Direct Dial/Ext: 03000 416478
e-mail: anna.taylor@kent.gov.uk
Ask for: Anna Taylor
Date: 21 October 2026

Dear Member

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - WEDNESDAY, 21 OCTOBER 2026

Please see the attached SEND slides presented at Scrutiny Committee earlier today.

Agenda Item No
C3 **SEND reform and sustainability** **(Pages 1 - 6)**

Yours sincerely

Benjamin Watts
Deputy Chief Executive

This page is intentionally left blank

SEND Reform Update

Kent County Council
kent.gov.uk

Timeline of SEND Reforms

• Every Child Achieving and Thriving White Paper, was released on **23 February 2026**. It sets out the UK Government's plans for reforms to schools and the SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) system in England.

•On **9 March 2026**, Department for Education commissioned all councils to produce a SEND Reform plan which had to include:

- •Current system baseline
- •Maturity assessment
- •Reform priorities
- •Strategy and delivery model
- •Governance and accountability
- •Monitoring and success measures

•On **5 June 2026** DfE released hugely delayed guidance on Experts at Hand, the centre piece of Year 1 reforms – DfE therefore made clear that all plans nationally would likely require more work in the future

•Deadline for submitting the plan was **19 June 2026**

•KCC received much awaited SEND Ofsted inspection call on **22 June 2026**

•Report to CYPE Cabinet Committee in **July 2026** providing detail on the SEND Reform Plan

•First Experts at Hand specific engagement event for Key partners took place on **1 October 2026**

Kent County Council kent.gov.uk

Timeline of Ofsted

•KCC received SEND Ofsted inspection call on **22 June 2026**

•Inspection took place over three weeks between **22 June 2026** and **10 July 2026**

•Outcome report released publicly on **18 September 2026**

•The SEND Local Area received the middle outcome - 'The local area partnership's arrangements lead to inconsistent experiences and outcomes for children and young people with SEND, and that the partnership must work jointly to make improvements'.

•Of 35 inspections under this framework, three local areas have received a 1, twenty eight received a 2 and four received a 3

•This outcome means that the Local Area will be revisited in three years' time

•Local Area is required to publish a **Local Area Plan (LAP)** within 50 days of the report going public – for Kent this will be **20 November 2026**

•All Local Area Key partners are currently finalising proposed plans

•LAP to be considered at November CYPE Cabinet Committee

Kent County Council kent.gov.uk

Current position

•On **2 October 2026** KCC received confirmation that its first draft SEND Reform plan had sufficient clarity to allow High Needs funding deficit payment to be released

•As per previous DfE advice, all successful councils were provided a list of areas within the plans that need to be strengthened before they are considered complete

•Current plans lack detail around how Experts at Hand will be delivered

•DfE have not yet indicated how and when councils are expected to share updated plans

•SEND Reform plan is scheduled to be discussed at January CYPE Cabinet Committee

Kent County Council kent.gov.uk

Finance – How are SEN Services Funded?

- KCC & Schools are expected to spend around **c£850m** on SEND services in 2026-27, along with a High Needs Capital Budget of £125m (funded from a DfE specific grant)

Council – High Needs Block (Dedicated Schools Grant, DSG)	Council – Specific grants	Council – General Fund (Council tax & Other Sources)	Primary & Secondary Schools Budget & Inclusive Mainstream Fund
£205m State-funded Special Schools	£11m Expert at hands Offer	£73m SEND Transport	£222m Notional SEN Budget (Mainstream Schools)
£128m Independent Schools	£1m LA SEN Transformation	£11m SEND EHCP assessment, annual reviews & strategy	c£13m Mainstream Inclusion Fund
£85m Mainstream (including SRPs, individual children and CoS)	£1m Family Hub SEND Outreach	£6.5m Educational Psychology Services	
£34m Post 16	£2.5m Early Years Block DSG (SEN specific services & payments)		
£33m Alternative Provision (out of school support & Direct Payments & therapy)			
£19m Other SEND Support Services			
£4m Contingency			
Total = £508m	Total = £15.5m	Total = £90.5m	Total = £235m

- SEN services are funded from a mix of specific grants, council resources and school budgets
- The High Needs Block for 2026-27 is £379m, leading to overspend of £126m of which £17m has been covered from a transfer from primary & secondary school budgets, leaving £109m in-year overspend

Kent County Council kent.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank