



# ALDCS Racial Equity and Leadership (REAL) Programme

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**ALDCS**

The Association of London  
Directors of Children's Services

# Background



**ALDCS established the REAL programme in 2020, shortly after the death of George Floyd and the advent of the Black Lives Matter movement. Key achievements include:**

- Establishing a Pan London Reference Group of Black and Global Majority (BGM) childrens services staff to work with ALDCS on racial equity ambition and delivery
- Joint funding a BGM leadership programme commissioned from The Staff College to help tackle the lack of racial diversity in senior childrens leadership
- Undertaking the Big Listen, a huge engagement exercise with over 1,000 CS social workers, which flagged key issues relating to racism and disproportionality
- Implementing the London Pledge to tackle factors (including around racial equity) leading to drift into the agency market
- 'Baking in' racial equity to all areas of the ALDCS work programme, including its five priority workstreams
- Developing disproportionality datasets to track experiences/outcomes by race across both the workforce and children and families accessing services

# The REAL Reference Group



- Establishing a regional children's racial equity reference group has been a key moment in its own right
- The group brings together around 60 Black and Global Majority middle and senior leaders from across London Children's Services.
- All of the 33 Children's Services are represented
- The group works with ALDCS to set the racial equity ambition for London and designs the detail of the REAL programme. It has also run two pan London racial equity conferences.
- The group also acts as a critical friend to ALDCS to support racial equity in new policy areas/work programmes

# Developing a Pan London BGM Leadership Programme



- ALDCS members have regionally commissioned leadership programmes to support its BGM workforce into senior leadership positions for several years
- In its first three years over 180 members of the workforce attended the Black and Asian Leadership Initiative (BALI) programme run by the Staff College
- The leadership programme this year has been awarded to DWC Consulting, with ALDCS members providing £2k from each LA to support 66 members of the BGM workforce to attend the 25/26 iteration
- Individuals attendance to the REAL programme – now named *REALising Potential* - is supported by regional activity to develop cultural competence and racial equity in the workplaces and organisations they return to
- We are developing a 'Shadowing Plus' offer to enable programme attendees to further develop skills and share ideas by spending time in another local authority

# The Big Listen (2023) & The Big Conversation (2025)



1

Our research found that the public perception of social work is **something many social workers struggle with**. It adds a barrier to recruitment and retention and negative representations in the media overshadow the positive difference social workers make.

2

Social workers are motivated by being able to improve the lives of the children and families they work with. It is important to them that local authorities deliver services that align with these aims and that the values of social work do not get 'lost' in the corporate ambitions of their LA.

3

Our research suggests most authorities will have a small, but significant number of social workers who feel **disaffected and undervalued**. These staff are at higher risk of leaving, and it is important employers know who they are and support them to feel more valued.

4

Our research found that **35% of social workers who responded plan to or are considering a future move to the agency market**. The reasons for this differ significantly between authorities and it is important for each authority to understand the factors driving their own specific drivers for their agency reliance, which are symptomatic of both 'push and pull' factors.

5

For some groups of workers agency employment offers greater flexibility that they cannot get directly from local authority employers. Local authorities should review their employment terms to explore the potential for greater flexibility for directly employed staff.

6

Our research suggest the cost of living crisis is impacting on most social workers and managers (almost 70% across both regions), the effects are strongest for Black and Global Majority staff (83%) and workers who gave been qualified for under 5 years (76%). These groups are also amongst those who are most likely to seek agency employment. Authorities need to develop clear strategies to help staff deal with the financial pressures faced.

7

Caseload, excessive hours and lack of supervision are the three most significant reason that social workers leave local authority employment, followed by pay. Authorities may benefit from developing better systems to measure and track the demands placed on individual staff.

8

More work is required to understand the supply of social workers at a regional (and sub-regional level). Over that last 5 years demand has increased in both regions (642 more workers in London since 2017 and 799 in the SE over the same period), with no corresponding increase in social worker training/education.

