



The Children's Homes Association

Dialogue RI meeting CHA Membership

15.09.2026

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Children's Homes association CHA

What does the membership provide ?

The CHA is the voice of children's homes and residential childcare providers across England and Wales. We bring together providers, managers and sector leaders to share knowledge, tackle challenges and champion the vital work happening in residential childcare every day.

Why join?

Stay informed with sector updates, policy changes and regulatory insights.

Access practical support from people who understand the realities of running and managing children's homes.

Connect with peers through Registered Manager and Responsible Individual networks.

Join webinars, practice discussions and events focused on improving outcomes for children.

Have your voice heard through the CHA's representation with government, regulators and key decision-makers.

Benefit from discounted access to the CHA Conference and National Children's Homes Awards.

Supporting providers. Strengthening practice. Improving outcomes for children and young people.

Your sector. Your voice. Your association

Residential care reform: the implementation phase

The Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 has created the framework for major changes to:

- Commissioning and sufficiency
- Deprivation of liberty
- Provider oversight
- Market intervention
- Inspection and registration

The details are now being developed through consultation and secondary legislation.

CHA is working directly with DfE and Ofsted while those decisions are still being shaped.

Regional Care Cooperatives (RCCs)

Seven RCC areas now cover more than 100 local authorities.

RCCs will increasingly

- Commissioning and sufficiency
- Deprivation of liberty
- Provider oversight
- Market intervention
- Inspection and registration

Better planning creates opportunities. However, regional procurement could disadvantage smaller and specialist providers.

CHA are working with members to mitigate risks by developing regional consortiums

Home Again: a new response to complex needs

Home Again focuses on children who are experiencing, or are at risk of experiencing, deprivation of liberty.

Participating areas will be expected to establish:

- A multi-agency Home Again team
- Earlier identification through a shared regional register;
- A single referral and triage pathway;
- A common Assessment of Need;
- One coordinated intervention plan;
- Access to support across social care, health, education and youth justice;
- Support for placement stability, step-down and return closer to home.

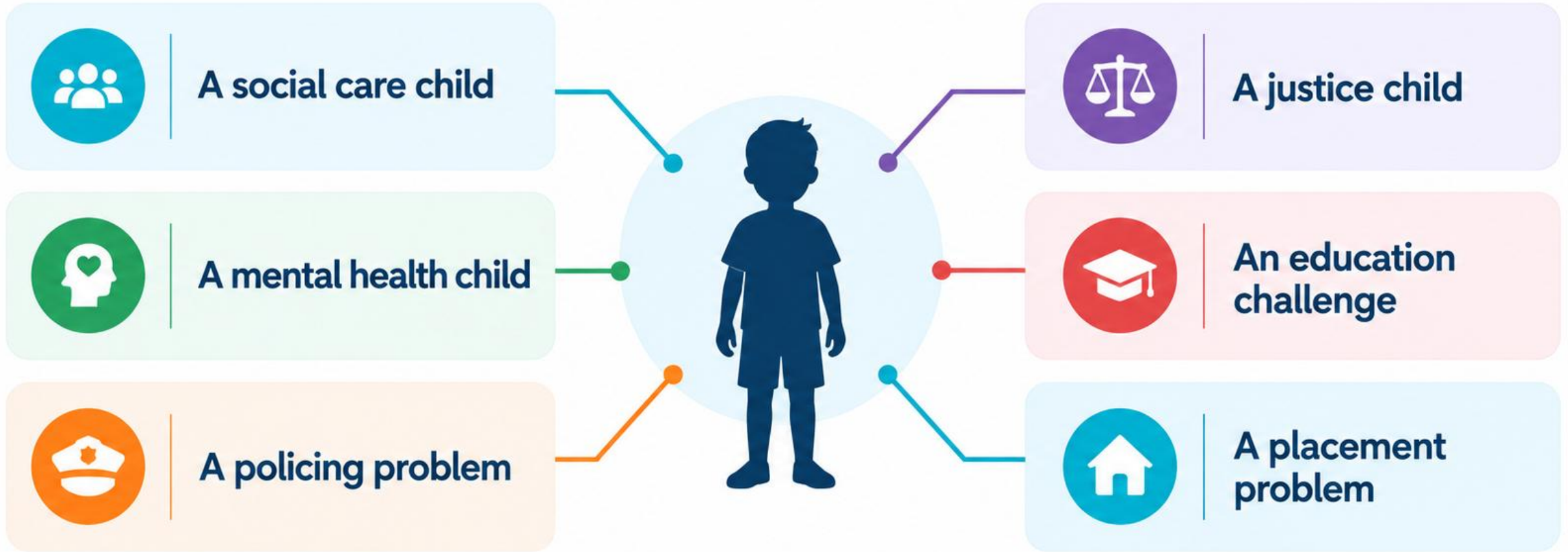
Funding

- £23.1 million national programme
- £18.5 million available directly to up to five RCCs from October 2026

Separate government capital investment will support more than 600 additional secure and open residential places.

One child, many institutional identities

The same child. Different labels. A fragmented response.



**They are not different children.
They are the same child.**

Where did the need go?

Closed systems contracted. Pressure appears elsewhere.



Closed systems



Youth custody 3,145 (2002) → 383 (2025)



Mental health inpatient capacity -23% since 2014



Fewer secure welfare places



Pressure elsewhere



~500–800 children subject to High Court DoL at any one time (estimate)



+65% acute paediatric mental health admissions (2012/13–2021/22)



Unregistered and emergency placements



Increased police demand

Need has not disappeared. It has moved.

