

**CHILDREN'S, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION
CABINET COMMITTEE**

Tuesday, 9th July, 2024

2.00 pm

**Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall,
Maidstone**





AGENDA

CHILDREN'S, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION CABINET COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 9 July 2024 at 2.00 pm
Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall,
Maidstone

Ask for: **James Clapson**
Telephone: **03000 417387**

Membership

Conservative:	Mr M C Dance (Chairman), Mr M Dendor (Vice-Chairman), Mr P V Barrington-King, Mr D Beaney, Mrs L Game, Ms S Hamilton, Mr S C Manion, Mrs M McArthur, Mr A Sandhu, MBE and Mr D Ross
Labour:	Mr A Brady and Dr L Sullivan
Liberal Democrat:	Mrs T Dean, MBE
Green and Independent:	Ms J Hawkins and Mr P Stepto
Church Representatives:	Mr M Reidy, Mr J Constanti and Mr Q Roper
School Governor Representatives	Ms R Ainslie-Malik and Ms H Carter

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

(During these items the meeting is likely to be open to the public)

- 1 Introduction/Webcast announcement
- 2 Apologies and Substitutes
- 3 Declarations of Interest
- 4 Minutes of the meeting held on 16 May 2024 (Pages 1 - 12)
- 5 Verbal Update by Cabinet Members
- 6 Special Education Needs transformation and the role of the Specialist Teaching and Learning Service (Pages 13 - 180)

School Expansions/Alterations

- 7 24-00059 Expansion of New Line Learning Academy, Maidstone (Pages 181 - 194)
- 8 24-00060 Increase of a Designated Number of Nexus Foundation Special School (Pages 195 - 208)
- 9 24-00062 Implementation of Standardised School Led Home to School Transport Offer for all Home to School Transport (Pages 209 - 220)
- 10 24-00051 Direct Payment Support Services for Children and Young People (Pages 221 - 242)
- 11 24-00061 Early Years Review: Implementation of a revised model of Early Years Education in Kent
Report to follow.
- 12 24-00046 KCC Community Learning and Skills - Adult Education Funding Reforms (Pages 243 - 292)

Benjamin Watts
General Counsel
03000 416814

Monday, 1 July 2024

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KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

**CHILDREN'S, YOUNG PEOPLE AND EDUCATION CABINET
COMMITTEE**

MINUTES of a meeting of the Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee held at Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Thursday, 16th May, 2024.

PRESENT: Mr M C Dance (Chairman), Mr M Dendor (Vice-Chairman), Mr P V Barrington-King, Mr A Brady, Mrs T Dean, MBE, Ms S Hamilton, Ms J Hawkins, Mr A Sandhu, MBE, Mr P Stepto, Dr L Sullivan, Mr M Reidy, Mr Q Roper and Mrs R Binks (Substitute for Mrs L Game)

OTHER MEMBERS: Sue Chandler and Rory Love, OBE

OFFICERS: David Adams (Assistant Director Education (South Kent)), Sarah Hammond (Corporate Director Children, Young People and Education), Ingrid Crisan (Director of Operations, Integrated Children's Services), Christy Holden (Head of Children's Commissioning), Ian Watts (Assistant Director Education, North), Alison Farmer (Assistant Director for SEND, Principal Educational Psychologist), Kevin Kasaven (Director of Children's Countywide Services), Christine McInnes (Director of Education), Samantha Sheppard (Senior Commissioner), Mike Rayner (Principal Post-16 Lead (TEP)), Jude Farrell (Interim Head of Service), Siobhan Price (Assistant Director, School Inclusion) and Robert Veale (Assistant Director Education (East Kent))

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Apologies and Substitutes
(Item 2)

Apologies were received from Mrs McArthur, Mr Beaney and Mrs Game for whom Mrs Binks was present as substitute.

2. Declarations of Interest
(Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2024
(Item 4)

It was RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2024 were a correct record.

4. Verbal Update by Cabinet Members
(Item 5)

1. Mr Love provided his Cabinet Member verbal update as follows:

1.1 Primary School Offer Day

- On 16 April, primary school placements were offered for September 2024. Out of 16,653 Kent applicants, nearly 99% were offered one of their three preferred schools and over 91% were offered their first preference.
- Parents and carers were given until 30 April to accept the offer or they could refuse and ask to join a waiting list for an alternative school.
- The deadline for appeals closed on 14 May. The Admissions Team was reallocating places from schools' waiting lists and would send out a second round of offers on 23 May. Mr Love thanked the officers within the Admissions Team for ensuring that over 16,000 pupils received a school place offer by the deadline.

1.2 School Attendance Update

- The Department for Education recently published its latest statistics on school attendance. While the levels of attendance were still below pre-Covid levels, there had been improvements.
- The combined overall absence for primary and secondary schools within Kent had decreased year on year by 1.1% in Autumn 2023, and persistent absence had fallen by 5.1%. For special schools, overall absence fell by 0.4%, and persistent absence fell by 3.8%. Mr Love paid tribute to the ongoing work by KCC's Attendance Team in tackling the issue.
- Mr Love noted that school attendance was not primarily the responsibility of the Council. Academy Trustees, Governing Bodies, Schools, and Academies all had a role to play, and parents were legally responsible for ensuring their child received a suitable full-time education.

1.3 SEND Information Roadshows

- Four SEND Information Roadshows have taken place to date. All the Roadshows had been fully booked and 180 families attended.
- The SEND service was exploring the possibility of digitising the content of the Roadshows to enable access to a wider audience, and more Roadshows planned in the future.

1.4 SEND Enquiry Hub Update

- At the beginning of April 2023, the SEND Enquiry Hub was launched to help improve communication with SEND services. By the end of March 2024, the SEND Enquiry Hub had supported 11,554 families with their queries and 99.8% of these queries had been resolved within five working days.
- Work was now underway to enhance the database's accuracy which would add additional capability to the Hub.

1.5 Isle of Sheppey Schools

- There have been significant developments in respect to the secondary school proposals on the Isle of Sheppey.

- The DfE issued the formal closure letter to Oasis Community Learning, this allowed Leigh Academies Trust and EKC Schools Trust to proceed with the next stages of establishing two new academies on the Isle for September 2024.
 - Families affected by the change had been contacted on 25 March to begin the process of identifying a place at one of the new academies.
 - Mr Love welcomed the news as a positive next step for education on the Isle of Sheppey.
2. Mr Love offered to obtain and share with Mr Sandhu details about the number of children missing school in the Dartford area.
 3. Mrs Chandler provided her Cabinet Member verbal update as follows:
 - 3.1 Family Hubs Update
 - The majority of staff appointments had been made and the remaining vacancies were advertised on the KCC website.
 - Some sites have been renamed to ensure accessibility to all.
 - There were interim service timetables in place at the existing Family Hubs and Children’s Centres, however, they were to be revised and full service timetables would be available from June onwards.
 - A variety of outreach sessions were being introduced across the County, particularly in locations where centres had closed. For example, outreach sessions were to be piloted at Faversham Library, which was a 5-minute walk away from St Mary’s Children’s Centre.
 - 3.2 Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) Update
 - There had been 77 UASC arrivals so far this month, and the total for the year was currently 748. There were 85 children awaiting dispersal via the National Transfer Scheme. The largest proportion of arrivals were from Afghanistan, followed by Iran and Sudan. The majority of arrivals were aged 16 and 17, however, there were some younger arrivals.
 - The Council would look to find an alternative site for the UASC Reception Centre planned at Ocean Hights on the Isle of Sheppey. Elsewhere, work at the identified sites continued with full communication with residents.
 - A detailed FAQ section was available on the Council’s website that was regularly updated.
 4. Further to questions and comments from Members, it was noted that:
 - The Family Hubs would be operating with a fuller timetable in June.
 - A dedicated Family Hubs webpage was under development that was intended to include all the information service users needed. This was expected to be operational within the next few weeks.

- Some Family Hub services were universal, and some used a referral system to allow planning for the number of people attending. There was also the option to self-refer in some cases.
- The advert was currently live for family coach volunteers. It was planned to eventually have 12 coaches in each district if the small scale trial was successful.
- A list of outreach services for the Canterbury area could be provided to Mr Brady.

5. The verbal updates were noted.

5. Presentation - An Overview of Post 16 Education (Item 6)

Mike Rayner, Principal Post-16 Lead – The Education People was in attendance for this item.

1. Mr Rayner shared a presentation that provided the Committee with an overview of the post 16 education system.
2. Further to questions and comments from Members, it was noted that:
 - There was a team who tracked and worked to support young people not in education or training (NEETs). Work was underway with providers to assess strengths, weakness and gaps in provision. It was hoped that this increase in understanding and awareness would help to reduce the number of NEETs over the next couple of years.
 - Dr Sullivan asked if the courses provided within the new Framework for Adult Education, were comparable with others across the Country. Mrs McInnes offered to provide Dr Sullivan with a written response after the meeting.
 - Schools were becoming increasingly aware of the value in offering vocational studies. The introduction of T Level courses were intended to help increase the perceived intellectual value of vocational qualifications, however it was too early to assess their impact at this stage.
 - The Careers Enterprise Company was a national body that worked with primary school children to give career guidance. Secondary schools were required to give students a number of encounters with employers and should be encouraged to hold apprenticeship fares.
 - Some small employers struggled to provide the right support to apprentices.
 - The Kent Choices website had a comprehensive list of courses, apprenticeships and other opportunities available to young people.
 - There were commissioned staff that went into special schools to provide careers advice to young people with SEND.
 - The voices of young people were captured when the Pathways for All initiative was developed. A review was now underway to ensure that the initiative continued to reflect the voice of young people.
 - One of the roles of the Employment Task Force was to support young people transition into work. This included a co-ordinated approach to encourage apprenticeships by looking at what has worked and what has not worked in the past.
 - Mr Reidy asked if young people with SEND or EHCP's were required to achieve the same minimum grades as other young people in order to

proceed into 6th form. Mr Rayner offered to find out and provide Mr Reidy with a response outside of the meeting.

- The Chairman thanked Mr Rayner of his presentation and noted that topic knit into the work of the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee.

3. RESOLVED to note the report

6. 24/00027 - Specialist Nursery Intervention Service Level Agreement Extension (Item 7)

Samantha Sheppard, Senior Commissioner (Inclusion and SEN), Christy Holden, Head of Children's Commissioning and Christine McInnes, Director of Education were in attendance for this item.

1. Ms Holden introduced the report noting that the decision related to a report considered by the Committee in January 2024. She added that a report would be brought to a future meeting of the Committee with details of the consultation results.

2. Mr Love confirmed that the decision fell within his Education and Skills portfolio.

3. Further to questions and comments from Members, it was noted that:

- This was a commissioned service that provided services within special schools from their on-site nurseries.
- A consultation was planned to enable more children to receive support, and to provide a more consistent service across the County.

3. RESOLVED to endorse the proposed decision by the Cabinet Member for Education to:

- a) Extend the existing Service Level Agreements for Specialist Nursery Intervention for one year from 1 September 2024 to 31 August 2025.
- b) Delegate decisions and necessary actions, including the award and the implementation of the extensions, to the Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education, or other Officer as instructed by the Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education, in consultation with the Cabinet Member.

7. Kent SEND Transformation Projects (Item 8)

Siobhan Price, Assistant Director, School Inclusion, Alison Farmer, Assistant Director for SEND, Principal Educational Psychologist and Christine McInnes, Director of Education were in attendance for this item.

1. Ms Price introduced the report noting the intention was to align the projects to generate cohesive systemwide change across the County.

2. RESOLVED to progress the following three items and their recommendations:
- a) The Locality Model for Special Educational Needs Inclusion
 - b) Special School Review and

c) Specialist Resource Provision Review.

8. 24/00026 - The Locality Model for Special Educational Needs Inclusion
(Item 8a)

Siobhan Price, Assistant Director, School Inclusion, and Christine McInnes, Director of Education were in attendance for this item.

1. Further to questions and comments from Members, it was noted that:
 - There had been 1400 responses to the consultation. The consultation feedback showed a need to provide further clarification around the proposed changes.
 - The intention was to provide a better continuity of service when children moved between phases.
 - The reclassification of special schools had not been done anywhere else in the Country, and there was concern that the Council may not have sufficient resources to implement such wide scale changes.
 - There would be a motion at Full Council asking for a review of the proposed SEND changes.
 - The Council's Safety Valve Agreement with the Department for Education assisted the Council to pay for a £142 million overspend. There was a need to reduce costs to match the amount of funding received and the Locality Model would help to achieve this.
 - It was recognised that the current system fell short in some areas. The Locality Model was the culmination of four years of work that drew upon evidence to generate a proposal for improvement.
2. RESOLVED to endorse the proposed decision to adopt a Locality Model for Special Educational Needs Inclusion in Kent.

9. Proposals for the Review of Special Schools
(Item 8b)

Alison Farmer, Assistant Director for SEND, Principal Educational Psychologist and Christine McInnes, Director of Education were in attendance for this item.

1. Further to questions and comments from Members, it was noted that:
 - The intention was to ensure that children with complex needs had the opportunity to attend an appropriate school.
 - There was a proposal to increase support for secondary schools where gaps were identified. A grant had been awarded to support a pilot scheme for the inclusion of children with neurodiversity needs within schools. This could be expanded across Kent and Medway if the pilot was successful.
 - There was no classification for physical SEND conditions because the Equalities Act 2010 already required all schools to make reasonable adjustments to allow the inclusion of those with physical disabilities.
 - Currently each special school had their own admission criteria. There was a need to ensure that children with the most complex needs had access to these services.
2. RESOLVED to endorse the proposed future pathway pertaining to the review and associated proposals for public consultation.

10. Specialist Resource Provision Review Update
(Item 8c)

Siobhan Price, Assistant Director, School Inclusion, and Christine McInnes, Director of Education were in attendance for this item.

1. RESOLVED to note the report.

11. 24/00023 - School Term Dates 2025/26, 2026/27 and 2027/28
(Item 9)

Christy Holden, Head of Children's Commissioning and Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director CYPE were in attendance for this item.

1. RESOLVED to endorse the proposed decision that the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills agree the school term dates for KCC community and voluntary controlled schools for the school years 2025/26, 2026/27, 2027/28.

12. 24/00045 - KCC CLS Accountability Agreement
(Item 15)

Jude Farrell, Interim Head of Service and Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education were in attendance for this item.

1. RESOLVED to endorse the proposed decision by the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills to:
 - a) Approve the Annual Accountability Statement; for submission to the DfE;
 - b) Delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Children's, Young People and Education, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, to take the relevant actions as necessary to implement the decision, including future annual sign off and submission of the Annual Accountability Statement

13. School Expansions and Alterations
(Item 10)

14. 24/00025 - Expansion of Northfleet Technology College, Gravesend
(Item 10a)

Ian Watts, Assistant Director Education, North and Christine McInnes, Director of Education was in attendance for this item.

1. Mr Watts introduced the report.
2. RESOLVED to endorse the proposed decision that the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills:
 - a) Approve the expansion of Northfleet Technology College from a PAN of 165 to a PAN of 189.
 - b) Agree to allocate the funding from the CYPE Capital Budget that will be required to complete the project.

- c) Delegate authority to the Director of Infrastructure to, in consultation with the Director of Education, enter into any necessary contracts or other legal agreements, as required to implement this decision.
- d) Agree for the Director of Infrastructure to be the nominated Authority Representative within the relevant agreements, with authority to enter variations as envisaged under the contracts.

15. 24/00024 - Expansion of Leigh Academy, Dartford
(Item 10b)

Ian Watts, Assistant Director Education, North and Christine McInnes, Director of Education was in attendance for this item.

1. Mr Watts introduced the report and advised that traffic impact and mitigation measures would be considered as part of the feasibility work that would be carried out before the expansion could take place.
2. RESOLVED to endorse the proposed decision that the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills:
 - a) Approve the expansion of Leigh Academy by 2FE.
 - b) Agree to allocate £425,000, subject to a binding funding agreement, from the CYPE Capital Budget to the Leigh Academy Trust (LAT), to:
 - a. enable design work for the essential internal and external works.
 - b. enable LAT to undertake essential internal modification works, during 2024.
 - c) Agree to allocate £975,000 from the CYPE Capital Budget, to enable KCC to undertake feasibility checks, design, plan, cost and tender for the project to construct a new standalone block, from June 2024.
 - d) Delegate authority to the Director of Infrastructure to, in consultation with the Director of Education, enter into any necessary contracts or other legal agreements, as required to implement this decision.
 - e) Agree for the Director of Infrastructure to be the nominated Authority Representative within the relevant agreements, with authority to enter variations as envisaged under the contracts.
3. The Committee noted that subject to the delivery of the above proposed decision, the decision on final progression of the project would be taken at a later date, taking account of any comments made by the Cabinet Committee on the report.

16. 24/00040 - Proposal to add four classrooms at Whitfield Aspen Primary School (Richmond Way site)
(Item 10c)

David Adams, Assistant Director - Education (South Kent) and Christine McInnes, Director of Education were in attendance for this item.

1. Mr Adams introduced the report.
2. RESOLVED to endorse the proposed decision that the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills:

- a) Approve the allocation of up to £2,800,000 of capital funding from the CYPE capital budget to add an eight classroom block at Whitfield Aspen Primary School (Richmond Way site).
- b) Delegate authority to the Director of Infrastructure in consultation with the Director of Education to enter into any necessary contracts or other legal agreements as required to implement this decision.
- c) Authorise the Director of Infrastructure to be the nominated Authority Representative within the relevant agreements and to enter into variations as envisaged under the contracts.

17. 24/00039 - Replacement of temporary classrooms and hall at Langdon Primary School, Dover
(Item 10d)

- 1. Mr Adams introduced the report.
- 2. RESOLVED to endorse the proposed decision that the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills:
 - a) Approve the allocation of £1,430,000 capital funding from the Children's, Young People and Education modernisation capital budget to replace the modular classroom and wooden hall/classroom at Langdon Primary School.
 - b) Delegate authority to the Director of Infrastructure in consultation with the Director of Education to enter into any necessary contracts or other legal agreements as required to implement this decision.
 - c) Authorise the Director of Infrastructure to be the nominated Authority Representative within the relevant agreements and to enter into variations as envisaged under the contracts officer, to undertake the necessary actions to implement the decision.

18. 24/00041 - Mobile replacement scheme at Blean Primary School
(Item 10e)

Robert Vale, Assistant Director Education, East, and Christine McInnes, Director of Education were in attendance for this item.

- 1. Mr Vale introduced the report.
- 2. RESOLVED to endorse the proposed decision that the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills:
 - a) Approve the allocation of £1,440,000 from the Children's, Young People and Education Modernisation Programme to permit the required works for the modular replacement.
 - b) Delegate authority to the Director of Infrastructure to, in consultation with the Director of Education, enter into any necessary contracts or other legal agreements, as required to implement this decision.
 - c) Agree for the Director of Infrastructure to be the nominated Authority Representative within the relevant agreements, with authority to enter variations as envisaged under the contracts.

19. Work Programme
(Item 11)

1. RESOLVED to note the work programme.

20. Motion to exclude the press and public for exempt business
(Item 12)

1. RESOLVED that the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting for the following business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

EXEMPT ITEMS
(Open access minutes)

21. Regional Care Cooperative Update
(Item 13)

Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director CYPE was in attendance for this item.

1. Mrs Hammond provided Members with early notification that the South East had been selected to participate in one of two Regional Care Cooperative pilot schemes. She advised that a briefing note with further information would be circulated in due course.

22. 24/00047 - Services Provided by The Education People
(Item 14)

David Adams, Assistant Director - Education (South Kent) and Christine McInnes, Director of Education were in attendance for this item.

1. Mr Adams introduced the report.
2. Further to questions and comments from Members, it was noted that:
 - The corporate overhead costs included items such as management costs, building costs and insurance. Mr Adams offered to provide Mr Brady with a more detailed breakdown of the overhead costs after the meeting.
 - An assessment needed to be made of the condition and suitability of the equipment held at the Emporium. Where possible the equipment would be made available to children with SEND.
 - Members' comments regarding the need to review the viability of The Education People (TEP) and outdoor learning services were taken on board.
 - Some of the proposed savings were to be achieved at sites that were currently closed or would become unavailable for use in the near future. In cases where these assets were owned by the Council, they would be subject to the Council's asset disposal process.
3. RESOLVED that the Cabinet Committee endorse the proposed decision that the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, in consultation with Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services, agree to:

- a) to reduce the value of the core contract with The Education People by £0.9m over the next 2 years through the changes to the service specification set out in Table 1 and Appendix A of the decision report;
- b) to delegate authority to Director of Education & SEN to take the necessary actions to implement the decision.

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From: Rory Love, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills
Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education

To: Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee – 9 July 2024

Subject: Special Education Needs transformation and the role of the Specialist Teaching and Learning Service (STLS)

Past Pathway of report:

Future Pathway of report:

Electoral Division: All

Summary: This report provides the Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee with the background and current position of the Specialist Teaching and Learning Service (STLS), including options for the future of the service beyond the end date of the current Service Level Agreement.

Recommendation: The Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and note:

- A. the content of the report
- B. the proposal to undertake a public consultation in relation to the service, to understand in more detail what gaps in provision it may fill within the new ways of working.
- C. a report will be presented to this Committee on the outcome of the consultation at the earliest opportunity.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Kent County Council is in the process of a significant transformation in its approach to supporting children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).
- 1.2. In response to significant areas of weakness identified by OFSTED, an Accelerated Progress Plan (APP) identifying 116 projects across nine areas of weakness has been developed. These projects will improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND.
- 1.3. At the same time, the Safety Valve programme establishes a need to consider carefully how the High Needs Funding (HNF) budget is spent to ensure that services can demonstrate impact and improved outcomes for children and young people, taking into consideration funding of non-statutory versus statutory services.

- 1.4. During this period of significant change, it is important to understand how existing, established processes, structures and services fit into the new ways of working. This understanding is needed to avoid both duplication and creation of gaps.
- 1.5. The Specialist Teaching and Learning Service (STLS) is one such service. It is commissioned by the Education and Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Division within Kent County Council (KCC).
- 1.6. The service has existed for over ten years. A key decision (Decision - 22/00001) taken in March 2022 agreed the development of a new three year Service Level Agreement (SLA). This SLA came into effect on 1 September 2022 and ends 31 August 2025. There is no option to extend.
- 1.7. STLS is a local resource, supporting the development and embedding of inclusive practice within mainstream schools and early years settings. Given the changing local SEND landscape in Kent and the introduction of a Localities Model for School Inclusion, among other initiatives, the proposal is to undertake a public consultation in relation to the service, to understand in more detail what gaps in provision it may fill within the new ways of working.

2. Current Provision and Context

- 2.1. STLS is currently commissioned from 12 maintained Special Schools in Kent via an SLA that ends 31 August 2025. The service has approximately 94 full time equivalent members of staff, including administrative support, specialist teachers and district leads who are employed directly by the special schools. Funding for the service is from the HNF Block and is £5.8m per year.
- 2.2. The overarching aim of the STLS is to support early years settings and schools to build their capacity and confidence in delivering high quality provision for children and young people with SEND, in improving pupil progress and outcomes and to spread best practice across educational settings. The Purpose of the Service can be found at Appendix 1.
- 2.3. In considering how STLS fits within the transforming Kent landscape it is important to understand how and why schools access the service and the impact that the support has.
- 2.4. STLS offers a broad menu of support, the main areas being:
 - Support for individual children, including advice and support provided through the Local Inclusion Forum Team (LIFT) meeting.
 - Training
 - Transition support.
- 2.5. Over the duration of the current SLA, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) have been implemented and refined to provide a comprehensive picture of the activity and impact delivered by the service. This includes a Local Activity Report (LAR) that provides information about levels of activity through Local Inclusion Forum Team (LIFT).

- 2.6. Performance monitoring meetings take place three times per year with each individual district reporting retrospectively on the previous two terms. This includes the use of a narrative report that adds context to data submitted.
- 2.7. The 2022 – 2023 Annual Performance Report (Appendix 2) and the Countywide Report for Terms 1 – 4 for 2023 – 2024 (Appendix 3) include information related to the performance of the service with the later comparing performance across Terms 1 – 4 of 2022 – 2023 and 2023 – 2024.
- 2.8. Information gathered through KPIs and LARs demonstrate high levels of engagement with the service as illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1: Percentage of settings and schools in Kent engaging with the service on average per term

	Early Years	Primary	Secondary
Term 1- 4 2022-2023	78%	99%	84%
Term 1- 4 2023-2024	81%	100%	90%

- 2.9. LIFTs are multi-agency meetings, chaired and administered by STLS through which specialist teachers are allocated. Primary schools access support for individual children via LIFT more than early years settings or secondary schools (Table 2). The service has worked hard to engage more secondary schools and the figures below illustrate that there has been some success in this.

Table 2: Percentage of settings and schools attending LIFT on average per term

	Early Years	Primary	Secondary
Term 1- 4 2022-2023	38%	68%	53%
Term 1- 4 2023-2024	31%	67%	63%

- 2.10. While performance monitoring is clear that demand for the service is high, feedback from settings and schools’ points to a widely held belief that attendance at LIFT, the allocation of a specialist teacher and the production of a Record of Visit is required to access Special Educational Needs Inclusion Funding (SENIF), HNF or as part of the process to request an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). This may be driving some demand through LIFT and the service, and it is unclear how this may change once new processes are implemented as part of the early years review and Localities Model of School Inclusion.

- 2.11. The service supports some of the most complex children in mainstream schools. Table 3 shows that the highest percentage of children discussed at LIFT are in receipt of SEN Support.

Table 3: SEN Status of primary and secondary age children presented at school age LIFT on average per term (this information is not collected for early years)

	SEN Support	Receiving HNF	Has EHCP
Term 1- 4 2022-2023	74%	9%	7%
Term 1- 4 2023-2024	83%	12%	7%

2.12. Of the children discussed at LIFT, Table 4 shows that a higher portion of children from early years settings are allocated a specialist teacher compared to school age children. This difference may be due to the solution focused approach and the use of pre-LIFT clinics that are more widely adopted for school age LIFT.

Table 4: Percentage of children presented at LIFT that are allocated a specialist teacher on average per term

	Early Years	School Age
Term 1- 4 2022-2023	71%	51%
Term 1- 4 2023-2024	72%	47%

2.13. Because most LIFTs support primary and secondary schools in one meeting, the LAR does not separate out primary children allocated a specialist teacher from secondary age children. However, Table 5 below shows that primary age children represented 87% of school age children on STLS caseloads in 2022-2023 and 86% in 2023-2024.

2.14. Feedback provided via surveys and workshops suggest that one to one support for individual children is the area of support most highly valued by schools and settings. Although some feedback notes that the advice provided is not always relevant or reflects what SENCOs already know, Table 5 shows that caseloads for specialist teachers are consistently high with primary schools accessing this support more than early years settings or secondary schools.

Table 5: Average numbers of pupils on caseload per term

	Early Years	Primary	Secondary
Term 1- 4 2022-2023	1,530	2,620 (2% total primary age children)*	402 (0.4% total secondary age children)*
Term 1- 4 2023-2024	1,411	2,550 (2% total primary age children)*	425 (0.4% total secondary age children)*

* based on January 2022 school census [Facts-and-Figures-2022.pdf \(kelsi.org.uk\)](#)

2.15. On average, 70 – 80% children on caseload are actively supported each term (see Table 6). Active support means taking an approach that is bespoke to individual children, generally consisting of three visits per year to undertake an initial observation and assessment during which initial targets are set, followed up by visits or discussions to review and amend targets as progress is made.

Table 6: Average number of pupils actively supported per term

	Early Years	School age
Term 1- 4 2022-2023	1,103 (72% children on caseload)	2,191 (73% children on caseload)
Term 1- 4 2023-2024	1,106 (78% children on caseload)	2,341 (79% children on caseload)

2.16. STLS offers a core and bespoke training programme. Primary and secondary schools engage more consistently in training (Table 7). KPIs reflect that the bespoke training offer is accessed more than the core offer, reflecting STLS responding to identified local need. While generally considered relevant and helpful, some feedback from schools and early years settings provided via surveys and workshops note that training can be outdated.

Table 7: Percentage of settings and schools attending training (core and bespoke) on average per term

	Early Years	Primary	Secondary
Term 1- 4 2022-2023	17%	49%	53%
Term 1- 4 2023-2024	18%	66%	65%

*excluding AET training delivered by STLS

2.17. STLS are engaged in supporting transition both from early years to school and from primary to secondary phases of education. Support includes conversations with schools and settings about transition support for individual children as well as coordinating and facilitating workshops. The past year has seen increased planning for transition between STLS and the Council’s Kent Education Psychology Service and SEND Improvement Advisors. This is reflected in an increased number of transition events reported each term between 2022-2023 and 2023-2024.

2.18. Impact surveys undertaken in 2023 and March to April 2024 show that the service is highly valued by early years settings and schools. Each survey received over 450 responses, with the highest proportion of responses coming from primary school SENCOs. (Analysis of the surveys can be found in Appendices 4 and 5)

2.19. As noted in 2.13, in these surveys respondents ranked one to one specialist support for a named child and support provided through the LIFT as the type of support that had the most benefit for developing inclusive practice within their setting or school.

2.20. SENCOs also cite ‘support provided’ as a key benefit of the service and it is clear from comments made, that the value of the support provided to this group cannot be underestimated.

2.21. Regarding impact, this is challenging to determine. Consistent feedback from impact surveys is that respondents felt more confident in supporting children with SEND and noted a positive impact in relation to the outcomes for children and young people receiving support.

2.22. For example, STLS take a bespoke approach with each child, setting targets that are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound (SMART). Based on KPI returns, on average 39% of school age children open to STLS have their targets formally reviewed each term. Of these, an average of 29% have their cases closed due to targets being met and an average of 35% have their targets amended due to progress against them. Given the complex needs of children being supported this is a positive outcome for those children.

- 2.23. Respondents to feedback surveys report feeling confident in supporting children with SEND because of support provided by the service. In the recent impact survey early years settings and schools STLS received a countywide average rating of 4.1 in relation to the degree to which schools or settings are more able to provide support to a child or a group of children with SEN without the need for an EHCP.
- 2.24. However, this confidence does not translate into a reduction against various measures that are indicative of embedded inclusive practice at a district or county level. For example, the percentage of primary age children with an EHCP have risen year on year since 2020. [District Dashboard - KELSI](#)
- 2.25. Within a wider strategic context, the Special Education Needs and Disabilities and Alternative Provision Improvement Plan, published in March 2023 outlines the governments commitment to improving mainstream provision so that it is more inclusive of children with SEND. It identifies priorities related to supporting and upskilling the teaching workforce, through high quality, evidence-based teaching, teacher training in SEND, SEND specific professional development and increased use of assistive technology. It recognises the importance of providing specialist support at an appropriate time to prevent needs from escalating and how joined up working across education, health and social care can ensure that the right support is put in place as early as possible. Achieving this at a local level, requires reflection on and understanding of how we remove complicated referral pathways and deploy specialists within the system more effectively and for best outcomes. This is reflected in both the Early Years review and the Localities Model for School Inclusion.

3. Commissioning Intentions

- 3.1 As the current service level agreement for STLS ends on 31 August 2024 with no option to extend, the following options have been identified in relation to the service delivery beyond that date:
- Option 1: Do nothing. The Service Level Agreement and the service ends 31 August 2025.
 - Option 2: No change. The service continues to be funded through the High Needs Funding block under a further SLA.
 - Option 3: STLS becomes a traded service.
 - Option 4: STLS is funded directly by clusters of schools through the HNF allocated to clusters for decision making via the Localities model.
- 3.1. Workshops undertaken with stakeholders, including STLS, early years settings and schools and Council officers regarding these options resulted in three preferred options, with schools and STLS preferring Option 2 and the Council preferring Option 1 or 4.
- 3.2. In relation to these options, additional feedback was that:
- For Option 2 consideration should be given to increasing funding to the service to make it financially viable 'as is' over the longer term.
 - For Option 2 any decision to not increase funding would necessitate streamlining the service to focus on key areas of maximum impact, stopping other areas of support to make it financially viable.

- For option 4 schools and settings reported finding it difficult to comment on this due to lack of clarity about what future models will look like.
- 3.2 Since the completion of this process, two additional options have been identified and dismissed. These are:
- Option 5: bring the service in house.
 - Option 6: transition option, extending the current SLA for one year to enable a transition to Option 3 or 4.
- 3.3 Appendix 6 provides a detailed description of the feedback received and Appendix 7 provides an options appraisal based on this feedback.
- 3.4 In considering the above options, the Council recognises that the impact on early years settings and providers is likely to be different from that on schools. While schools have access to a range of support services, these are more limited for early years settings and proposals related to the Localities model do not currently relate to early years. Therefore, it may be necessary to consider different options for school age versus early years STLS.
- 3.5 The changing SEND landscape within Kent resulted in some stakeholders struggling to engage fully in the options appraisal process due to lack of detail related to some of this change. As an underpinning part of this change, a Continuum of Need and Provision is being developed as part of the Localities Model and any future service will need to be dynamic enough to deliver on this continuum. Given these factors, the Council intends to undertake a full public consultation in relation to the service. The consultation will seek to understand in more detail what gaps in provision it may fill within the new ways of working.
- 3.6 Any future activity will be considered within the strategic context of:
- The Council's commitment in discharging its statutory duty for children and young people with SEND.
 - The Council's drive for greater inclusion of children with SEND in mainstream settings and schools as outlined in the Countywide Approach to Inclusive Education (CATIE).
 - Outcomes Framework for Children and Young People in Kent.
 - Framing Kent's Future
 - Securing Kent's Future
 - Delivery of the Safety Valve and the Accelerated Progress Plan (APP).
- 3.7 These actions will support Framing Kent's Future through:
- Priority 1: Levelling Up Kent and our commitment to maintain KCC's strategic role in supporting schools in Kent to deliver accessible, high quality education provision for all families, specifically: Maintain improvement support services for all Kent schools, including maintained schools and academies, to maintain Kent's high-quality education system.
 - Priority 4: New Models of Care and Support and our commitment is to support the most vulnerable children and families in our county, ensuring our social work practice supports manageable caseloads, reflective learning, joined up

safeguarding and effective corporate parenting arrangements, specifically:
Respond to national policy changes on SEND provision, work with SEND families to rapidly improve the service provided to SEND children and work with mainstream schools so more can accept and meet the needs of children with SEND, increasing choice and proximity of school places.

3.8 These actions will support Securing Kent's Future by:

- Supporting Objective 1 in bringing the budget back into balance through cost avoidance achieved by supporting more children in mainstream schools from the outset of their statutory education and avoiding the use of non-maintained independent special school placements.
- Further transforming the operating model of the Council (Objective 4) by making processes less time-consuming and bureaucratic we can free up our resource to focus on working directly with children and the providers that support them. A greater focus on understanding and demonstrating impact will enable more effective decision making about how and where to focus the use of resources.

4. Financial Implications

4.1. The annual cost of STLS is £5,856,468. This is a static budget that has remained unchanged since before the existing SLA and has not been subject to inflationary uplifts over that time.

4.2. Individual districts receive varying levels of funding (see table below). Discussions with SLA holding headteachers have highlighted the historical nature of the funding agreements, and that these have not been reviewed considering inflation, or changes to demography and levels of need that have occurred over time. The level of funding allocated to each district has a direct impact on staffing and therefore the capacity the service has and its ability to deliver impact.

4.3. The information below has been collected from SLA holding schools as part of the performance monitoring process.

District	Core Budget	Outreach Budget	Total (This is the amount specified in each SLA)	Any other Income 22-23	Any other Income 23-24
Thanet	£377,550	£278,000	£655,550	£1,120	£22,751
Swale	£617,679	0	£617,679	£50,596	£42,230
Maidstone	£267,850	£240,000	£507,850	£12,080	£40,293
Folkstone and Hythe	£307,210	£200,000	£507,210	£3,000	£3,000
Ashford	£292,840	£210,000	£502,840	£17,751	£17,751
Gravesham	£309,310	£180,000	£489,310	£9,000	£28,159
Canterbury	£278,840	£200,000	£478,840	0	£19,145
Dover	£283,230	£180,000	£463,230	£23,479	£19,803
Dartford	£288,830	£170,000	£458,830	£8,276	£45,318
Tonbridge and Malling	£264,850	£190,000	£454,850	£1,750	£25,272
Tunbridge Wells	364,850	0	£364,800	£19,163	£16,163
Sevenoaks	£235,480	£120,000	£355,480	£24,023	£15,870
Total			£5,856,468		

4.1. The service is funded from the High Needs Block of Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) provided by the Department of Education. Spend is reported within the Special Educational Needs & Psychology key service line presentation of the 2024-2025 Medium Term Financial Plan. This is not currently a direct cost to the General Fund. However, the Council has committed to contributing a total of £82m towards the DSG deficit relating to High Needs overspends by 2027-28, and the statutory override, which is currently holding this deficit off the Council's balance sheet (in an unusable reserve), is due to cease from April 2026, unless the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Local Communities extends this policy further.

5. Legal implications

5.1. Legal advice will be sought in relation to any future SLA.

6. Equalities implications

6.1. An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed as part of this process.

6.2. Key areas of impact have been identified in relation to age, given that the potential impact on early years and school age children, and gender given that representative number of females within the associated workforce.

7. Governance

7.1. Accountability for statutory functions in relation to Safety Valve and Accelerated Progress Plan sits with Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education. Responsibility sits with the Director for Education and Special Education Needs.

8. Conclusions

8.1. Provision of support to children and young people in Kent is undergoing a significant period of change and transformation. During this time, it is important to understand the role that established process, structures and services will play in the future ways of working to avoid duplication or the creation of gaps.

8.2. STLS is an inclusion focused service that is valued by early years settings and schools. Both report that the service has impact across a range of measures and that support related to advice and guidance provided for individual children, especially through the LIFT process, is the most highly valued aspect.

8.3. Schools and settings report that the service has impact, improving outcomes for children and enabling schools to feel more confident in supporting children with SEN. However, this does not appear to translate through into a reduction against measures that would be indicative of embedded inclusive practice.

8.4. The current SLA ends 31 August 2025 and there is no option to extend. Options have been identified for the future of the service beyond that date and stakeholders engaged to inform the appraisal of those options. This has resulted in different preferred options for different stakeholder groups.

8.5. Given the changing local SEND landscape in Kent, the introduction of a Localities Model for School Inclusion and the recommendations of the review into early years education in Kent, the proposal is to undertake a public consultation in relation to the service, to understand in more detail how it might fit within the new ways of working.

9. Recommendation(s):

9.1 The Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and note:

- A. the content of the report
- B the proposal to undertake a public consultation in relation to the service, to understand in more detail what gaps in provision it may fill within the new ways of working
- C. a report will be presented to this Committee on the outcome of the consultation at the earliest opportunity.

10. Background Documents

- Appendix 1: Purpose of the service
- Appendix 2: Countywide Annual report 2022-23
- Appendix 3: Term 1 – 4 Countywide Report
- Appendix 4: Feedback Survey 2022-23
- Appendix 5: Impact Survey 2024 Analysis Report
- Appendix 6: Options Appraisal Workshops
- Appendix 7: Options Appraisal

11. EQIA

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Appendix 1: Purpose of the service (extract from Specialist Teaching and Learning Service (STLS) Service Level Agreement)

3. Background and Context of the Service

3.1 The main aims of the Specialist Teaching and Learning Service are:

3.2 to raise standards of high-quality Inclusive teaching in mainstream classrooms that enables children and young people with SEND who attend mainstream early years settings and schools to remain in these settings with access to quality first teaching.

3.3 developing the targeted and specialist knowledge, skills and expertise in Kent early years settings and mainstream schools using specialist SEN support services to create a coordinated, equitable, and effective provision of additional support for children and young people with Special Additional Needs to:

- build sustainable SEND capacity in early years settings and mainstream schools to meet the needs of children in the mainstream sector through high quality evidence led advice and training
- close attainment gaps and improve pupil SEND targets and track progress to these outcomes
- reduce the likelihood of exclusion by ensuring staff skills and provision is right to meet the needs of vulnerable children
- reduce the need for statutory assessments (for example, Education and Health Care Plans) by:
 - supporting schools and education settings in meeting children's needs through SEN support, adopting an 'assess, plan, do, review' approach to enable children to be included
 - by building confidence in the sector and influencing Inclusive cultures
 - building confidence in the totality of the local offer signposting the wealth of support available to children and families pre EHCP

4. Service Outcomes and Aims

4.1 The overarching aim of the STLS is to support early years settings and schools to build their capacity and confidence in identifying the right children at the right time, in delivering high quality provision for children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), in improving pupil progress and outcomes and to spread the best practice across Educational settings. This will be achieved in the following way:

Outcomes for children and young people with SEND

4.2 Provide support for the identification of needs and the provision of evidence-based support (e.g. Education Endowment Foundation Toolkit; Autism Education Trust resource materials, Anna Freud centre, Nurture UK and British Dyslexia

Association) for all children and young people with SEND in mainstream schools and early years settings, at the earliest possible stage and monitored and tracked over time.

- 4.3 Promote the local offer and other pathways to support for children and young people as well as providing advice on interventions and provisions suitable for the child, modelling excellent practice and building capacity where needed.
- 4.4 The service will also promote the Kent Schools Resource Directory and other commissioned training opportunities as resources to schools in developing Inclusive Practices.

Outcomes for participating schools

- 4.5 Supporting the increased use of maintained sector provision and resources rather than independent sector placements through building capacity within mainstream schools and settings to equip staff at all levels to recognise and successfully include learners with SEND.
- 4.6 Evidence led development and use of resources and strategies within mainstream schools and early years settings, so that staff have the right skills, tools and strategies to enable children and young people with SEND to access the curriculum and make good progress in an inclusive learning environment.
- 4.7 Work with mainstream schools and early years settings, school improvement advisors and Local Authority Officers to promote the mainstream pathway for pre-school children, support staff to develop quality of provision in SEND within mainstream schools and early years settings through training and development targeted to the delivery of the Mainstream Core Standards and Best Practice Guidance, ensuring that these are embedded in practice.
- 4.8 To reduce the need for Statutory Assessment by establishing more effective processes for children to access timely, high quality earlier intervention, support and provision.



Children, Young People and Education
Children's Commissioning Team

Specialist Teaching and Learning Service Countywide Annual Report

Term 1 - 6

2022-2023

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Executive Summary

This report details the findings of the formal performance monitoring of Specialist Teaching and Learning Service (STLS) by the Children's Commissioning Team for the academic year 2022-2023. It explores the progress made towards the recommendations proposed in the Countywide Report for Terms 1 and 2 of 2022-2023.

The report analyses data collected from the full set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) implemented at the beginning of the current Service Level Agreement (SLA) in September 2022 and, as such, summarises activity across the full academic year 2022-2023.

The data illustrates that there is a large demand for support from the service with the majority (if not all) of the early years settings, primary and secondary schools in a district receiving support of some form during the year. Across the county, the largest area of support for individual children is for those in primary schools.

District caseloads submitted through the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) give an idea of the level of demand for the service, however they tend to include children who, for a range of reasons, are not being actively supported by the service. Therefore, the KPI related to the number of children actively being supported is a more accurate measure of demand for the service under the current SLA.

The Annual Survey illustrated that the service is valued by those receiving it. Most respondents were SENCOs and subsequent surveys will seek to broaden the range of respondents.

Purpose

This report details the activity and performance of the Specialist Teaching and Learning Service (STLS) across the 12 districts of Kent for the academic year 2022 – 2023. This represents the first delivery year of the three-year Service Level Agreement (SLA) which was initiated in September 2022.

The report includes analysis of the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) which were agreed with the service to coincide with the new SLA, and for which a sharepoint reporting process was designed. The KPI template can be found in Appendix A. This template has been adjusted slightly to reflect the recommendations made in the previous Term 1 and 2 2022 – 2023 Countywide report (see Appendix D) which includes a detailed description of the service and the background to the [Cabinet Committee recommendations](#) made on 1 March 2022.

The STLS district leads of the SLA holding schools submit their KPIs on a termly basis and formal monitoring meetings are held three times per year, reporting retrospectively on the two preceding terms.

This report outlines the annual countywide findings for Terms 1 to 6 of the 2022–2023 academic year. The Appendices detail district level data.

The overarching aim of the STLS is to support Kent's mainstream early years settings and schools in delivering high quality inclusive provision for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Their focus is to build capacity,

confidence, skills, and knowledge amongst educators and promote inclusive practice and increase capacity across all mainstream educational settings.

This service operates across the 12 districts of Kent and is commissioned through 12 separate SLAs, each held by a special school within each district. These SLAs end 31 August 2025.

Local Context

Following an initial Ofsted inspection in 2019, and a re-visit in November 2022, the Council is undergoing significant period of change with an even greater focus on Inclusion than previously. STLS sits amongst a range of other services in delivering this ambition. The service supports the strategic outcomes of the Council as referenced in the [Countywide Approach to Inclusive Education \(CATIE\)](#) and the [Accelerated Programme Plan \(APP\)](#) which has been developed as a direct response to the OFSTED inspection. Both of which aim to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

A review of the High Needs Funding model in Kent has been completed and a new model has been proposed which reflects a locality-based approach, with greater decision making and accountability for locality resources within districts. This proposal is currently out for Public Consultation. STLS is funded by KCC through the High Needs Funding block and is also a local resource so any changes to how that funding is allocated and administered may impact on STLS.

There are a number of reviews being undertaken as part of the financial recovery [Safety Valve Agreement](#) which aims to eliminate the cumulative deficit arising from existing and forecast overspends on high needs funding for schools for children and young people with SEND in Kent. These include the Specialist Resource Provision (SRP) review, the Special School review and the Early Years review. These may all have an impact on the STLS over the next six to 20 months.

Part One – Background and Progress to Date

Performance Monitoring took place three times across the academic year 2022/2023. In February (Terms 1 and 2); May (Terms 3 and 4) and September 2023 (Terms 5 and 6).

A countywide report was produced after Terms 1 and 2 monitoring. This was the first report produced that covered the service since the review completed in January 2022. Feedback was positive and the report was welcomed by SLA-holding Heads as well as Lead Specialist Teachers. This report made several recommendations that have since been implemented. (see Appendix B).

1.1 The Service

STLS supports mainstream primary and secondary schools, and early years' settings. The overall offer of support is consistent across the county with some local variations in delivery. The variations are in response to local need, demand and capacity, resulting from 12 separate SLAs and their associated budgets. The past year has seen some districts reducing their staffing teams and adjusting their delivery styles due to budget constraints, which has further contributed towards variations in practice.

The Working Together, Planning Together workshops are a joined-up approach that STLS participate in, alongside Educational Psychologists from Kent Educational Psychology

Service (KEPS), Special Educational Needs Inclusion Advisors (SIA) and council representatives which enables greater collaboration between services, working towards a joined-up approach within local areas. This year has seen a focus on Phase Transition and developing an agreement of the role of various agencies within the process.

Council officers regularly attend the STLS District Leads meeting to provide updates on relevant, strategic developments and activity within the Council.

STLS support the Council's strategic aims by delivering Autism Education Trust (AET) training and supporting the roll out of the Balanced System®.

The last academic year has started to see different ways of working in response to limited and decreasing capacity of services including:

- An approach to more group work, moving away from individual support.
- No allocation at Local Inclusion Forum Team (LIFT) at certain times in some districts to free up capacity to focus on transition.
- A trial of New Ways of Working in Tonbridge and Malling, and Maidstone, which focuses on delivering specialist support through the graduated approach.
- STLS having greater collaboration with the Council by supporting initiatives such as the rollout of the AET training and attending the Working Together, Planning Together workshops.
- Increased sharing of resources across districts.

All districts reported in their Terms 5 and 6 monitoring meetings that the central government agreed 6.5% teacher pay rises which comes into effect in September 2023 will place additional strain on the static budget.

SLA-holding Heads expressed that they were willing to deliver the STLS service beyond the length of the SLA but cautioned that this would result in a diminished offer over time if the budget remained static.

Part Two – Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and Performance Monitoring Process

A new set of KPIs was introduced when the SLA came into effect in September 2022, alongside a new, simplified reporting mechanism using Microsoft forms. Although developed with the service leads in all districts, not all districts initially had the capacity to collect and report on all KPIs. By the end of Term 3, all service leads had processes in place and so the data has a higher degree of accuracy from that term onwards.

Generally, there have been two commissioners, the district lead, and the SLA holding head teacher present during performance monitoring meetings.

In Terms 1 and 2, 12 performance monitoring meetings were held. All were held virtually. The focus of Performance Monitoring was:

Operational Update

Including:

- Transition
- LIFT
- Communications with Schools and SENCos

Performance Against KPIs

Including:

- Narrative report
- Staffing
- Financial Audit

Quality Impact

Case study which could be example of a successful or innovative practise or intervention

Challenges, Barriers, Issues arising.

Following feedback from Terms 1 and 2 performance monitoring, commissioners invited STLS to submit any questions or enquiries in writing prior to the meeting so that commissioners could ensure a full response could be provided, where appropriate. There were no questions presented during Terms 3 and 4 meetings for commissioners to respond to, however this opportunity will still be made available prior to future performance monitoring meetings.

In Terms 3 and 4, 12 performance monitoring meetings were held, 11 of these were in person with commissioners visiting the SLA holding special school, and one meeting was held virtually (due to commissioner capacity).

The focus of Performance Monitoring was:

Narrative Report

(To include transition, process changes, innovation, or new ways of working, supplementary information in relation to KPI's i.e., anomalies/exceptions)

KPI and Local Activity Report (LAR)ReturnsQuestions

(Submitted before the meeting so Commissioners could provide a response at the meeting)

In Term 5 and 6, 12 performance monitoring meetings were held. All meetings were held virtually due to commissioner capacity. The focus of the Performance Monitoring meeting was:

Narrative Report

Please prepare a comment to include anything significant on: transition, process changes, innovation, or new ways of working, supplementary information in relation to KPI's i.e., anomalies/exceptions)

KPI and LAR

Brief overview of any differences to previous terms.
Reflections on changes of delivery and focus over the past year.

Focus for next academic year.

By Term 6, there was minimal feedback of technical issues or reports of any challenges in collecting required data, although there are still some differing interpretations of the KPIs in a very small number of occasions.

2.1 Summary of Activity

Performance Monitoring in relation to Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and Local Activity Reports (LAR)

The following is a high-level summary (based on data submitted) of the performance of STLS as a countywide service during Terms 1 to 6 of 2022 – 2023 school academic year.

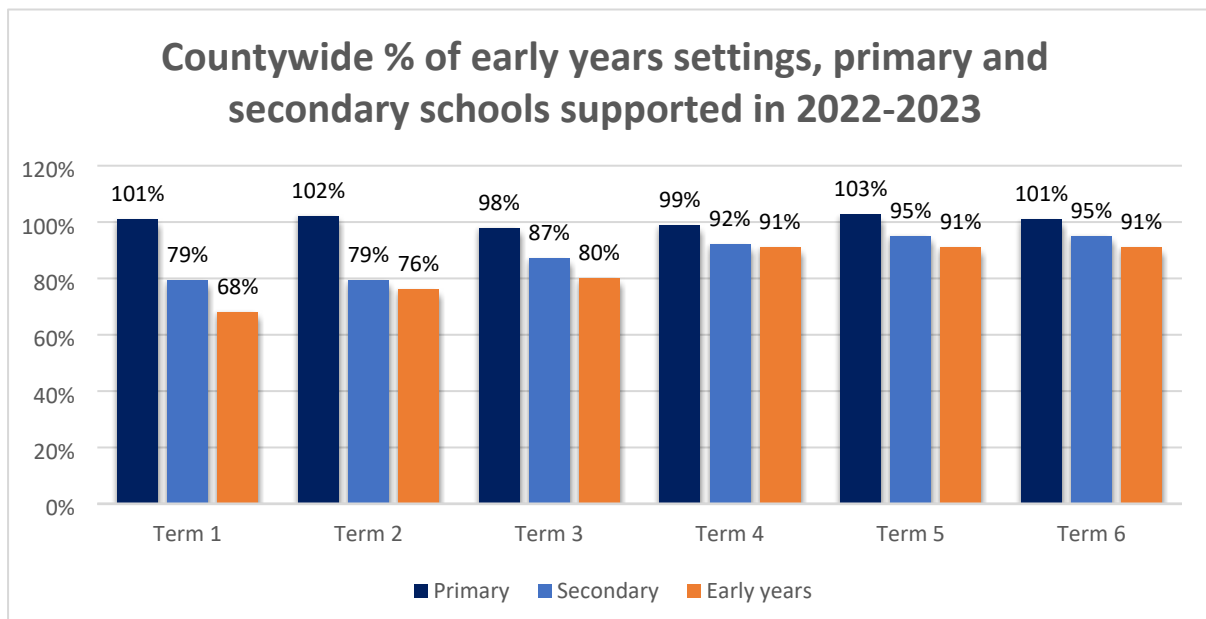


Figure 1: Countywide average % of early years settings, primary, secondary schools supported (Kent Analytics KPIs Power BI Dashboard)

When the KPIs were agreed, it was not understood that STLS supported schools outside their district. This mostly happens when districts share training courses. This had led to an anomaly in the percentage of schools and settings supported, with schools from outside the district included in the count, resulting in a percentage that is over 100%, as can be seen in Figure 1. This is to be resolved in reporting going forward.

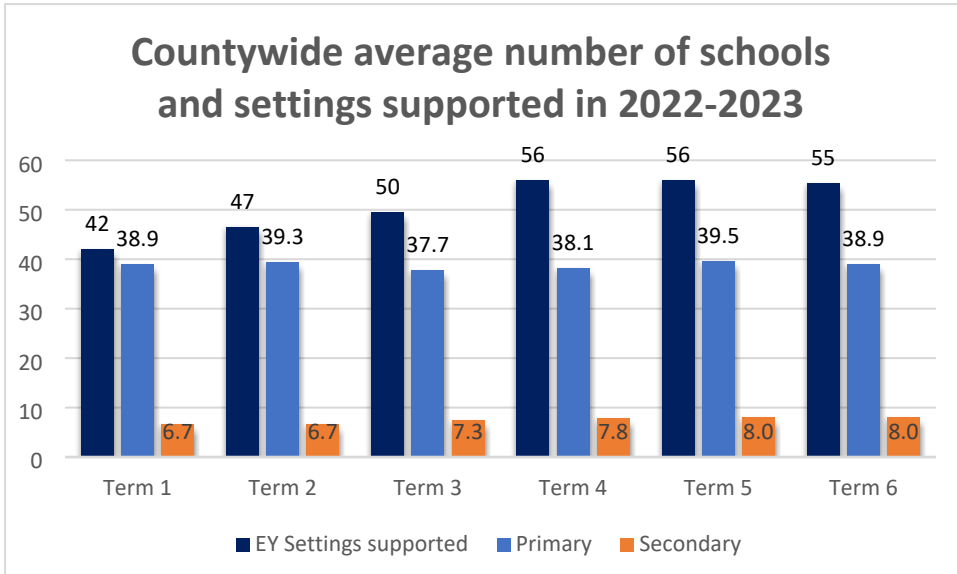


Figure 2: Countywide average number of early years, primary, secondary schools (Kent Analytics KPIs Power BI Dashboard)

Figure 2 shows STLS are supporting a larger percentage of Primary schools than Secondary schools countywide. According to [Kent Analytics- Integrated Dataset](#) SEN Support for mainstream secondary school pupils increased by 18% between 2019/2020 and 2021/2022, three times higher than the rise in primary school pupils (6%). This could have an impact on STLS capacity if the figures continue to rise.

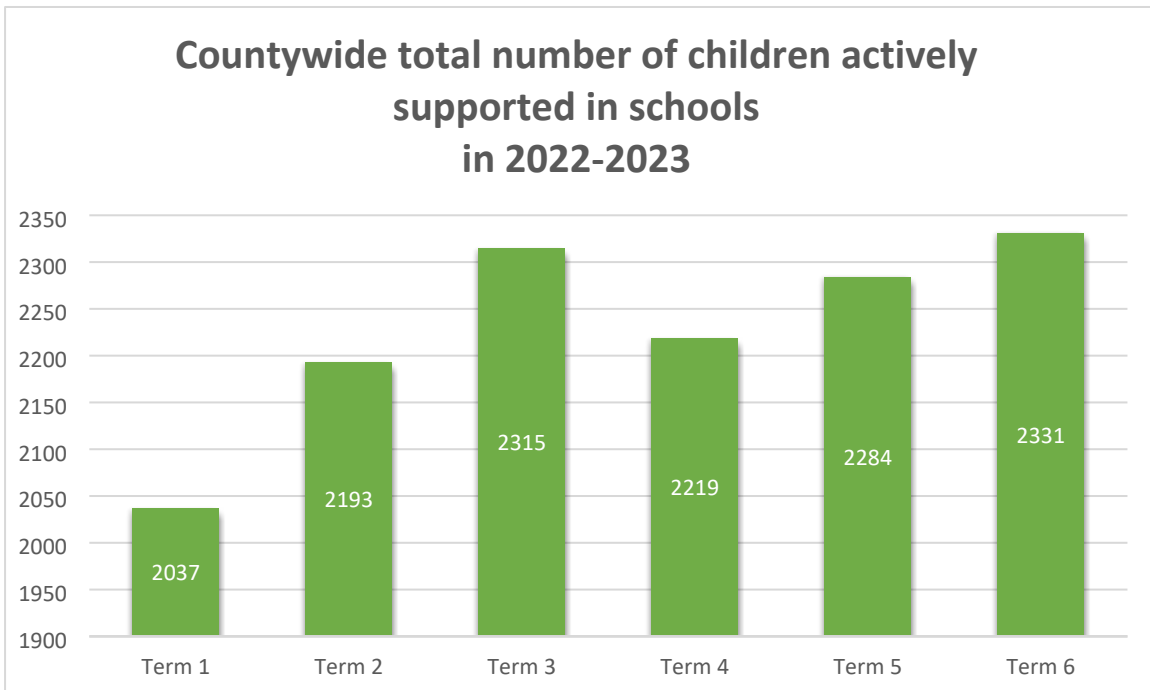


Figure 3: Countywide total number of children actively supported (Kent Analytics KPIs Power BI Dashboard)

By Actively Supporting, we mean: an individual child that is 1) open to the service; 2) has a specialist teacher actively supporting the child and 3) where the child is working towards individual targets.

It is important to note that these are not new cases each term and a large number of children are likely to be the same children from term to term. Most districts are starting to ensure that cases are closed once the child has reached specific targets or the school has sufficient capacity to meet the needs of the child regardless of the level of progress made. This may reduce these numbers in time. However, this can be challenging where the child has ongoing complex needs or the school asks for ongoing support (e.g. as a safety net) and the specialist teacher cannot identify an appropriate opportunity to close the case. These cases can always be opened again should specialist support be appropriate later.

Fluctuations in number of children supported across terms are mostly due to a traditional emphasis on transition in Term 5 and 6, although other factors are also at play. For example, Swale filling all specialist teacher vacancies after a long period and building caseloads up again, or long periods of staff sickness where no cover was available. In Figure 3, a further factor is that not all districts were able to report on this KPI for Terms 1 and 2 as they had not previously been required to be collecting this data meaning that not all activity is represented. By Term 3 all districts were able to report.

All districts are now working more closely in line with the timelines detailed in the Transition Charter. It is expected that transition will be a focus throughout the year rather than within specific terms, meaning that there will be less fluctuation in activity across the terms during in 2023-2024.

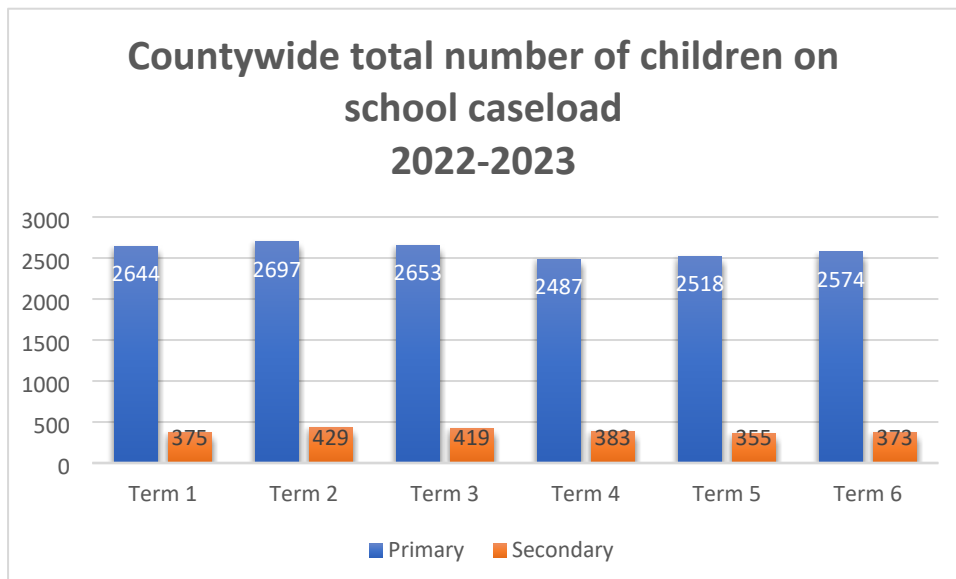


Figure 4: Countywide Total number of children on school caseload (Kent Analytics KPIs Power BI Dashboard)

Figure 4 shows us that there are more children on the caseload than are being actively supported. The reasons for this may include: children who are required to be open to STLS (although not necessarily supported by them) in order to receive financial or other specialist support; children with ongoing medical conditions such as Down’s Syndrome and other occasions where the specialist teacher is not able to identify a time to end support and cases were schools are reluctant for STLS to close the case even though they are not actively providing support. Note that all schools were able to report on this measure for Terms 1 and 2 as this was information captured within previous version of the KPI’s. The dataset for the cases being actively supported was not complete for Terms 1 and 2 for the reasons cited

above. Nonetheless, it is evident from the remaining terms that there are more children in STLS caseloads than are actively receiving support.

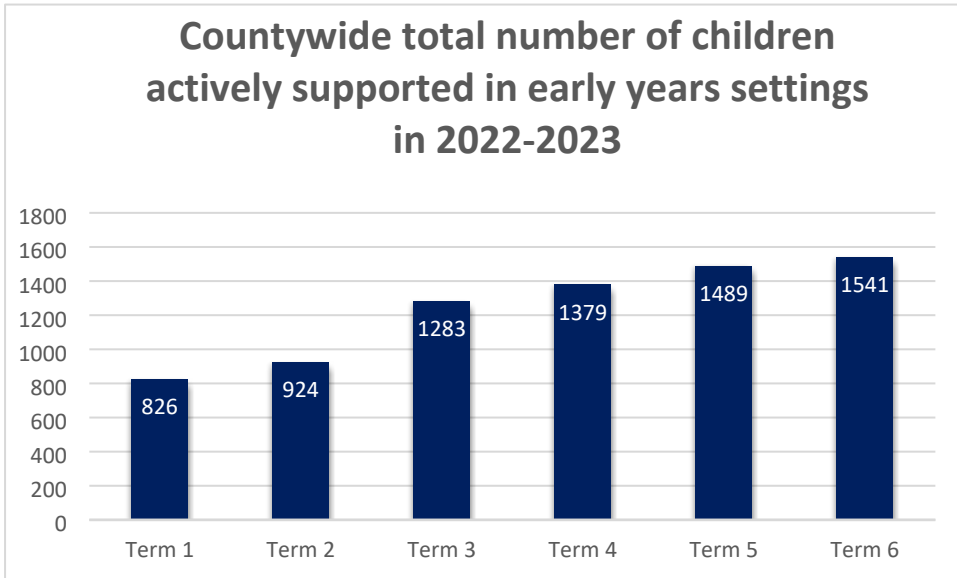


Figure 5: Countywide total number children actively supported in early years settings (Kent Analytics KPIs Power BI Dashboard)

Again, as with school age, these are not necessarily new cases each term, some children will be counted in more than one term. We can see that, despite not having a complete dataset in Term 1 and 2, caseloads have increased each term. This evidences a significant demand for support in early years countywide, particularly after transition and as part of the requirement for a child to have a specialist teacher allocated to them in order to receive SENIF support and support at a specialist intervention nursery.

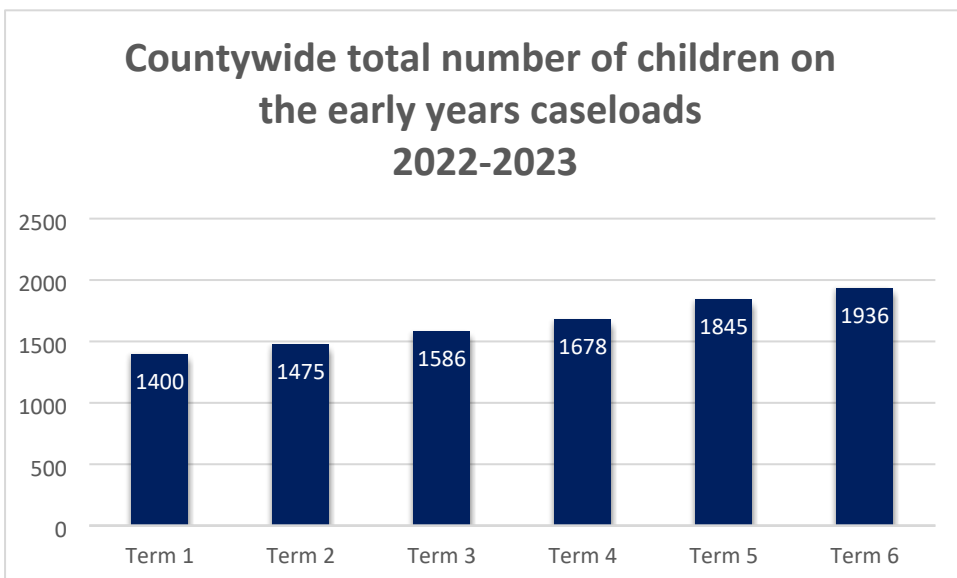


Figure 6: Countywide Total number of children on early years caseload (Kent Analytics KPIs Power BI Dashboard)

Figure 6 shows the countywide figures for all early years' caseloads. As with school age children there is a discrepancy between caseload and the number of children actively receiving support. For early years, the primary reason for this is that all districts tend to keep children on their cases for one or two terms after they have transitioned into Reception year to support the child and the school as the school identifies any emerging SEND and puts support in place through High Needs Funding or Education and Health Care Plans (EHCP).

Again, the number of children actively supported is not accurate for Terms 1 and 2 as not all districts were able to report on this data during these periods. We will have a more accurate idea in 2023-2024.

LIFT

The Local Inclusion Forum Team (LIFT) meeting is a forum where SENCOs can discuss children with STLS teachers, other SENCOs and any other attending professionals, such as Educational Psychologists.

The school LIFT meetings are Solution Focussed, with the SENCO defining the piece of support or guidance they need in the form of a question before describing the child's behaviour and techniques already applied, and clarification questions being asked by all professionals present, followed by a solution summary. Early years LIFT is less solution focussed due to the age of the children and associated emerging need or developmental delay.

The districts which have separated out primary and secondary LIFT have found that this encourages other secondary schools to attend.

Depending on the district, a specialist teacher may be allocated in schools LIFT. Due to capacity issues, some districts are encouraging schools to implement the advice given prior to the allocation of teacher, and only allocating teacher where it is most needed.

Conversely, a specialist teacher will often be allocated at Early Years LIFT as well as a SENIF Practitioner. The SENIF Practitioner will support the setting by modelling support identified by the Specialist Teacher. These are a Council service and cannot be allocated without the child being open to STLS. For early years, while LIFT is a valued resource there is an additional driver as attendance at LIFT is part of the process to apply for SENIF.

Having LIFT and allocation of a specialist teachers as part of the evidence used to demonstrate the need for further support through an EHCP, High Needs Funding or SENIF has placed additional pressure on the service. Although valued by SENCOs (as evidenced in the annual survey results found in Appendix D), the process of making a referral can be seen as part of a tick box exercise, it is reported to be time consuming for schools and settings, and the LIFT process is requires a lot of administration by STLS.

To address some of these barriers, more districts are operating a clinic/surgery/in-school or setting review to provide support, advice and guidance in an anonymised way. This provides support and reassurance without unnecessary bureaucracy and allows LIFT to focus on the most complex referrals while ensuring that SENCOs still receive support from a specialist teacher.

Each district operates approximately six school LIFTs, and four early years LIFTs per term, with some districts separating out LIFT for primary and secondary schools. Some districts struggle to engage with secondary schools, although others, such as Gravesham, have excellent engagement.

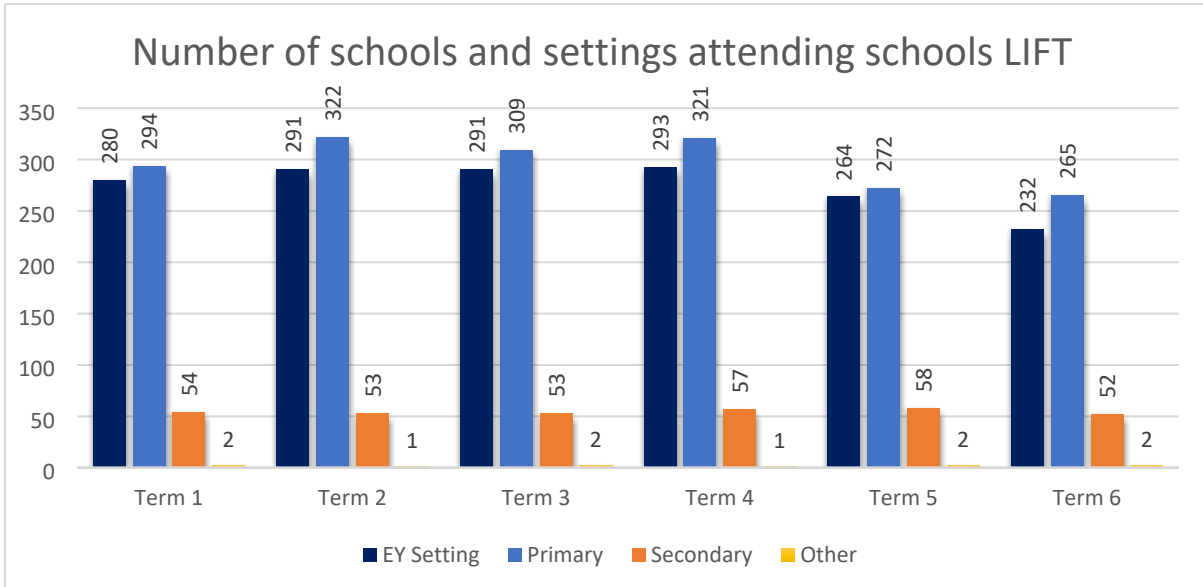


Figure 7: Number of schools and settings attending Schools LIFT (Kent Analytics LAR Power BI Dashboard)

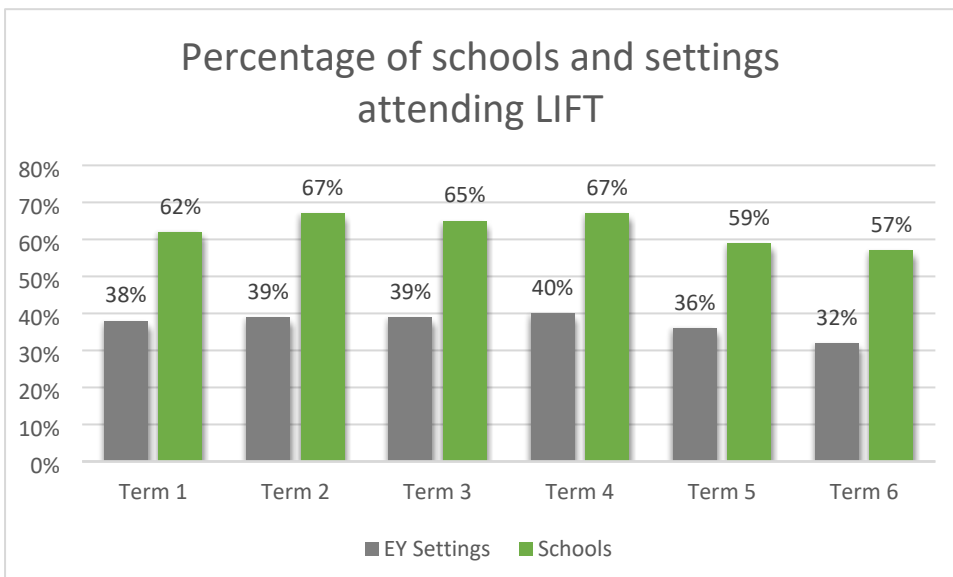


Figure 8 Percentage of schools and settings attending LIFT

As previously mentioned, and is further evidenced in Figure 8, data tells us that primary schools are far more likely to engage in the LIFT process than secondary schools. Whilst schools and settings do engage with the STLS, not all schools and settings engage with the LIFT process.

It was identified in Terms 1 and 2 report that, although LIFT is designed to be a multiagency forum, attendance by professionals other than STLS, Educational Psychologists and SENIF Practitioners (in early years) varies across districts and often the only professionals attending (other than SENCos) are from STLS (see Figure 9). There are some outliers, for instance, Dover regularly has Early Help professionals attend both early years and school LIFTs. SENIF Practitioners attend early years LIFT, which is where they are allocated, subject to approval from the Senior SENIF Practitioner. Districts also have an allocation of KCC Educational Psychologists time which is allocated towards supporting at LIFT and running clinics.

STLS have widely reported that often professionals who have been invited to attend LIFT, do not attend. The Speech and Language service are often not able to attend, however they will support the process by providing a record of the child’s history, including some medical information that the SENCo may not have been told by the parents, which could guide the direction of support.

Countywide number of professionals attending schools LIFT

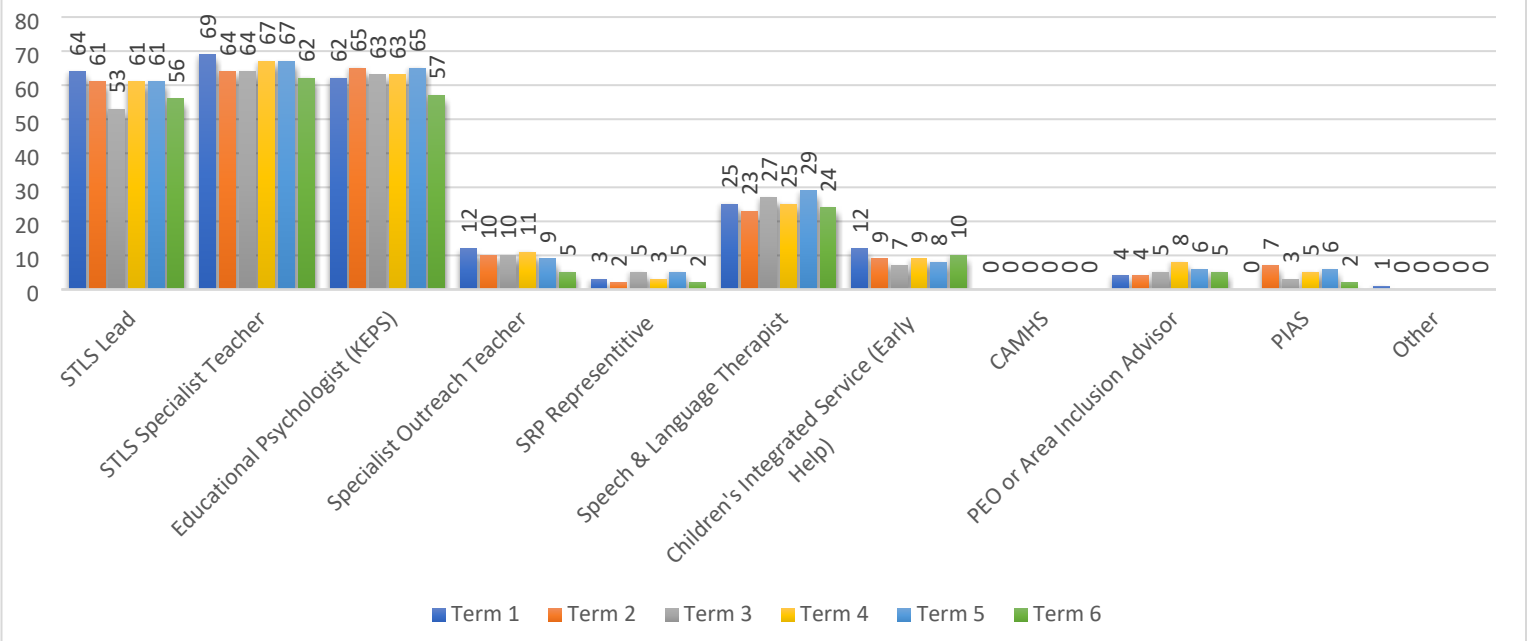


Figure 9: Number of professionals attending Schools LIFT (Kent Analytics KPIs Power BI Dashboard)

Countywide number of professionals attending early years LIFT

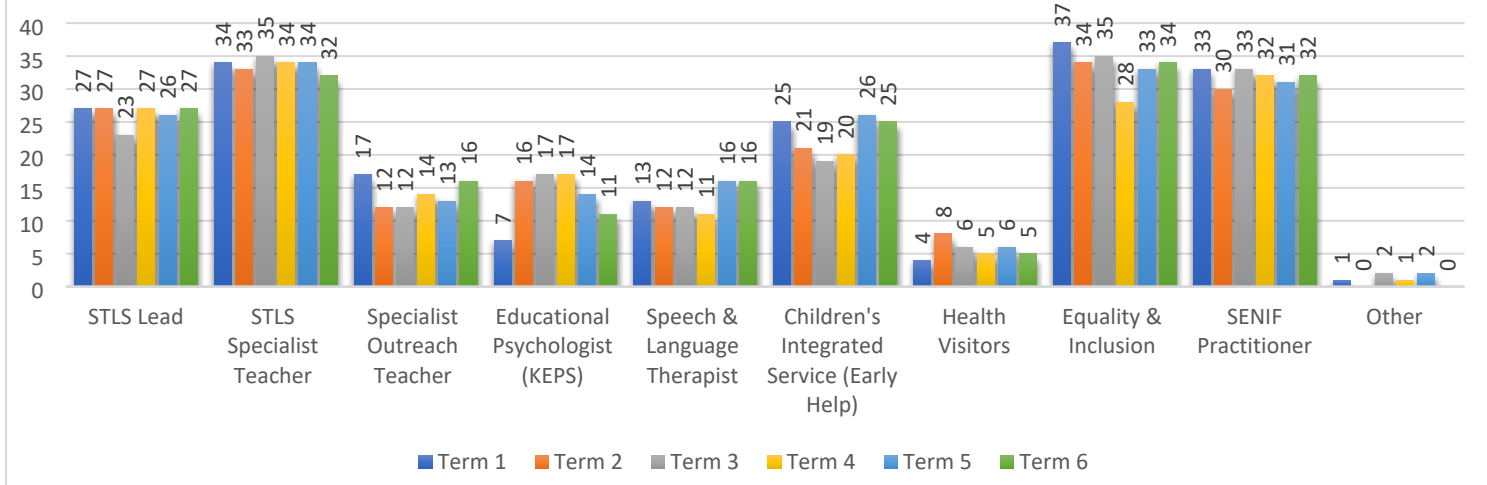


Figure 10: Number of professionals attending early years LIFT countywide (Kent Analytics LAR Power BI Dashboard)

Figures 9 and 10 shows there is consistent presence of the STLS Lead, STLS specialist teacher and KCC Educational Psychologists at LIFT meetings in Terms 1 and 2. No district had representation from a Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) professional.

Lack of professional attendance at LIFT is widely recognised and is still the case. However, this measure was put in place to corroborate anecdotal information provided by the service. Having achieved this, the Council will no longer be collecting the data on professionals attending LIFT and will not be reporting this going forward.

The table below shows activity in terms of the number of cases discussed at LIFT.

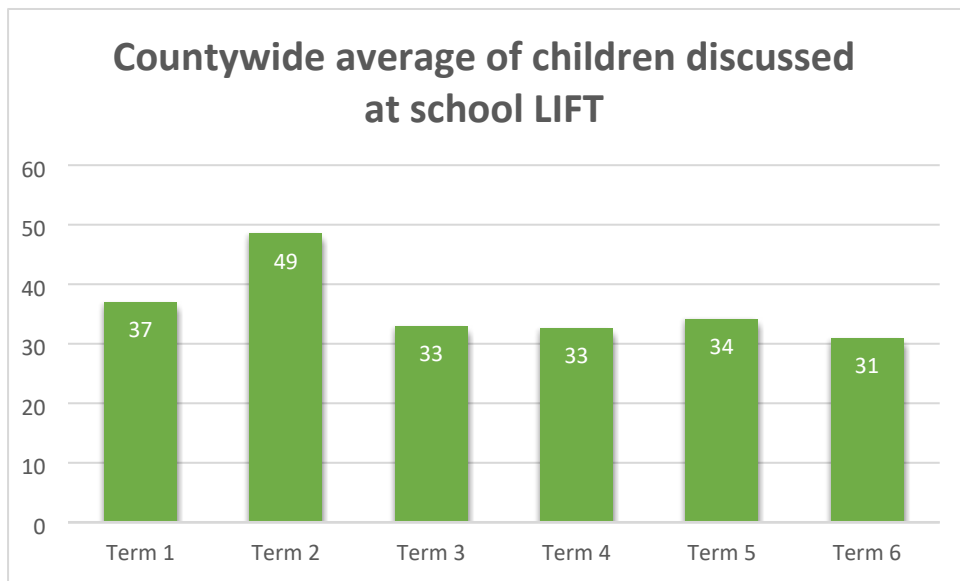


Figure 11: Countywide average of children discussed at school LIFT (Kent Analytics KPIs Power BI Dashboard)

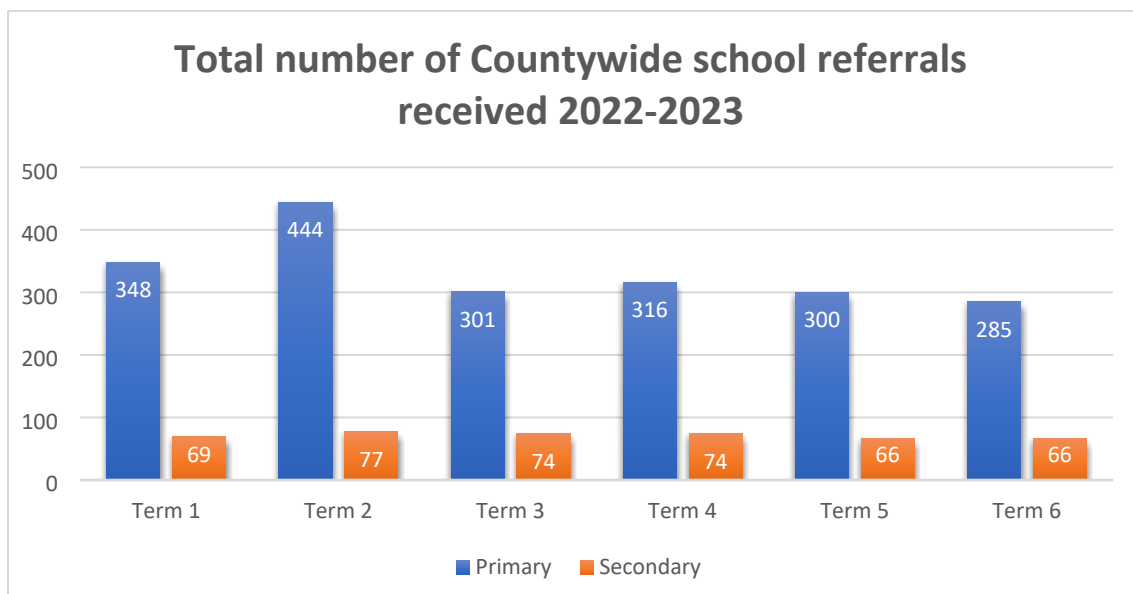


Figure 12: Total number of Countywide school referrals received 2022-2023 (Kent Analytics KPIs Power BI Dashboard)

Figure 12 shows that primary schools access STLS more than secondary schools. There were 426 secondary LIFT referrals countywide and 1994 primary LIFT referrals in the academic year. The increase in referrals in Term 2 is partly due to schools using Term 1 to allow children to transition and to determine whether universal strategies are enough to meet need before accessing further support via LIFT in Term 2.

There are often a high number of cases at early years LIFT due to the number of settings and the level of need, which adds pressure and impacts on the capacity of early years STLS to support settings. Early years have different processes to schools LIFT, and STLS report practitioners often only tend to attend LIFT if a case requires SENIF funding and practitioners will often only attend to discuss the child they have brought to LIFT, and not stay for the whole meeting due to time constraints. This is more common than not, although there are variations across districts.

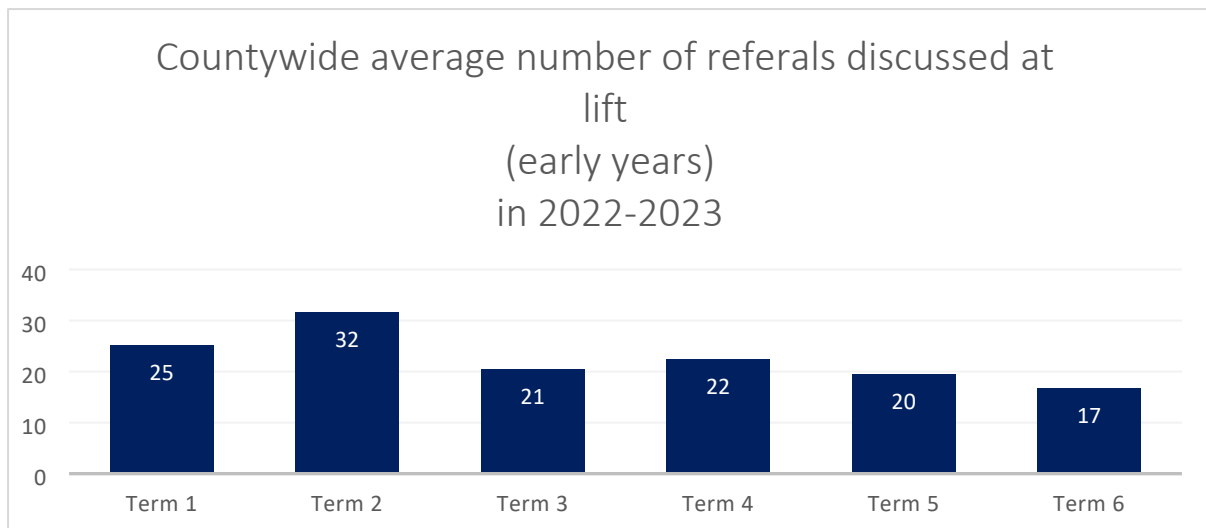


Figure 13: Countywide average of early years referrals discussed at LIFT (Kent Analytics KPIs Power BI Dashboard)

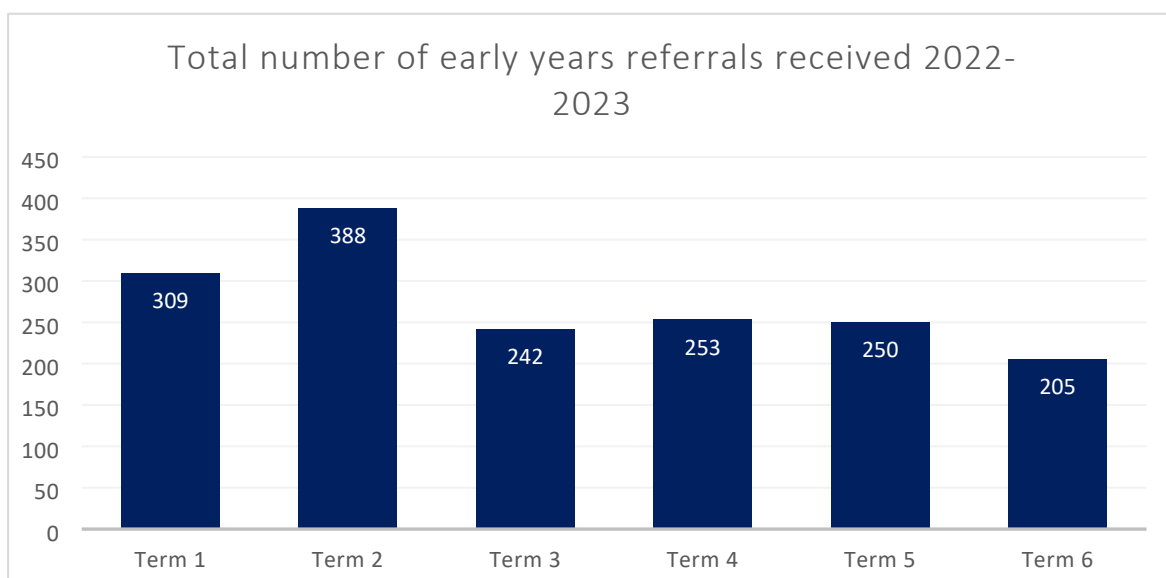


Figure 14: Total number of early years referrals received 2022-2023 – early years (Kent Analytics KPIs Power BI Dashboard)

According to Figure 14 there were 1647 early years LIFT referrals countywide in the academic year. There is an increase of referrals in Term 2, which could be due to settings implementing the Graduated Approach before referring to LIFT. STLS tend to not allocate to as many children in Term 6 as children who would benefit from support are often being supported through the transition processes.

Looking at the service as a whole, most cases at early years LIFT have a specialist teacher allocated to them. This is due to the reported increase in the volume of highly complex cases being brought to LIFT, the KCC requirement for a specialist teacher allocation before SENIF support can be allocated, and the requirement for the child to be open to STLS while they are being supported by a specialist nursery. These requirements are being examined as part of the Early Years review. These factors have a significant impact on demand for LIFT referrals and specialist teacher allocation and are being considered within the Early Years Review.

Clinics/Surgeries

There is an increasing move towards providing advice and guidance in an anonymised, less formal way outside LIFT to avoid bureaucracy, and so that SENCOs can access advice, guidance and reassurance with a short turnaround. There are variations across the county, with Thanet using their Link Teacher model to provide in school/setting reviews, and other districts offering virtual clinics or surgeries, sometimes with the support of the Kent Educational Psychology Service.

Districts report that this does sometimes remove the need to attend LIFT for children in most need types, however, children with Social Emotional Mental Health (SEMH) will usually go on to attend LIFT.

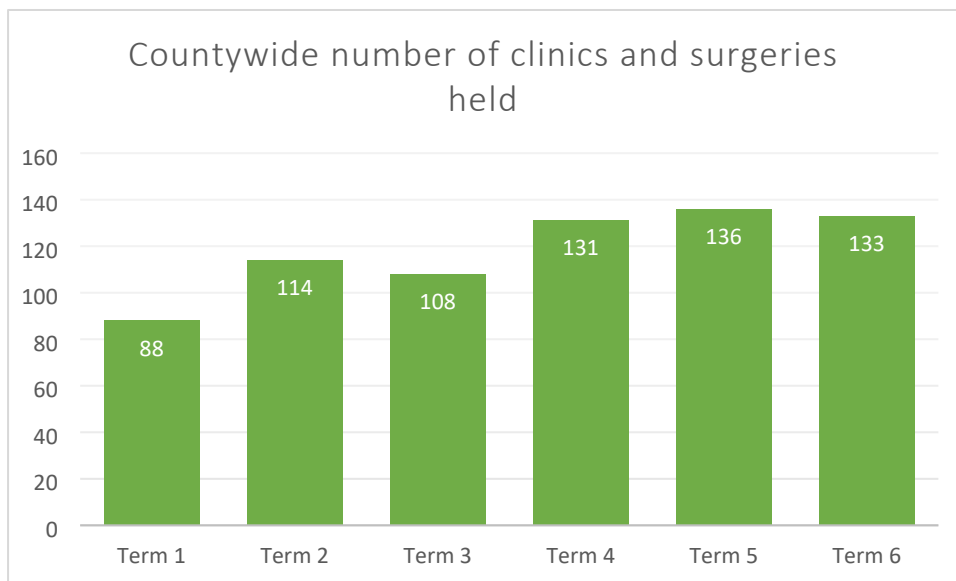


Figure 15: Countywide Number of clinics / surgeries / in school reviews ((Kent Analytics KPIs Power BI Dashboard)

A total of 710 clinics/surgeries were reported to have been delivered across the county during the academic year for schools. It is likely that this number will increase next year as districts look for ways to support schools and settings as effectively as possible in light of growing demand and limited capacity.

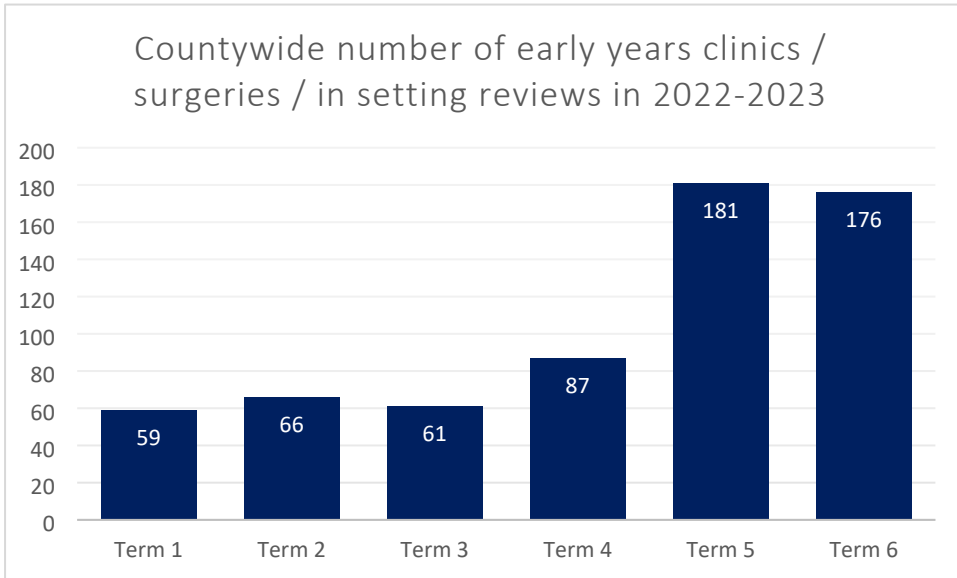


Figure 16: Countywide Number of early years clinics / surgeries / in setting reviews (Kent Analytics KPIs Power BI Dashboard)

Figure 16 shows that there were 630 early years clinics/surgeries throughout the academic year. It is likely that the jump in numbers in Terms 5 and 6 are due to transition support and some changes to delivery models.

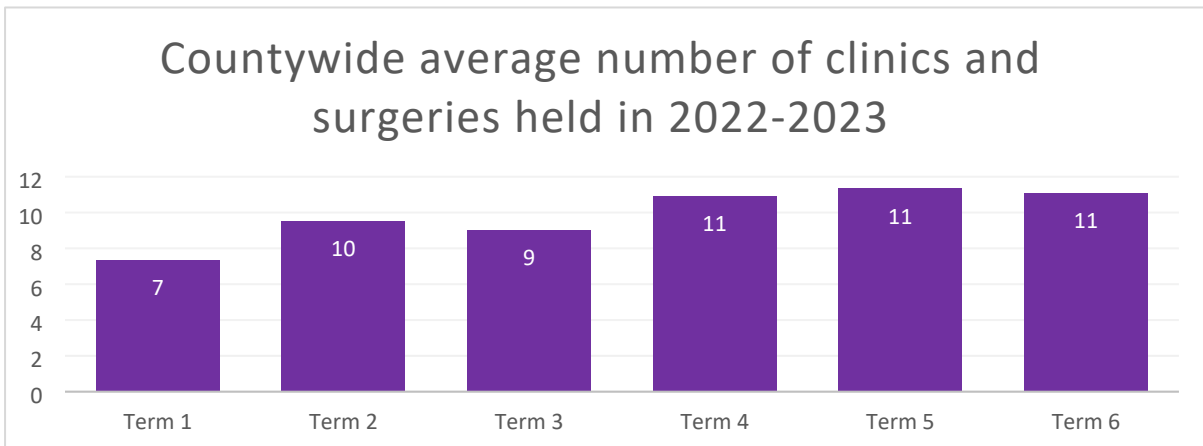


Figure 17: Countywide average of school clinics and surgeries held (Kent Analytics KPIs Power BI Dashboard)

Tonbridge and Malling, with their new way of working which is modelled around the graduated approach, has a focus on providing specialist support, operate clinics and reserve LIFT for children with the highest need.

Additional measures have been added to performance monitoring for 2023-2024, monitoring the volume going through clinics, not just the number of clinic/surgeries held to gain more understanding of this activity and the impact that it has.

2.5 Transition

A key topic of discussion within the performance monitoring meetings continues to be the role of STLS in transition. Findings are summarised below:

Primary to Secondary School:

Figure 18 shows in Term 1, STLS reported that 94 schools were supported to deliver transition events, and in Term 5, 322 schools were supported countywide.

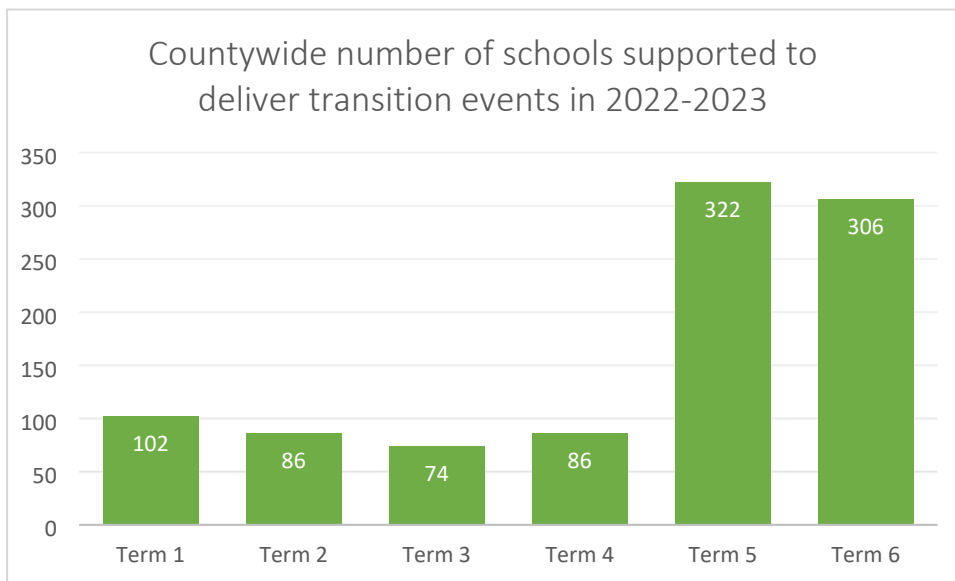


Figure 18: Countywide Number of schools supported to deliver transition events (Kent Analytics KPIs Power BI Dashboard)

The county's approach to transition has solidified this year, with the termly Working Together, Planning Together meetings in Lenham supporting a more joined-up approach to transition. STLS have further developed relationships with the SIAs and the Education Psychologists in their districts to support implementing the Transition Charter. Districts that previously had only supported transition during Terms 5 and 6 have identified that there are elements of transition that need to be addressed throughout the year and have adjusted their work plans for 2023-2024 in recognition of this.

Early years to Reception:

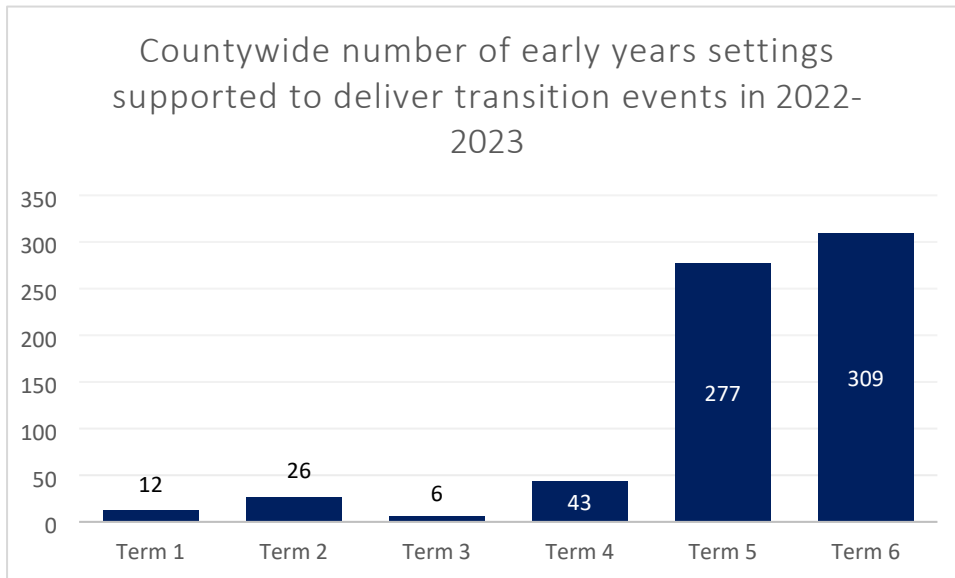


Figure 19: Countywide Number of early years settings supported to deliver transition events (Kent Analytics KPIs Power BI Dashboard)

Figure 19 shows STLS supported a total of 673 transition events throughout the academic year.

As with schools' transitions, the approach to transition has varied across the county, with a significant emphasis in Terms 5 and 6.

The approach to transition is shifting, with more collaborative working across inclusion agencies. A key challenge is that STLS do not always know which school a child has been accepted at and so are less able to support the process. This is less of an issue in districts where STLS has a link model and the specialist teacher can have regular conversations with a greater number of schools and settings.

Complexity of Needs

At school age, it is evident that the majority of referrals through LIFT are for SEMH. This could be for several reasons – as SEMH is not a diagnosis, the behaviour could be as a result of various factors, including undiagnosed ASD, hearing impairment, trauma and abuse amongst other factors. Also, districts tell us that SEMH is the one need type which is rarely resolved at clinic.

Early years STLS report there has been a significant rise in number of children with complex needs. This does not necessarily mean they have SEND however they will need help, support, and encouragement to develop their early language skills and vocabulary.

Countywide number of schools referrals by Area and Priority Need Type

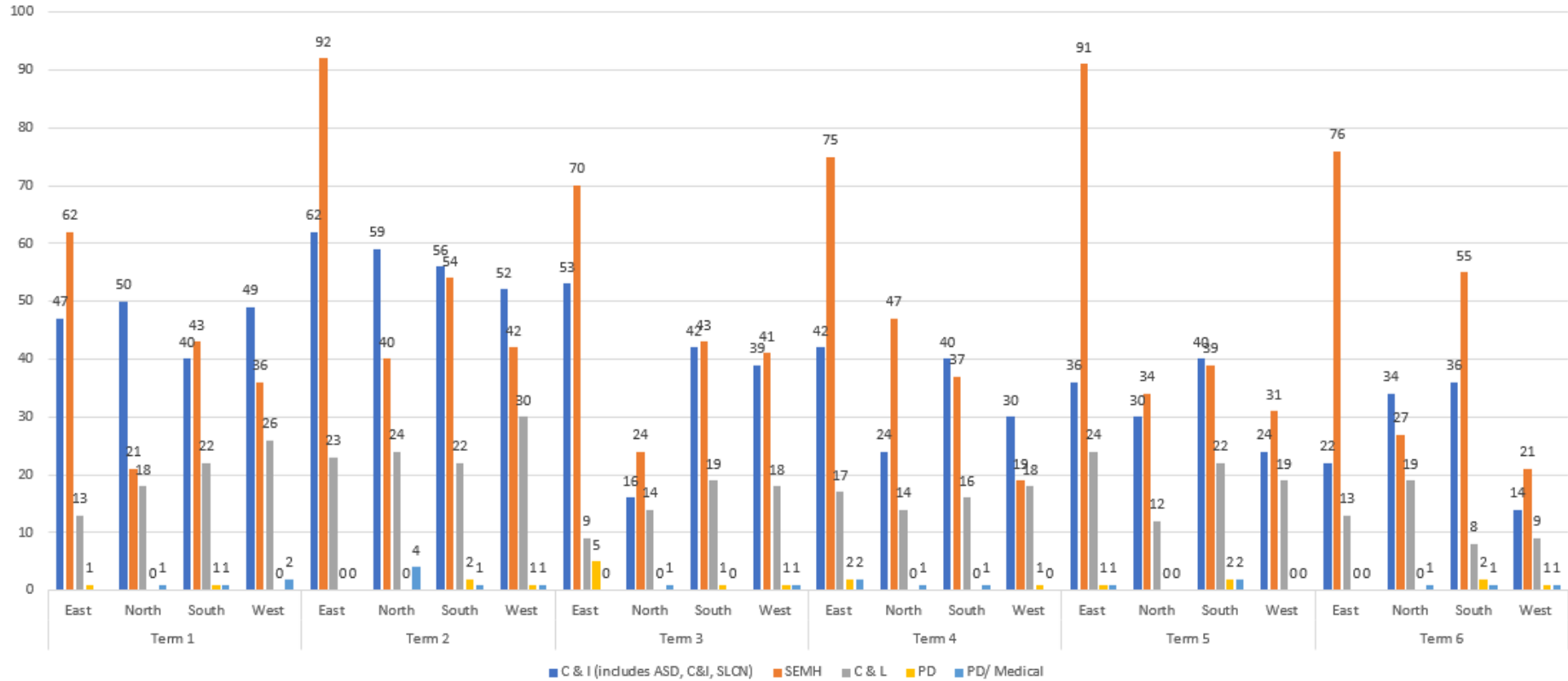


Figure 20:: Countywide Number of Schools Referrals by Area and Priority Need Type (Kent Analytics KPIs Power BI Dashboard)

There remain serious concerns about the high demand and lack of availability of services in Kent, particularly for Speech and Language. Early years STLS countywide have reported there have been an increase in Communication and Interaction (C&I) referrals, and that this is the most common referral dimension type in early years. Given the accessibility of STLS through the LIFT process, STLS report that they are often 'picking up' cases that require a different specialist service.

Countywide number of Early Years referrals by Area and Need Type

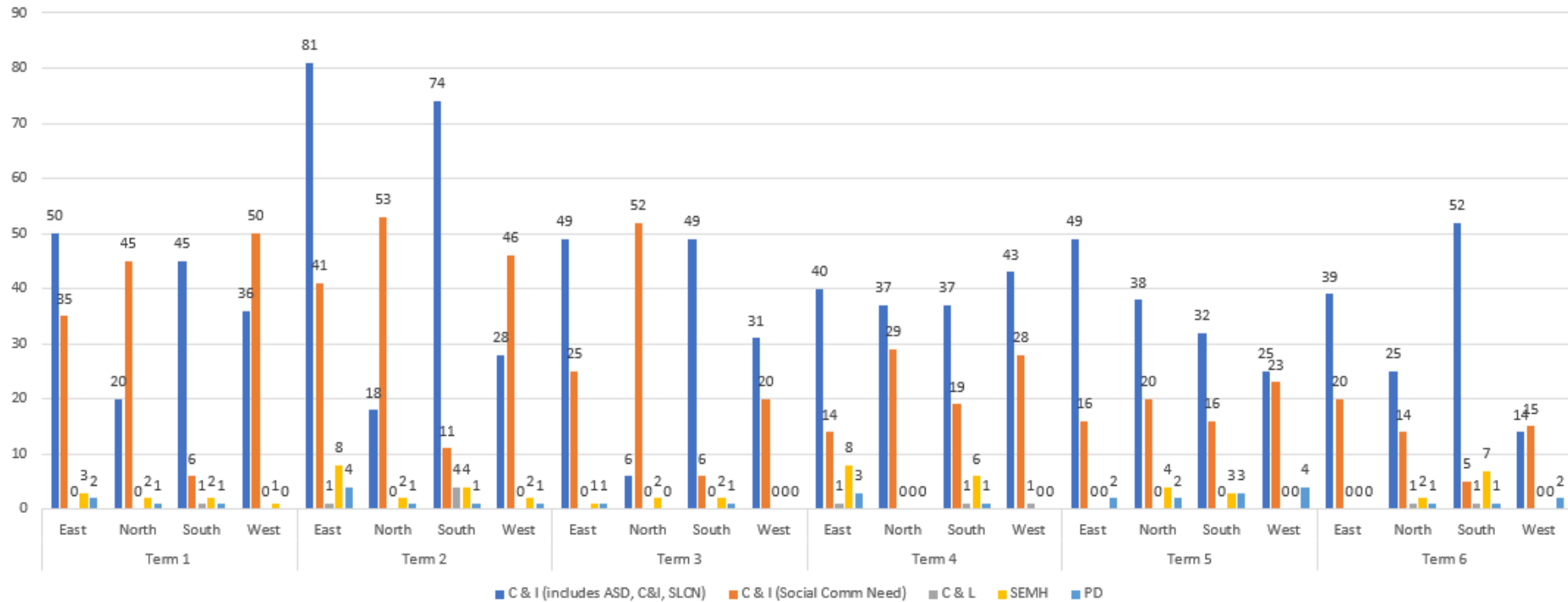


Figure 21: Countywide Number of early years Referrals by Area type and Priority Need Type (Kent Analytics KPIs Power BI Dashboard)

Children are often undiagnosed, have complex needs, and/or have new or emerging SEN in the early years. However, the highest identified need types in early years STLS are C&I and Cognition and Learning. SEMH falls far below these, and yet this changes significantly when children enter school as evidenced by figure 20.

2.7 Training

STLS continue to offer both a range of core and bespoke training courses, with the requirement for bespoke training outstripping the requests for core training across the county.

Core training refers to training that is planned yearly in advance, is often delivered across areas and requires individuals from schools to register and attend. The bespoke training is provided at the request of individual schools to meet an identified need within the school.

The graphs below clearly illustrates the reported trend towards more schools requesting bespoke training packages and greater engagement by primary schools in training.

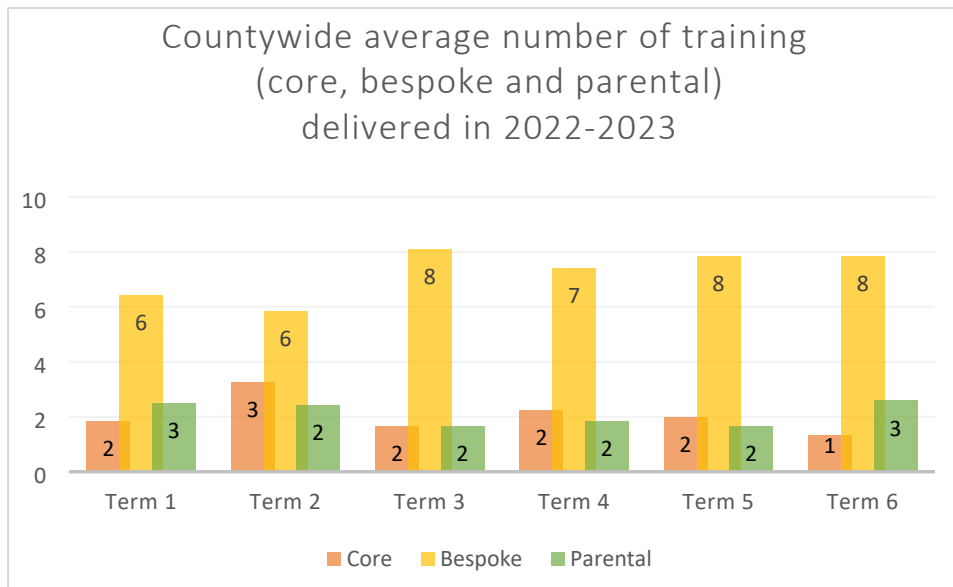


Figure 22: Countywide average of core, bespoke and parental training delivered per district (Kent Analytics KPIs Power BI Dashboard)

Refer to individual district profiles for district data.

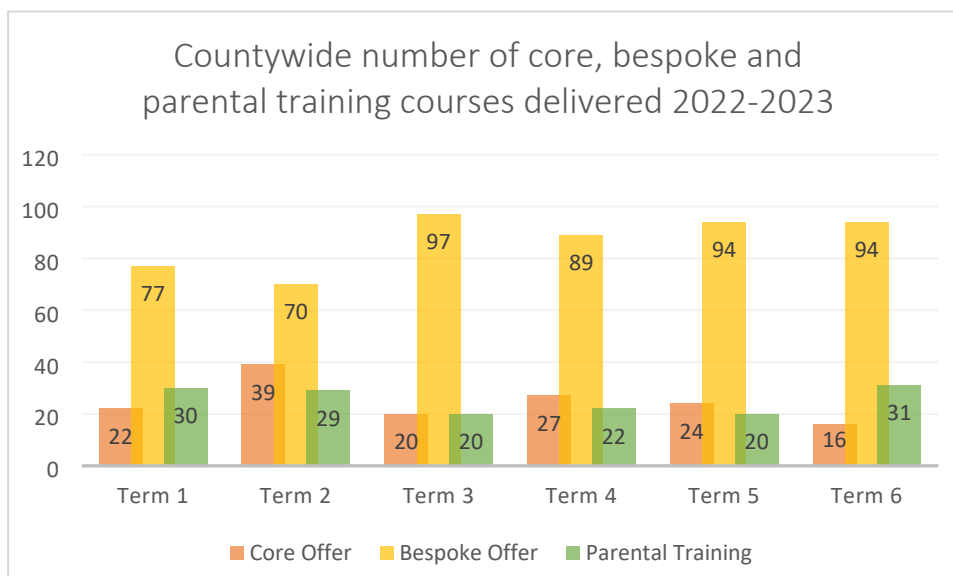


Figure 23: Countywide number of core, bespoke and parental training courses delivered in total across each term (Kent Analytics KPIs Power BI Dashboard)

Continued key feedback from performance monitoring meetings is that schools are facing increasingly tight budgets and capacity issues. As a result, most STLS districts have reported a reduction in the number of schools attending core training courses, with many being cancelled due to lack of sign up.

The dataset in Figure 22 tells us that, as the demand for core training decreases, the demand for bespoke training has increased. The datasets tell us that training is generally lower in Term 1 and is relatively consistently offered throughout the year.

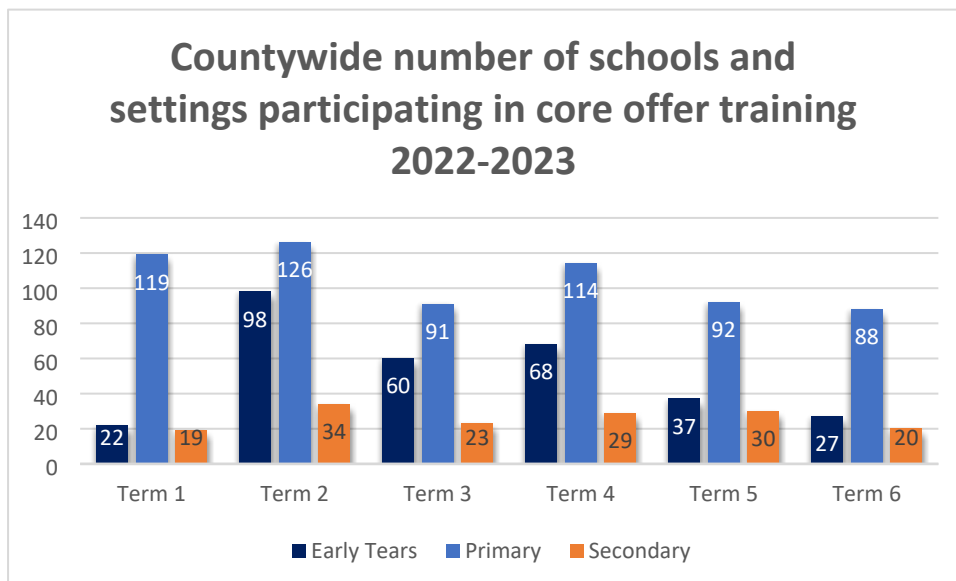


Figure 24: Countywide number of schools and settings participating in core offer training (Kent Analytics KPIs Power BI Dashboard)

Figure 24 shows us that most training is provided to primary schools.

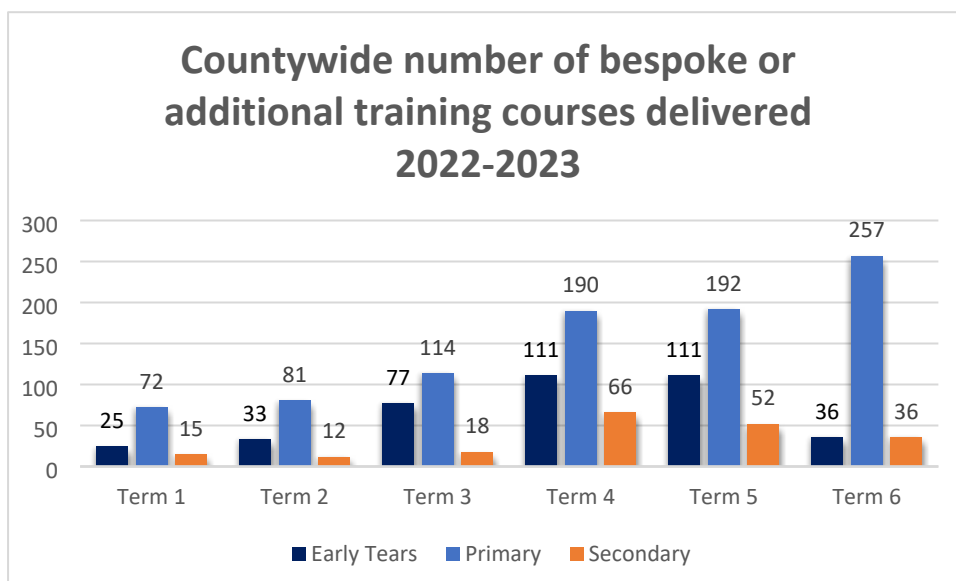


Figure 25: Countywide number of bespoke or additional training courses (Kent Analytics KPIs Power BI Dashboard)

Figure 25 shows us that there was a significant increase in bespoke primary school training courses in Term 6.

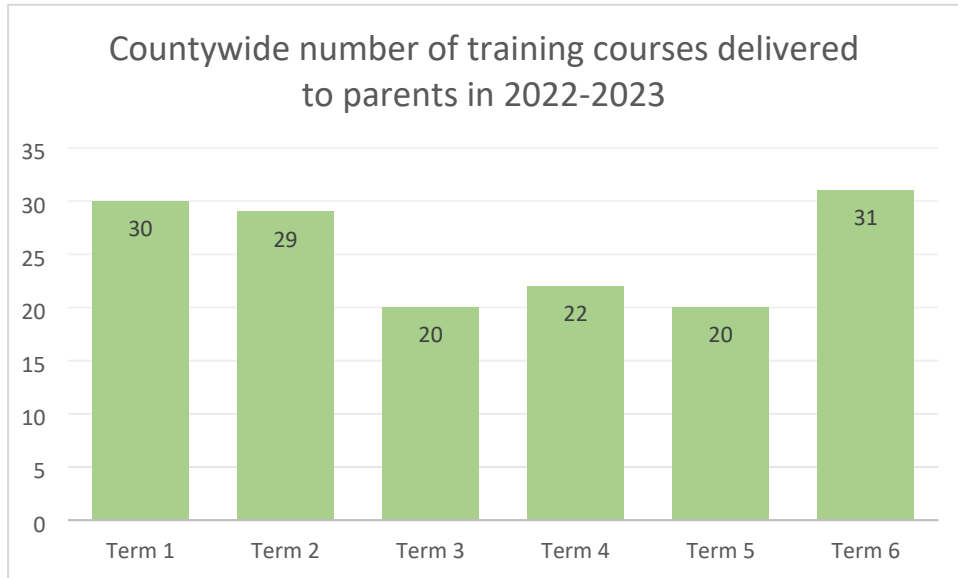


Figure 26: Number of training courses delivered to parents (schools) (Kent Analytics KPIs Power BI Dashboard)

STLS is engaged with the delivery of the Autism Education Trust (AET) training across KENT. This framework has been purchased by KCC with the ambition of supporting children across with county with autism, or autism-like traits. The rollout of this training started in 2022-2023. The full roll out of training started fully from September 2023, however some districts had already started to deliver sessions by the end of the academic year.

The AET KPI is that 20% of School Age, Early Years and Post 16 Settings are trained by August 2024. The data below is correct up to the end of July, although the recording mechanisms in Tonbridge had a technical glitch, so although they had bookings coming in, but they had not been recorded on the data sheet at the end of term.

School Age

District	Number of AET School Age Training Sessions Completed	Number of AET School Age Training Sessions Booked
Thanet	2	3
Swale	9	12
Maidstone	0	0
Folkstone and Hythe	8	15
Ashford	4	9
Gravesham	1	13
Canterbury	0	2
Dover	1	3

Dartford	0	3
Tonbridge and Malling	1	1
Tunbridge Wells	0	1
Sevenoaks	2	9

Early Years

District	Number of AET Early Years Training Sessions Completed	Number of AET Early Years Training Sessions Booked
Ashford	0	2
Canterbury	0	0
Dartford	0	5
Dover	0	0
Folkestone and Hythe	0	8
Gravesham	1	11
Maidstone	0	2
Sevenoaks	0	0
Swale	0	3
Thanet	0	3
Tonbridge and Malling	0	1
Tunbridge Wells	0	1

Data provided by KCC AET Lead Trainer

2.2 Finance and Budget

The annual STLS budget is £5,856,468. This is funded through the High Needs Funding budget and is allocated to each district based on several factors.

The funding allocation was agreed in 2012 when the service was devolved from the Council and has not changed since then. This budget will remain static for the duration of the SLA.

This table below shows the funding allocated to each district across the county.

District	Core Budget	Outreach Budget	Total (This is the amount specified in each SLA)	Any other Income
Thanet	£377,550	£278,000	£655,550	£1,120
Swale	£617,679	0	£617,679	£50,596
Maidstone	£267,850	£240,000	£507,850	£12,080
Folkstone and Hythe	£307,210	£200,000	£507,210	£3,000
Ashford	£502,839	0	£502,839	Not reported
Gravesham	£309,310	£180,000	£489,310	£9,000
Canterbury	£278,840	£200,000	£478,840	Not reported
Dover	£283,230	£180,000	£463,230	£23,479
Dartford	£288,830	£170,000	£458,830	£8,276
Tonbridge and Malling	£264,850	£190,000	£454,850	£1,750
Tunbridge Wells	364,850	0	£364,800	£19,163
Sevenoaks	£235,480	£120,000	£355,480	£24,023
Total			£5,856,468	

Figure 28: Information accurate as of Term 2, 2022-2023. The Total column remains static whilst districts may make changes to the other amounts according to priority and activity. This table reflects reporting from each district.

There has been some challenge to this allocation in relation to the inequity of the funding and the impact that it has on resources and capacity. While funding allocations have remained static, the nature of need within districts has changed. The allocation also fails to consider factors such as the number of settings or schools in each district, the geographic size of the district or the number of children travelling out of or into the district to attend mainstream schools. As salaries increase, the amount of resource and therefore capacity within the service may decrease. An agreed 6.5% teachers pay rise to be implemented in 2023/2024 will have an additional impact, with some SLA-holding Heads reporting that they will not be able to sustain the service without a diminished offer beyond the length of the SLA with no additional funding, and that the current service is likely to be diminished during the length of the current SLA. The Term 1&2 Countywide report recommended that a decision be made as to whether this allocation would be adjusted, and it was subsequently decided the budget would remain the same for the duration of this SLA.

Each district receives funding for both Core STLS and outreach, although several districts amalgamate the budgets and report this as one figure, and others are cutting their outreach budget allocation due to increasing core costs – mainly salaries. They are also able to generate income through their training offer. Some districts are reporting that their ability to generate income through training has been impacted by the requirement for them to deliver the AET training, which is free.

Appendix D in the previous countywide report (see Appendix B) contains a more detailed summary of information relating to funding, staffing volumes, caseloads and schools

supported. This contains an analysis of demand in relation to staffing levels if all schools and settings in a district received support and average caseloads per district.

In the above table, the Core and Outreach columns total to the amount specified on their Service Level Agreement. Any other income, including the Teacher's pay and Pension grant and any income generated from training appear in the 'Any Other Income' column. Information related to Pay and Pension Grant was not requested as part of the performance monitoring process, however some districts have included this information and so it has been referenced above where it has been reported.

As part of the performance monitoring process in Term 2, districts were asked to report on how they spend their allocated budget. Overall, approximately 95% of the budget is spent directly on staffing costs.

Key differences include:

- the way that each district manages their budgets.
- how outreach funding is allocated, with some districts choosing to allocate an amount to a special school to deliver outreach and others subsuming it within the core budget and providing outreach themselves. Districts who operate an outreach model through a special school are examining their funding allocations and adjusting these to reflect diminishing resource.
- allocation of non-staffing related costs, for example, rent or management costs for the host school.

District	Total Budget	Direct Staffing Costs (SLA Holding School)	Rent and Premises Overheads	Amount Allocated to Special School Outreach
Thanet	£655,550	£605,652	0	£53,100
Swale	£617,679	£487,725	£64,447	0
Maidstone	£507,850	£519,287	0	0
Folkstone and Hythe	£507,210	£521,371	0	0
Ashford	£502,840	Not reported	Not reported	Not reported
Gravesham	£489,310	£494,596	£18,800	0
Canterbury	£478,840	£381,386	£3,500	£100,000
Dover	£463,230	£446,562	£8,000	£41,149
Dartford	£458,830	£498,846	£23,000	0
Tonbridge and Malling	£454,850	£461,834	£22,714	0
Tunbridge Wells	£364,800	Not reported	0	0
Sevenoaks	£355,480	£331,531	£12,000	£60,000

Figure 29: Spending This information is accurate as of Term 2 2022 – 2023. Changes in staffing, salary rises and other costs may have had an impact.

2.3 Staffing

The level of staffing within each district is a direct result of the amount of funding available.

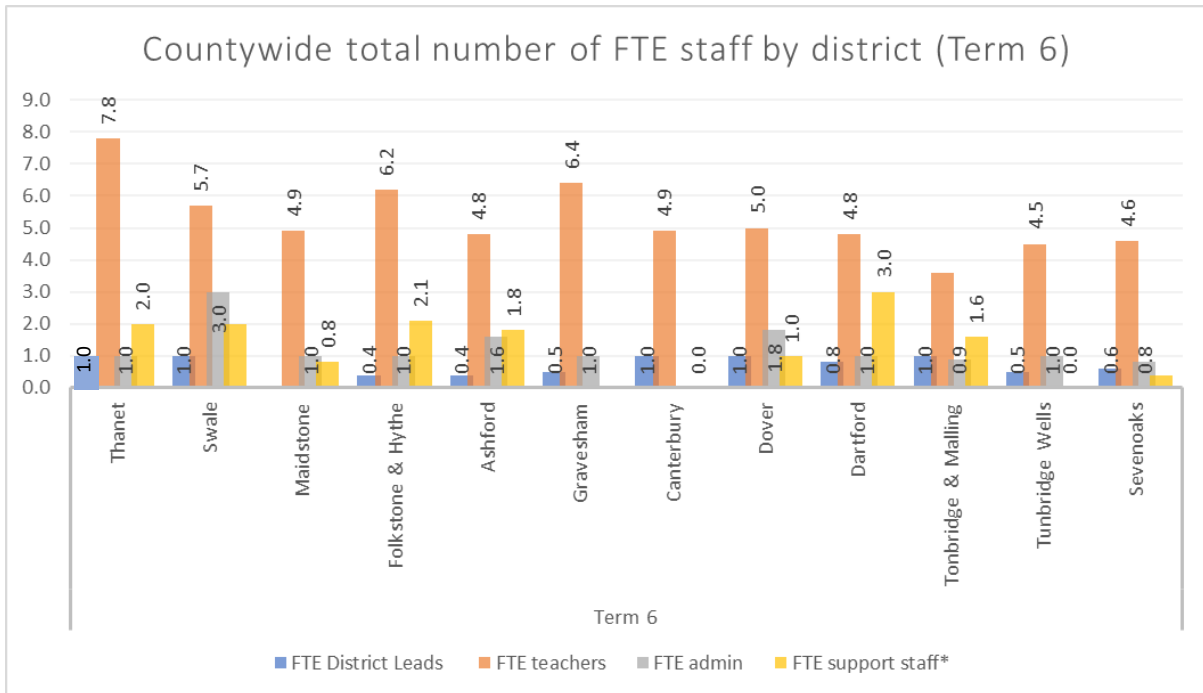


Figure 30: Countywide Total number of FTE staff by district as of Term 6 (Kent Analytics KPIs Power BI Dashboard).

Figure 30 shows the staffing variations across the county. Swale has been operating at much reduced capacity for most of the year due to staff vacancies. These have now all been filled. Although Dover is showing that they no longer have vacancies, the district has had specialist teachers away from work on long term sick and dependants leave which has impacted their capacity.

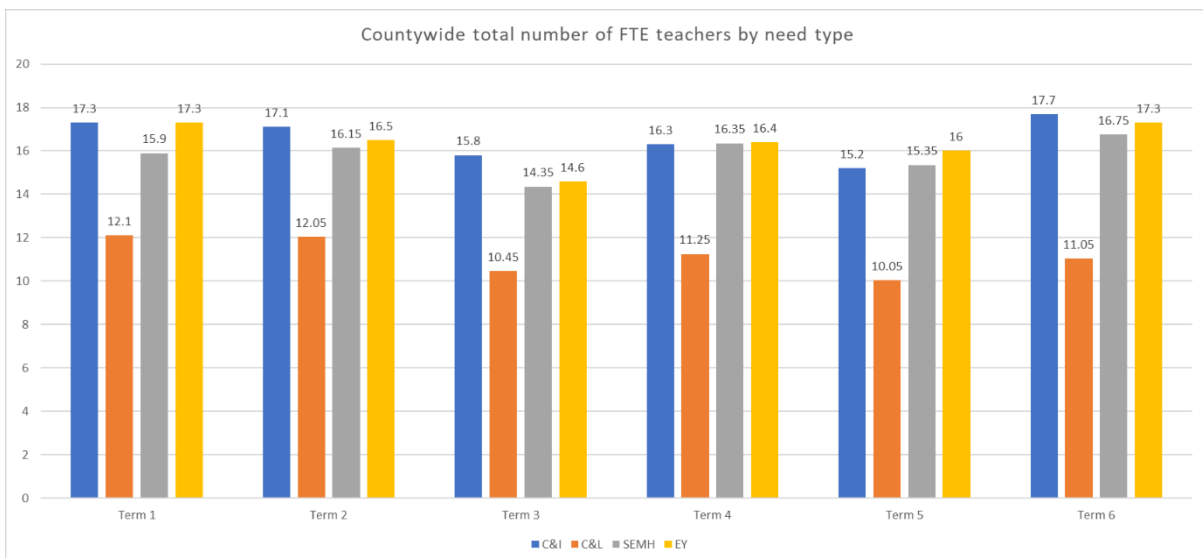


Figure 31: Total number of FTE teachers by need type (Kent Analytics KPIs Power BI Dashboard)

The resource dedicated to need types remains relatively consistent across the year. All districts are reporting an increase in SEMH cases being brought to LIFT which may affect future recruitment priorities, however districts report during their monitoring meetings that this need type is the one least likely to be resolved at clinic.

Most districts are reporting that staff pay rises and static budget impacts are likely to show a reduction in staffing levels through the remainder of the SLA.

2.8 Impact

Measuring impact is challenging. When multiple factors or areas of support are involved in a single environment or with a single individual attributing impact to a single service or entity can be almost impossible. This does not mean that impact cannot be seen at a system level.

Within the KPIs there are several measures of impact. These are best efforts to measure the impact of STLS as a service in relation to individual progress of children supported and capacity building with schools and settings.

Not all districts have had reporting mechanisms in place to measure impact as identified within the KPIs, so were unable to report on in this round of monitoring. This includes Dartford and Sevenoaks.

STLS review cases regularly and on request.

	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4	Term 5	Term 6
% of children are open to STLS whose targets have been formally reviewed	35%	38%	36%	41%	46%	41%

Figure 32: % of children are open to STLS whose targets have been formally reviewed (Kent Analytics KPIs Power BI Dashboard)

	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4	Term 5	Term 6
% of individual cases where STLS-set targets are amended on review - schools only	25%	23%	35%	37%	30%	33%

Figure 33: % of individual cases where STLS-set targets are amended on review - schools only (Kent Analytics KPIs Power BI Dashboard)

Impact is also determined by cases closed due to achievement of targets.

	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	Term 4	Term 5	Term 6
% of individual cases closed due to STLS-set targets achieved	13%	12%	25%	31%	21%	23%

Figure 34: % of individual cases closed due to STLS-set targets achieved (Kent Analytics KPIs Power BI Dashboard)

In addition to the above, impact has been measured through self-reporting and satisfaction surveys administered by each STLS district. The satisfaction surveys have had a very low return rate, which has not provided an accurate picture of the impact of the service.

Commissioning developed an Annual STLS Survey. It received over 400 responses, mostly from SENCO's. Overall, respondents reported high levels of satisfaction with the support they received from STLS. Primary school SENCOs reported a higher level of satisfaction than secondary schools on the whole. This survey will be repeated in 2023-2024, with a wider respondent base to include more headteachers to gauge how impact is seen beyond SENCOs. See appendix B for the results of this survey.

Part Three – Capacity versus Demand

All districts are struggling to manage case lists of individual children and are starting to look at ways of increasing capacity within their teams to address the increased and highly complex need coming through LIFT and to support the priorities of the Council.

There is a growing appetite to deliver advice and guidance outside LIFT, with only those most in need of specialist support being formally presented. The new way of working in Tonbridge and Malling which was initiated by the district this year and explained in detail in the Term 1 and 2 report, was reported in the Term 5 and 6 to be showing signs of effectiveness. Other districts such as Gravesham are considering adopting a similar process. Thanet has traditionally adopted a link teacher model which they have found successful, and which is manageable due to their staffing resource, and Dover is examining the possibility of adopting a similar model.

Some demand through LIFT can be attributed to the rising level of children within mainstream settings with SEND and / or complex needs. However, the widely held belief by professionals that children need to have gone through school LIFT and have been allocated a specialist teacher to be allocated an EHCP may also be driving demand. There is a clear ambition within the Council for the right support, at the right time to be available to children with SEN without the need for an EHCP.

All districts have now received training in delivering the AET autism programme. Many have started to deliver and have reported some challenges, such as the capacity for early years settings to attend this training as a unit. Some districts have addressed this by delivering multiple training sessions at the setting in one day to allow a rotation of attendees which is time consuming. Others, such as Ashford, have run a large Saturday training day in order to maximise their training time, with trainers taking Time Off In Lieu. Other districts are not able or willing to undertake out of hours working. Most districts reported that the training has been very well received and that there is much enthusiasm for booking sessions. This is creating a large demand on training capacity and the free nature of the training is reducing the ability of the district to generate income through paid for training.

Strategically, STLS are being encouraged to move increasingly towards building capacity through group rather than individually focused interventions. As illustrated above, districts are actively developing ways of working that enable this, as well as working differently to build capacity within the service generally.

As previously mentioned, early years professionals' attendance at LIFT is generally lower, due to staffing capacity. Some early years settings have minimal staff numbers, which will mean staff are unable to be released due to ratio constraints.

The number of 5–10-year-olds with an EHCP is forecasted to increase by over 65%, an increase of around 3,100 children and young people, by 2026. If these projections come to fruition, this will have a significant impact on the number of LIFT referrals, and STLS capacity, presenting further challenges for the service to continue delivering its current offer of support within a static budget.

Part Four - Planned Work

Although significant progress has been made in streamlining STLS work, developing mechanisms for evaluating impact and improving communication and joined up working, there is still a lot to be done.

There are several interdependent projects taking place across the Council that will enable the Council to achieve its strategic aims of greater inclusion of children with SEND in mainstream settings and although STLS may not be directly involved in all of these, it is likely that the outcomes of this will have a direct impact on the service.

These include:

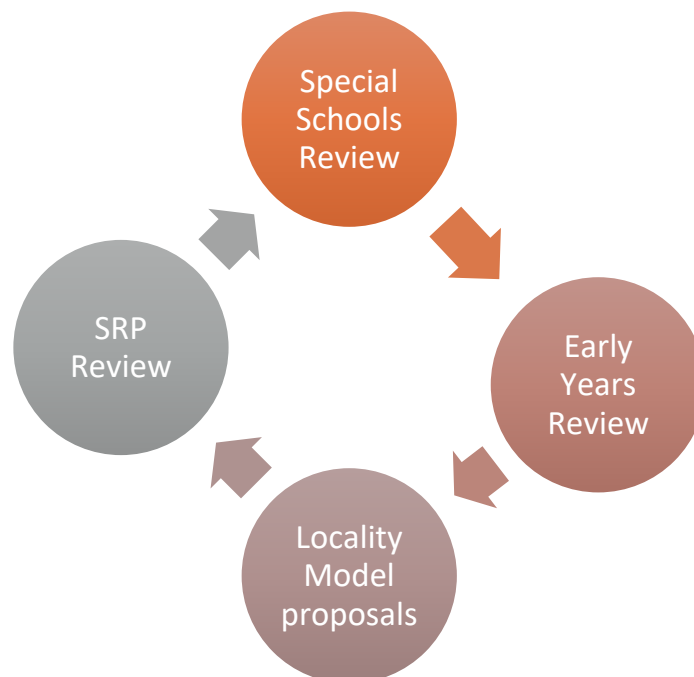


Figure 35: Interdependent projects

Locality Resource Proposals - Services can often be disjointed, with multiple agencies working with children in an incoherent way. In addition, professionals are acutely aware of very localised issues and pressures on communities and feel they cannot effectively influence, giving indication of the need to move towards a locality working model. Kent is proposing to have 'clusters' of all designation and cross-phase schools, working together to

influence the expenditure of a defined pot of money and use of resources, to the benefit of children and young people who attend Kent schools within their geographical area.

These proposals are currently out to Public Consultation and will be presented to the Children, Young People and Education (CYPE) Cabinet Committee in March 2024.

Special Schools Review - A key part of developing curriculum pathways for children with SEND is the presumption of more children with SEND in mainstream settings. This may result in additional demand for STLS support and training.

Early Years Review – An overarching report which takes into consideration the deep dives which include Pathways and Specialist Intervention Nurseries and the SENIF process will be produced as part of this review, with the recognition that a significant amount of STLS resource is utilised in administration and evidencing need for SENIF support. Recommendations will be made which may affect the way that the early years STLS hold caseloads, manage LIFT and work with other early years inclusion teams (such as the SENIF Practitioners).

Specialist Resource Provision (SRP) Review – The rationale for the review is:

- Ensure there is consistency in content and terms between the contract and SLA. Strengthen the monitoring and reporting arrangements to ensure these are robust.
- Strengthen the governance arrangements between schools and KCC, as well as internally within KCC.
- Establish where SRPs sit in the wider SEND Improvement context.

The outcome of the review indicates that this is likely to impact on STLS outreach, however this is yet to be determined.

Part Five - Summary and Conclusion

This report has identified several successes and challenges facing the service. Some of the challenges are reflective of wider national issues, for example, early years workforce recruitment and retention. Other challenges are unique to STLS in terms of current processes and capacity.

A considerable amount of development has taken place over the past year to build positive working relationships with STLS District leads and SLA holding Heads. It is evident that the sweeping changes required across the SEN landscape to support the CATIE, the Accelerated Progress Plan as well as supporting the need for KCC to manage a challenging budget are putting pressures across the sector, and particularly for STLS.

SLA-holding Heads told commissioners during monitoring meetings that they are fully supportive of the service and would want to continue delivering it, but that ongoing delivery within the current financial envelope and with the increasing levels of demand, will likely result in a diminishing service over time and, possibly, within the term of the current SLA.

It is important to note, that whilst there has been a significant amount of information collected as part of this formal performance monitoring process, changes to KPIs and the introduction of the SharePoint system mean that there are gaps in relation to the data submitted, particularly at the beginning of the academic year. Commissioners recognise therefore that this report does not present a full picture of the delivery and impact of STLS across the

county. However, it does provide sufficient information to identify some key themes in relation to the service and serves as a template for future reporting.

As a result, focus of future performance monitoring will be on clarifying issues and questions raised within the report and ensuring that consistent data collection is established for the remainder of the SLA to provide a full picture of the service, its impact, and the future.

Over the course of this year, and through the recent Monitoring meetings, the following key findings have been identified:

- The increasing financial pressures on the service will result in most districts reducing their staff FTEs and adjusting their offer as a result during the lifetime of the current SLA.
- Whilst supportive of the service, most SLA holding Heads have expressed a degree of caution to signing a new future SLA without a revised budget.
- As districts revise their practise, there is more disparity across the county, which is frustrating for associated services, such as SENIF and E&I.
- There is an appetite from most districts to work more in partnership with the Council to deliver key priorities.

Part Six – Next Steps





This report will be distributed to the STLS Steering Group for comment and will be presented to and discussed at the KCC internal SEND Transformation Operational Group (TOG) 2.








For clarification purposes, the STLS Steering Group is an internal stakeholder group established during the process of the initial review. Since then, both the Terms of Reference and the membership has been reviewed. Given the number of interdependences between STLS and other strategic projects within the Council, this group is formed of individual KCC Officers leading those projects, so ensure that interdependences in relation to STLS are fully understood.

The report will then be updated to reflect comments from both groups and a final version agreed.

UPDATED: April 2024. Please note that this is the final version of the report.

APPENDICES

A	Key Performance Indicators Template and Local Activity Report Template	 STLS Key Performance Indicators.xlsx  Local Area Report template.xlsx
B	STLS Countywide report Term 1 and 2 2023	 STLS Countywide Report Terms 1&2 20
C	STLS MD Report May 2022	 STLS MD report May 2022 Final.docx
D	STLS Annual survey 2022-2023	 STLS survey 2022-2023.docx
E	District Profile: Ashford	 District Profile - Ashford.docx
F	District Profile: Canterbury	 District Profile - Canterbury.docx
G	District Profile: Dartford	 District Profile - Dartford.docx
H	District Profile: Dover	 District Profile - Dover.docx

I	District Profile: Folkestone and Hythe	 District Profile - Folkestone & Hythe.d
J	District Profile: Gravesham	 District Profile - Gravesham.docx
K	District Profile: Maidstone	 District Profile - Maidstone.docx
L	District Profile: Sevenoaks	 District Profile - Sevenoaks.docx
M	District Profile: Swale	 District Profile - Swale.docx
N	District Profile: Thanet	 District Profile - Thanet.docx
O	District Profile: Tonbridge and Malling	 District Profile- Tonbridge & Malling.c
P	District Profile: Tunbridge Wells	 District Profile- Tunbridge Wells.docx

Appendix C: Update on recommendations from Term 1 and 2 report

Recommendation One – Communication

- Commissioners to continue bi-termly formal monitoring meetings with STLS.
- Council representative to continue to attend termly STLS Leads meetings.
- Working Together Planning Together workshops to continue.
- ‘Open door’ communication to continue between STLS and relevant Council officers
- Work to rebuild relationships with SLA-Holding Heads through improvement communication and engagement

Update: Bi-termly formal performance monitoring is continuing into the next academic year. There have been council representatives in attendance at STLS Leads meetings to respond to any queries and to share updates. Working Together, Planning Together workshops are to continue, with the latest workshop held in September with a focus on transition. Communication between STLS, Holding Heads and the Council is positive and productive.

Recommendation Two – LIFT - Changes to paperwork:

- Continue to work with STLS to agree a countywide LIFT referral form and look to create an easily accessible digital version.
- Work with district leads streamline Record of Visit paperwork to focus on appropriate and proportional information referencing the Graduated Approach and Mainstream Core Standards

Timescale: Terms 5 and 6 2022/2023

In line with interdependent projects:

- Work with STLS Leads, SLA Holding Heads, Mainstream schools and representatives from LIFT Executive to consider how the purpose and function of school LIFT might adapt in response to changes with High Needs Funding and Locality Resources. Co-produce a new Terms of Reference.
- Map out and understand the role of early years LIFT in relation to the review of SENIF Funding processes being undertaken as part of the Early Years review. Work with key stakeholders (including STLS) to undertake this.

Timescale: Term 1 2023/2024

Update: Changes to paperwork is currently on hold until the interdependent reviews are completed. Some districts are implementing some local changes to their paperwork.

Interdependent projects - On track to be completed by Term 4 2023/2024

Recommendation Three - Clinics/Surgeries:

- STLS to continue offer of support outside LIFT process via Clinics, Surgeries and in school/setting support.
- This process to ensure that MCS and BPG have been implemented prior to LIFT referrals being made.
- Consider making attendance at Clinic mandatory prior to accepting LIFT referrals to ensure LIFT is utilised for cases that require specialist and / or multi-agency support.

Predicted Timescale: Term 1 2023/2024

Update: This recommendation was received with mixed views. It has been decided that clinics/surgeries are generally good practice, and most districts do support schools and setting through surgeries/clinics or in-school reviews. However, these are not being made mandatory. It has been agreed that recording of attendance at clinics will be added to the Local Area Report (LAR) reporting as of Term1 2023-2024.

Recommendation Four -Training

Core training offer:

- STLS to review Core Training offer with the Council in terms of content and focus.
- STLS to implement a reduction in the number of core training courses offered, increasing joined up delivery across areas and the county, reducing and streamlining the Core training offer and expanding delivery of a bespoke training offer to schools.

CPD and quality assurance:

- STLS SLA Holding heads and staff to ensure they are accessing the most up to date training available for their own Continuous Professional Development.
- Develop a Quality Assurance process to measure the impact of training delivered.

Predicted Timescale: Term 1 2023/2024

Update: STLS continue to develop a countywide core offer that is delivered in collaboration with all districts, taking into account that schools are generally requesting more and more bespoke training that can be delivered at the school, and less of the core training. STLS review the core training offer in Term 5 of each year and plan delivery for the next academic year. The Council are in the process of reviewing its core offer and will work in collaboration with STLS to reduce risk of duplication.

A survey of support provided by STLS was produced and circulated by the Council. This survey had 475 respondents who were mostly SENCOs. 13 Headteachers responded to the survey, all from Primary schools. The results of the survey were positive and were welcomed by STLS. The intention is for this to be produced annually and for a wider set of respondent views, particularly headteacher views to be reflected. See Appendix D for the results of the survey.

Recommendation two: For the annual survey to include a wider set of respondents, particularly Primary and Secondary Headteachers.

Recommendation Five – Reporting and Impact KPIs:

- As of Term 1 2023/24 amend the requirement to monitor:
 - Number of schools and setting supported to include % of schools and settings supported. This will be achieved by amending the reporting template and not require additional input from STLS.
 - As of Term 1 2023/24 remove the requirement to monitor:
 - Number of cases open more than six months.
 - Number of open cases supported through outreach.
 - Total sum of all visits provided during reporting period per dimension.
 - Training separated between core and bespoke.
 - Number of children referred to other inclusion agencies.
 - School staff reporting increased confidence.
 - As of Term 1 2023/24 include the requirement to monitor:
 - Number of active cases per dimension type
 - Number of cases discussed at Clinics.
 - Training as one service regardless of whether core or bespoke, to include number of courses delivered, number settings / schools supported through training.
 - Commissioners to work with STLS to develop an online survey for SENCOs about their experience of the service, to understand impact and be administered annually by Commissioners.
- Process:
- STLS will continue to report termly via the SharePoint system.
 - The Council to stop informal performance monitoring meetings and replace with Area Development Meetings
 - The Council to continue bi-termly formal performance monitoring meetings.

- Commissioners to report high level performance information to Council governance meetings bi-termly and submit a full performance review annually.

Predicted Timescale: Term 1 2023/2024

Update: KPIs have been amended for the requirement to monitor the stated previous reporting requirements in Recommendation Five, this will be effective from Term 1 2023/2024. Reporting through the SharePoint system has now fully embedded with all districts successfully reporting through this platform. Some information is missing from Terms 1 and 2 as not all districts were in a position to record the required data at that time. Area Development Meetings did not take place in Terms 5 and 6 and are planned to take place during the next academic year. The Council have produced this report as the first annual full performance review. The next report will be published in September 2024.

Recommendation Six – Budget:

The Council will decide either to review the current financial profiles or to make a strategic decision to leave current budget allocations until the end of the Service Level Agreement which ends in 2025.

Predicted Timescale: Transformational Operational Group (2) on 13 April 2023

Update: There was no appetite to review the current budget allocations before the end of the Service Level Agreement; therefore, the budget will remain the same until the end of the Service Level Agreement which is due to end in August 2025.

Recommendation Seven – Commissioning Resource/ Head of Service:

- Develop a business case to recruit a Head of Service for STLS

Predicted Timescale: April – May 2023

Update: There were mixed opinions as to whether this recommendation would be beneficial, with some opinion that this would add a further layer of bureaucracy and concerns about the source of the funding. This business case will form part of the discussions on the future of STLS after the end of the current SLA, taking into account the changes that will come with Locality Based Resources.

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Children, Young People and Education
Children's Commissioning Team

Specialist Teaching and Learning Service Countywide Annual Report

Term 1 - 4

2023-2024

Version	Author	Reason	Date
0.1	Barbara van Minnen	Report outline	20/02/2024
0.2	Barbara van Minnen	Draft	02/05/2024
0.3	Samantha Sheppard	Draft	07/05/2024
0.4	Barbara van Minnen	Draft	15/05/2024
0.5	Barbara van Minnen	Final	07/06/2024

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Purpose of report

The Specialist Teaching and Learning Service (STLS) operates across Kent. The outcomes of the service are described in a Service Level Agreement (SLA) which is held by one special school in each district. All 12 SLAs are all the same, with the only difference being the level of funding allocated to each school for the delivery of the service.

The current SLA began 1 September 2022 and ends 31 August 2025.

This report comprises one of several reports that have been compiled to support decision making regarding the future of the service beyond the terms of the current SLA. It illustrates the activity and performance of the service across Kent for terms 1-4 in 2023-2024 and compares this to the same terms from 2022-2023.

Previous reports include a performance report for Term 1 and 2 of 2022-2023 that made several recommendations, including the recommendation to remove several KPS, and an annual performance report to summarise countywide performance of the service for 2022 – 2023. This year is the first opportunity to compare the delivery of the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) across successive years.

The current KPIs were developed with STLS to ensure that the service was being fairly and appropriately measured, and a simplified reporting process was established within the first term of the current SLA. Some districts struggled to report completely in the first reporting periods (Term 1 and Term 2, 2022-23). Most had developed appropriate recording and reporting systems by Term 2, and all were able to report fully by Term 3 of 2022-23.

The current KPI template can be found in Appendix A, and the Term 1 and 2 2022 – 2023 Countywide report which includes a detailed description of the service and the background to the [Cabinet Committee recommendations](#) made on 1 March 2022 can be found in Appendix D. Given that some KPIs were removed for 2023-24 reporting purposes, a comparison for these measures is not possible. The KPIs which were removed are listed at the end of this document.

The STLS district leads of the SLA holding schools submit their KPIs on a termly basis and formal monitoring meetings are held three times per year, reporting retrospectively on the two preceding terms.

This report makes a comparison of the activity and performance of terms 1-4 2022-2023 (the first year of the new SLA), and terms 1-4 2023 – 2024 (the second year of the SLA) to understand any changes in performance between the two years.

Factors to consider that may impact activity between these two years include:

- The rollout of AET training by STLS during 2023- 2024.
- The changes made within the service delivery as regular monitoring and supportive conversations are held.
- Changes occurring due to a year of interacting closely with other inclusion services in their districts as inclusion services are facilitated to work more closely together.
- Changes in delivery as the services adjust to static budgets by reducing full time equivalent staffing, or managing maternity leave, struggles to recruit to vacant positions and long term sick leave.
- Changes to service delivery between year 1 and 2 might include: changing their models of delivery to focus on specialist support, increase the use of less formal support through clinics and surgeries, as well as reduce their case lists and the length of time they provide support for. The Appendices detail district level data.

Local Context

Following an initial Ofsted inspection in 2019, and a re-visit in November 2022, the Council is undergoing significant period of change with an even greater focus on Inclusion than previously. STLS sits amongst a range of other services in delivering this ambition. The service supports the strategic outcomes of the Council as referenced in the [Countywide Approach to Inclusive Education \(CATIE\)](#) and the [Accelerated Programme Plan \(APP\)](#) which has been developed as a direct response to the OFSTED inspection. Both of which aim to improve outcomes for children and young people with SEND.

A review of the High Needs Funding model in Kent has been completed and a new model has been proposed which reflects a locality-based approach, with greater decision making and accountability for locality resources within districts. A public consultation has been conducted and responses will be taken into consideration when the model is implemented from September 2025. STLS is funded by KCC through the High Needs Funding block and is also a local resource so any changes to how that funding is allocated and administered may impact on STLS.

There are a number of reviews being undertaken as part of the financial recovery [Safety Valve Agreement](#) which aims to eliminate the cumulative deficit arising from existing and forecast overspends on high needs funding for schools for children and young people with SEND in Kent. These include the Specialist Resource Provision (SRP) review, the Special School review and the Early Years review. These reviews are complete and awaiting Cabinet Committee agreement. The outcomes may also impact on future delivery of STLS.

Part One – Background and Progress to Date

The overarching aim of the STLS is to support Kent's mainstream early years settings and schools in delivering high quality inclusive provision for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND). Their focus is to build capacity, confidence, skills, and knowledge amongst educators and promote inclusive practice and increase capacity across all mainstream educational settings. Increasingly, the service is being aligned with the Council's Outcomes Framework for children and young people with SEN.

Formal performance monitoring takes place three times across the academic year to review performance retrospectively for the preceding two terms.

Since the inception of the current SLA, four rounds of performance monitoring have taken place, as below, with two more monitoring meetings scheduled for this academic year.

- February 2023 for Terms 1 and 2 of 2022-23 academic year,
- May 2023 for Terms 3 and 4 of 2022-23 academic year
- September 2023 for Terms 5 and 6 of 2022-23 academic year
- January 2024 for Terms 1 and 2 of 2023-24 academic year

Two previous countywide reports have been produced – one to reflect terms 1 and 2 for 2022-2023, and one to reflect the full academic year for 2022-2023. The initial report made several recommendations, most of which were accepted. (see Appendix B).

1.2 The Service

STLS supports mainstream primary and secondary schools as well as early year's settings to improve inclusive practice through information, advice and guidance, as well as training. The STLS supports children with special educational needs (SEN) in mainstream and are part of a system of support in phase transition.

While there is a consistent core offer of support across the county, there can be variations in relation to quality and delivery approaches. Districts will also deliver additional projects which are unique to the needs of their district.

Each district has its own SLA with an allocated financial envelope specific to the district. This is based on historical criteria and has not been reprofiled since initial allocation. The level of funding relates directly to staffing capacity within each district and this capacity accounts for some of the variation of approach and practice across the county.

STLS participate in the Working Together, Planning Together workshops. The focus of these workshops, which are held termly, is to enable greater collaboration between inclusion services, including STLS, Educational Psychologists from Kent Educational Psychology Service (KEPS), Special Educational Needs Inclusion Advisors (SIA), PIAS and council officers, and support a more joined-up approach within local areas. The past year has seen a focus on phase transition and the services have worked together to develop a district level plan to ensure a joined-up approach to transition, based on the Transition Charter.

Council officers have continued to attend the STLS District Leads meeting, which are held termly, to provide updates on relevant, strategic developments and activity within the Council.

STLS support the Council's strategic aims by delivering Autism Education Trust (AET) training and supporting the roll out of the Balanced System®. Rollout of the AET training has not been consistent across the county and some districts have struggled to prioritise this due to capacity and conflicting district priorities. Please see table 16 for this information.

This report will reflect the changes in activity and focus as STLS have adjusted their ways of working in response to limited and decreasing capacity of services. These include:

- An approach to more group work, moving away from individual support.
- Sharing of resources and training across districts (usually within Areas).
- Using the Graduated Approach in allocation of support – to keep the focus on specialist and sometimes targeted support.
- STLS having greater collaboration with the Council by supporting initiatives such as the rollout of the AET training and attending the Working Together, Planning Together workshops.
- Districts exploring the possibility of using a Link Teacher model.

1.3 What makes a Specialist Teacher

In seeking to continue deepening the level of understanding of the service, one of the areas explored as part of performance monitoring was the expected levels of qualification and relevant experience that is needed to be a specialist teacher in each district. Figure 1 below, outlines some of the key areas identified by individual districts.

Requirement	Number of districts (out of 12)
SENCo background	6
Specialist background / experience	8
Mainstream experience	2
Early years' experience	1
Range of skills	1
Responsive to queries	1
Qualified Teacher Status (QTS)	6
Master's level qualification in a relevant field – not a requirement but a definite benefit	6
People skills	1
Relevant experience	6
Up-to-date CPD	8

Figure 1: Specialist Teacher qualifications and experience

Not all districts require the Specialist Teacher to have Qualified Teacher Status or a master's degree, however there is an emphasis on keeping specialist training up to date. Having experience either as a SENCo or having previous experience of supporting children with SEN in schools and settings are sought after skills.

1.4 Staffing

The level of staffing within each district is a direct result of the amount of funding available. There have been some fluctuations in staffing levels between the two comparison years – for instance, Swale now has a full complement of staff after a long period of vacancies and Dartford has reduced staffing due to budget constraints.

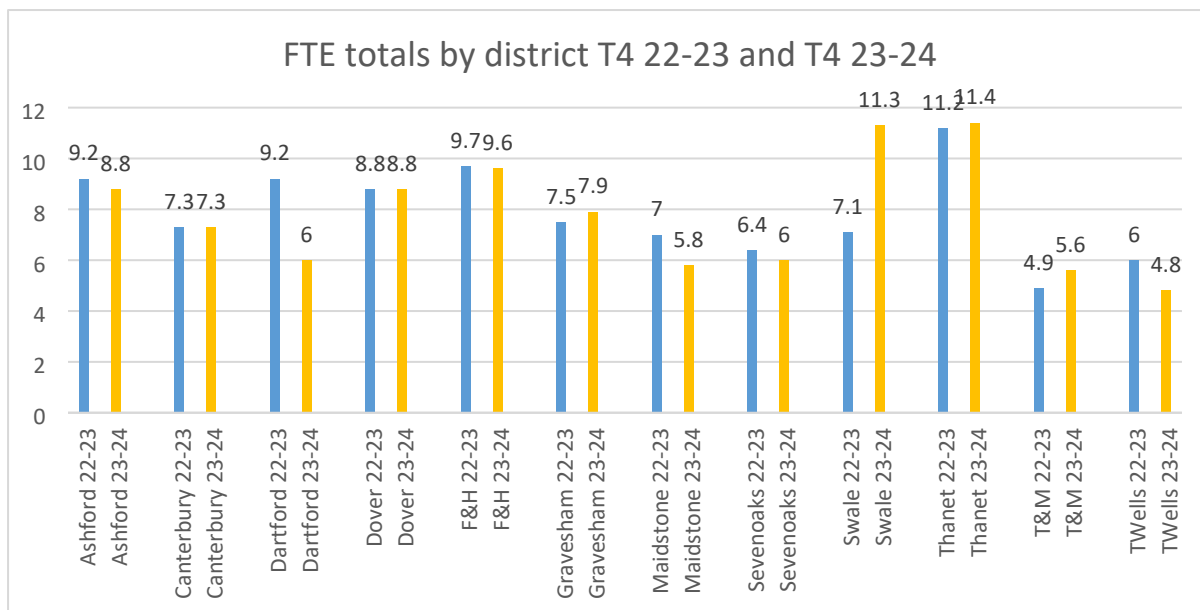


Figure 2: Countywide Total number of FTE staff by district – term 4 comparisons. (data for Dartford district is from term 3, 2023-24) (Kent Analytics KPIs Power BI Dashboard).

The total number of Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff members has changed from 94.38 FTE in Term 4, 2022-23 to 93.46 in term 4, 2023-24. This indicates that the resource available at this point in the current academic year is very close to the same as it was last year, despite some fluctuations across districts. These figures represent the whole resource available in the district, including leads and support staff. In all districts administration is less than 2 FTE. District Leads chair Local Inclusion Forum Team (LIFT) meetings and, in most cases, will carry a case load.

It is anticipated that recent teacher’s pay increases will have an impact on staffing numbers for academic year 2024-25, impacting on capacity within the service.

Data for Dartford district is from term 3, 2023-24, however it is assumed that the staffing resource has remained static.

Part Two – Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and Performance Monitoring Process

A new set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) alongside a new, simplified reporting mechanism using Microsoft forms and a revised approach to performance monitoring was coproduced with the STLS Leads when the current SLA came into effect in September 2022.

2023-24 is therefore the first year where a comparison in performance across successive years of the SLA can be made. This comparative data does have some anomalies as not all districts had capacity to collect and report on all KPIs in Terms 1 and 2 of 2022-23. However, by the end of Term 3 2022-23, all districts had processes in place to collect the required information and so the data has a higher degree of accuracy from that term onwards. The new reporting process also introduced a Narrative Report as a mechanism to compliment and provide context to the data returns.

Generally, there have been two commissioners, the district lead, and the SLA holding head teacher present during performance monitoring meetings.