9

Location is the main reason social workers choose the authority they work for (58%), followed by the specific roles available (40%). Local Authorities should review their local recruitment strategies and target areas with good transport links/routes.

The Big Conversation 2025 is open until 1<sup>st</sup> August



The Big Conversation is the second release of The Big Listen. The research includes a survey and a series of focus groups. Its purpose is to affect change *with* and not *to* the workforce.

Across the UK and beyond, governments are proposing and implementing significant reforms aimed at addressing long-standing challenges in the system, and with it the role of the social worker is evolving. This is an exciting opportunity for child and family social workers to share their views and the greater the response, the more meaningful the impact!



# The London Pledge



## Strategy:

Objectives focused on sustainability, sufficiency and supply. Launch in parallel with permanent framework and regional website  
*'Small part of big ambition...'*

## Listening:

Research to understand root causes – 'agency push and pull factors' and 'Big Listen'  
*'Change with not to..'*

## Engagement:

Communication, breadth of networks and groups  
*'Can't over-communicate change...'*

## Collaboration:

London Boroughs agreed to single capped rate agreements  
*'Building trust and changing culture...'*

## Ownership:

DCS Led sub-regional multi-disciplined governance groups  
*'Service owned and led..'*

## Data:

100% regional quarterly agency pay rate data collection  
*'Enabling transparency and wider analysis...'*

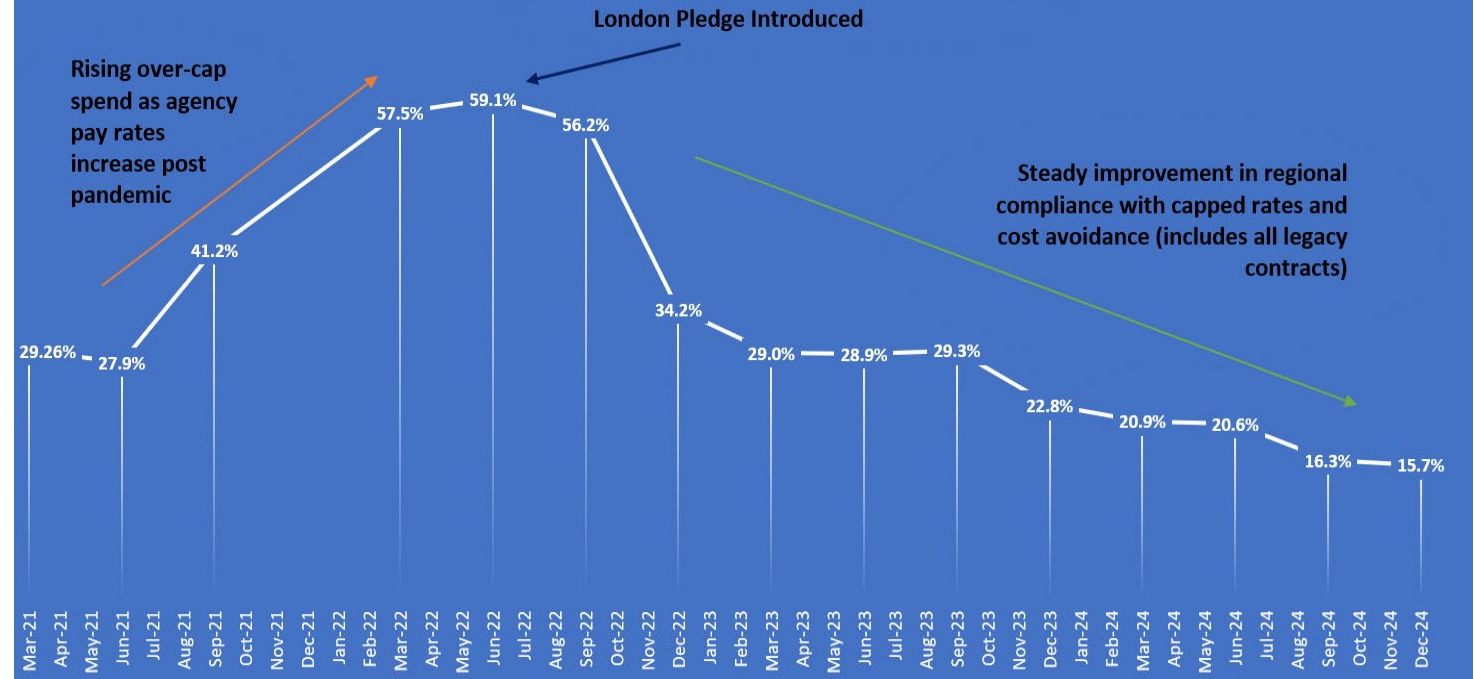
## Partnership working:

Direct provider market and agency supply chain engagement and relationship  
*'Right players in the room...'*

## Influence:

Cross regional and national working and increased sharing to enable positive impact. Statutory guidance mirrors London Pledge.  
*'Sharing and scaling impact...'*

## REGIONAL % OF OVERCAP PLACEMENTS - CSC AGENCY SWS



# International Recruitment Framework



## Background to International Recruitment Framework Initiative:

- **Market Need:** Following the launch of the London Pledge on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2022 market engagement with agencies and LAs highlighted the lack of consistent route to market for the recruitment of social workers on a permanent basis.
- **Co-Produced:** YPO, London Councils and LiiA commenced work on the development of two frameworks with the support of a specialist, multi-disciplinary London LA task group.
- **Domestic Permanent:** Phase 1 of this initiative was to design and develop a domestic permanent recruitment framework for London based LAs. This coproduced Framework for London in Permanent (FLiP) CSC SW recruitment was successfully launched in August 2023.
- **International Permanent:** Phase 2 is has seen the design and development and launch of a specialist framework for the international recruitment of Social Workers including both Adults and Childrens. The framework is now live and available for LA's UK wide.

## Key Benefits of Framework:

- **Compliance:** unique and compliant route to market for the specialist international recruitment of adults and children's social workers for Local Authorities nationally when they need to engage agency support
- **Specialist suppliers:** procure directly from pre-qualified agency suppliers on pre-agreed and standardised terms and conditions, who will be appointed to the framework following an extensive evaluation process which considers quality, price and social value
- **Pastoral Care:** significant consideration has been given to the development of pastoral care services in recognition of the important role they have for international candidates. The framework covers all elements of the international recruitment process with the ability to include associated services, such as training, in the full scope
- **Fixed Pricing:** all suppliers commit to a fixed ceiling price across services offered, ensuring value for money as well as providing all LAs with the ability to run further competitions to secure even better value
- **Free Support:** Local Authorities will benefit from robust support from YPO as a single point of contact when using the framework, as well as best practice support identified and shared through regional working groups.