Relevant accommodation in the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026

A statutory route is welcome — but it does not solve the underlying system failure.

What section 13 does

- 1 Amends section 25 of the Children Act 1989, as amended by the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026, so it refers to depriving children of their liberty.
- 2 Allows deprivation of liberty in 'relevant accommodation' in England, not only in secure children's homes.
- 3 Relevant accommodation is intended for settings whose primary purpose is care and treatment, not simply restricting liberty.
- 4 Allows regulations to define the cohort, the description of accommodation and the maximum period before court authorisation or re-authorisation is needed.

Problems that remain

- 1 It creates a legal route, not the beds, homes or specialist teams.
- 2 Most of the real detail is still left to secondary legislation.
- 3 Boundaries remain blurry: secure home, hospital, children's home and other provision.
- 4 Safeguarding, inspection, workforce and therapeutic standards must be explicit.
- 5 There is a risk of normalising deprivation of liberty in less specialist settings.
- 6 Commissioning, cost pressure, transitions and step-down pathways remain unresolved.

Without capacity, capability and clear safeguards, the system may simply relabel the same crisis.

Relevant accommodation

- A new statutory framework for children whose care requires deprivation of liberty outside a secure children's home.
- The detailed regulations, safeguards and registration arrangements are still to come.
- Assessment of Need: A shared assessment of children's needs, strengths and risks across agencies.
- Its purpose is to inform formulation, placement design and a coordinated intervention plan.

Ofsted inspection and registration

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Provider oversight

Ofsted currently regulates individual homes.

New powers will allow action at provider-group level.

Where Ofsted reasonably suspects grounds to cancel two or more registrations, it may require the parent organisation to:

- produce an improvement plan
- appoint a senior person accountable for delivery
- agree actions and timescales
- implement the accepted plan

Expected from early 2027, subject to regulations.

Organisational failure and recovery: A Case study

The problem

- Three homes.
- Every home had been judged Inadequate.
- One home received the judgement twice.
- Registrations faced potential cancellation.
- Local authorities were removing children.
- The underlying causes crossed the whole organisation.

Example of how leadership failure can rapidly lead to crisis and loss of confidence from the regulator and local authorities

Organisational failure and recovery: A Case study

CHA Response and actions included::

- Governance and Board assurance
- Leadership and accountability
- Safeguarding oversight
- Workforce development
- Purpose, cohort and matching
- Practice model and quality assurance
- Relationships with Ofsted and local authorities

The first home reinspected achieved **Good** in all areas.

Ofsted and local-authority confidence has returned.

Example of how affirmative action can quickly address a crisis

Learning for RI's

Provider oversight makes the RI role more important.

RIs need visibility across:

- Patterns between homes
- Safeguarding and organisational risk
- Leadership and workforce pressures
- Matching and placement stability
- The operation of the practice model
- Delivery of improvement plans

Individual incidents can reveal organisational problems.

What providers should do now

- Understand emerging RCC arrangements in your region.
- Build relationships with host and placing authorities.
- Evidence the need and purpose of each home.
- Be clear about the children each service can safely support.
- Test whether governance identifies patterns across homes.
- Engage with CHA's survey, consultation work and October conference.

CHA Membership: Guidance, Support and Sector Collaboration



Purposeful webinars delivered throughout the year, shaped directly by member feedback and designed to support all areas of your organisation.



RI and RM support groups designed to be a safe place for members sharing good practice and trending concerns. Providing regulatory insight and a listening ear.



Frontline support and sector knowledge for all aspects of your provisions. Collaboration with already established, experienced providers



Events

- In person Regional meetings
- Annual CHA conference and Children's Home's awards
- Online meetings including AGM and regionals

Trends and Process for Support: Example

Direct reach out to Memberships officer in this case example a provider is needing support around threat of young person being moved due needs changing and now young person is needing 2:1 support primarily around support around toileting.

Risk of a settled placement being disrupted due to disagreement in the change of care planning, which would increase cost of placement fee for 2:1 staffing. Provider already taking on this extra cost on themselves.

Sharing of information

- Provider share's with Membership officer all correspondence that has already been had around this young person with Social workers, commissioning and the young persons advocate and all documentation evidencing the need for the increase in staffing for this young person and implications if the home did not provide appropriate staffing levels in terms of regulations but also to meet the basic needs of the young person providing a safe and dignified environment.

Outcomes and Actions

Learning Through the Process

Full analysis of communications so far, giving key targeted actions for the provider to communicate with all relevant professionals

Document outlining breaches of the Child's right to an appropriate advocate that can communicate their wishes to remain at current placement.

Support within call with the Local Authority.

Provided a x referenced document relating current risk assessment for 2:1 staffing and how that relates to current regulation and relating the Disability Rights and Equality Act 2010.

Support lead to a young person remaining in placement where they are settled and safe and increased collaboration and learning alongside all agencies working with this young person.



Better Outcomes

Brighter Futures

Good news —
I'd like to join CHA.

CHA
MEMBERSHIP
APPLICATION

TRI3 DED

Excellent. Now...
how long has it been
making that noise?

A Brighter Tomorrow →

Open discussion

How could CHA membership support you in your role as an RI?





Together
for exemplary
residential care