleagues shortly.

# Programme Updates: SEND Commissioning

The SEND Commissioning strand has made strong progress in establishing pan-London infrastructure, data tools, and commissioner collaboration mechanisms, with a clear shift from set-up to delivery, influence and system alignment.

## **PAN-LONDON COMMISSIONING INFRASTRUCTURE ESTABLISHED**

The Pan-London SEND Commissioners Forum, launched in November, continues to see regular engagement from borough commissioners at termly meetings. Attendance and participation were strong at the Spring meeting on 12th March, which focused on INMSS as a key pressure point in SEND. The next termly meeting is scheduled for 11th June and will focus on paediatric therapies (Speech & Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy).

***The SEND Commissioning Hub is live on the LIIA website*** and is regularly updated, providing a central platform for data sharing, best practice dissemination and commissioning resources.

**A SEND Data Sub-Group** has also been established (reporting to the ALDCS SEND Steering Group), with monthly meetings from February 2026 to strengthen data-led commissioning across the region.

## **INMSS (INDEPENDENT & NON-MAINTAINED SPECIAL SCHOOLS)**

***Following the launch and dissemination pan-London of Provider ID Tool (Phase 1)***, the Phase 2 pilot to develop an INMSS tool is now completed with the transfer of the Power BI dashboard (via MIME) now underway to support:

- INMSS Placement tracking
- Future Cost analysis
- Market intelligence

We hope to share with boroughs to identify the Top 10 providers by volume with a view to develop ways to work with the market via regional commissioning approaches across London to inform more strategic commissioning arrangements.

## **SUFFICIENCY IN RELATION TO ASD AND SEMH**

Work with Newton is progressing well on Autism and SEMH horizon scanning, alongside the commissioned INMSS collaborative commissioning reports which will be shared imminently. A workshop will be scheduled to test recommendations against SEND reforms and agree pan-London versus sub-regional responsibilities.

## **FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY & VALUE FOR MONEY**

Development of a SEND Financial Resilience Tool is underway, linked to DBV/Safety Valve learning. The Ealing Best Value Challenge (BVC) pilot is informing commissioning and finance transformation within the council.

Active engagement has taken place through the SEND Finance Network at the January meeting, where the focus was on transport cost models (LATCO, optimisation, Personal Transport Budgets), as well as benchmarking and cost intelligence discussions. The next meeting is due to be held on 19th May, with a focus on the financial implications of the SEND reforms.

## **POLICY AND SYSTEM SUPPORT**

Work is progressing on setting out London's position in relation to the CLA recoupment guidance issued last December. At the same time, benchmarking is underway to compare London boroughs' approaches to exceptions within Home to School Transport guidance.

# Programme Updates: Co-production

Co-production is central to LIIA's SEND programme, ensuring services are designed with, not for, children, young people and families. It strengthens the voice of parents, carers and young people across London and embeds lived experience into SEND leadership, diagnostics and improvement activity. LIIA has also partnered with the National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi) to explore how Local Areas engage families and young people through focused conversations, helping to identify effective practice and inform future regional support and system improvement.

NDTi have been engaging in local area discussions and will be sharing findings in May 2026.

# Upcoming Activity

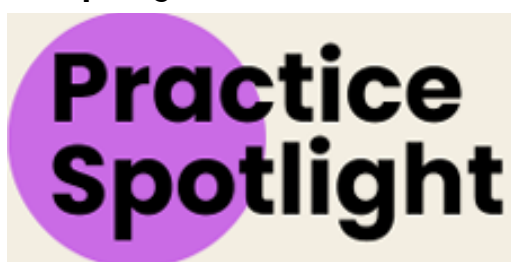
## \*EVENTS\* Network Meetings & Upcoming Workshops

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	Session	Contact Point
Experts at Hand Practice Sharing Workshop	21st April	<a href="#">Maddy Oakes</a>
SEND Reform Support Tool: Drop in Sessions	27th & 28th April	<a href="#">Bethan Evans</a>
Listening to London: SEND & Social Care Connections	30th April	<a href="#">Bethan Evans</a>
SEN Transport Leads Network	6th May	<a href="#">Marissa Kodikara</a>
ALDCS SEND Steering Group	11th May	<a href="#">Bethan Evans</a>
London SEND Strategic Managers & Parent Carers Network	14th May	<a href="#">Bethan Evans</a>
SEND Finance Lead Network	19th May	<a href="#">Marissa Kodikara</a>
London SEND Commissioning Network	11th June	<a href="#">Marissa Kodikara</a>
SEND Inclusion and Learning Conference	9th July	<a href="#">Bethan Evans</a>
London SEND Heads of Service/AD Network	14th July	<a href="#">Marissa Kodikara</a>

## \*ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITY\* - Practice Spotlight Deadline Extended!

**Practice Spotlight 2026 is now live – and we want to put your new and emerging practice in the spotlight!**



Last year, Practice Spotlight highlighted over 100 examples of practice across London's children's services. Across London, your teams and multi-agency partners are transforming the lives of children, young people and families every day. This year, we are shining a light on new and emerging practice – the ideas taking shape right now, the sparks of change, and the early innovations that deserve to be shared, celebrated and scaled.

We recognise the significant demands currently placed on Local Authorities and partner agencies in the context of ongoing reform. In response, ALDCS has agreed to extend the submission deadline to Friday 29 May 2026. There is still time to contribute. We welcome further submissions that showcase emerging practice, support shared learning, and highlight the impact of your work across the system, as well as shaping or responding to key national reforms.

*“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”*

Choose from nine categories ranging from racial equity to early intervention, SEND to care leavers, multi-agency safeguarding to placement innovation – all areas of practice are relevant and you can submit more than one example.

**Find out more and submit your practice by Friday 29<sup>th</sup> May** 

**Explore more than 100 examples of Practice via the Digital Area** 

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# 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.

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## GET IN TOUCH

Please visit our website: [liia.london](https://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](#).*

If you would like to discuss any areas of the programme in more detail or support a particular area of work, please reach out to our LIIA Head of SEND, **Frank Offer**.

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