The agendas for monitoring meetings is summarised below:

Terms 1 and 2	2022-23 1. Operational update <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition • LIFT • Communications with schools and SENCos 2. Performance against KPIs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrative report • Staffing • Financial Audit 3. Quality Impact (case study) 4. Challenges, barriers, issues arising	2023-24 1. Narrative report <i>Please prepare a comment to include anything significant on: transition, process changes, innovation, or new ways of working, supplementary information in relation to KPI's i.e., anomalies/exceptions</i> 2. KPI and LAR returns 3. Staff Qualifications 4. Finance Budget Sheet/Understanding your budget 5. Challenges, barriers, issues arising
Terms 3 and 4	2022-23	2023-24

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Narrative report <i>(To include transition, process changes, innovation, or new ways of working, supplementary information in relation to KPI's i.e., anomalies/exceptions)</i> 2. KPI and LAR returns 3. Questions (to be provided to commissioners before the meeting) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Narrative Report 2. KPI and LAR returns 3. Impact Survey 4. Challenges, Barriers, Issues arising
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Figure 3: Agenda for formal monitoring meetings

2.1 Summary of Activity

Comparison of Key Performance Indicators (KPI) and Local Area Reports (LAR for Terms 1 & 2 2022-2023, and Terms 1 & 2 2023-2024

The following is a high-level summary (based on data submitted) of the performance of STLS as a countywide service during Terms 1 to 4 of 2022–2023 compared to the same period for the 2023-2024 school academic year. All districts were able to report on this data.

Total Number of schools and early years settings supported								
	Term 1 2022-23	Term 1 2023-24	Term 2 2022-23	Term 2 2022-23	Term 3 2023-24	Term 3 2023-24	Term 4 22-23	Term 4 2023-24
	547	554	552	562	540	562	550	564
Primary	467	463	472	465	452	471	457	472
Secondary	80	91	80	97	88	91	93	92
Total Number of Early Years settings supported	504	589	558	601	594	606	670	614

Figure 4: Countywide number of schools and settings supported (including schools with children on active caseload, schools participating in training and schools supported with transition) terms 1-4 2022-23; 2023-24 (Kent Analytics KPIs Power BI Dashboard)

The overall number of schools supported has shown a small increase since term 1, 2022-23. This is likely to be because of the increasing focus on transition. There has been a small increase in engagement with secondary schools.

The number of settings supported has increased slightly. This may be due to the rollout of AET training to early years settings.

These numbers are presented below as percentages of the overall number of schools and settings in the county. Some percentages are over 100%. This is due to an anomaly in the reporting process which reflects support provided to schools outside the district and included in the count, as can be seen in Figure 5 below. This mostly happens when districts share training courses. Amending the reporting process to address this has been discussed, but dismissed in favour of keeping the current process which enables the ability to undertake meaningful comparisons across and within academic years.

Percentage of schools supported across the county								
	Term 1 2022-23	Term 1 2023-24	Term 2 2022-23	Term 2 2023-24	Term 3 2023-24	Term 3 2023-24	Term 4 22-23	Term 4 2023-24
Primary	101%	100%	102%	100%	98%	102%	99%	102%
Secondary	78%	89%	78%	95%	86%	89%	81%	90%
Early years	68%	79%	76%	80%	80%	81%	91%	83%

Figure 5: Countywide average % of early years settings, primary, secondary schools supported (Kent Analytics KPIs Power BI Dashboard) NOTE: these figures are impacted through double counting in some instances. See text for details.

When looking at performance of the service, another key indicator is the number of children and young people who are receiving support from the service (figure 6) One of the key changes implemented from the previous KPIs was to separate out data on children who are on case lists from those that are actively receiving support and those that have been open for more than six months. In relation to the data below, this concerns children who are on the caseload. Figure 7 identified the percentage that are actively receiving support and Figure 8, those that are on hold.

Performance Indicator	Term 1 2022-23	Term 1 2023-24	Term 2 2022-23	Term 2 2023-24	Term 3 2023-24	Term 3 2023-24	Term 4 22-23	Term 4 2023-24
Total number of children on schools caseload	3019	2953	3126	3031	3072	2923	2870	2981
Primary	2644	2506	2697	2624	2653	2497	2487	2575
Secondary	375	437	429	407	419	449	383	406
Early Years	1400	1201	1457	1416	1586	1473	1678	1554

Figure 6: Countywide total number of children on caseload terms 1-4 2022-23; 2023-24 (Kent Analytics KPIs Power BI Dashboard)

Caseloads in schools and settings have reduced slightly. All districts have started working in a more solution-focussed manner, and an increase in advice and guidance provided through clinics / surgeries (see figure 11) will have enabled schools to support more children without the need for a referral on to caseload through the Local Inclusion Forum Team (LIFT) referral route. Although districts review caseloads regularly and have closed a number of cases that were open for some time, they report that the level and complexity of need results in SENCos requesting referrals which can lead to open cases.

This is the same with early years caseloads. The level of demand through LIFT for the allocation of a specialist teacher may be impacted by the requirement for children to be allocated a specialist teacher to receive certain support – such as Special Educational Needs Inclusion Fund (SENIF) allocation, the allocation of a SENIF support worker (a Council resource, allocated at LIFT) and support through a Specialist Nursery Intervention. Proposals within the Early Years in Education public consultation seek to address these issues. However, these requirements remain in place at the time of writing.

Percentage of children on caseloads who are being actively supported								
	Term 1 2022-23	Term 1 2023-24	Term 2 2022-23	Term 2 2023-24	Term 3 2022-23	Term 3 2023-24	Term 4 22-23	Term 4 2023-24
schools	67%	81%	70%	83%	75%	80%	77%	71%
years cases	59%	76%	63%	71%	81%	69%	82%	73%

Figure 7: children on caseload being actively supported in reporting period terms 1-4 2022-23; 2023-24 (Kent Analytics KPIs Power BI Dashboard)

By Actively Supporting, we mean: an individual child that is 1) open to the service; 2) has a specialist teacher actively supporting the child and 3) where the child is working towards individual targets. It is important to note that these are not new cases each term and many children are likely to be the same children from term to term.

In some districts, *actively supporting a child* means that the specialist teacher spends time with the child. This can include undertaking cognitive assessments in some districts and observations and feedback in others who do not have the capacity to do the assessments. An assessment can take up to two or three mornings with a child. Some do a half day assessment which revolves around key time e.g. morning arrival or lunch time. Sometimes they talk to child and sometimes not depending on child.

In other districts, the specialist teacher does not interact directly with the child. The specialist teacher may do an observation and make recommendations. They will then meet with the SENCo on a termly basis to assess progress and make further recommendations.

Although this is not a complete data set, we can see from figure 7 that districts have worked hard to undertake regular caseload reviews and ensure that at least 80% of the children on their caseloads are being actively supported.

Total number of children inactive / dormant / on hold								
	Term 1 2022-23	Term 1 2023-24	Term 2 2022-23	Term 2 2022-23	Term 3 2023-24	Term 3 2023-24	Term 4 22- 23	Term 4 2023-24
school	514	442	442	320	457	247	250	245
Early Years	327	139	243	128	218	168	160	134

Figure 8: Countywide total number of children on caseload who are inactive/dormant/on hold terms 1-4 2022-23; 2023-24 (Kent Analytics KPIs Power BI Dashboard)

Three districts were unable to report on this KPI in terms 1&2, 2022-23, and two districts were unable to report in term 3 of that year.

We can see in figure 8 that the number of children who were on caseload but were not being actively supported had fallen significantly between terms 1, 2 and 3 of 2022-23 and 2023-24, with a sharp rise in term 4, 2023-24.

When the new KPIs were introduced, it was noted that some districts kept children with complex needs or conditions such as Down’s Syndrome permanently on their caseloads. Districts reported that SENCos were uncomfortable with children having their cases closed as having a specialist teacher available at short notice had provided a sense of security for them. However, a move towards a solution focussed approach has led to some of these children’s cases being closed. These children can be brought back to LIFT for a referral should this be necessary, or the SENCo can access advice and guidance through clinics.

Performance monitoring also reflects that districts tend to keep some children on caseload for one or two terms after transition from primary to secondary school so they can quickly support with any difficulties the child may experience. This accounts for a higher number of children on hold during terms 1 and 2 of the new academic year, followed by a fall in the number on hold in terms 3 and 4 when they are then removed from the caseload once the child has settled in the school and teachers have support systems in place.

Total number of cases open for more than six months								
	Term 1 2022-23	Term 1 2023-24	Term 2 2022-23	Term 2 2022-23	Term 3 2023-24	Term 3 2023-24	Term 4 22-23	Term 4 2023-24
Schools	1752	2254	2282	2163	2089	2109	1848	2076
Early years	829	774	1000	798	1013	869	1032	905

Figure 9: Countywide total number of cases open for more than six months terms 1-4 2022-23; 2023-24 (Kent Analytics KPIs Power BI Dashboard)

Three districts were not able to report on this figure for terms 1 and 2, and two were not able to report in terms 3 of 2022-23.

There has been some discussion regarding this measurable, with STLS reporting that six months is not a useful benchmark as some children could come onto caseload just before the six-week summer holidays and would fall into this category. Not all districts were collecting this data initially, but the data shows that this number has fallen as districts have examined their caseloads and ways of working.

The figures in table 9 are also affected by some Council processes, such as the requirement for children in receipt of a Specialist Nurseries Intervention to be open to STLS, and for children in early years settings receiving SENIF funding to have been allocated a specialist teacher. Both factors will account for a proportion of the children open for longer than six months. Both will be impacted by proposals identified within the Early Years in Education public consultation. If implemented, then these proposals would remove that requirement, and this should result in a drop in these numbers for 2024-25 academic year.

Total number of cases closed								
	Term 1 2022-23	Term 1 2023-24	Term 2 2022-23	Term 2 2022-23	Term 3 2023-24	Term 3 2023-24	Term 4 22-23	Term 4 2023-24
Total number of school cases closed	338	377	340	376	242	301	306	226
Total number of early years cases closed	80	104	81	65	89	49	79	55

Figure 10: Total number of individuals whose STLS support has ended in reporting period terms 1-4 2022-23; 2023-24 (Kent Analytics KPIs Power BI Dashboard)

One district was not able to report on this in term 1 and 2 2022-23, and one district was not able to report in term 4, 2023-24. For reasons noted above, an increase in the number of cases being closed can be seen from 2022-23 to 2023-24. We would expect this trend to continue for 2024-25.

2.2 LIFT and Local Area Reports

The Local Inclusion Forum Team (LIFT) meeting is a forum where SENCOs can discuss the needs of individual children with STLS teachers, other SENCOs and any other attending professionals, such as Educational Psychologists and receive support and advise in return. LIFT is also the mechanism to refer to STLS specialist teachers, SENIF Practitioners and Specialist Nursery Intervention. STLS record the activity through LIFT on the Local Area Reports (LAR).

LIFT meetings follow a similar format across the county. There are some differences in relation to combining primary and secondary schools in one meeting, and the use of a solution focused approach in school age LIFT but less so in early years LIFT. In addition,

some districts now adhere to a strict version of the Graduated Approach, with only the most complex cases taken to LIFT and advice and support offered through clinics or surgeries.

LIFT meetings have continued to be well attended by SENCOs and those who do attend attach a lot of value to them, as evidenced through the STLS Impact Survey. Although the intention is for these to be multi-agency meetings, they are generally seen to be synonymous with STLS. STLS administer and chair these meetings in all districts and take their referrals from there. The early years LIFT chair will also recommend the allocation of a SENIF practitioner from this meeting. Other than that, no other agencies take referrals from LIFT. Data collected during 2022- 2023 regarding the level of attendance at LIFT by other professionals demonstrated inconsistent attendance across the districts.

Performance monitoring meetings have highlighted high demand for cases to be discussed at LIFT with capacity issues resulting in some districts limiting the number of cases that individual schools or settings can bring.

One reason for the level of demand may be linked to Council pathways that schools and setting must follow when applying for funding. For example, early years practitioners must attend LIFT to have a specialist teacher allocated to a child in order to be allocated a SENIF practitioner or SENIF funding. These requirements have been examined through the Early Years Review which is to go to Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee on 2 July 2024. Removal of this requirement (if agreed) would ensure that early years LIFT is solely used for support, advice and guidance and may reduce the level of demand that LIFT experiences.

Schools report that they are not able to receive High Needs Funding (HNF) or EHCPs for children if they have not exhausted the Local Offer. Whilst not explicitly a requirement, the general perception is that the local offer includes accessing a specialist teacher through LIFT. Schools have reported that their applications have been turned down if they are unable to provide evidence that this step has been completed. The new Localities initiative will change the way that high needs funding is allocated and this may also have an impact on the LIFT process for school age children.

Some districts have had surgeries, clinics or in-school / in-setting reviews as part of their offer for some time, however more districts have moved towards this model since the beginning of the current SLA as can be seen in figure 11.

Clinics or surgeries are less formal than LIFT and offer a less bureaucratic, anonymised way for the SENCO to receive advice and guidance. This has enabled SENCOs to obtain advice and guidance quickly whilst reserving LIFT for the more complex cases.

Number of clinics / surgeries / in-setting reviews / in-school reviews								
	Term 1 2022-23	Term 1 2023-24	Term 2 2022-23	Term 2 2022-23	Term 3 2023-24	Term 3 2023-24	Term 4 22- 23	Term 4 2023-24
schools	-	124	-	153	-	149	-	124
Early years	-	14	-	26	-	23	-	14

Figure 11 Number of clinics / surgeries / in-setting reviews / in-school reviews term 1-4 2023-24 (Kent Analytics LAR Power BI Dashboard)

Regarding clinics, this information was not collected in 2022-23. One district was not able to report in term 4, 2023-24. The service began reporting on clinics at the beginning of the 2023-24 academic year, and so these are included from then in this table.

The LAR does not form part of STLS' KPIs and several discussions have taken place about either combining the two or removing the LAR. However, at this point STLS report on both. The KPIs provide valuable insight into the delivery of the service in schools and the impact on children and young people, whereas the LAR provides valuable insight into the overall demands on the service.

Information collated from LAR include:

- which schools and settings are accessing LIFT,
- which need types they are bringing to the meeting and
- the allocation of specialist teachers to need type.

As noted above, demand through LIFT is high.

In 2022-2023 38% early years settings, 68% primaries and 53% secondaries attended LIFT on average each term.

In 2023-2024 31% early years settings, 67% primaries and 63% secondaries attended LIFT on average each term.

Local Area Report (LAR) reporting for schools

	Term	Term 1 2022-23	Term 1 2023-24	Term 2 2022-23	Term 2 2023-24	Term 3 2022- 23	Term 3 2023-24	Term 4 2022-23	Term 4 2023-24
	No of LIFTs	69	69	65	69	66	70	69	63
	No of clinics		124		153		149		124
	Average % of schools attending LIFT	64%	65%	68%	68%	66%	70%	69%	60%
	Average % of schools engaging with clinics		31%		41%		37%		35%
Referrals	Average % of new referrals	88%	86%	92%	92%	88%	90%	89%	84%
	Average % of return referrals (return within 12 months)	12%	15%	8%	8%	12%	10%	11%	8%
	Number of discussions re possible SA / EHCP Applications	28	61	62	85	40	71	41	57
	Individuals	428	423	563	486	381	499	374	407
	Cohorts	0	4	2	11	4	4	3	2
	Classrooms	11	0	9	9	9	12	8	6
	Whole school referrals	2	1	6	6	0	0	0	0
	No. of each priority need type as identified by	C & I (includes ASD, C&I, SLCN)	186	158	229	186	150	188	136

school (1 per referral only for individual cases) for LIFT	SEMH	162	190	228	267	178	225	178	211	
	C&L	79	66	99	63	60	79	65	45	
	PD	2	8	3	0	7	9	3	3	
	PD/Medical	4	2	6	4	2	3	4	3	
No. of each priority need type as identified by school (1 per referral only for individual cases) for Clinics	C & I (includes ASD, C&I, SLCN)		81		95		113		94	
	SEMH		100		79		109		92	
	C&L		59		80		97		70	
	PD		0		0		0		0	
	PD/Medical		9		1		0		2	
SEN States	SEN Support	288	362	413	400	308	434	320	349	
	Receiving HNF	41	50	53	45	41	62	36	57	
	Has EHCP	25	20	33	32	36	43	29	33	
Additional vulnerabilities	Service child	2	2	5	1	0	2	2	4	
	Child in care	13	11	10	18	12	23	13	11	
	In receipt of pupil premium	88	116	104	112	111	132	102	121	
	Low or non-attendance	54	63	68	91	62	83	85	53	
	Currently on a reduced timetable	59	83	78	72	49	79	55	62	
	Suspensions in last 12 months	36	72	60	83	58	74	57	74	
Outcome	Allocate to STS	C&I	90	69	80	78	59	66	57	47
		C&L	45	32	47	37	33	41	30	19
		EY	26	28	50	38	29	30	22	29
		SEMH	71	85	108	109	67	98	92	66

	PD	1	1	5	0	5	0	4	0
	Resolved at LIFT	239	217	325	243	203	278	190	163
	Referred/ signposted to other agencies	110	106	112	148	75	125	91	90

Figure 12: Schools Local Area Report (LAR) comparison of Terms 1-4, 2022-23; and terms 1-4, 2023-24 Kent Analytics dashboard

The percentage of schools attending LIFT has remained consistent across the compared periods. This is due to the value attached to LIFT by SENCOs as a result of the support provided, the amount and complexity of the need which requires a visit to LIFT; including the perceived requirement of the allocation of a specialist teacher, to receive an EHCP or HNF, or a combination of both. Therefore, an expected decrease in the number of cases presented at LIFT due to the introduction of clinics in most districts has not occurred.

Some conversations regarding EHCPs are still being held in LIFT meetings. Between 65% and 85% of referrals through LIFT are in receipt of SEN support. Between 9% and 14% of referrals are in receipt of High Needs Funding, and between 5% and 9% of children referred are already in receipt of an EHCP.

These figures are comparable across the two periods being examined.

Although there is a drive towards working more with groups or cohorts of children, the numbers individuals, cohorts, classrooms and whole schools being brought to LIFT remain low.

The number of children being brought to LIFT with SEMH has risen term on term. SEMH is also by far the largest need type being brought to clinics or surgeries for advice.

About 24% of children accessing LIFT are in receipt of Pupil Premium. This has remained comparable across the two periods being compared.

Around 50% of cases brought to school LIFT receive an allocation of a specialist teacher.

Local Area Report (LAR) reporting for early years settings

	Term	Term 1 2022-23	Term 1 2023-24	Term 2 2022-23	Term 2 2023-24	Term 3 2022-23	Term 3 2023-24	Term 4 2022-23	Term 4 2023-24
	No of LIFTs	35	36	36	36	36	35	36	32
	No of clinics		14		26		23		14
	Average % of settings attending LIFT	38%	34%	39%	33%	40%	29%	41%	28%
	Average % of settings engaging with clinics		2%		7%		3%		2%
Referrals	Average % of new referrals	96%	88%	97%	93%	96%	95%	96%	83%
	Average % of return referrals (return within 12 months)	4%	12%	3%	7%	4%	5%	4%	9%
	Individuals	276	304	350	278	245	230	268	229
	Cohorts	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Setting sessions	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Whole setting	2	0	1	0	0	1	0	1
No. of each priority need type as identified by school (1 per referral only for individual cases) for LIFT	C & I (includes ASD, C&I, SLCN)	151	149	201	226	135	147	157	137
	C&I (social comm need)	136	128	151	72	103	70	90	70
	C&L	1	2	5	4	0	4	3	2
	SEMH	8	3	16	4	5	5	14	6
	PD	4	5	7	2	2	4	4	3

No. of each priority need type as identified by school (1 per referral only for individual cases) for Clinics	C & I (includes ASD, C&I, SLCN)		22		30		17		17	
	C&I (social comm need)		3		14		5		32	
	C&L		1		2		1		0	
	SEMH		0		1		1		2	
	PD		1		2		0		0	
Additional vulnerabilities	Child in care	2	4	0	3	5	2	5	1	
	EAL	19	33	31	37	31	40	26	22	
	Forces family	1	2	3	2	0	3	1	1	
	Early years pupil premium	6	15	16	27	18	18	16	18	
	Disability Access Fund (DAF)	9	21	11	13	5	13	8	18	
	Free for Two entitlement	21	44	33	49	19	36	38	39	
Outcome	Allocated to STLS	EY	198	225	250	242	170	166	175	131
		PD	3	3	3	0	2	3	1	0
		Specialist outreach	16	9	19	15	6	13	11	8
	Signposted to E&I	31	11	13	14	7	8	14	12	

Signposted to SENIF	44	37	40	64	35	41	42	33
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Figure 13: Early years Local Area Report (LAR) comparison of Terms 1-4, 2022-23; and terms 1-4, 2023-24 Kent Analytics dashboard

In the STLS Satisfaction Survey and the recent STLS Impact Survey, LIFT is ranked as the most valued aspect of support provided by STLS.

As part of mapping which schools across the county had accessed support from inclusion agencies, the Area SEND Co-ordinator canvassed STLS to ascertain which schools had not accessed support from STLS at all. The responses were mixed, with some districts not able to supply any data, and so the Area SEND Co-ordinator was not able to compile this data set.

However, from the information that was received, it is evident that there are vast variations district to district. This was felt that this is due to the offer varying significantly district to district. For example, in some districts there are schools that had engaged in 12-15+ training sessions, in school bespoke session, etc. and in others there was a high of 2/3 sessions attended - so it was very difficult to do a cross county comparison on school engagement.

The recent STLS Impact Survey (see appendix E) which was mainly completed by primary school SENCos, indicates that advice and support provided through LIFT is the second highest ranking aspect of support with regards to benefit on inclusive practise within schools or early years settings, second to one-to-one Specialist Support for a Named Child Provided in the School or Setting. STLS is by far the most represented service at this meeting and so therefore the advice and support at LIFT will be mostly either support from peers or from STLS, or both.

2.3 Transition

A key topic of discussion within the performance monitoring meetings continues to be the role of STLS in transition. Although this has always formed a part of the STLS support to schools and settings, there has been a Council facilitated countywide focus on developing a planned multi-agency approach to transition over the past year, supported through the Working Together Planning Together meetings.

Number of schools and settings supported to deliver transition events (including preparation meetings in relation to phased transfer process)								
	Term 1 2022-23	Term 1 2023-24	Term 2 2022-23	Term 2 2023-24	Term 3 2022-23	Term 3 2023-24	Term 4 22-23	Term 4 2023-24
Schools	102	235	86	119	74	167	86	300
Early years	12	109	26	72	6	43	43	85

Figure 14: Transition support comparison of Terms 1-4, 2022-23; and terms 1-4, 2023-24 Kent Analytics dashboard

One district did not report in term 4, 2023-24. Some schools and settings may receive support over more than one term.

STLS have been engaged with other inclusion agencies and it is evident that their transition support has increased significantly across the two periods, particularly increasing in term 4, 2023-24. This is likely to be associated with the Transition Charter and the joined up working with other Inclusion agencies as well as a focus on supporting transition activities throughout the academic years rather than in specific terms. Another reason for the increase is that commissioning have asked STLS to record preparation meetings as well as transition (e.g. 'speed dating') events.

Transition support is offered across the academic year to ensure that children can be properly supported when or soon after their transition. STLS have further developed relationships with the SEND Inclusion Advisors and the Education Psychologists in their districts to support implementing the Transition Charter.

In comparison to other support provided, schools and settings responding to the STLS Impact survey (appendix E) rank transition second from the bottom in terms of the support that has most impact on inclusion in schools and settings. Just above support for parents.

2.4 Training

In the recent STLS Impact Survey, training delivered at the STLS base or online was considered by respondents the sixth out of 11 most beneficial aspect of support with regards to inclusion. Bespoke training delivered in the school or setting was less impactful and sits at seventh most beneficial aspect of support. However, the STLS service has reported in their monitoring meetings that core training is not sought after by schools and settings as they are unable to release SENCOs and Teaching Assistants to attend training. STLS told us that demand for bespoke training is increasing with schools and settings request training focused on their areas of need to be delivered at the setting. This is corroborated by data submitted within the KPIs which generally shows a trend of the number of people participating in core training decreasing and the number participating in bespoke training increasing.

In 22-23 34% Early Years settings, 97% of primary schools and 103% of secondary schools engaged in training. In 23-24 20% Early Years settings, 98% of primary schools and 105% of secondary schools engaged in training.

STLS sometimes provide training to schools outside their district, which affects the reported percentage of schools supported in a district. This method of data capture has been discussed and will be examined for the 2024-25 reporting period.

		Term 1 2022-23	Term 1 2023-24	Term 2 2022-23	Term 2 2023 -24	Term 3 2022-23	Term 3 2023-24	Term 4 2022-23	Term 4 2023-24
Number of core offer training courses delivered		22	48	39	45	20	58	27	73
Number of schools and settings participating in core offer training	Primary	119	68	126	113	91	120	114	150
	Secondary	19	22	34	23	23	24	29	38
	Early years	22	24	98	27	60	36	68	64
Number of school and setting staff participating in training		469	2512	511	2413	511	2246	587	1749
Number of bespoke or additional training courses developed and delivered in response to an identified need in the district		77	94	70	101	97	105	89	101
Number of schools and settings participating in bespoke or additional training:	Primary	72	205	81	209	114	174	190	164
	Secondary	15	38	12	33	18	38	66	41
	Early years	25	104	33	112	77	76	111	98
Number of school staff participating in bespoke training		1010	2631	971	1836	1341	2373	1161	1989
Number of training courses delivered to parents		30	25	29	30	20	31	22	30
Number of parents engaging in training		85	187	130	191	149	246	202	238

Figure 15: Countywide average of core, bespoke and parental training delivered per district (Kent Analytics KPIs Power BI Dashboard)

One district did not report in term 4, 2023-24. The number of training sessions and school and setting staff participating is directly related to the rollout of the Autism Education Trust (AET) training that has been rolled out across the county. This training is delivered by STLS, KEPS and some training has been delivered directly by the AET Lead Trainer who is part of the Council's workforce.

AET

STLS is engaged with the delivery of the Autism Education Trust (AET) training across KENT. This framework has been purchased by KCC with the ambition of supporting children across with county with autism, or autism-like traits. The rollout of this training started in 2022-2023.

The focus for the AET rollout has now moved to the Good Autism Practice (GAP) and returning to settings for meetings to review the impact of the training and support schools to use the AET Frameworks documents to create an action plan around embedding good autism practice. The AET Lead Trainer reports that some districts are doing review meetings, however moving forward the meetings need to adopt the new Action Planning format that includes a Case Study document. In some circumstances there has been a follow up meeting with the setting but no direct work around the frameworks. There is positive feeling that reviews are being conducted and the AET team have been able to collect anecdotal evidence around training impact and cultural change, but there is recognition that use of prescribed materials and meeting format are not consistently used across the county. The information from these review meetings will be used in a research project on the impact of AET training.

There has been variation in capacity to deliver across districts and challenges in finding opportunities to deliver to early years settings who are often unable to release staff during the working day. Kent Educational Psychologist Service (KEPS) has been supporting with training as part of the rollout. KEPS has also supported in delivery over weekends where settings are more able to attend. The AET Lead Trainer who manages the overall delivery and is employed directly by KCC has also been delivering in districts where STLS was not able to meet their targets. The allocation of training delivered is indicated in Figure 16 below.

The license for AET expires August 2025.

A researcher has now been added to the AET team to research and evaluate the impact of the training and the implementation of the frameworks. A specific evaluation format had been created and shared. Trainers were asked to support schools to create a next step action plan.

The previous format was not adopted as standard practise, with some districts focusing more on discussions around training impact without looking at the Standards Framework in the follow up meeting. The impact of this has been that there are no action plans that can be shared for the research project. To mitigate this, the AET have redeveloped the Action Planning document and shared this with STLS and KEPS staff in April. Moving forward it is important that all districts are using this document in the follow up meeting. The follow up meetings should discuss impact, but also encourage schools to use the frameworks and embed practice.

Districts have requested to deliver the training virtually, particularly to early years settings. This was agreed for early years, however some districts have extended this to their School Age as a virtual training. There is concern that virtual training does limit attendees' ability to have group discussions around practice and improving practice.

A further issue with virtual training is how to ensure that identified principles from the standards framework are being supported, as a wide number of settings would be present who may have different priorities, and how does this affect the effectiveness of follow up meetings.

Virtual training cannot be recorded and reported on to AET due to the licence requirements.

The AET Lead Trainer is working with STLS and other trainers to develop a focus on the broader aim of using the modules of the training to encourage settings to the frameworks to make cultural change rather than just getting training out to every setting.

Figure 16: AET training sessions comparison - Data provided by KCC AET Lead Trainer

District	Target	Delivered	Planned	Delivered by:				Comments
				Lead AET Trainer	STLS	KEPS	Joint (STLS & KEPS)	
Ashford								
Early Years	24	12	7	1	10	1	0	Ran Saturday EY training
School Age	8	17	9	0	10	7	0	
Secondary	2	3	1	0	3	0	0	
Canterbury								
Early Years	20	4	0	2	2	0	0	Have found it hard as many settings want evening and weekend training which they can't facilitate.
School Age	7	11	1	0	10	1	0	
Secondary	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	
Dartford								
Early Years	24	8	0	2	4	2	0	
School Age	6	8	4	0	2	5	1	
Secondary	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	
Dover								
Early Years	14	9	1	1	8	0	0	They are running EY training in the summer led by AET Lead Trainer
School Age	8	24	10	2	13	5	4	
Secondary	2	2	0	1	0	0	1	
Folkestone & Hythe								
Early Years	15	13	0	0	13	0	0	
School Age	7	21	0	0	13	7	1	Folkestone have led some GAP training too. They also led 6 trainings in 22/23 so total number trained is higher.
Secondary	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	
Gravesham								
Early Years	24	17	0	0	16	1	0	

School Age	6	15	5	0	11	4	0	
Secondary	2	4	0	0	1	2	1	
District				Delivered by:				
	Target	Delivered	Planned	Lead AET Trainer	STLS	EP	Joint (STLS & EPs)	Comment
Maidstone								
Early Years	32	27	0	1	26	0	0	KEPS ran a virtual EY training session on 20/04/24 which had 26 attendees.
School Age	10	7	2	0	2	0	5	
Secondary	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	
Sevenoaks								
Early Years	26	12	0	4	7	1	0	AET Lead trainer has supported training due to low capacity
School Age	8	22	0	2	13	7	0	
Secondary	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	
Swale								
Early Years	32	22	4	0	22	2	0	They have completed training and had follow up meetings delivered in a localised format. Targets are being achieved and Swale are also leading GAP training in their area.
School Age	10	31	5	0	29	2	0	
Secondary	2	2	3	0	1	1	0	
Thanet								
Early Years	32	16	0	4	10	2	0	
School Age	6	16	0	0	16	0	0	
Secondary	2	4	0	0	4	0	0	
Tonbridge and Malling								
Early Years	20	5	4	3	2	0	0	
School Age	9	9	9	0	7	2	0	
Secondary	3	0	2	0	0	0	0	
Tunbridge Wells								
Early Years	24	7	0	3	4	0	0	
School Age	7	14	6	0	6	1	7	
Secondary	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	

The Balanced System

The Balanced System® is a whole-system outcomes focused approach to meet the needs of children and young people (CYP) with Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN). The STLS contribute to supporting CYP with SLCN in a variety of ways at individual, cohort and whole school levels. This involves liaison with Link Therapists and SENCos to support the implementation of a whole school development plan for SLCN and may include activities such supporting set-up of targeted provisions and interventions, staff training and coaching, and direct support for CYP.

Link therapists are currently in place in Ashford, Folkestone and Hythe and Dover/Deal, the rest of Kent except Swale will be from September 2025. There is intention and plan to include Swale.

2.5 Finance and Budget

The annual STLS budget is £5,856,468. The funding currently comes from the High Needs Funding Block. This funding block supports SEN support services and the mainstream top up. Each district has an allocation which was determined in 2012 when the service was devolved from the Council and has not changed since then. This budget will remain static for the duration of the SLA.

Each district was asked to report on their budget, identifying how the budget is used within the district and what it funds. Not all districts were able to give complete figures.

District	Core Budget	Outreach Budget	Total (This is the amount specified in each SLA)	Any other Income 22-23	Any other Income 23-24
Thanet	£377,550	£278,000	£655,550	£1,120	£22,751
Swale	£617,679	0	£617,679	£50,596	£42,230
Maidstone	£267,850	£240,000	£507,850	£12,080	£40,293
Folkstone and Hythe	£307,210	£200,000	£507,210	£3,000	£3,000
Ashford	£292,840	£210,000	£502,840	£17,751	£17,751
Gravesham	£309,310	£180,000	£489,310	£9,000	£28,159
Canterbury	£278,840	£200,000	£478,840	0	£19,145
Dover	£283,230	£180,000	£463,230	£23,479	£19,803
Dartford	£288,830	£170,000	£458,830	£8,276	£45,318
Tonbridge and Malling	£264,850	£190,000	£454,850	£1,750	£25,272
Tunbridge Wells	364,850	0	£364,800	£19,163	£16,163
Sevenoaks	£235,480	£120,000	£355,480	£24,023	£15,870
Total			£5,856,468		

Figure14: Information accurate as of Term 2, 2023-2024. The Total column remains static whilst districts may make changes to the other amounts according to priority and activity.

There are ongoing challenges with regards to this budget, with a particular impact on staffing and capacity. See figure 2 for an overview of staffing changes over the comparative periods.

Each district receives funding for both Core STLS and outreach. In districts where the SLA holding school provides both STLS and outreach, several have amalgamated the budgets to support STLS. Others are cutting their outreach budget allocation due to increasing core

costs – mainly salaries. Some districts continue to fund other special schools to deliver their outreach commitment, but have changed how they fund them, for example, moving away from a block payment to a per activity payment.

Schools are also able to generate income through their training offer. Some districts are reporting that their ability to generate income through training has been reduced by the requirement to deliver the AET training, which is free. Generally, the income generated from delivery of training covers the associated costs of the delivery, for example, venue hire.

All districts receive an additional contribution to teacher's pension costs. Some districts choose to support the service by contributing to the staffing costs from their school's budget.

Appendix B contains a more detailed summary of information relating to funding, staffing volumes, caseloads and schools supported. This contains an analysis of demand in relation to staffing levels if all schools and settings in a district received support and average caseloads per district.

Overall, STLS report that approximately 95% of the budget is spent directly on staffing costs.

Key differences include:

- the way that each district manages their budgets.
- how outreach funding is allocated.
- allocation of non-staffing related costs, for example, rent or management costs for the host school.
- any income generation and how this is used. For instance, some will allocate this towards professional development.

The central government agreed 6.5% teacher pay rises which came into effect in September 2023 has had an impact on the financial planning for the STLS budget holders, although this has not yet had an impact on the overall resource available to the service.

SLA-holding Heads value the STLS service in their districts and have strongly expressed a willingness to continue providing the service after the current SLA ends, but caution that this would be a diminishing service over time due to the static funding.

2.6 Impact

STLS are not the only inclusion service supporting children with SEN to stay in mainstream settings, and so measuring impact has been challenging.

Within the KPIs there are several measures of impact. These are best efforts to measure the impact of STLS as a service in relation to individual progress of children who are supported either directly by a specialist teacher or by a staff member within the school who is implementing advice provided by STLS. Initially, there were a further two measures included, however these were removed at the end of the 2022-23 academic year as they were not seen to provide necessary or accurate information.

Demonstrating impact of the service is challenging, especially recognising the number of factors that might impact on an individual child's ability to make progress within their environment. However, given the value of the funding given to the service and the volume of both schools and individual children supported, it is important to make reasonable attempts to do so.

The STLS takes a bespoke approach with each child, meeting them where they are. Initial, SMART targets are set, with a careful approach to ensure they are not too many or too complex so the child is able to feel positive about their progress.

Once initial targets have been met, STLS will work with the school to design and agree new targets that will develop the child further. This process will continue for as long as STLS, the school and child need.

Due to capacity within the service, and to allow children sufficient time to make progress, not all children are reviewed each term. Of the children reviewed, some will have their cases closed due to targets being achieved and some will have targets amended due to progress made. In this instance, 'Amended target' is not a negative term, in most cases it means previous targets have been met and the child is progressing. Targets are, therefore, amended accordingly.

	Term 1 2022- 23	Term 1 2023- 24	Term 2 2022-23	Term 2 2023 -24	Term 3 2022-23	Term 3 2023-24	Term 4 2022-23	Term 4 2023-24
Average % of children open to STLS whose targets have been formally reviewed	35%	43%	38%	40%	36%	40%	41%	42%
Average % of individual cases closed due to STLS set targets achieved	12%	32%	12%	39%	25%	37%	31%	44%
Average % of individual cases where STLS set targets are amended on review (schools only)	25%	39%	23%	36%	35%	39%	37%	44%

Figure 15: Impact measures

The above impact measures have been the subject of discussion during monitoring meetings, with feedback from STLS indicating that measuring children's progress against long-term targets every six weeks means does not allow time for sufficient progress to be made and therefore KPIs will reflect that a lower percentage of children will achieve set targets (on paper).

STLS have suggested that if the KPI read 'on track to meet targets', this percentage would be significantly higher. A decision has been taken to retain the current KPIs for consistency of reporting., but the reporting frequency of these measures will be amended to twice per year for 2024-2025 reporting – once in term 3, and once in term 6.

An initial Countywide STLS Feedback Survey can be found in appendix D. This survey received over 400 responses, mostly from SENCos, and focused on understanding quality and levels of satisfaction with the service. Overall, respondents reported high levels of satisfaction with the support they received from STLS.

To understand the impact of the service on inclusion in mainstream schools and settings in more detail, an Impact Survey was produced and distributed at the end of term 3, 2023-24 (Appendix E)

Respondents were asked to rate the impact of STLS on impact measures that are generally held to be indicative of embedded inclusive practice within mainstream settings and schools.

Most respondents to the survey were Primary School SENCOs. Although some responses did raise concerns about the quality and relevance of support, overwhelmingly the responses were positive.

Part Three – Capacity versus Demand

The data tells us that the numbers on caseloads and cases going through LIFT is not decreasing and that the capacity of the service, based on an FTE comparison, has not diminished.

Based on feedback provided by STLS, there is a risk that the number of FTE staff will reduce in 2024-25 as districts consider the rising salary costs within a static budget.

It is expected that some demand through LIFT will change because of the implementation of the Localities Model. However there are still reports that LIFT is a prerequisite for referral to therapists, Early Help and paediatricians that will continue to result in referrals, and given the level of complexity of children in mainstream settings and the resultant 'cap' on the number of cases that some districts have imposed, this change may be ameliorated.

It is apparent from the engagement that the Council has had with schools through the two surveys that schools and settings most value the support they receive through direct one-to-one interventions, visits to schools and settings, and advice and guidance through LIFT and clinics.

As part of the development of a preferred option for the future of the STLS, the Council held three engagement sessions with schools and settings. 69 individuals attended these sessions, and the attendees widely responded that they valued the STLS and were concerned that they might lose a trusted and well-known inclusion service.

The Early Years review which will be presented at the County Cabinet Committee in July 2024 makes some recommendations which will support the removal of some of the requirements to attend LIFT to receive wider funding and support. Also, the Localities review which will be presented at the same committee meeting makes further recommendations which will remove further obligations from attendance at LIFT. These factors, and the increased use of clinics or surgeries which are anonymised and require significantly less administration and permissions, should ensure that LIFT is reserved for those children who have complex and exceptional needs.

Part four - Looking forward











The current STLS Service Level Agreements come to an end in August 2025. The Council is undertaking an optional appraisal process to ascertain the opinion of key stakeholders for future of the service.









Engagement has been completed with internal stakeholders through the STLS Steering Group, SLA-holding heads and the STLS Leads, as well as schools and settings. Options

workshops were held with each of these groups where they were presented with several options and some additional clarification questions.

Once a preferred option has been identified, this will be communicated to the service in July 2024.

APPENDICES

A	Key Performance Indicators Template and Local Activity Report Template	 STLS Key Performance Indicators.xlsx  Local Area Report template.xlsx
B	STLS Countywide report Term 1 and 2 2023	 STLS Countywide Report Terms 1&2 20
C	STLS MD Report May 2022	 STLS MD report May 2022 Final.docx
D	STLS Annual survey 2022-2023	 STLS survey 2022-2023.docx
E	Impact Survey 2024	 STLS Impact survey report 2024 0.5.docx
F	District Profile: Ashford	 ashford.docx
G	District Profile: Canterbury	 canterbury.docx
H	District Profile: Dartford	 Dartford.docx
I	District Profile: Dover	 Dover.docx

J	District Profile: Folkestone and Hythe	 F&H.docx
K	District Profile: Gravesham	 Gravesham.docx
L	District Profile: Maidstone	 Maidstone.docx
M	District Profile: Sevenoaks	 Sevenoaks.docx
N	District Profile: Swale	 Swale.docx
O	District Profile: Thanet	 Thanet.docx
P	District Profile: Tonbridge and Malling	 T&M.docx
Q	District Profile: Tunbridge Wells	 T%20Wells.docx



Strategic Commissioning

Specialist Teaching and Learning Service Annual Survey

2022-2023

This first annual survey was produced in order to collate a standardised response from across the county regarding the support that schools had received from STLS throughout the year.

The survey was promoted at the SENCo conference, and to headteachers. There was a good response, with 483 respondents. The majority of these were SENCos, who are the cohort who interact with STLS the majority of the time.

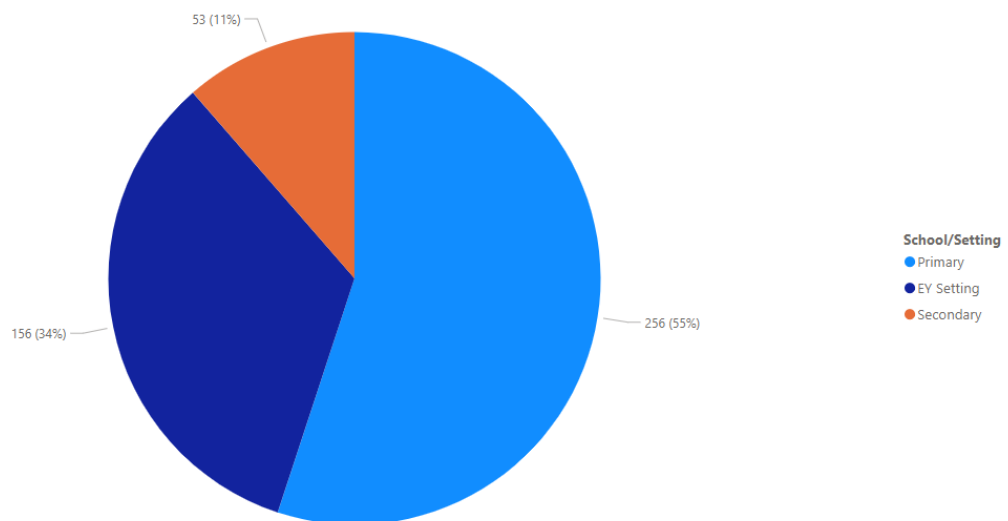


Figure 1: Number of survey responses by School/Setting

More than half of the respondents (55%) came from the primary school cohort, followed by the early years sector at 34% and 11% from secondary schools.

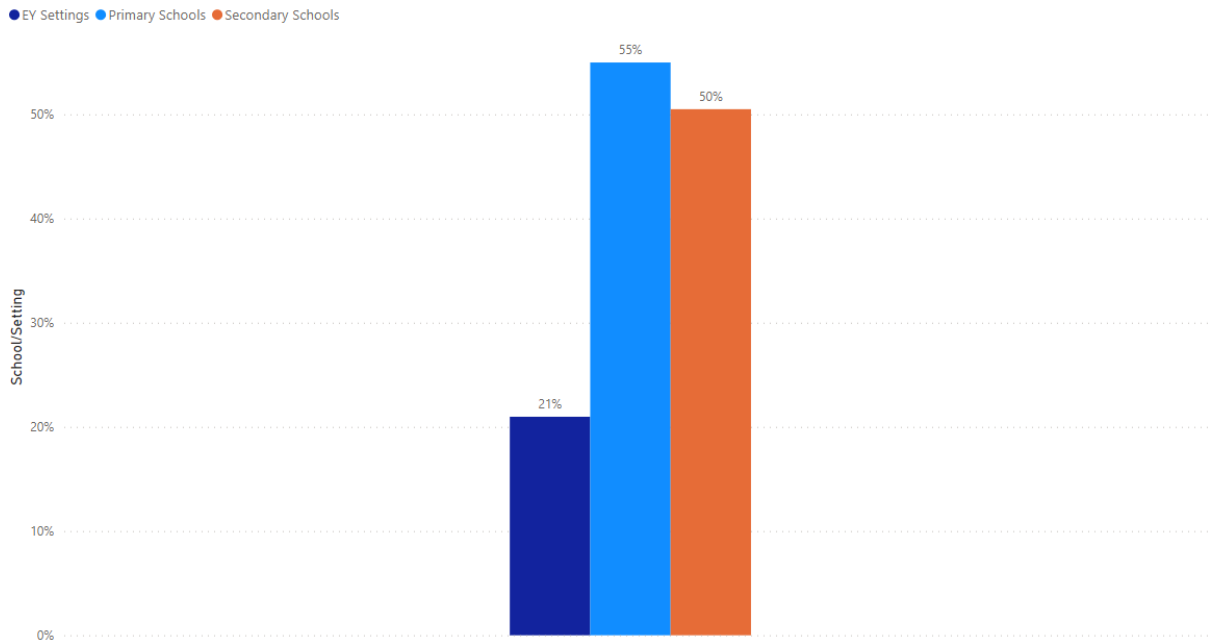


Figure 2: Out of all schools/settings in Kent, percentage of those who responded to the survey.

Although the number of primary school settings was far greater than for secondary settings, the percentages show that 55% of primary schools replied, and 50% of secondary schools. Only 21% of early years settings felt able or willing to respond.

Early Years

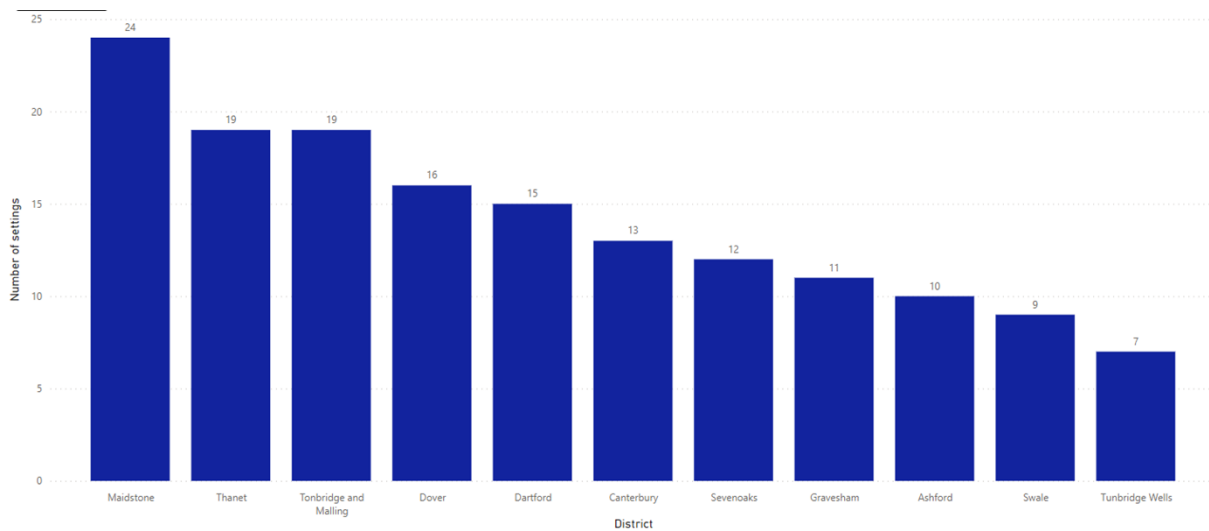


Figure 3: Number of settings responding per district

There was a variation in the response across the county, with the district with the largest number of respondents from the early years being Maidstone, and the least amount being Folkstone and Hythe, where there were no respondents from the early years.

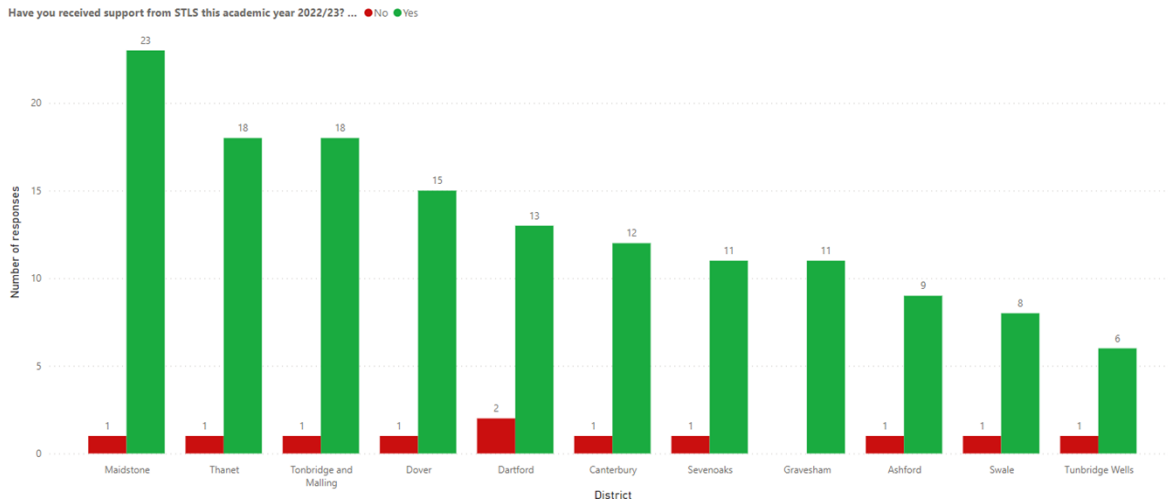


Figure 4: Out of settings which have responded to the survey - Number of settings reporting to have received support from STLS in the academic year 2022/23

A small number of respondents had not received support from STLS in this academic year.

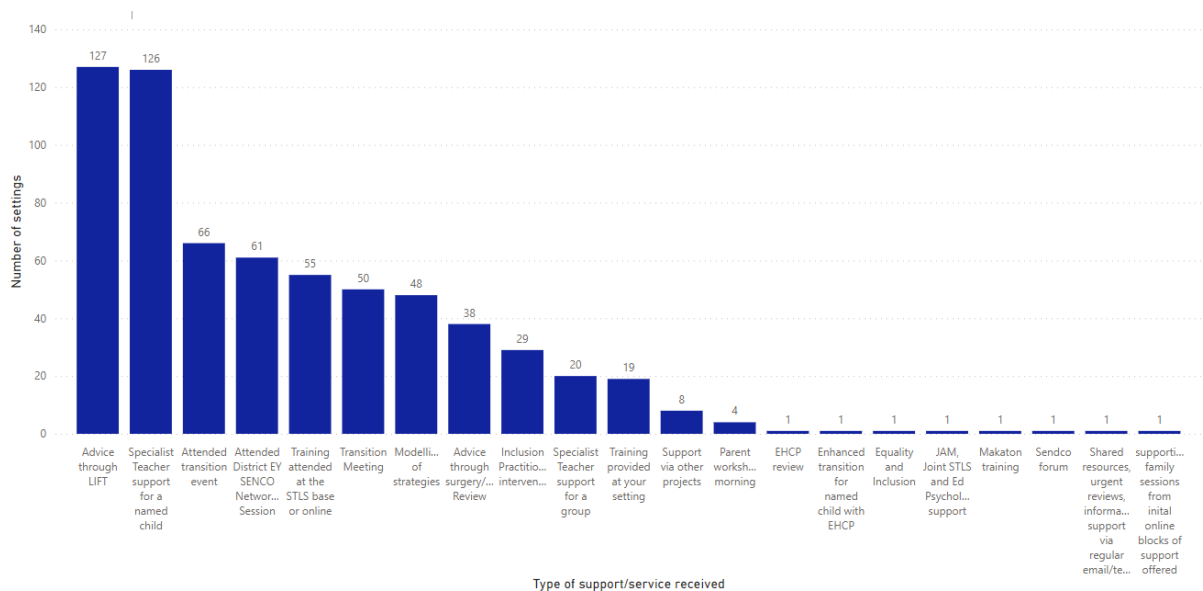


Figure 5: Number of services/supports received by EY settings

Early Years settings responded that the services that they had access the most were: Advice through LIFT; and Support for a Named Child. The requirements for accessing SENIF support and funding require attendance at LIFT and being open to a specialist teacher, which will have an effect on these figures.

Setting Manager	67
SENCO	80
Keyworker	1
Other	7



Figure 6: Respondent's role within early years settings

Primary Schools

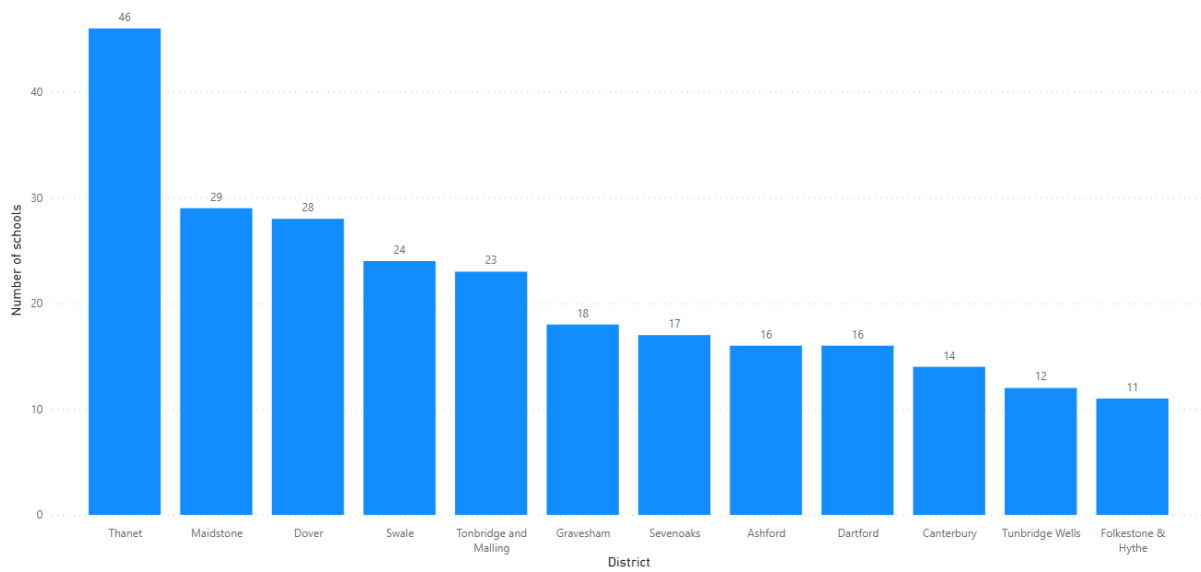


Figure 7: Number of primary schools responding per district

The largest amount of primary school respondents came from the Thanet district, with the least amount from Folkstone and Hythe district.

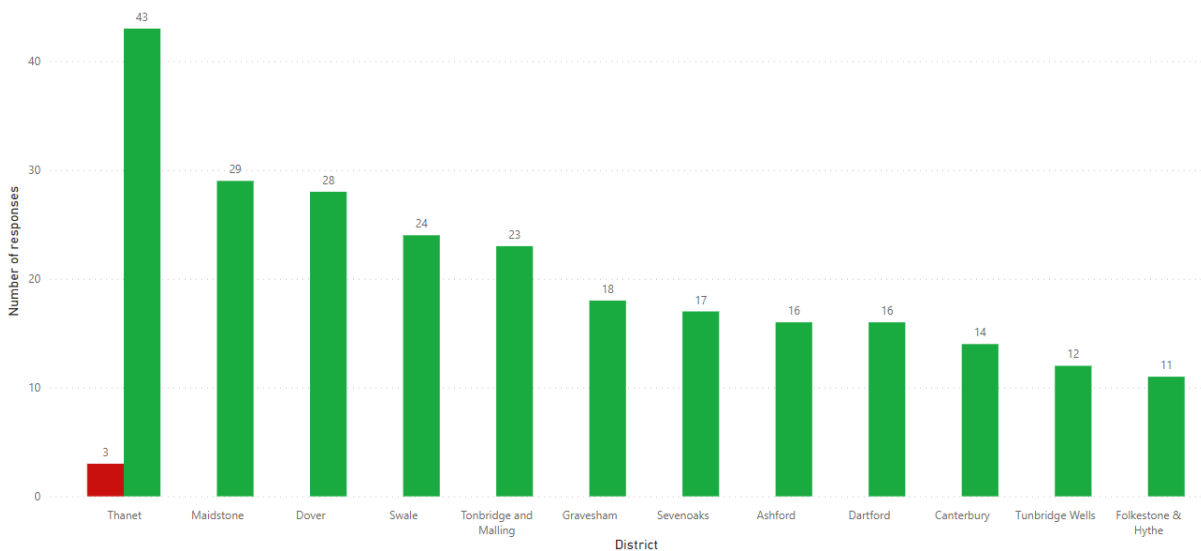


Figure 8: Out of primary schools which have responded to the survey - Number of settings reporting to have received support from STLS in the academic year 2022/23

A small number of respondents from Thanet had not received any support from STLS this year.

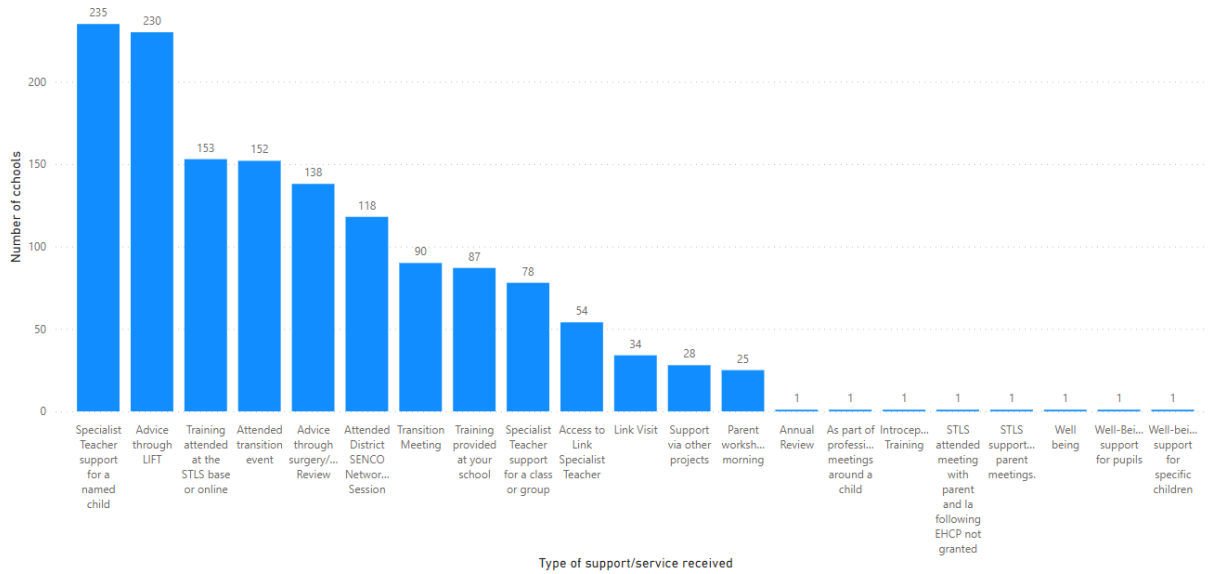


Figure 9: Number of services/support received by primary schools

As with the early years, the top two types of support accessed by primary schools were: Specialist support for a named child and LIFT.

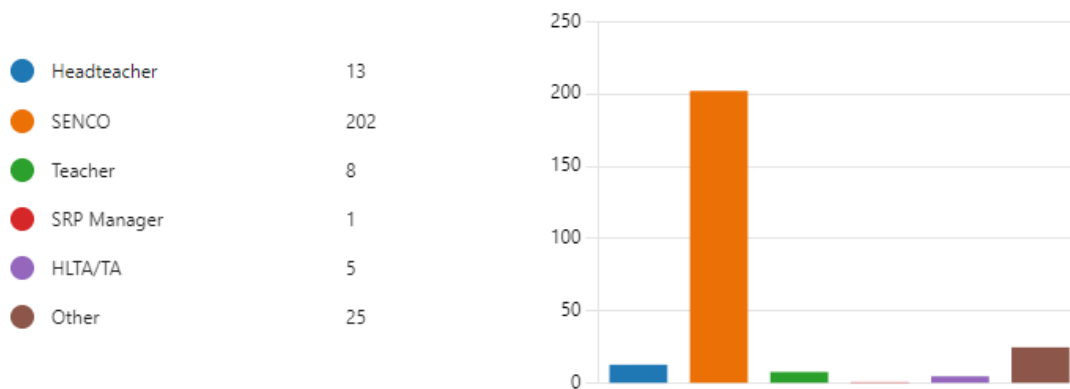


Figure 10: Responders' role within primary school

The overwhelming majority of primary respondents were SENCOs' although there was some headteacher representation.

Secondary Schools

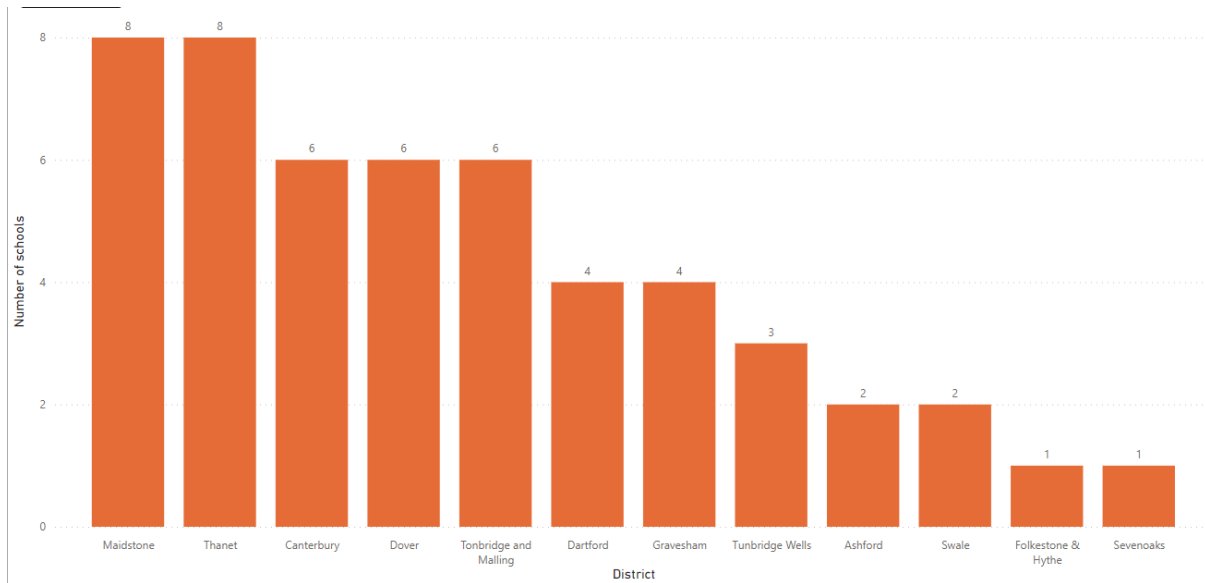


Figure 11: Number of secondary schools responding per district

Although the number of secondary schools responding was lower than primary schools there was some representation in each district.

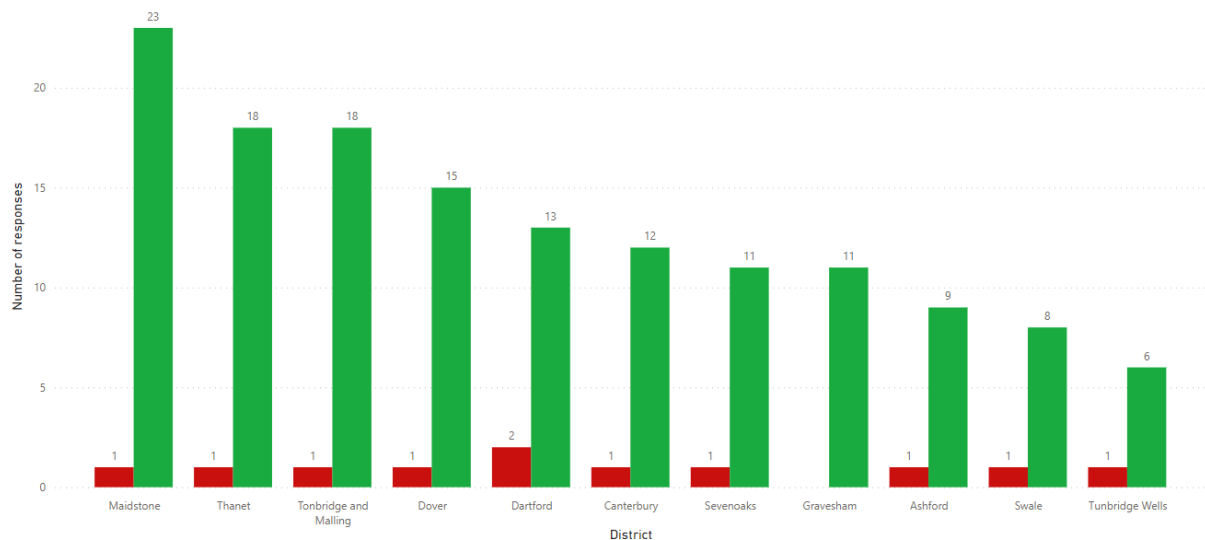


Figure 12: Out of secondary schools which have responded to the survey - Number of settings reporting to have received support from STLS in the academic year 2022/23

This visual is not available

Figure 13: Number of services/supports received by secondary schools

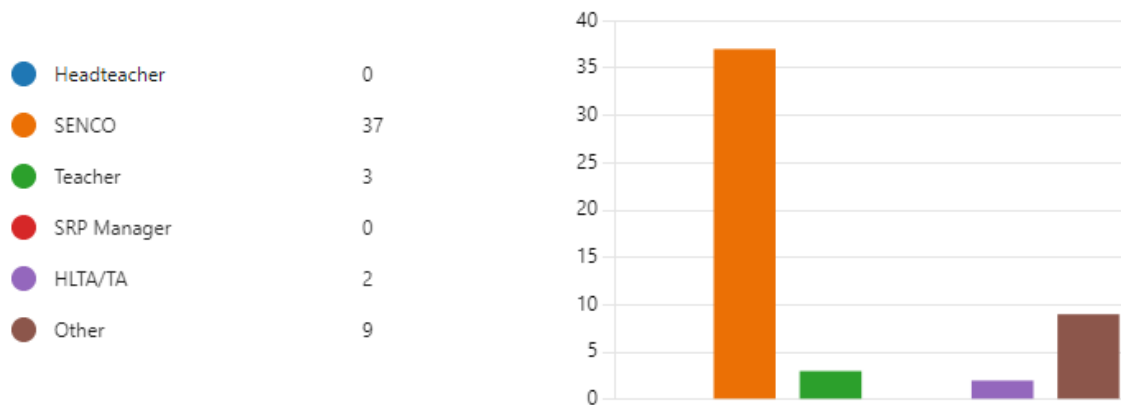


Figure 14: Responders' role within secondary school

The majority of secondary respondents were SENCOs, with no secondary headteacher representation.

Responses

School / Setting ● EY Setting ● Primary ● Secondary

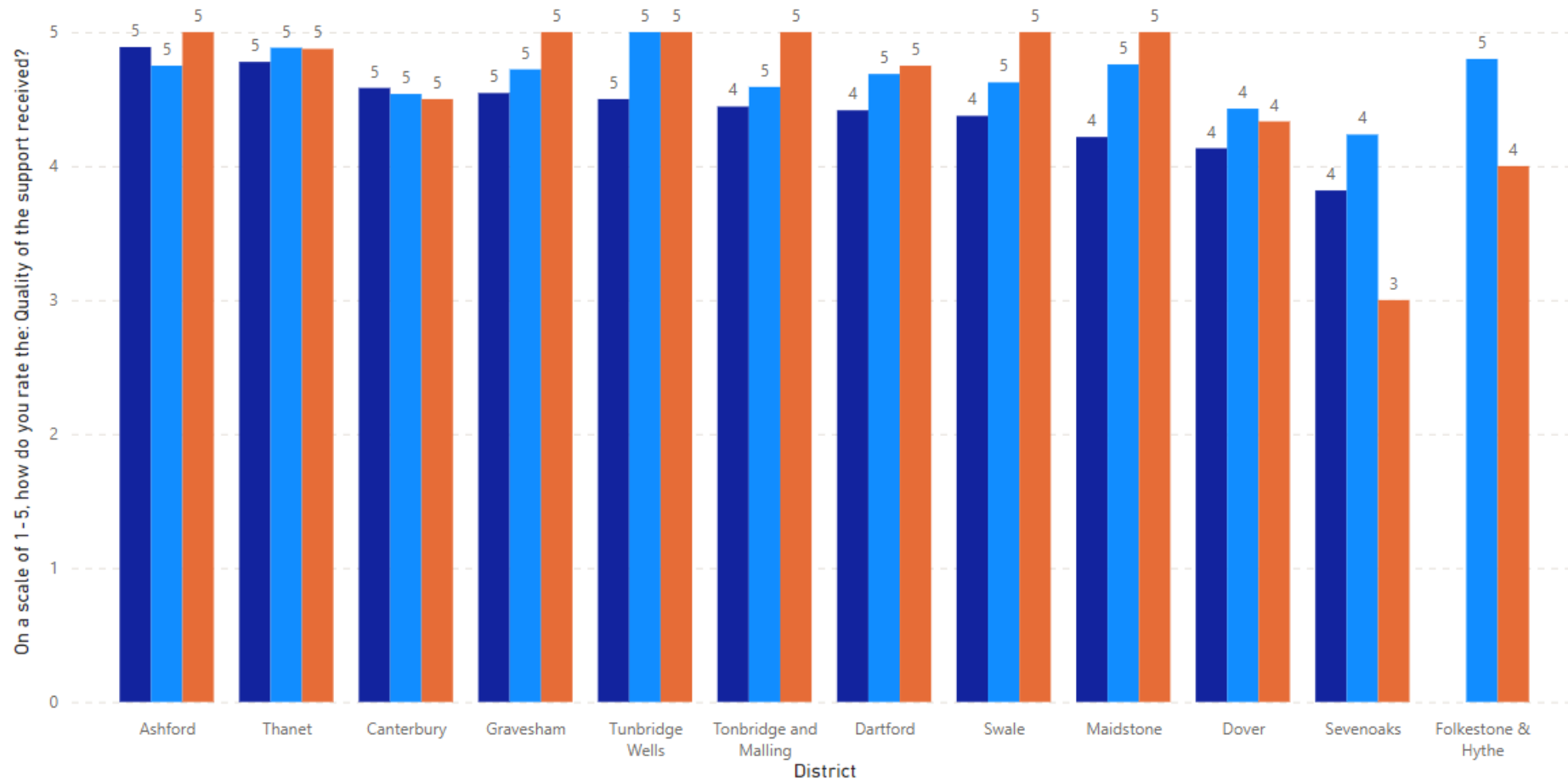


Figure 15: Quality of the support received across schools/settings

Schools and settings were asked to evaluate the quality of the support that they received on a scale of 1-5, with 5 being the highest. Response was positive, with most cohorts and districts scoring this as a 4 or a 5, with one district scoring a 3. No early year's settings responded to this survey in Folkestone and Hythe.

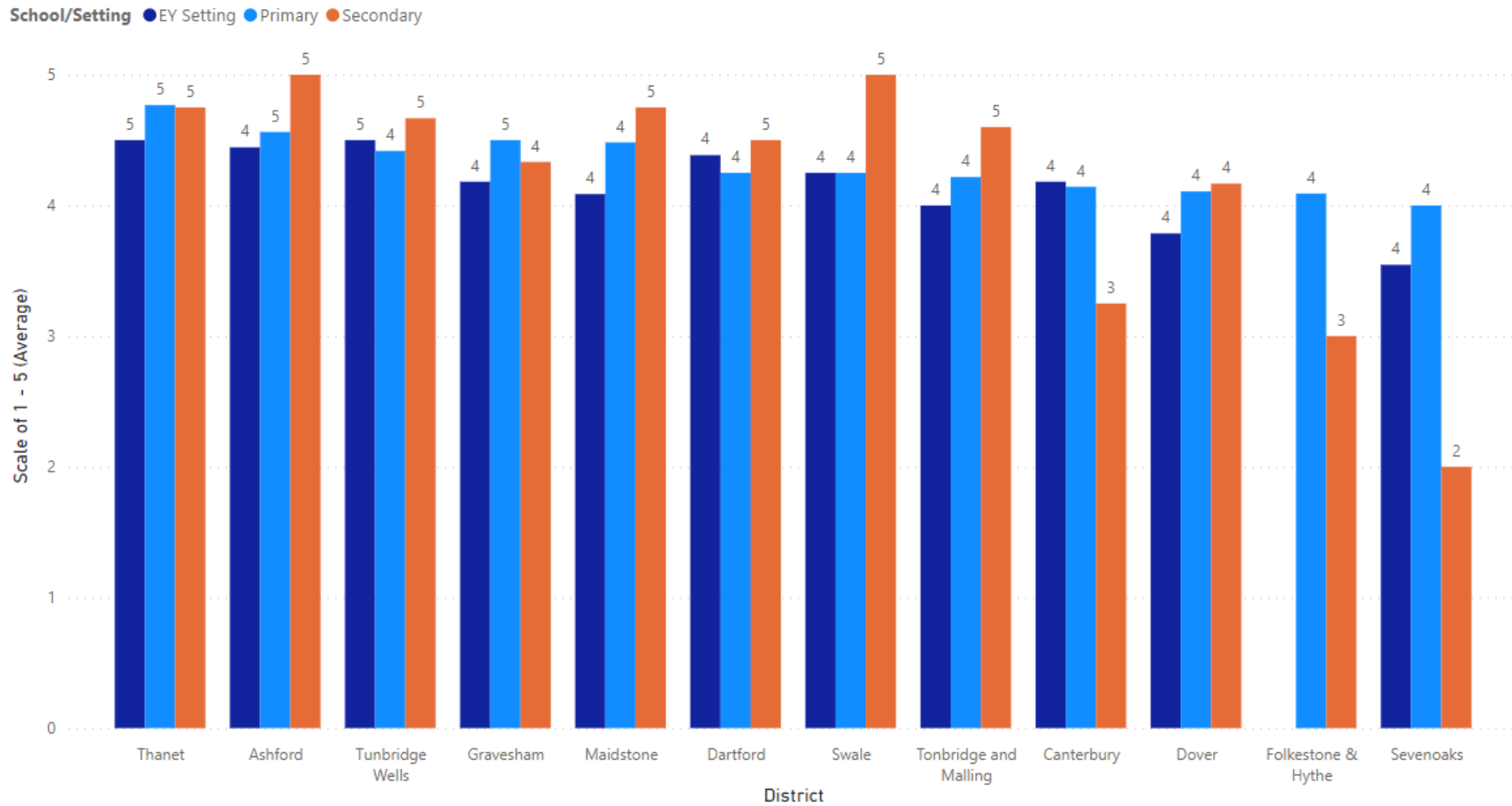


Figure 16: Impact of the support received in relation to building skills and knowledge within your school or setting in relation to SEND

The impact of the support received in relation to building skills and knowledge was positive, with some district variations, particularly in Sevenoaks where secondary schools gave less positive feedback than primary schools and early years settings.

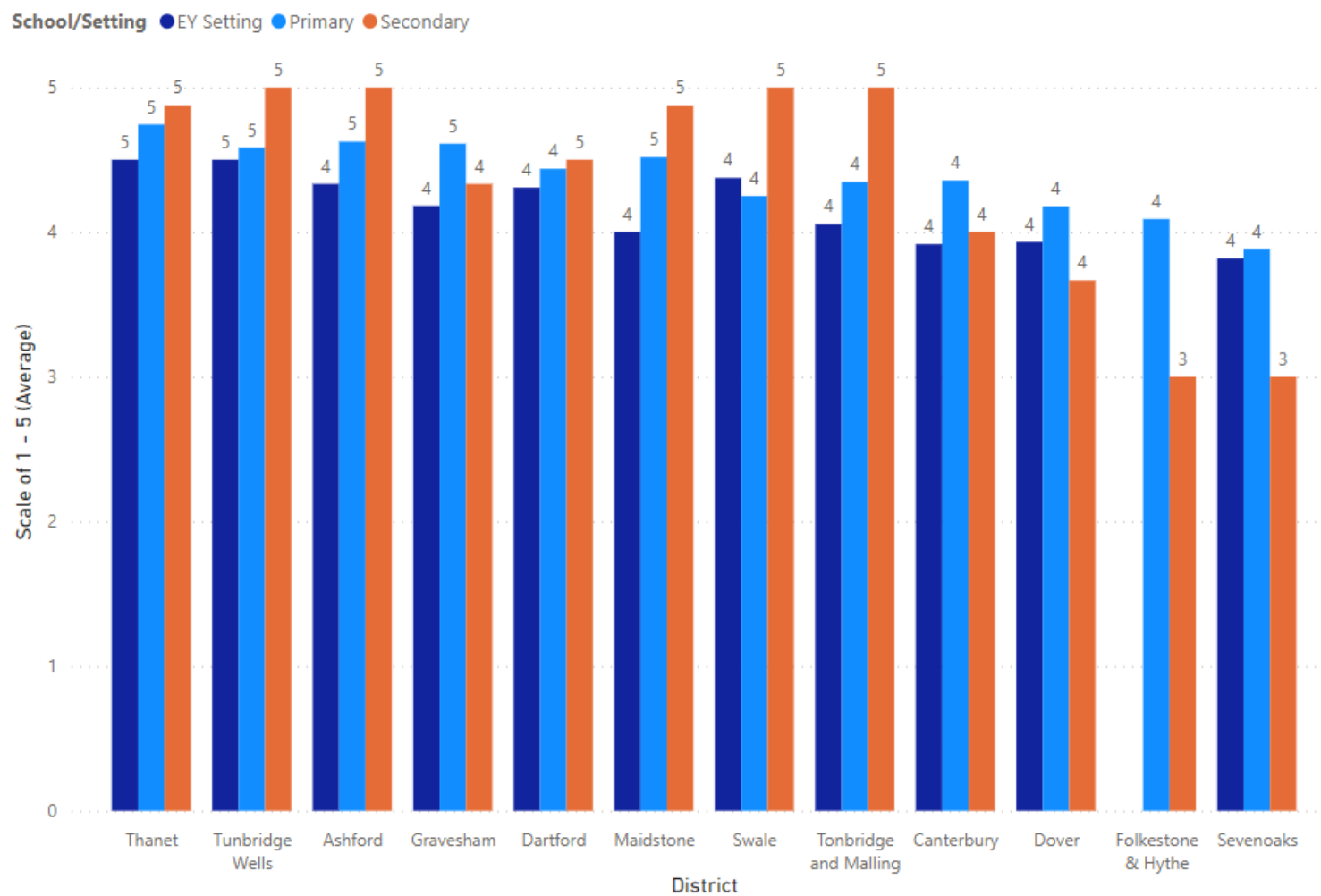


Figure 17: Impact of the support received in relation to confidence of you and your colleagues in supporting children and young people with SEND

Respondents in most districts scored the impact of the support received on their confidence at or near the highest score. This was slightly lower for secondary settings in F&H and Sevenoaks, however the score was still positive in these districts.

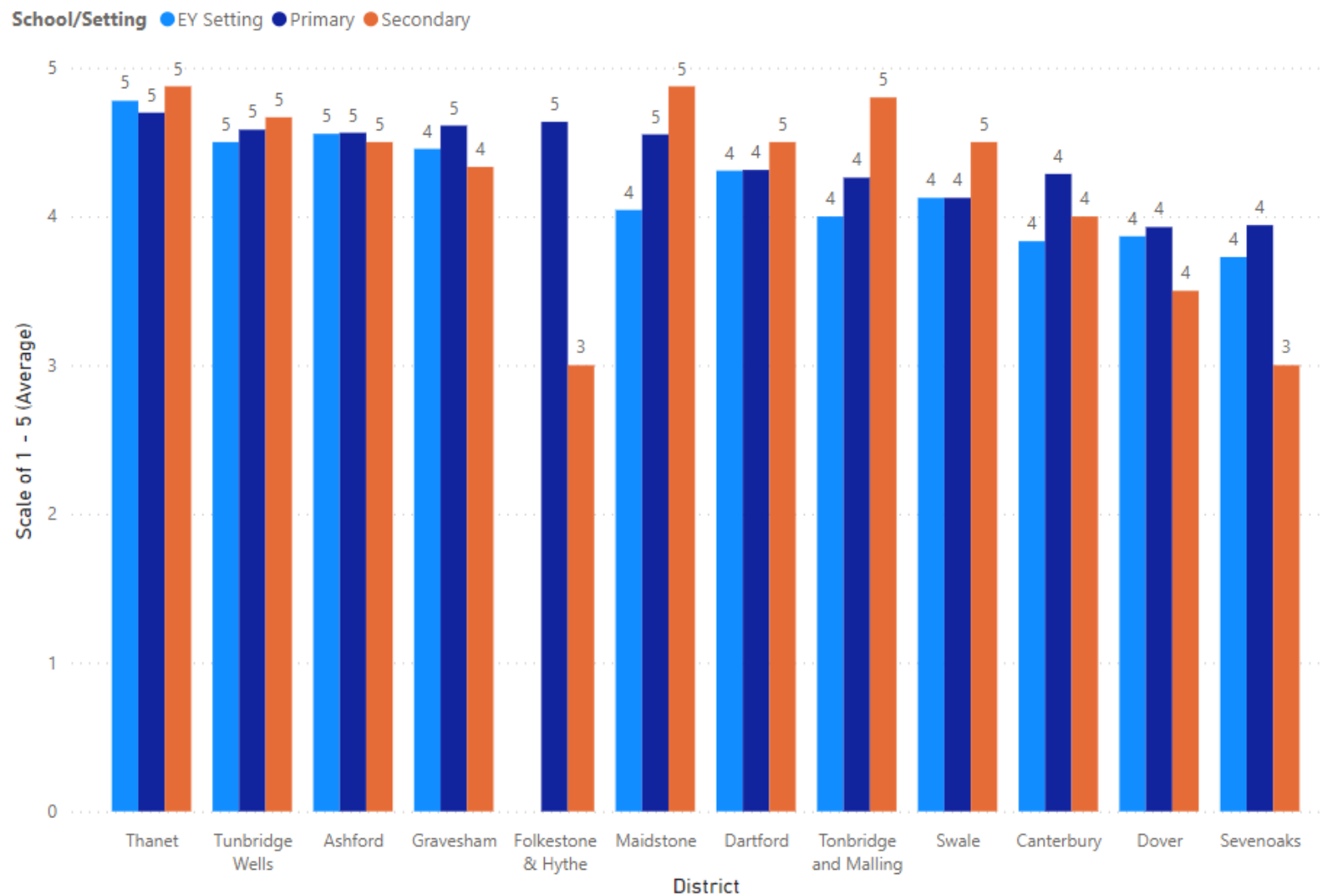


Figure 18: Impact of the support received in relation to outcomes identified for children and young people with SEND

All cohorts across all districts were positive about STLS support in relation to outcomes.

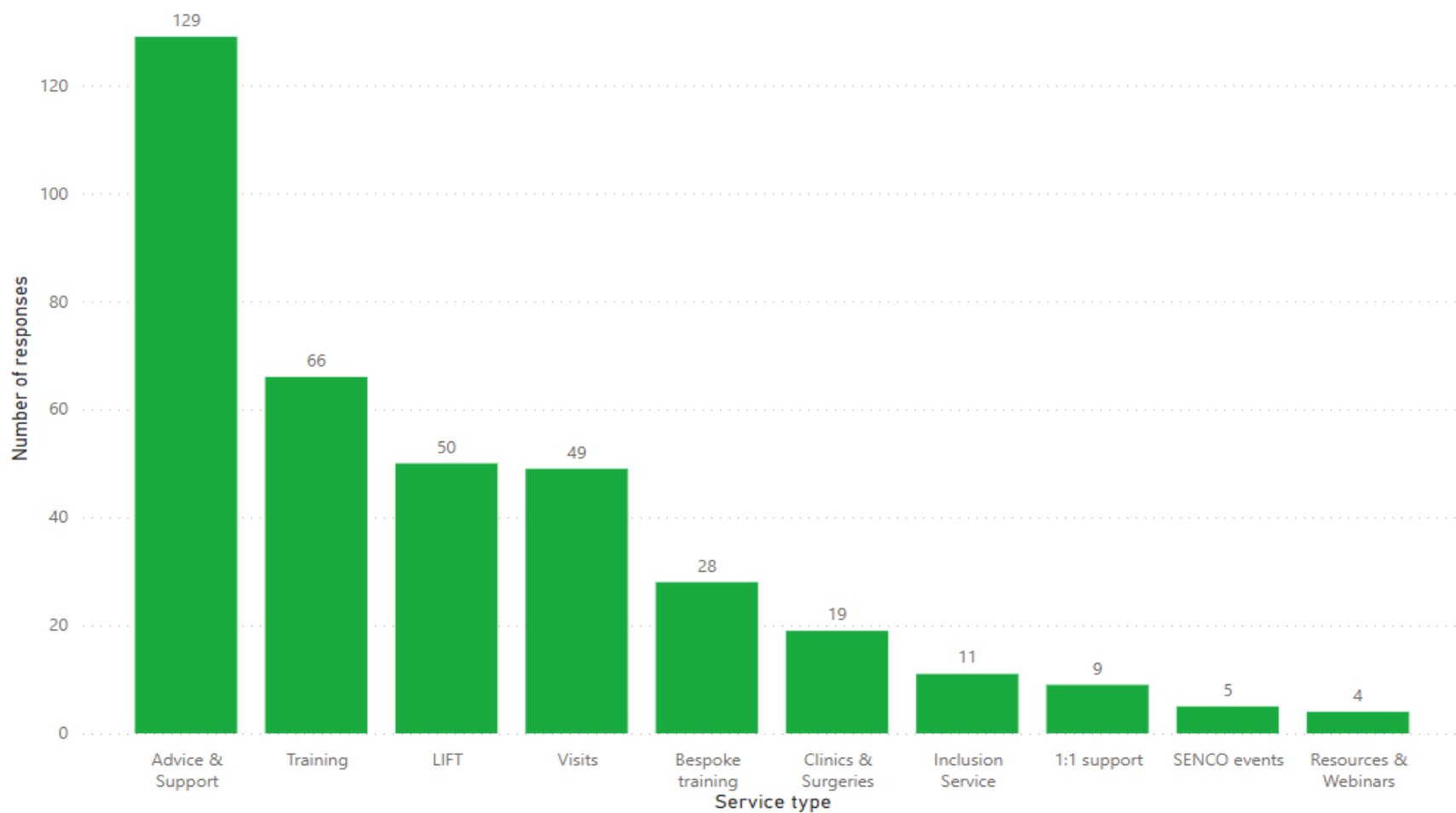


Figure 19: Top 10 services benefiting inclusive practice received by school / setting

Respondents were asked to tell us which services provided by STLS benefited their inclusive practice the most. It is evident that SENCOs value advice and guidance above all other types of support. One-to-one support is the 8th most valued service provided.

Average score of the quality of support received by number of responses per role, per cohort.

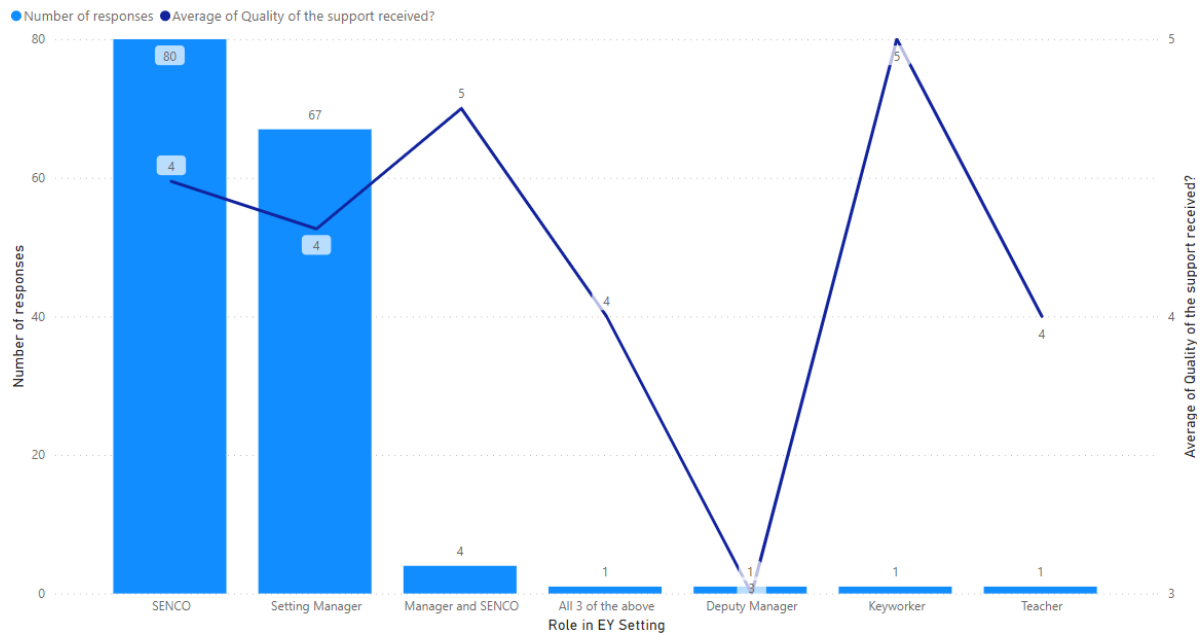


Figure 20: Average score of the quality of support received by number of responses (per role within EY Setting)

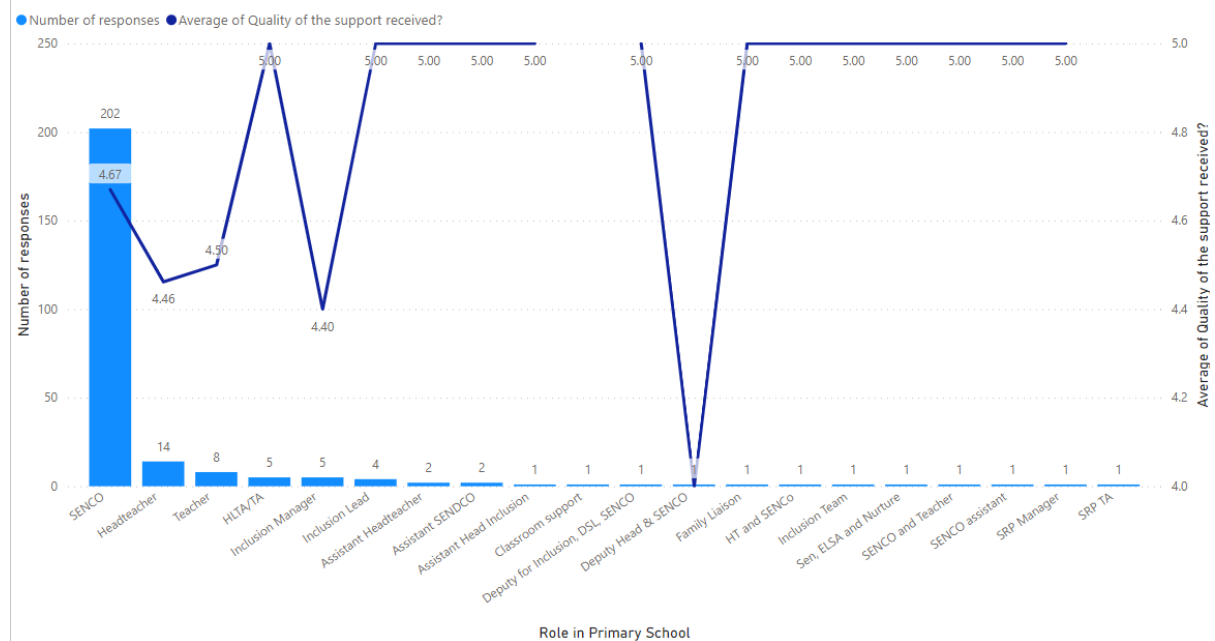


Figure 21: Average score of the quality of support received by number of responses (per role within primary school)

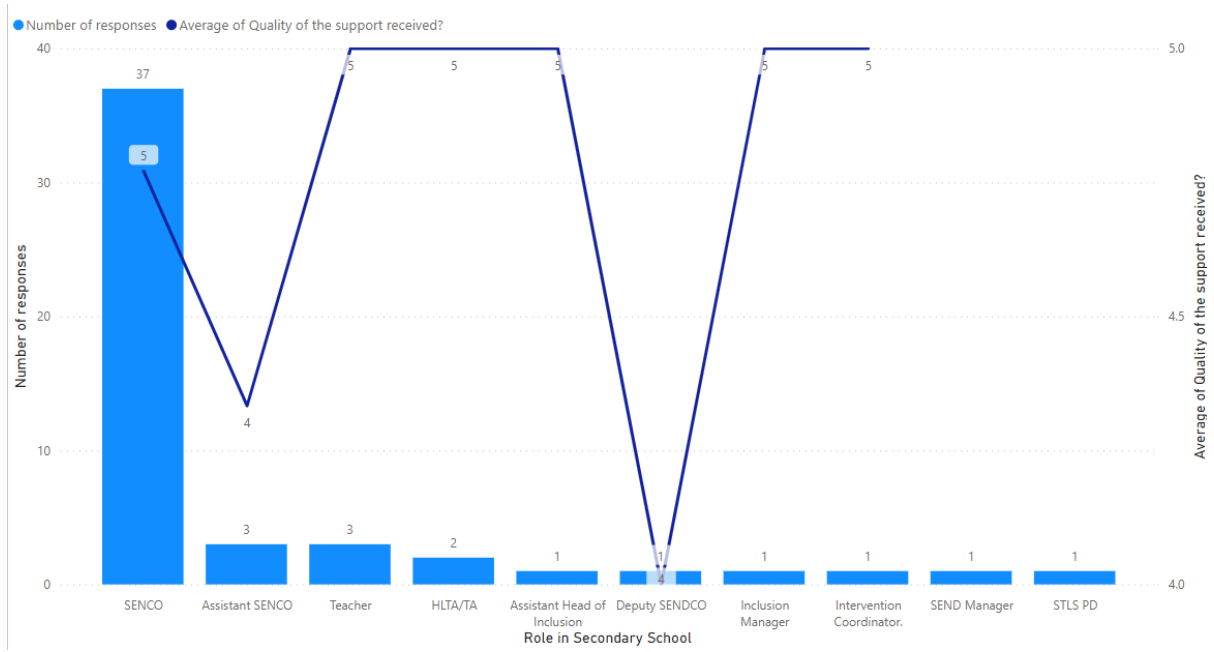


Figure 22: Average score of the quality of support received by number of responses (per role within secondary school)



Children, Young People and Education

Children's Commissioning Team

SPECIALIST TEACHING AND LEARNING SERVICE IMPACT SURVEY – APRIL 2024

The current Specialist Teaching and Learning Service (STLS) has a 3-year Service Level Agreement (SLA) in place. The SLA commenced in September 2022 and is now approximately halfway through its full term. The STLS has been working towards Council priorities and is referenced in the Accelerated Progress Plan (APP) which has been produced to address nine areas of weakness identified by Ofsted in relation to the overall system approach towards provision for children with SEND in Kent.

A previous survey provided valuable feedback into how the service is viewed by schools. Respondents to that survey indicated that the service had impact on children and young people. This survey has been developed to understand in more detail what that impact is. The survey commenced 15th March and ended 26th April 2024. All questions were provided to the STLS prior to publication for consideration and comment and amendments were made to reflect these.

Due to a technical issue, the survey had to be issued twice. A total of 485 people responded, with 138 education colleagues answering the first survey before it was closed, and 347 responding to the second version. The contents of both surveys were the same and most data from the first survey was recovered. The data from both versions of the survey was then amalgamated for each question. Where the data could not be amalgamated, the data from the second survey has been used in this report, due to the higher number of respondents. This is referenced through the report where relevant.

Respondents to the survey were asked to respond specifically in reference to their experience of support from the district STLS. However, some comments did reference the Sensory and Physical Disability STLS which was bought into the Council in January 2023. Where possible this has been noted in the report and relevant feedback shared with the Head of Service for that team.

Part one: Respondents

Question 1: Which STLS team is your school or early years setting covered by?

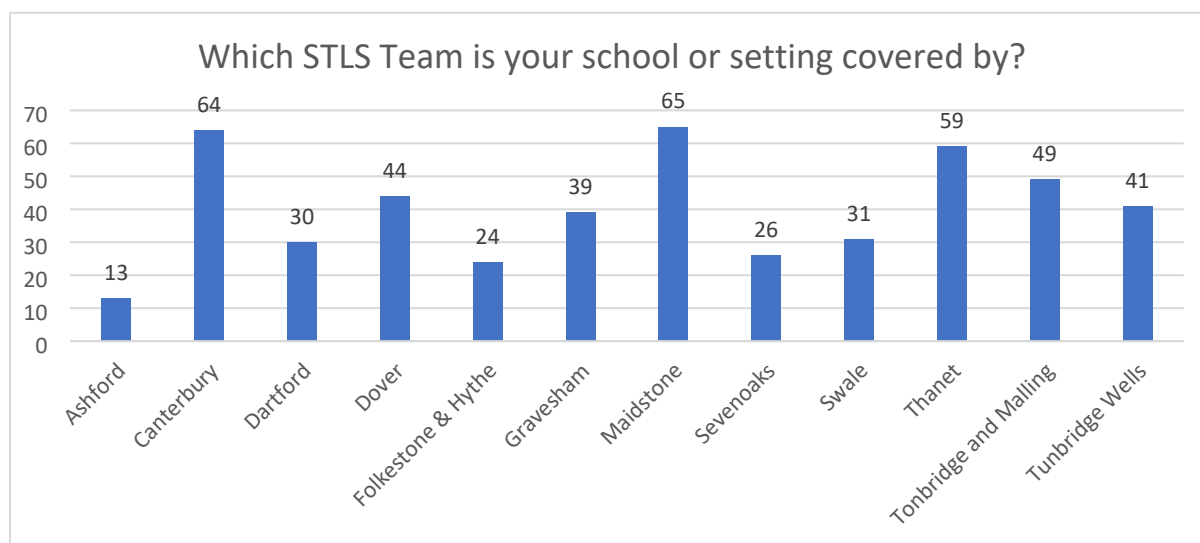


Figure 1: distribution of respondents

Maidstone, Canterbury and Thanet were the districts with the majority of respondents, and Ashford the least.

Question 2: School or setting

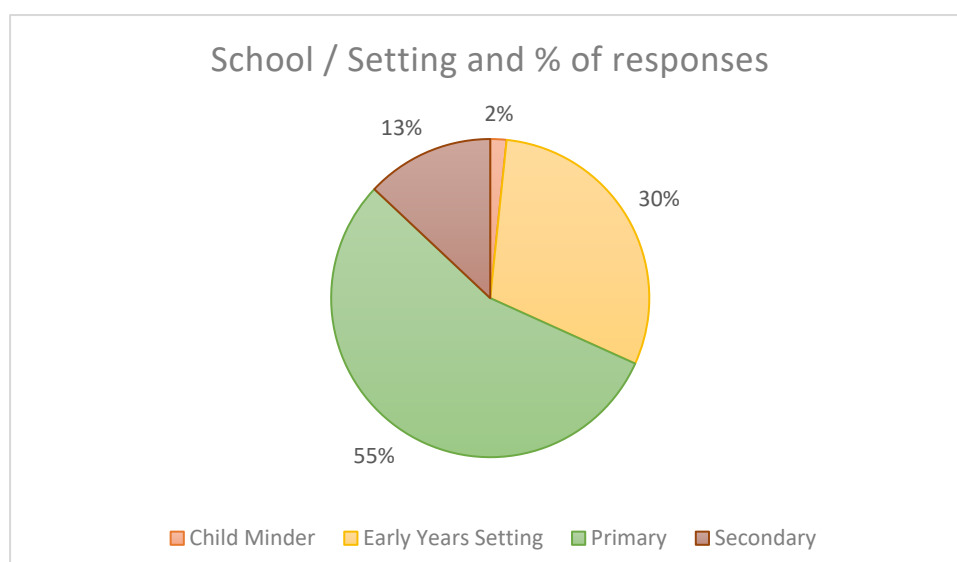


Figure 2: Distribution of responses by school or setting

Performance information from the Local Activity Report indicates that on average STLS engage with more primary schools than early years settings or secondary schools; engaging with approximately 80% of early years settings, 100% primary schools and 88% secondary schools on average each term.

This is reflected in the level of responses to the survey with more than half of the responses coming from primary schools, 30% of responses from early years settings and 13% from

secondary schools. This equates to 54% of all primary schools, 20% of early years settings and 36% secondary schools in Kent participating in the survey.

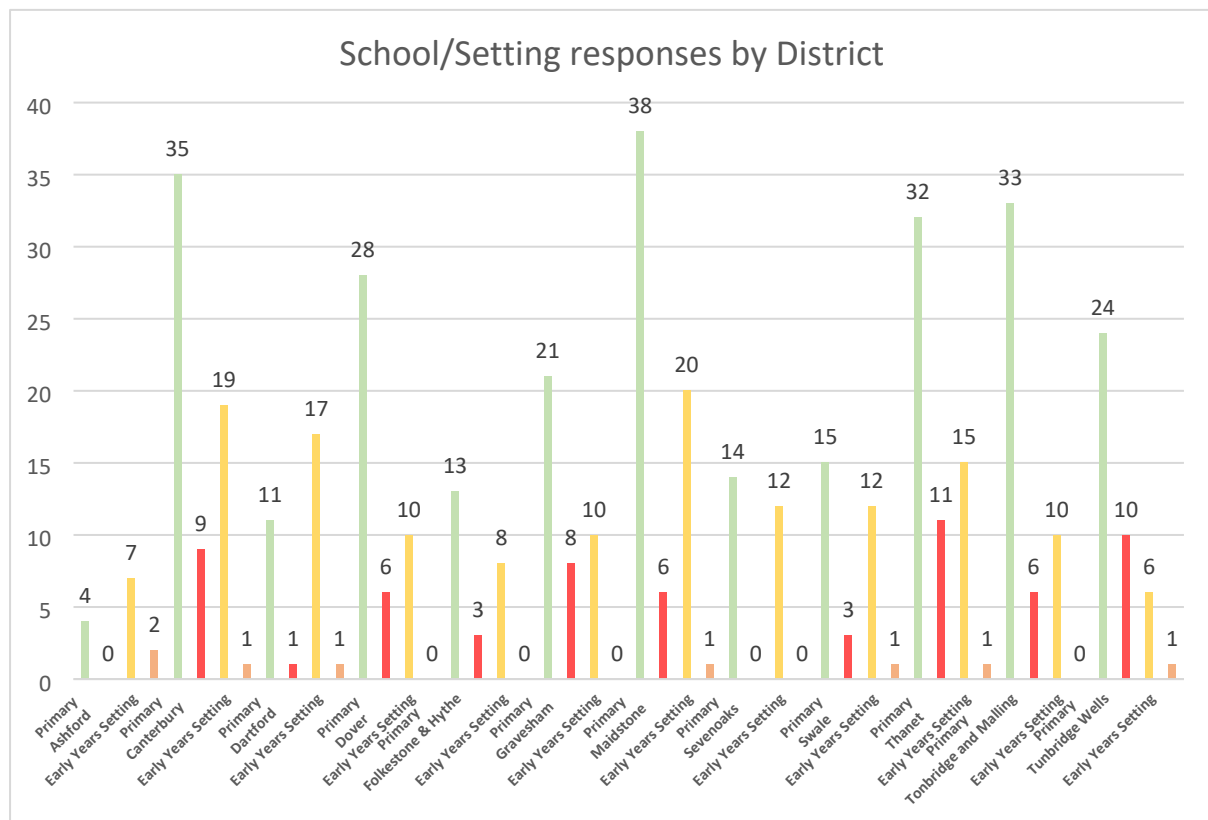


Figure 3: Distribution of responses by school or setting by district

In most districts the highest response rate was from primary schools, which is to be expected given the higher number of primary schools per district compared to secondary schools. Ashford and Dartford had more respondents from early years settings.

No secondary schools responded from Ashford or Sevenoaks.

Question 3: Role in school or setting

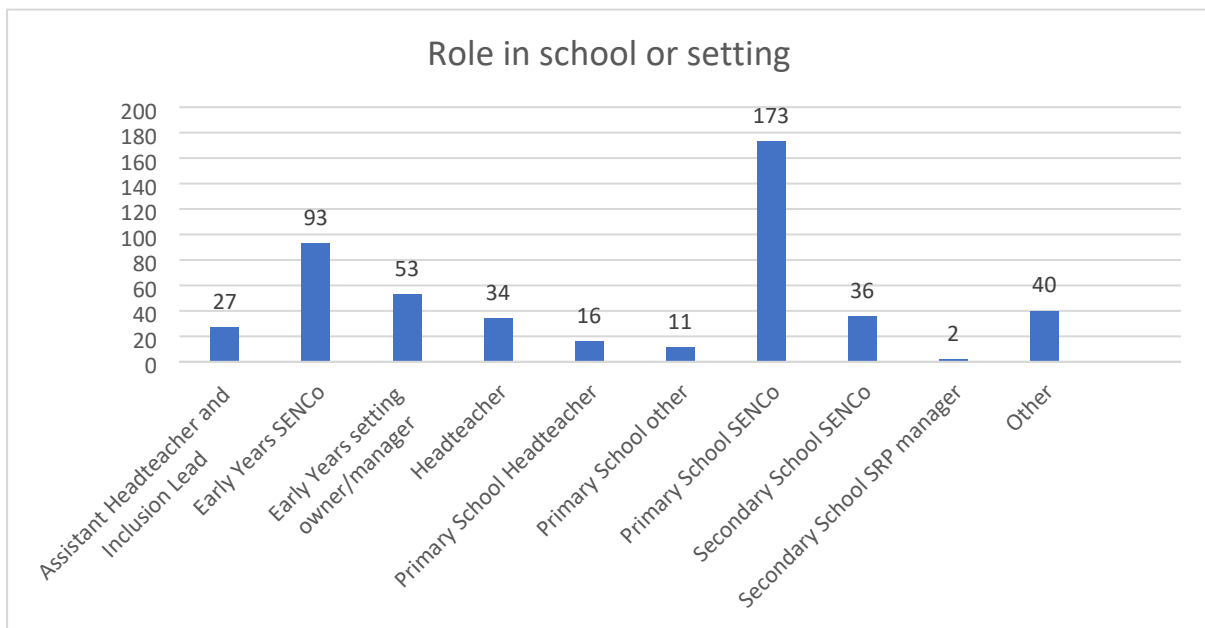


Figure 4: role in school or setting

36% of responses were from Primary School SENCos, followed by 19% from Early Years SENCos, reinforcing that SENCos are primary point of contact within schools for the service.

Question 4: Is your school or setting maintained, an academy or a Private, Voluntary or Independent (PVI) setting?

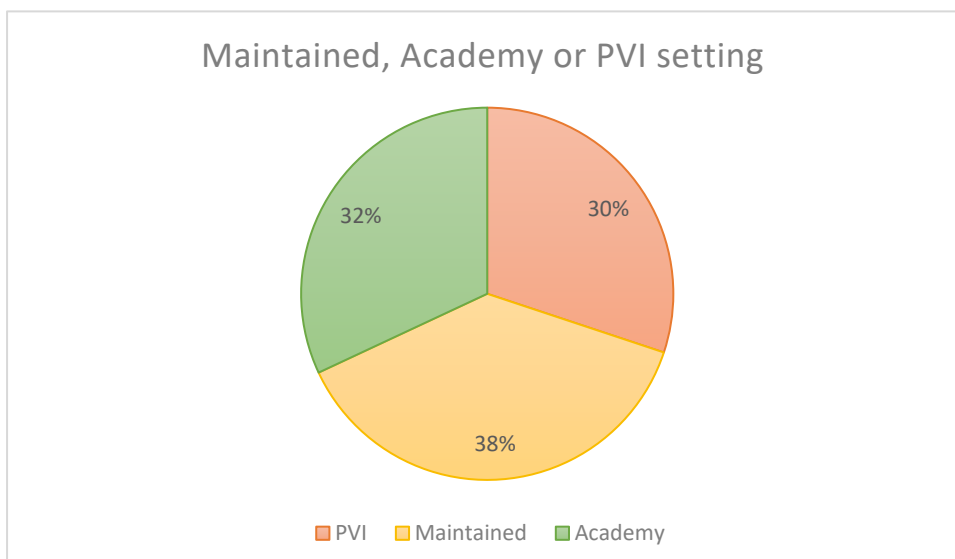


Figure 5: Maintained, Academy or PVI setting

There was an even spread of respondents from each sector, with a small majority coming from maintained schools and settings.

Question 5: Has your school or setting received support from STLS during the academic year 2023-24?

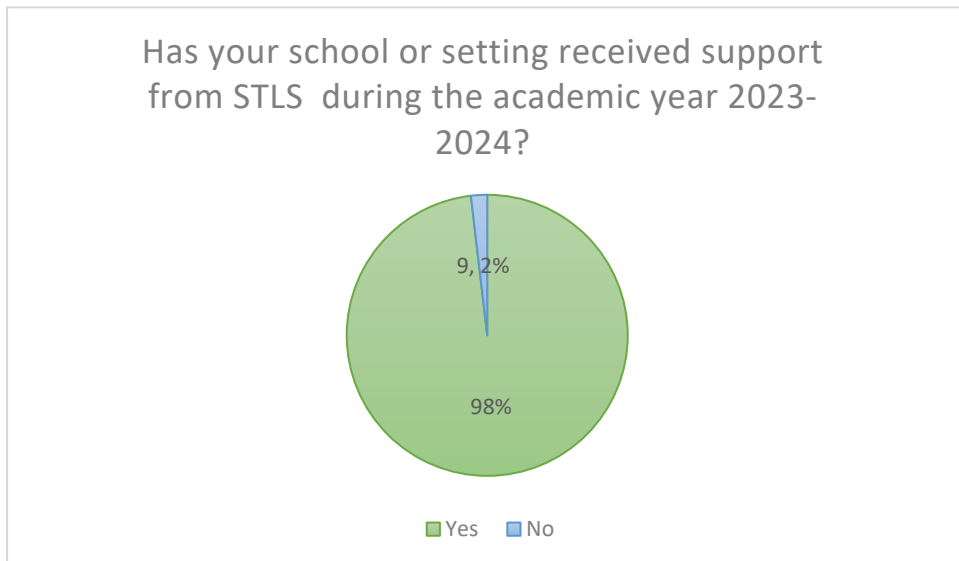


Figure 6: School or setting received support in academic year 2023-24.

98% of respondents had received support from STLS during 2023-24.

Part Two: Support

Question 6: Which services or support have you received?

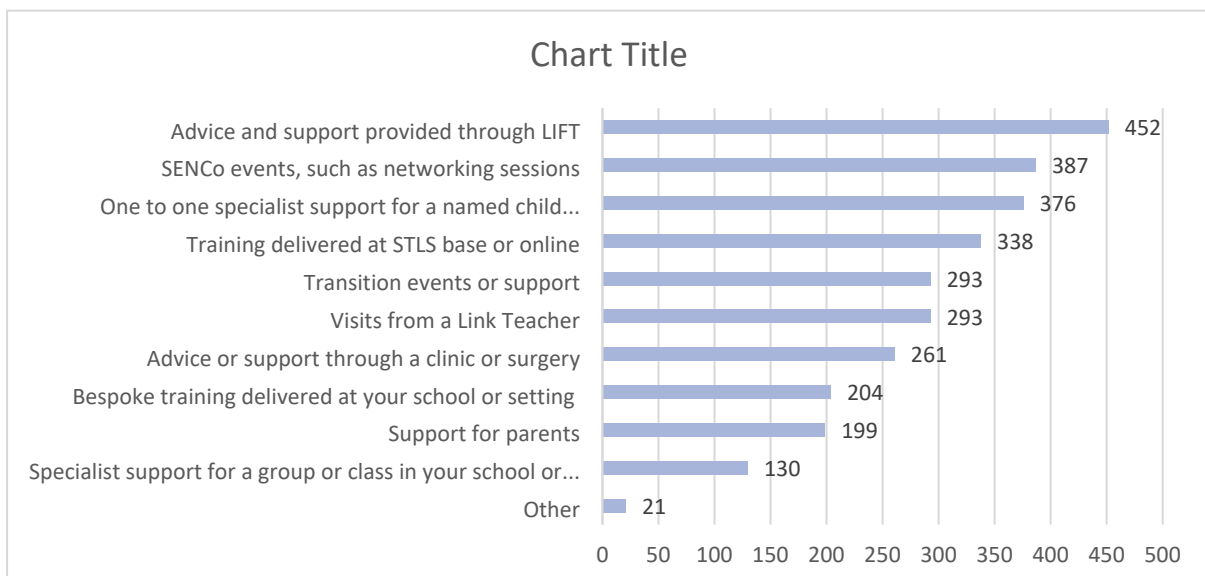


Figure 7: Which services or support have you received?

Respondents were asked to select from a list of services and support that STLS have told us that they provide.

The service most accessed was advice and support provided through Local Inclusion Forum Team (LIFT). LIFT offers advice and support to SENCOs and is the referral route for the allocation of a specialist teacher.

Currently, several processes to receive statutory support can only be accessed after referral to a specialist teacher or attendance at LIFT and it is possible that this drives some demand through the LIFT process. These include SENIF funding and SENIF Practitioner support in the Early Years, and access to High Needs Funding (HNF) and Education and Health Care Plans (EHCPs) for school age children. Although attendance at LIFT is not a specified requirement for HNF or EHCPs, the expectation that schools follow best endeavours in meeting a child's need is often associated with fully utilising the local offer which includes LIFT and STLS. Feedback from early years settings and schools indicates that this is a widely held perception and, for an unknown number, LIFT is seen as a tick box exercise. This is evidenced through comments submitted in the survey, including the following comment which was submitted in response to Question 21.

“Have not really had much involvement with STLS. Only go to LIFT to tick boxes for applying for EHCP or SENIF. We are in a collaboration and have our own support.”

Some STLS District Leads have also reported that medical referrals such as to Paediatricians and speech and language support require the child to have been presented at LIFT.

The recommendations from the Early Years review (if implemented) and the proposed model for Localities Model for Special Educational Needs Inclusion will remove most of these requirements and this may have an impact on the number of early years settings and schools attending LIFT.

The second highest area of support identified was networking events. These events often include an element of Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

The third highest element of support accessed by respondents was one-to-one support for a named child. This does not necessarily mean that the specialist teacher was working on a one-to-one basis with the child, but that the respondents received advice, guidance and support in relation to that named child. This support may have included an observation of the child in their mainstream setting, advice for the SENCO about techniques or strategies to support the child and setting of targets for the child to work towards. Initial visits would be flexibly followed up with a visit or phone call to establish progress or provide further advice.

Question 7: Did you implement the advice, training or strategies?



Figure 8: Implementation of advice, training or strategies

99% of respondents answered yes to this question. Quotes outlining the benefits and positive outcomes that the service delivers can be found in Part 3 of this report.

Canterbury had two respondents who replied 'no', and Dover, Maidstone, Thanet and Tonbridge and Malling each had one respondent who stated that they had not implemented the advice given. As with any service, it is important to understand the reasons that people may have for not accessing it or following through with the support provided. For this reason, respondents who identified that they had not implemented the training or strategies provided where asked to explain why. Responses to this question are outlined below.

Question 8: If you answered 'no' to question 7, please explain why not

Key Quotes:

"As an Alternative provision we take students from 8 schools in the surrounding area. Some of these students come to us having been to LIFT and some are open to STLS. When I have tried to get STLS support for those who are open, I have been told the strategies only work in mainstream school or that we are too far away from the home school for STLS support to visit. I have also tried to take a couple of students who have been with us for a long time to LIFT to engage STLS support, but again was told that it would not be appropriate for students at an AP. This is a real shame as many of our students would benefit from STLS support."

"As schools now have several children who need bespoke support, we are well-equipped to put in strategies ourselves (and we often have to as the wait time to get a visit from STLS is too long). The ideas that STLS are suggesting can be a little out-dated and not thinking of the teacher having to teach a class of 30. The ideas often require 1:1 facilitation, or at best small group work - this requires a full-time TA which schools cannot afford, so then HNF requests need to be made - it is a vicious circle. STLS just feel like a specialist teaching service more aimed at special settings and not mainstream."

We also had generic and bespoke training which was awful - just reading from a PowerPoint (that despite us paying considerably for the session they were reluctant to share the resource with us!). We didn't implement this as again, we had already been doing it and it taught us nothing new."

"The recommendations were things that we were already implementing within the setting. There were far too many and some unrealistic targets within the setting. Feel that the report could mislead parents into thinking that we were not supporting the child at all. We felt we needed to go through this report with the parent to explain."

Part three: Impact

To understand what is meant by 'impact' respondents were asked to rank the support that they had received on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 is strongly disagree and 5 is strongly agree) in terms of the following measures. Due to the method used to undertake the survey it was not possible to specify what was meant by a score of "3", for example neither agree nor disagree. Therefore, a score of 3 has been taken as an "average" score and is considered a positive "agree" response.

The following statement preceded the impact questions and recognised that the STLS is one of a several support services available to schools. "STLS is a consistent service across the county. There is some inconsistency across the county with regard to the support services for children with SEN. This is particularly noticeable in the level of health services available. Services provided by the Council, for example: Kent Educational Psychologists, are more consistent. As such, the work of the service contributes to the achievement of these outcomes for children and young people in Kent rather than being responsible for them."

In relation to each question, the total number of respondents answering for each number (one to five) is shown as well as average score per district. The latter being to understand the degree of variation across the county.

STLS is part of a whole system of Inclusion support available to schools. Of the support you have received from STLS, how would you rate their impact in contributing to the following measures?

Question 9: Your school or setting is more able to provide support to a child or a group of children with SEN without the need for an EHCP.

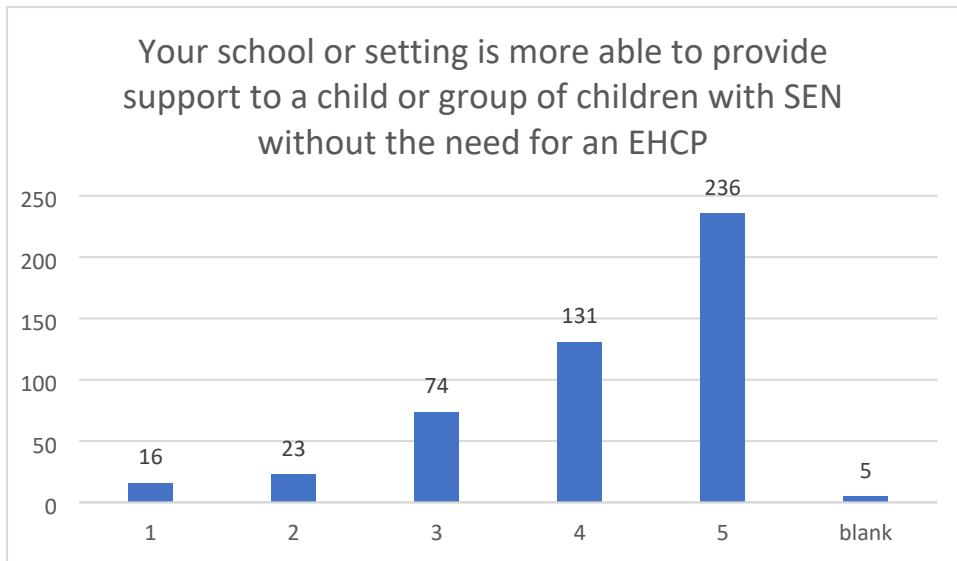


Figure 9: More able to support a child without the need for an EHCP

Most respondents across Kent schools and settings answered positively to this question with 76% of respondents scoring 4 or above.

