



South East Regional Improvement Workforce Grant Allocation of £88k (2026–2027)

Introduction

This proposal is to allocate £88k of the South East Regional Improvement Workforce Grant for the 2026–27 financial year. The funding will be used to strengthen the Children's Homes workforce pipeline by investing in three priority programmes that support entry, progression, and leadership development. The proposal recommends dividing the allocation equally across:

- Kingston Graduate Diploma
- Step Into Residential Care
- Care to Lead.

The investment will act as pump-priming, enabling councils to transition to sustainable funding models through the Growth and Skills Apprenticeship Levy, Adult Education Budget, and potentially local workforce budgets

Context

Children's Homes across the region continue to face persistent challenges in recruitment, retention, and access to training that genuinely reflects the relational, emotionally complex nature of residential care. Staff and managers consistently report that existing qualifications do not provide the depth of practice-based learning required to support children with increasingly complex needs.

At the same time, councils are seeking a more coherent, regionally coordinated workforce pathway that:

- attracts new entrants into the sector
- strengthens the pipeline of registered managers
- reduces duplication and fragmented training activity
- enables better use of Growth and Skills Levy apprenticeship and adult skills funding

The three programmes proposed for investment directly address these needs and form essential building blocks of an aligned qualification pathway.

Proposed Allocation

The total allocation of £88k will be divided across the three programmes:



1. Kingston Graduate Diploma – £30k

A specialist advanced practice and leadership programme designed to strengthen the pipeline for senior roles in Children's Homes. The programme embeds relational and evidence-based practice approaches and provides a progression route beyond Level 5. It is currently not eligible for apprenticeship funding, making pump-priming essential for early cohorts.

2. Step into Residential Care – £29k

An entry-level access programme that supports recruitment by preparing new entrants for the realities of residential practice. It provides a structured introduction to core skills, values, and practice expectations, improving readiness for Level 3 progression and reducing early attrition. The pilot course in the northwest is currently undergoing accreditation to receive 'Skills Bootcamp' status, allowing funding from Adult Education budgets. Part or match funding will help promote a similar approach in the southeast with individual councils that manage adult learning budgets.

3. Care to Lead – £29k

A development programme for aspiring supervisors and shift leaders. It strengthens frontline leadership capability, supports succession planning for Registered Manager roles, and provides a bridge between practitioner and management pathways. It is currently not eligible for apprenticeship funding, making pump-priming essential for early cohorts

Use of Grant Funding

The grant will be used to:

- subsidise tuition fees for early cohorts
- reduce financial barriers for councils
- generate evidence of impact to support future accreditation and scaling

This approach allows the region to advance quickly as national workforce reforms continue, including a review of professional development for the residual workforce. Regional coordination prevents duplication and establishes a unified framework for workforce development.

For further information please contact

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