# Developing Disproportionality Datasets

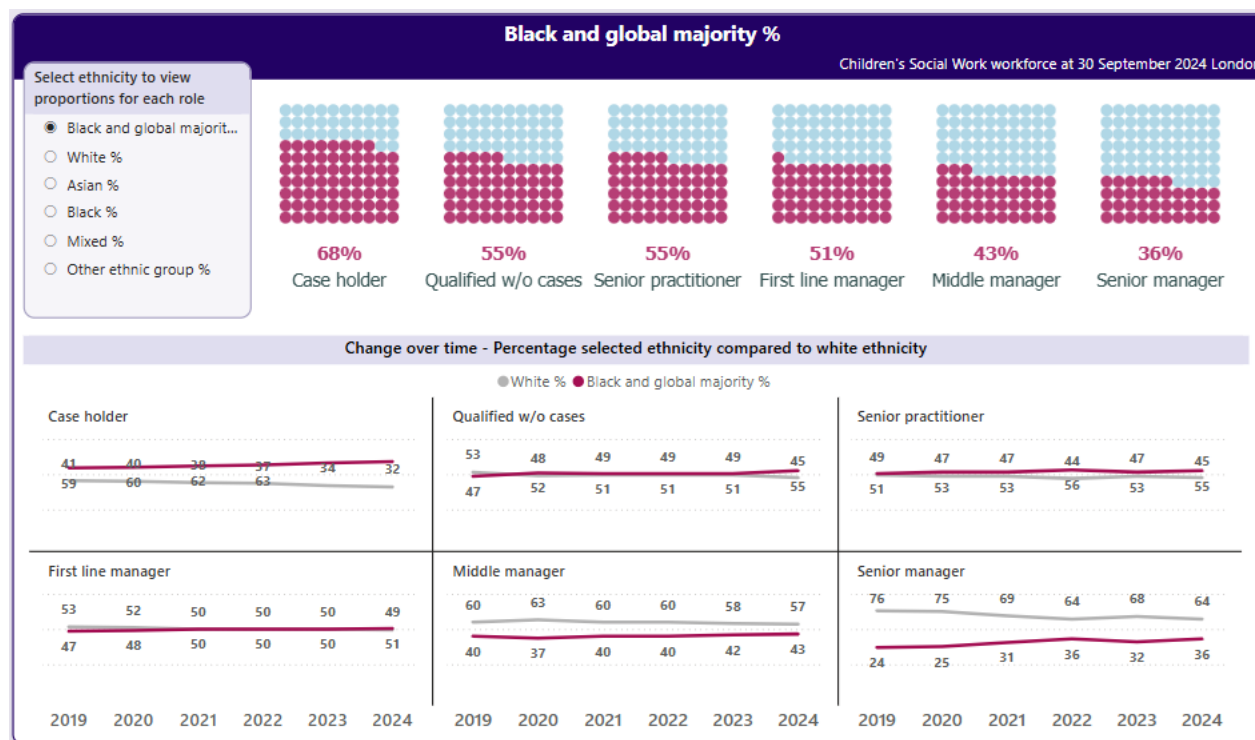


We have been developing an extensive data dashboard library. When covering a topic, where possible we will provide the ability to view the data through the lens of ethnicity and disproportionality, as well as other vulnerabilities.

This includes topics such as;

workforce – representation at all levels of the workforce and

education - disproportionality in the use of suspensions



London Workforce – proportion of Black & Global Majority

Number of pupils with one or more suspensions from school - Academic year 2022-23					
Rate per 1,000 pupils by ethnicity					
ethnicity group	Pupils	1+ suspensions per 1000	RRI	1+ suspensions RRI representation	
Mixed					
White and Black Caribbean	27,474	69	1.8	Substantially over	
White and Black African	10,437	45	1.2		
Any other mixed background	23,760	35	0.9		
White and Asian	11,646	28	0.7	Under-represented	
Black					
Black Caribbean	16,914	71	1.9	Substantially over	
Any other black background	8,745	45	1.2		
Black African	36,825	34	0.9		
Other					
Unclassified	21,555	52	1.4	Over-represented	
Any other ethnic group	18,294	31	0.8		
White					
Gypsy Roma	8,691	103	2.7	Substantially over	
Traveller of Irish Heritage	1,644	80	2.1	Substantially over	
White British	618,660	39	1.0		
Irish	2,361	37	1.0		
Any other white background	45,990	25	0.7	Under-represented	
Asian					
Pakistani	33,705	30	0.8		
Any other asian background	9,282	17	0.5	Under-represented	
Bangladeshi	7,413	16	0.4	Under-represented	
Indian	7,776	8	0.2	Under-represented	
Chinese	972	6	0.1	Under-represented	



