

London's Regional Care Cooperative (RCC)

Briefing for Senior Local Authority Officers & Lead Members

Purpose of this Briefing

This briefing provides Lead Members for Children's Services with an overview of London's Regional Care Cooperative (RCC) following the successful award of Department for Education funding. It explains the purpose of the RCC, London's approach to implementation, and the key areas of work that will be progressed during mobilisation and early delivery. The briefing also outlines the role of Lead Members as the programme develops.

What are Regional Care Cooperatives (RCCs)?

Regional Care Cooperatives (RCCs) are a key part of the Government's programme of children's social care reform. They are designed to help local authorities work together on challenges that are difficult to solve individually, including foster carer recruitment, placement sufficiency, commissioning and management of the children's care market.

By acting collectively, councils can strengthen their influence over the care market, improve the availability of placements, reduce unnecessary competition between authorities and support better outcomes for children and young people

The Department for Education (DfE) has identified RCCs as the primary vehicle for delivering long-term reform of the children's care system. London has been selected as one of five regions nationally to establish new RCCs and has been awarded £1.7m of transformation funding to support implementation. The programme is being led by the London Innovation and Improvement Alliance (LIIA) on behalf of the Association of London Directors of Children's Services (ALDCS), with the support of all London local authorities. Camden is acting as Lead Local Authority.

Key Messages for Lead Members

London's Regional Care Cooperative provides an opportunity for boroughs to work together to address some of the most significant challenges facing children's social care.

The immediate focus is on increasing the number of children who can live in safe, stable family homes by strengthening fostering and kinship care, improving the recruitment and retention of foster carers, and building a more sustainable care system across London.

Achieving this ambition will require collaboration across borough boundaries and between partner agencies. Through a **'One Customer' approach**, the RCC will support councils and partners to work together more effectively around the needs of children, young people and families, creating a more integrated and sustainable system of care.

As the RCC programme develops, Lead Members will receive further briefings on individual projects and any decisions requiring local consideration. There is no immediate action required at this stage.

The RCC is designed to support collaboration between boroughs and partners. It does not replace local political accountability for children's services, which remains with individual local authorities and their elected members.

London's Vision

A central ambition of London's RCC is to increase the number of children who can live in family-based homes rather than residential settings wherever this is safe and appropriate to do so. This reflects a shared commitment across London to ensuring that more children grow up in stable, loving family environments and remain connected to their families, communities and support networks.

Achieving this ambition will require more than increasing the availability of provision. It will require local authorities and partners to work together in new ways, aligning resources, commissioning approaches and support around the needs of children, young people and families. The RCC will therefore adopt a **'One Customer'** approach, bringing together local authorities and partner agencies to work collectively in planning, commissioning and delivering services. By aligning activity across organisational boundaries, London can create a more integrated system that responds more effectively to the needs of children and young people while making better use of public resources.

Key Areas of Early Delivery

As the RCC moves into implementation, the initial focus will be on three interconnected priorities: growing the availability of family-based care across London, developing a more integrated, system-wide approach to commissioning and service delivery, and strengthening collaboration across local authority children's homes.

1. Growing Family-Based Care

Increasing the number of children who can live in family homes is the RCC's primary priority. To achieve this, the RCC will focus on increasing the recruitment and retention of in-house foster carers and strengthening support for both foster and kinship carers.

Early work will include:

- Developing a stronger digital presence for fostering across London, making it easier for prospective carers to access information and begin their fostering journey.
- Expanding the Foster Friendly programme, encouraging public sector organisations and other employers to introduce policies that better support foster carers.

- Testing innovative approaches to supporting carers during periods of crisis, helping to reduce the numbers of carers leaving fostering.
- Reviewing London's approach to kinship care and identifying opportunities to strengthen support for kinship carers.
- Strengthening alignment and collaboration across London's Fostering Hubs, building greater consistency and maximising the benefits of collective working. There are now five Fostering Hubs in London, covering 28 local authorities across the capital.

Together, these initiatives will help increase the number of children who can benefit from stable, high-quality family-based care.

2. Delivering a 'One Customer' Approach

Alongside this work, the RCC will begin developing a 'One Customer' approach, bringing together local authorities and partner agencies to better align services around the needs of children and families.

Early work will focus on identifying opportunities for greater collaboration across commissioning, service delivery and procurement, including where services can be better aligned, integrated or jointly commissioned. The aim is to create a more sustainable system while making better use of collective resources across London.

3. Supporting Local Authority Children's Homes

London has a strong track record of collaboration in the provision of local authority children's homes and is well placed to build on these foundations as the RCC develops.

There is, however, significant scope to strengthen London's collective approach. Compared to some other regions, London has a smaller proportion of local authority-owned children's homes and remains heavily reliant on independent provision. The RCC provides an opportunity for boroughs to work together to improve sufficiency, expand local authority and not-for-profit provision where appropriate, and develop a more sustainable care system for London's children and young people.

To support this ambition, the RCC will work with councils to strengthen partnership working across children's homes through communities of practice, shared learning, joint planning and the development of new collaborative approaches that improve quality, sustainability and sufficiency. This will include supporting boroughs that are opening, or planning to open, new children's homes by helping them access expertise, share learning from existing providers, develop workforce capacity and explore opportunities for collaboration with neighbouring authorities.

Early activity will include supporting workforce recruitment and development. One example is **Jobs in Children's Homes** ([link](#)), a shared recruitment platform developed through a partnership between London and the Southeast RCC (Home & Future). The platform raises the profile of careers in children's residential care,

supports recruitment across participating authorities, reduces duplication and provides valuable workforce intelligence. It also demonstrates the potential benefits of regional collaboration in addressing workforce challenges.

Over time, this work will contribute to the RCC's wider ambitions around workforce development, placement sufficiency, commissioning and service improvement, helping local authority children's homes play a stronger role within London's care system.

What Happens Next?

The RCC is now entering its mobilisation phase.

Over the coming months, the RCC Board and programme team will work with boroughs, partners and stakeholders to develop the detailed operating model and implementation plans.

Lead Members can expect:

- Regular programme updates.
- Briefings on specific projects and workstreams.
- Information to support local governance and decision-making where required.
- Examples of how individual projects can support local ambitions for children and families.

As individual projects mature, more detailed information will be shared on a project-by-project basis.

If you have any questions about the development of the RCC, please contact

Tim Aldridge

Executive Director for Children and Learning in Camden and RCC Board Chair

Tim.Aldridge@camden.gov.uk.

For operational or programme-related queries, please contact

Jonny Woodthorpe

Head of RCC Delivery in LIIA

Jonny.Woodthorpe@londoncouncils.gov.uk