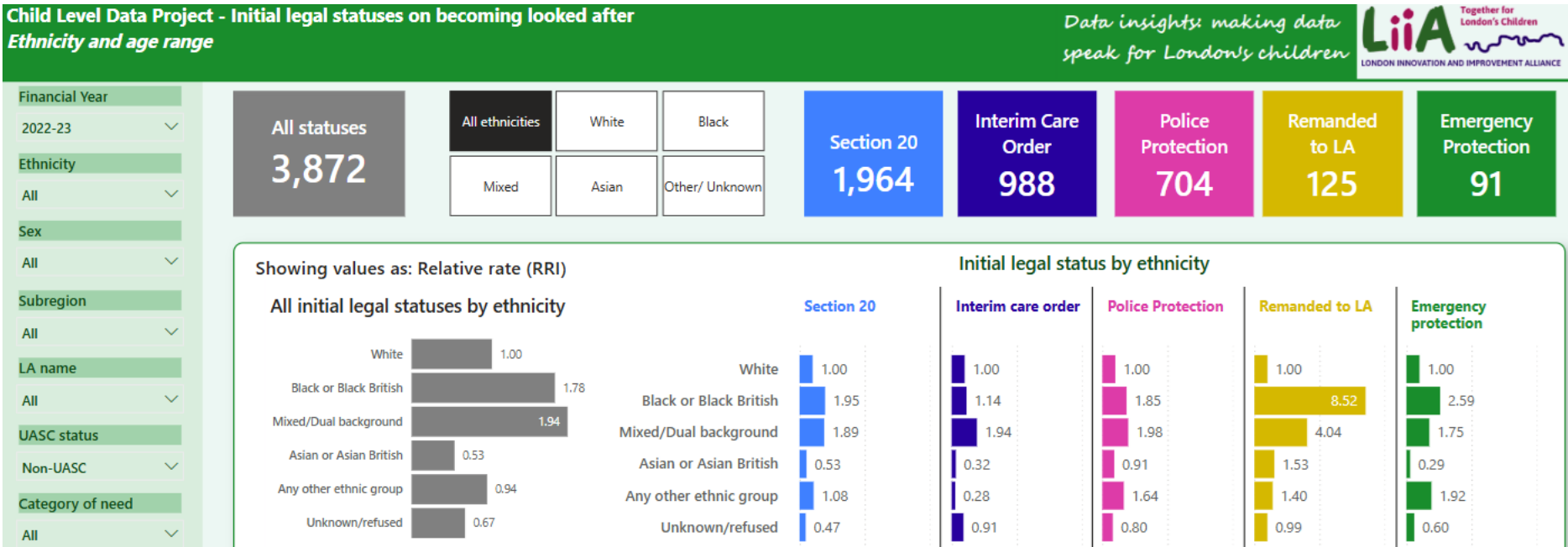
# Developing Disproportionality Datasets



Using the Relative rate index (initially developed in America) enables us to compare how much more likely than their white peers, children of other ethnicities are to become looked after, suspended at school or any other facet – helping us to identify possible disproportionality

The disproportionality related to the use of Remand to LA in London in the 2022/2023 year is clearly seen here.

Also noticeable is that children of a ‘mixed/dual background’ were nearly twice as likely as their white peers to become looked after.



# Baking in Racial Equity to all ALDCS activity



- In May 2024, ALDCS stated their intent to 'bake in' racial equity to all of its activity
- Importantly, this means shared ownership of the need for racial equity across everyone working on the ALDCS work programme, including partners.
- Five priority workstreams (Placements, Workforce, Adolescent Safeguarding, SEND, and Care Leaving) will:
  - Identify where issues of racism or racial disproportionality are affecting service users
  - Develop strategies to tackle this where it exists
  - Make use of data to measure impact
- ALDCS leads for these workstreams will work closely with the Reference Group as they incorporate this into their programmes.

# The role of London Children's Leaders

## "It starts with me"



- A key value of our regional work is that racial equity is all of our business. "It starts with me".
- As ALDCS, we recognise the key role we can play as systems leaders.
- This was supported by Staff College, who ran a Pan-London cultural competence workshop for LA children's leaders, as well as twilight sessions looking at the deep narratives of racism and discrimination.
- The sessions encouraged shifts of thinking and approach, including:
  - The ability of white systems leaders to effect change
  - Moving from 'allyship' to 'accomplices'
  - Taking on the challenge role
  - Working across sectors and partnerships