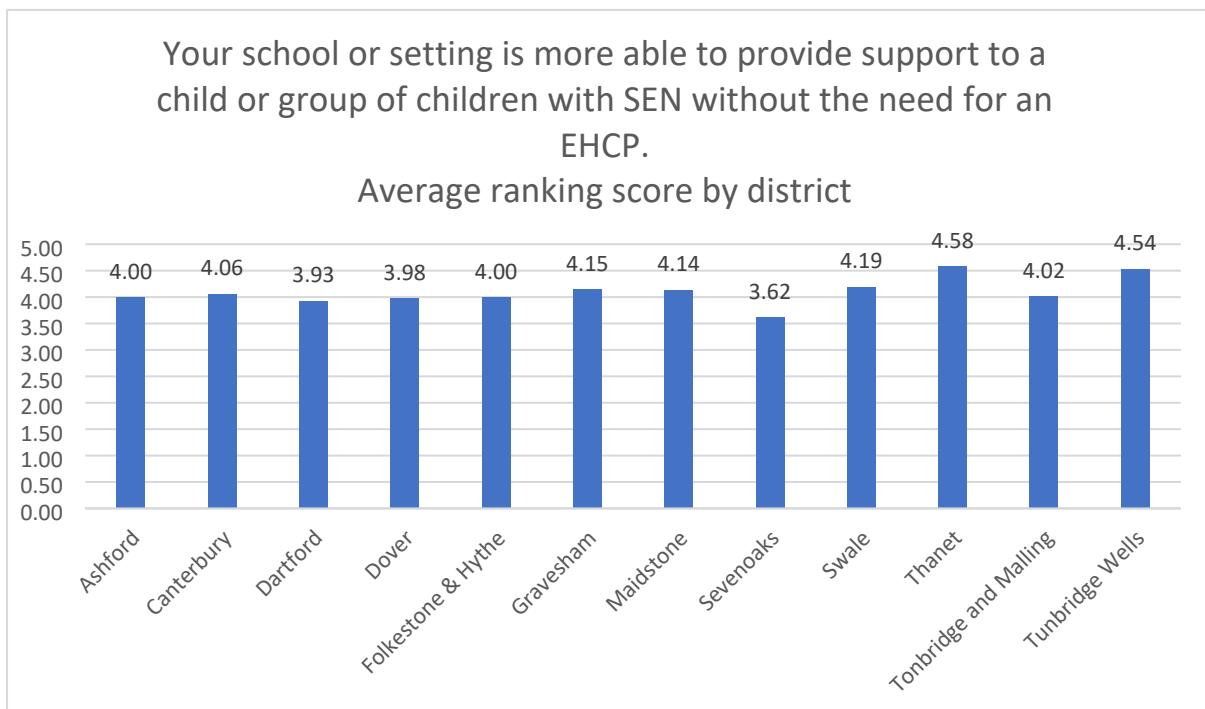


Figure 10: More able to support a child without the need for an EHCP – average ranking by district

Thanet had the highest score for this impact measure at an average of 4.58 out of a maximum of 5, closely followed by Tunbridge Wells at 4.54. The lowest score was for Sevenoaks, with a score of 3.62. The difference being 0.92.

Question 10: Your school or setting is more able to support children with an EHCP to progress towards targets.

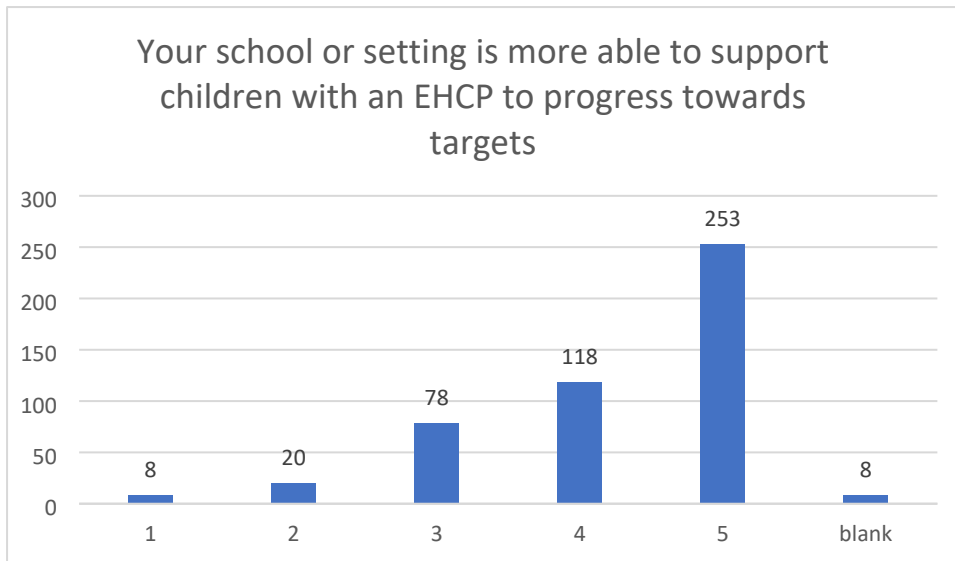


Figure 11: more able to support children with an EHCP to progress

Again, the general response to this question was positive, with 76% of respondents scoring 4 or above on this measure.

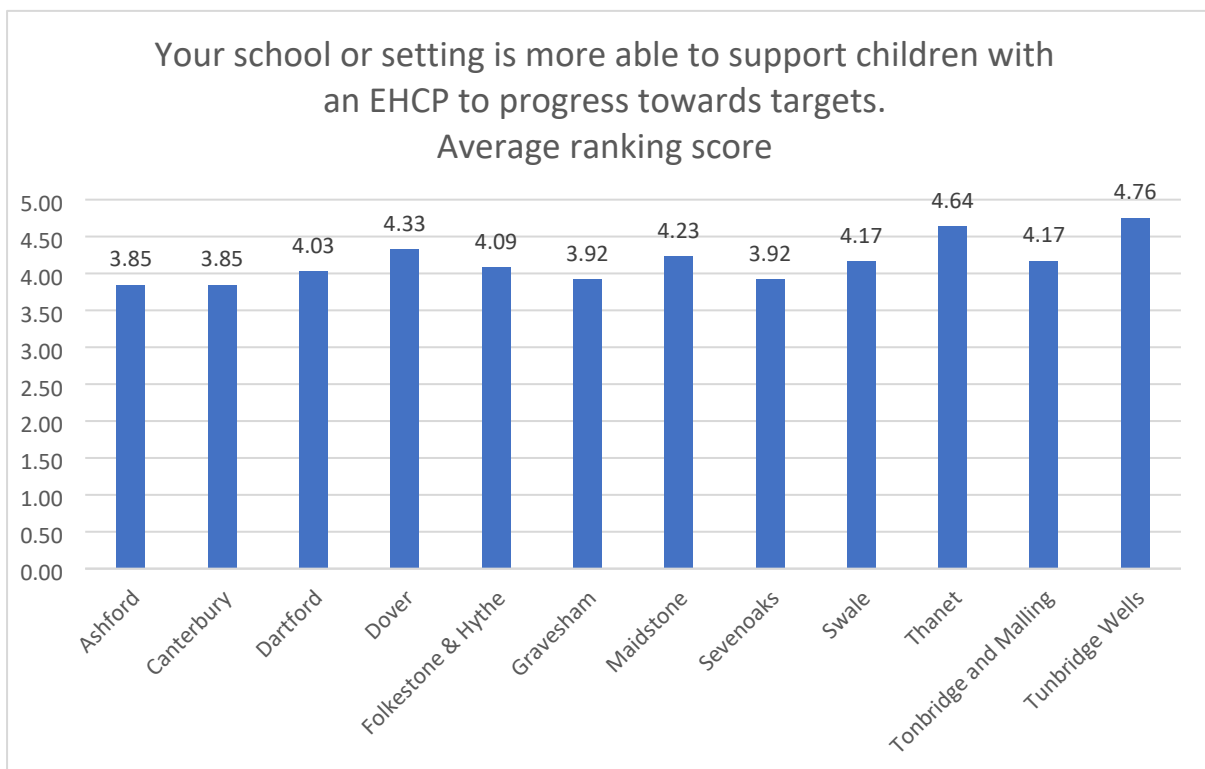


Figure 12: more able to support children with an EHCP to progress – average ranking by district

The highest scoring district for the response to this impact measure was Tunbridge Wells, with an average ranking of 4.76, followed by Thanet at 4.64. Ashford and Canterbury were the lowest ranking districts, with an average score of 3.85 each. The difference being 0.91.

Question 11: There has been a reduction in part-time timetables (If you are replying as an early years setting, this applies to children accessing their full entitlement)

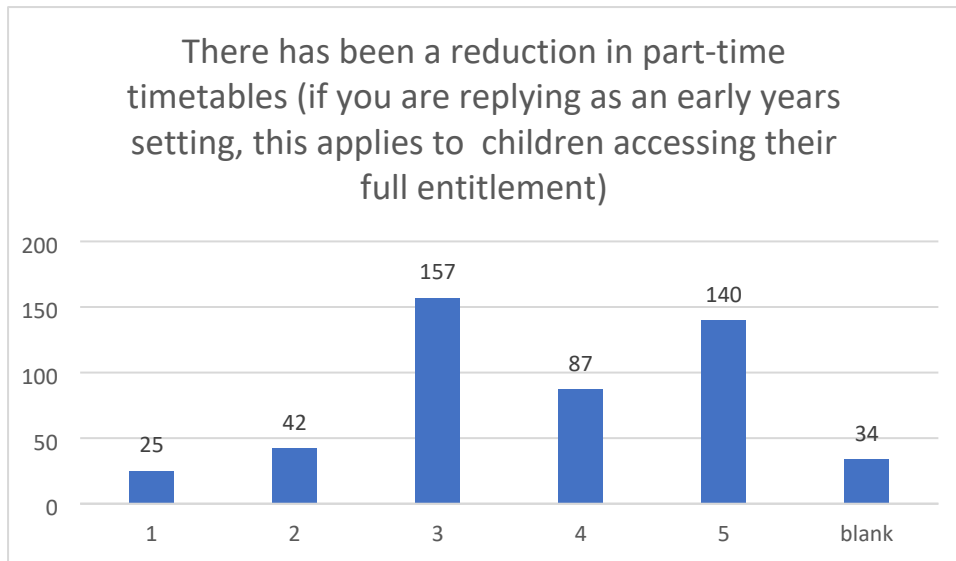


Figure 11: Reduction in part-time timetables

The response to this question was more varied and reflects the fact that there are several factors impacting on a child’s attendance in education. Some feedback provided has stated that a part-time timetable may indicate a positive step for a child who may not have previously been attending at all. This measure had the highest rate of “disagree” responses (14%) and the highest number of “average” responses (32%).

The positive impact against this measure is indicated in the quote below, submitted in response to Question 17, but specifically referencing the impact of the service on part-time timetables.

“The support from STLS has meant that from 10 reduced timetables, we went to 0 within a space of 1.5 years. Their reduced timetable package has supported us to refine our practise and structure children's reintegration. Their SEMH and C&I training and packages enabled the school to introduce the Zones of Regulation and Colourful Semantics, impacting then entire school and not just individual children. Our SEND offer has become more inclusive following the guidance and support of the specialist teachers from STLS.”

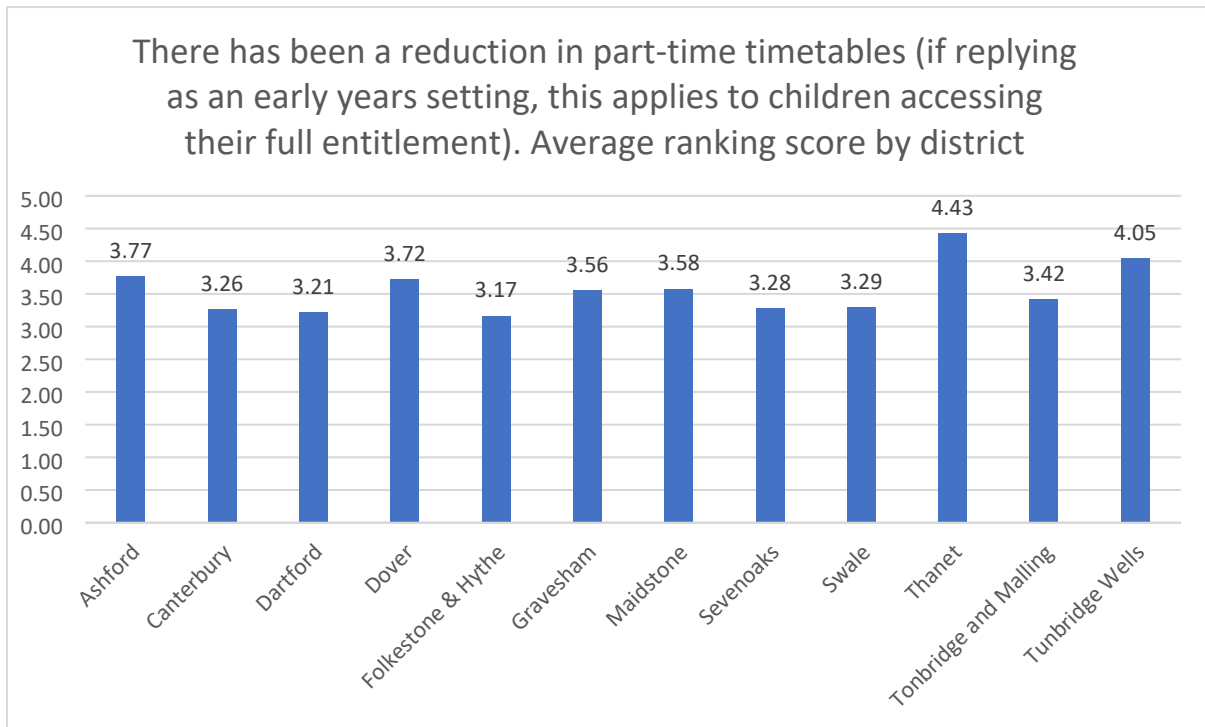


Figure 12: Reduction in part-time timetables – average ranking by district

The district averages on this measure reflect the more mixed countywide response. The distribution across the county is mixed, with the higher ranking of 4.43 out of 5 in Thanet, and the lower ranking of 3.17 in Folkstone and Hythe. The difference being 1.26.

Question 12: There is a clearer idea of destination for a child or a group of children (by destination we mean where the child or group of children go once they leave their current education provision)

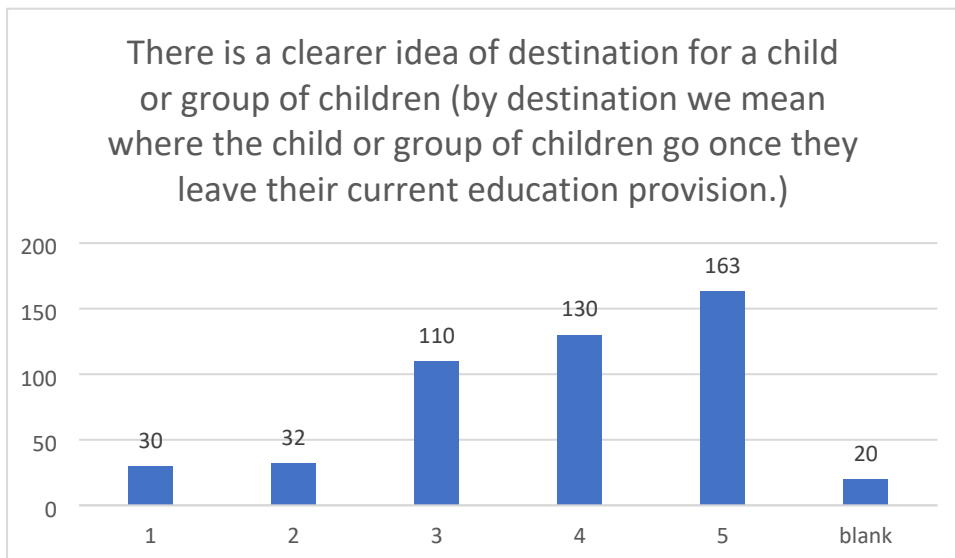


Figure 13: Idea of destination for a child or group of children

Although mostly positive, the responses to this question were more mixed, and there was some feedback that not all respondents understood the concept of 'destination' and this has influenced the distribution of responses.

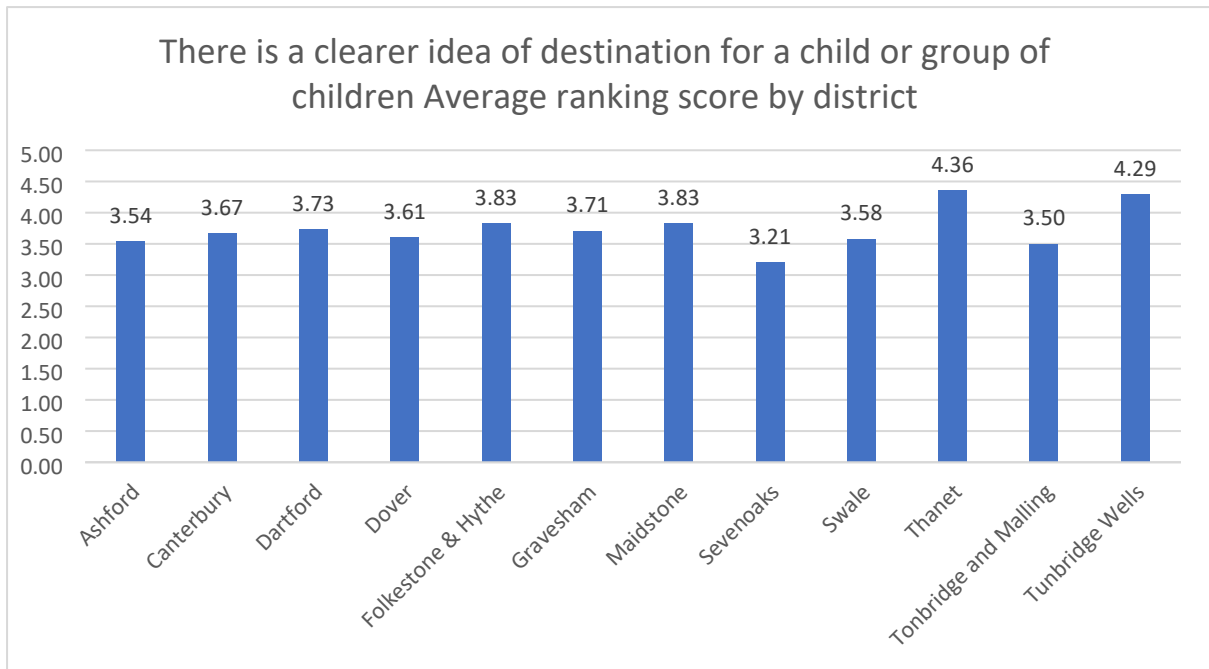


Figure 14: Idea of destination for a child or group of children – average ranking by district

Results for this impact measure are consistent across the county, with all scores above 3, and scores above 4 two districts. The difference between the highest and lowest average score being 1.15 which is the largest variation of average scores across the districts across all impact measures.

Question 13: There has been an improvement in learning outcomes/developmental progress and/or academic attainment in children with SEN.

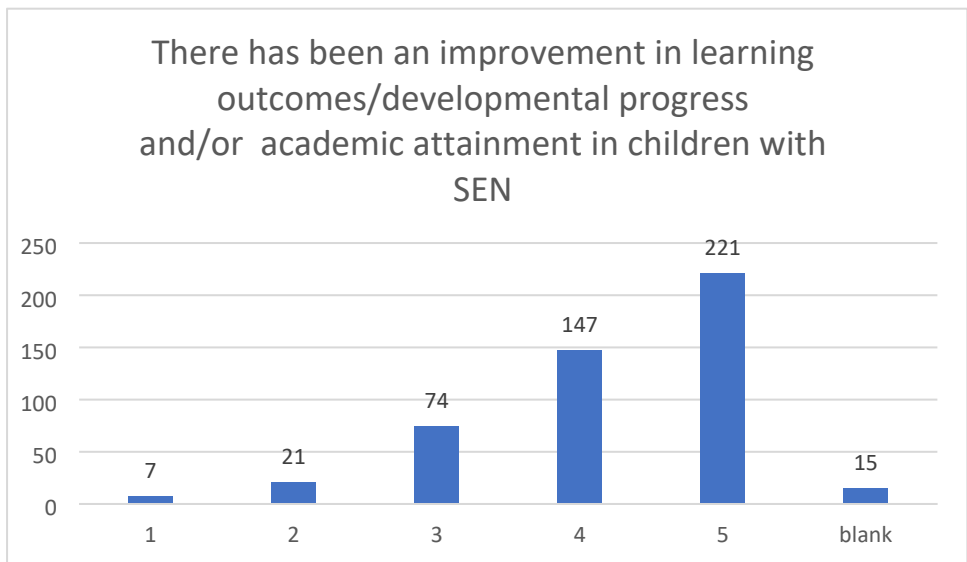


Figure 15: Improvement in learning outcomes/developmental progress and/or academic attainment in children with SEN

76% respondents submitted a score of 4 or above in relation to this outcome.

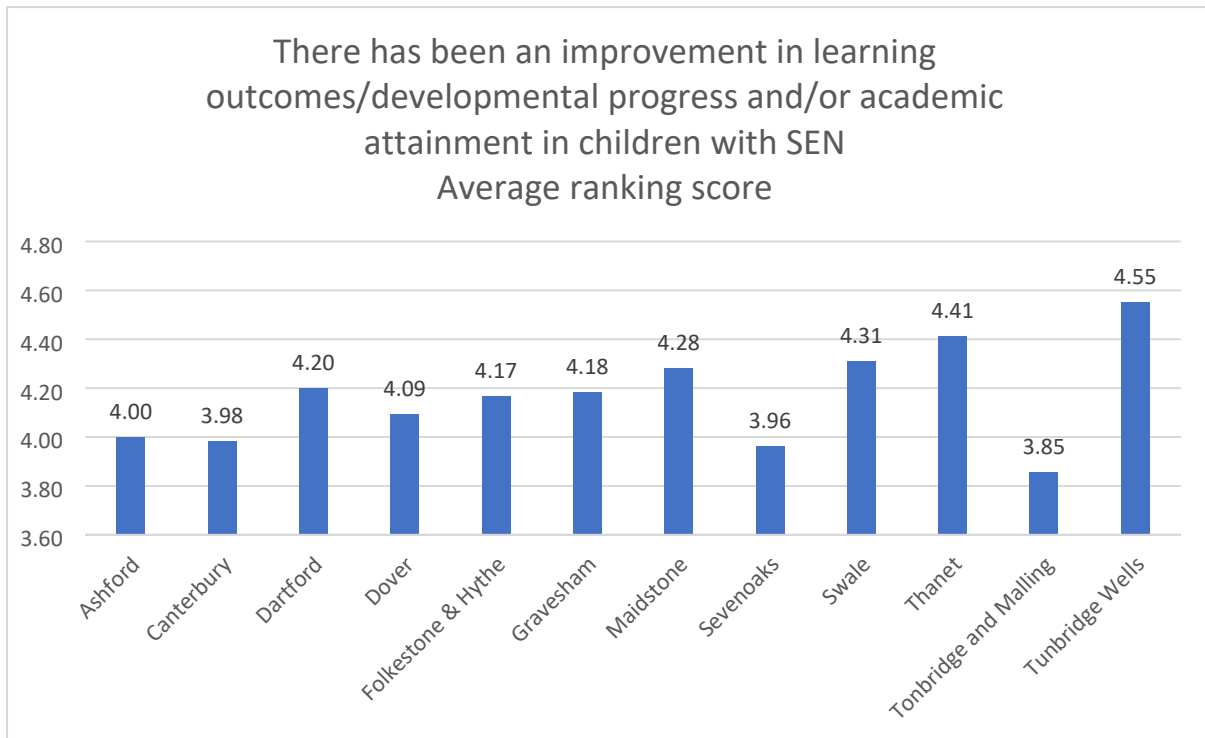


Figure 16: Improvement in learning outcomes/developmental progress and/or academic attainment in children with SEN – average ranking by district

Again, scores were overwhelmingly positive in relation to this measure with all districts receiving an average score of 3 (average) or above and 75% receiving an average score of 4 or above. The difference between the highest and lowest average score was 0.7.

Question 14: Children feel more able to be the best they can be in school or setting

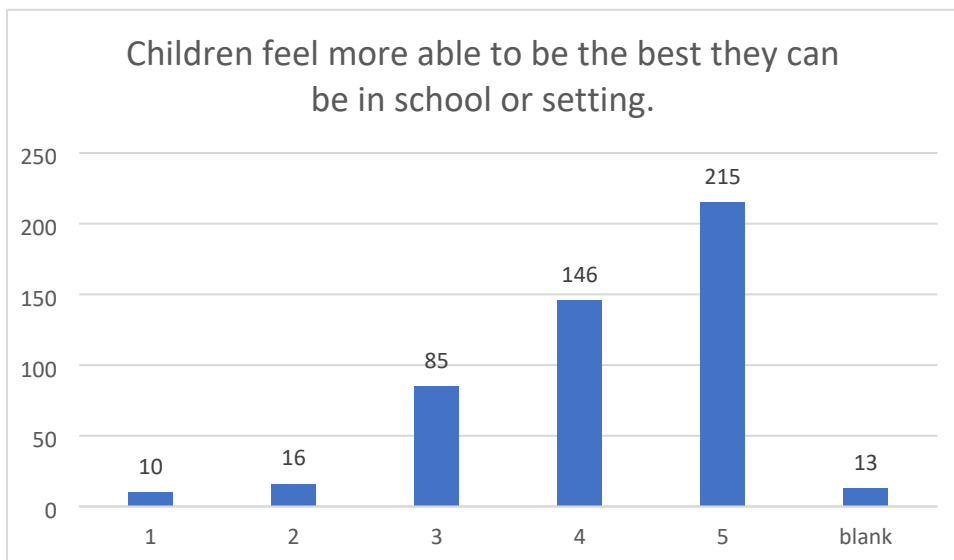


Figure 17: Children feel more able to be the best they can be in school or setting

74% responses to this impact measure were 4 or above, although there was some feedback that this is a subjective measure with many impacting factors.

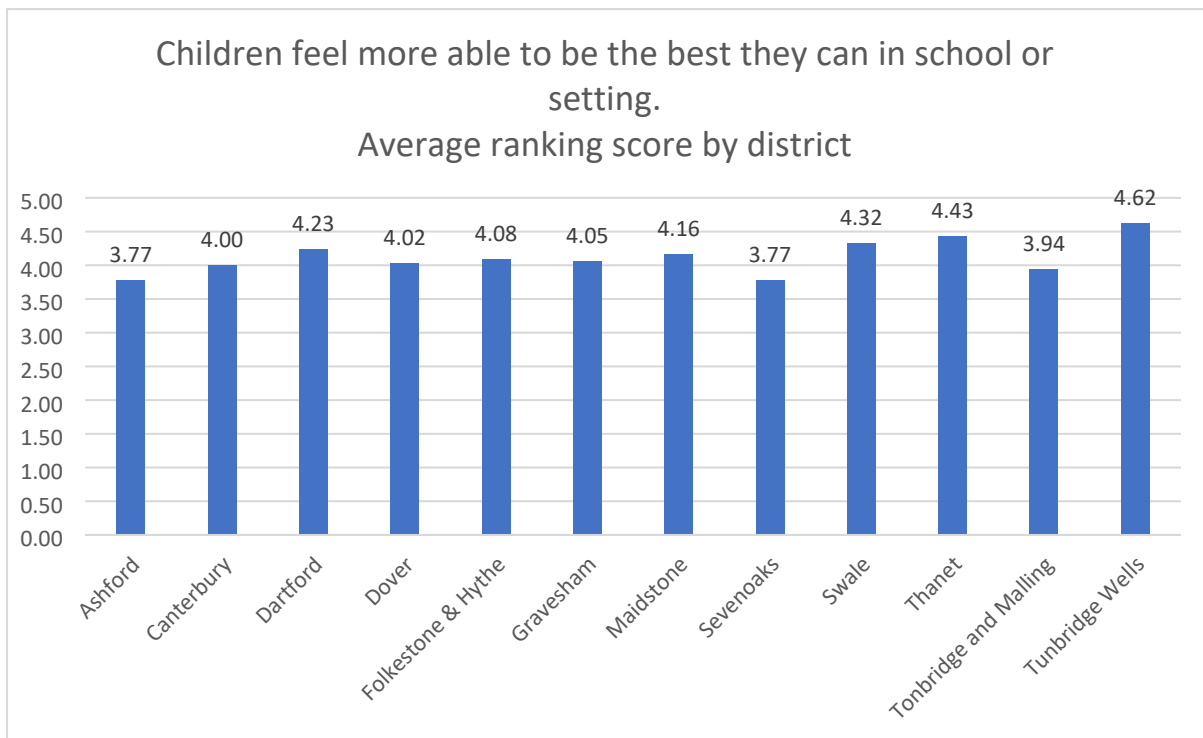


Figure 18: Children feel more able to be the best they can be in school or setting – average ranking by district

In terms of district averages, all districts scored 3.77 or above on this impact measure. The difference between the highest and lowest average being 0.85.

Question 15: Parents are more confident in your school / setting's ability to meet the needs of their child with SEN.

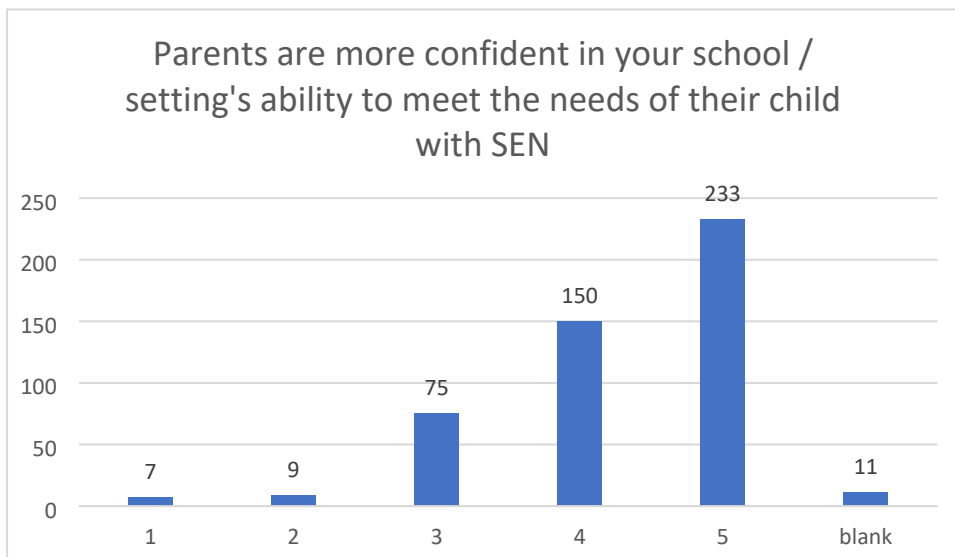


Figure 19: Parents are more confident in your school / setting's ability to meet the needs of their child with SEN

This survey was not aimed at parents, and so this response reflects the opinion of the school representative completing it.

Of the impact measures, this area of impact received the most above average scores with 79% respondents scoring four or above .

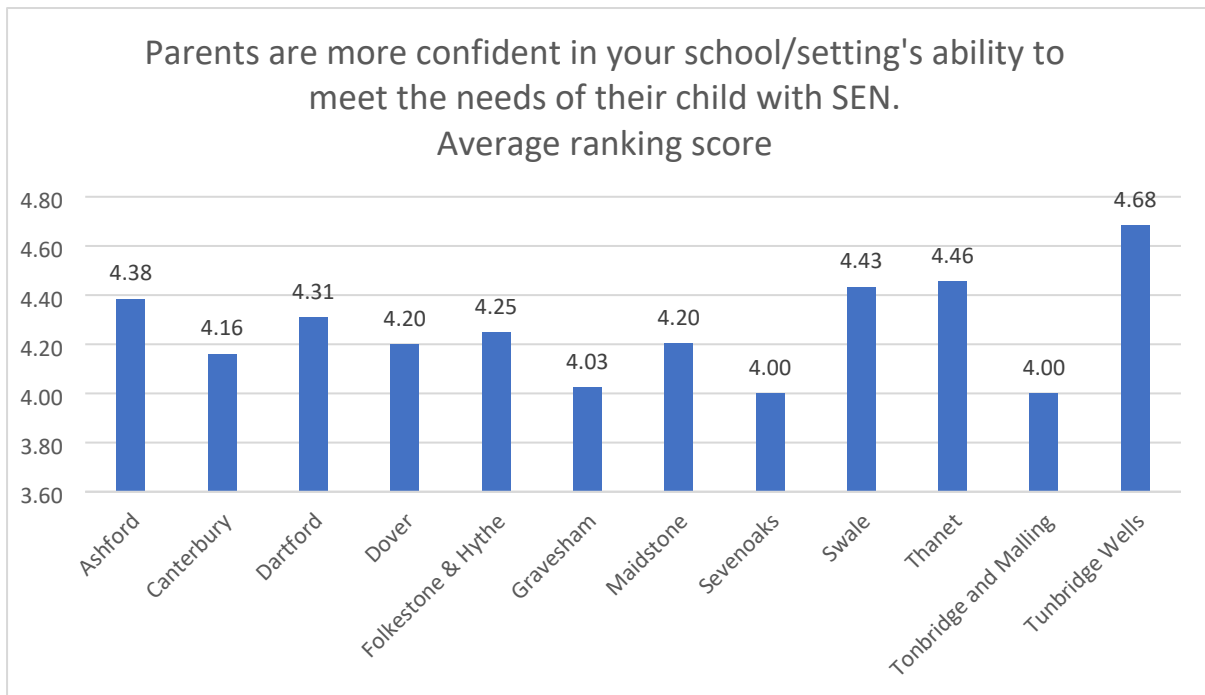


Figure 20: Parents are more confident in your school / setting's ability to meet the needs of their child with SEN – average ranking by district

Again, there was some variation across districts with all scoring 4 or above on average and a difference of 0.68 between the highest and lowest average score.

Respondents were asked further questions to clarify which support they most valued in terms of impact on inclusion. Where there were narrative questions, these have been themed and ranked.

Question 16: Of the support you received, please rank their benefit to inclusive practice in your school or setting by dragging and dropping the selection below – with the top item having the most benefit and the bottom the least.

Of the support you received, please rank their benefit to inclusive practice in your school or setting by dragging and dropping the selection below - with the top item having the most benefit and the bottom the least.

- 1 One to one specialist support for a named child provided in the school or setting
- 2 Advice and support provided through LIFT
- 3 Visits from a Link Teacher
- 4 Training delivered at STLS base or online
- 5 SENCo events, such as networking sessions
- 6 Advice or support through a clinic or surgery
- 7 Bespoke training delivered in your school or setting
- 8 Specialist support for a group or class in your school or setting
- 9 Transition events or support
- 10 Support for parents

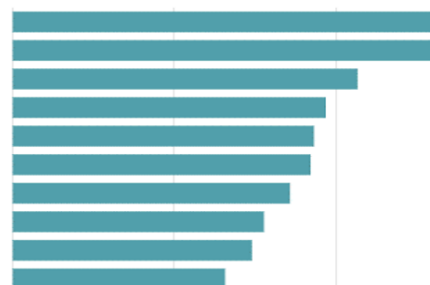


Figure 21: Support ranked in order of benefit to inclusive practice.

One to one specialist support for a named child in the school or setting and Advice and support provided through LIFT were reported to have the most benefit to inclusive practice in the school or setting. The third most popular item: Visits from a link teacher, has been interpreted differently as not all districts have link teachers. In those districts, the advice given to SENCOs from STLS who they had asked for clarification on this question were told by the service to interpret a 'link teacher' as a visit to the school by a specialist teacher.

Transition events or support was ranked as the 9th most impactful, just above support for parents. Not all districts offer support to parents which may have impacted on that measure; however all districts support with phase transition.

Question 17: Please explain why you chose the highest-ranking item in question 16.

A free text box provided in relation to this question received 435 comments. These were grouped into common themes as below:

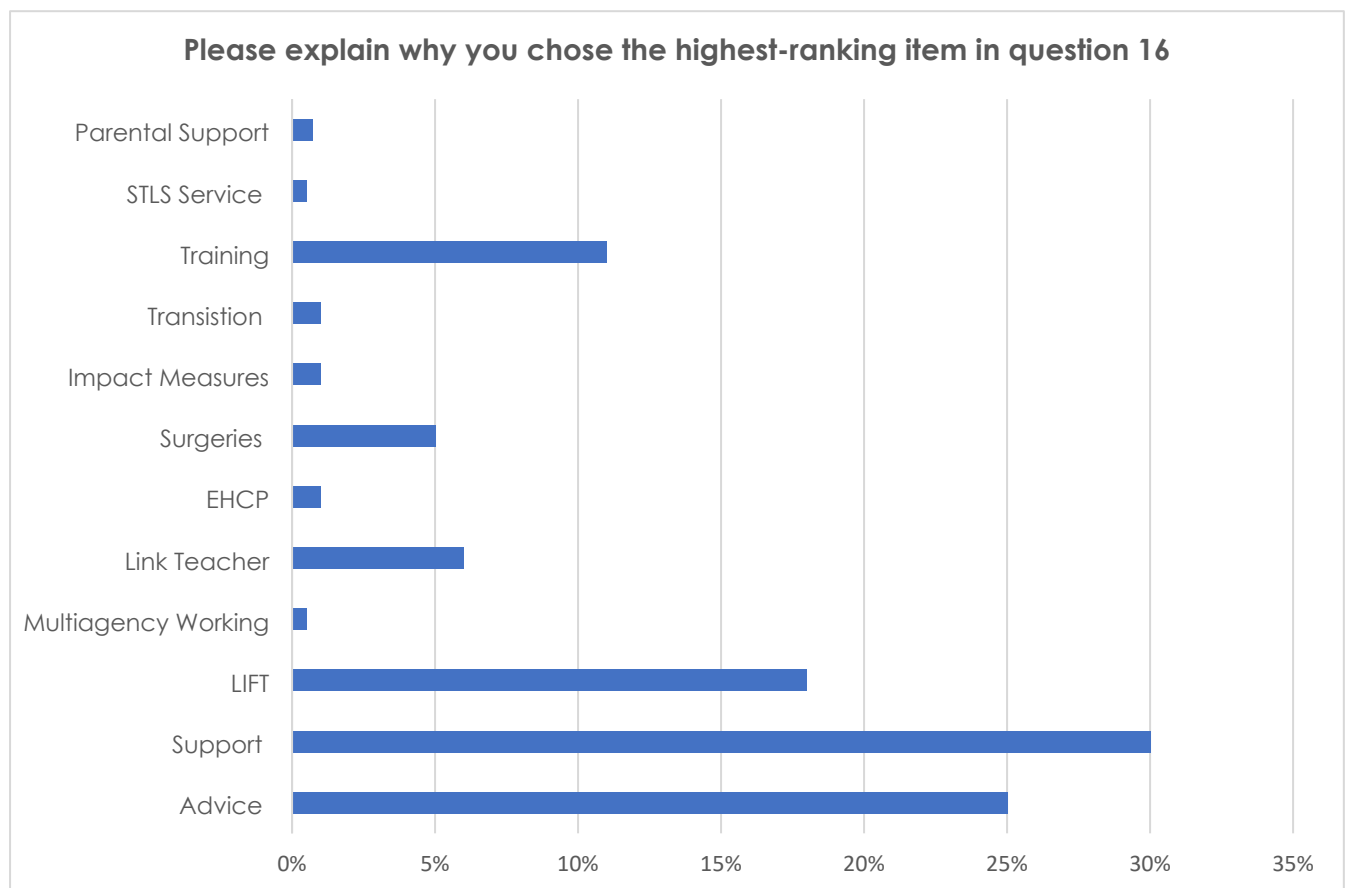


Figure 22: Reasons for choosing highest ranking item in question 16

The majority (30%) of respondents chose the area of support that they ranked highest in the previous question due to the support that it provided.

Key quotes taken from the free text section related to this question are below.

Key Quotes

“These are invaluable in them getting to know the child and seeing them in the setting, staff asking any questions or highlighting specific behaviour that they may need support in. Face to face conversations and help.”

“LIFT is invaluable. It is where I can go to access professionals and gain advice whether I have a child on the agenda or not. If I am discussing a referral, I leave with strategies whether allocated or not and I feel that the foundation is laid. If I do not have a case to discuss, I benefit from sharing advice with others.”

“We have utilised the STLS training offer this year and have undertaken whole school TEACCH training, it was really useful having someone so knowledgeable deliver training in school training. The session was just the right amount of time. We have seen a positive impact in the classroom with many teachers setting up work stations and adapting lessons accordingly. The training was also good value for money. The hourly awareness sessions which are free when a child is open to the service have also been extremely useful, just enough information is provided for staff to feel confident enough to get started with an intervention or strategy.”

“We have been easily able to access surgeries and they useful in providing some immediate strategies or providing reassurance to staff that we are doing all we can”.

“The support offered by STLS is exemplary and the training and advice offered over the years has upskilled staff and enabled increasing numbers of children with complex needs to be successfully educated and included in a mainstream environment. STLS remain the only front line service that actually provide on the ground support for schools, staff, children and parents, especially as health services have diminished or become harder to access.”

“Training, advice at LIFT, networking sessions are brilliant and so important to build up staff's knowledge and understanding of process (that constantly change) So that they can work with the children effectively, helping them to make progress using techniques and strategies, being able to share important information with parents and also to be able to point them in the direct for help and support away from the setting. We had a link worker come in to work directly with a child and that support was amazing and invaluable, they were able to give the key worker specific strategies and advice that they were able to share with the rest of the team. “

Question 18: Please explain why you chose the lowest ranking item in question 16.

A free text box provided in relation to this question received 426 comments. These were grouped into common themes.

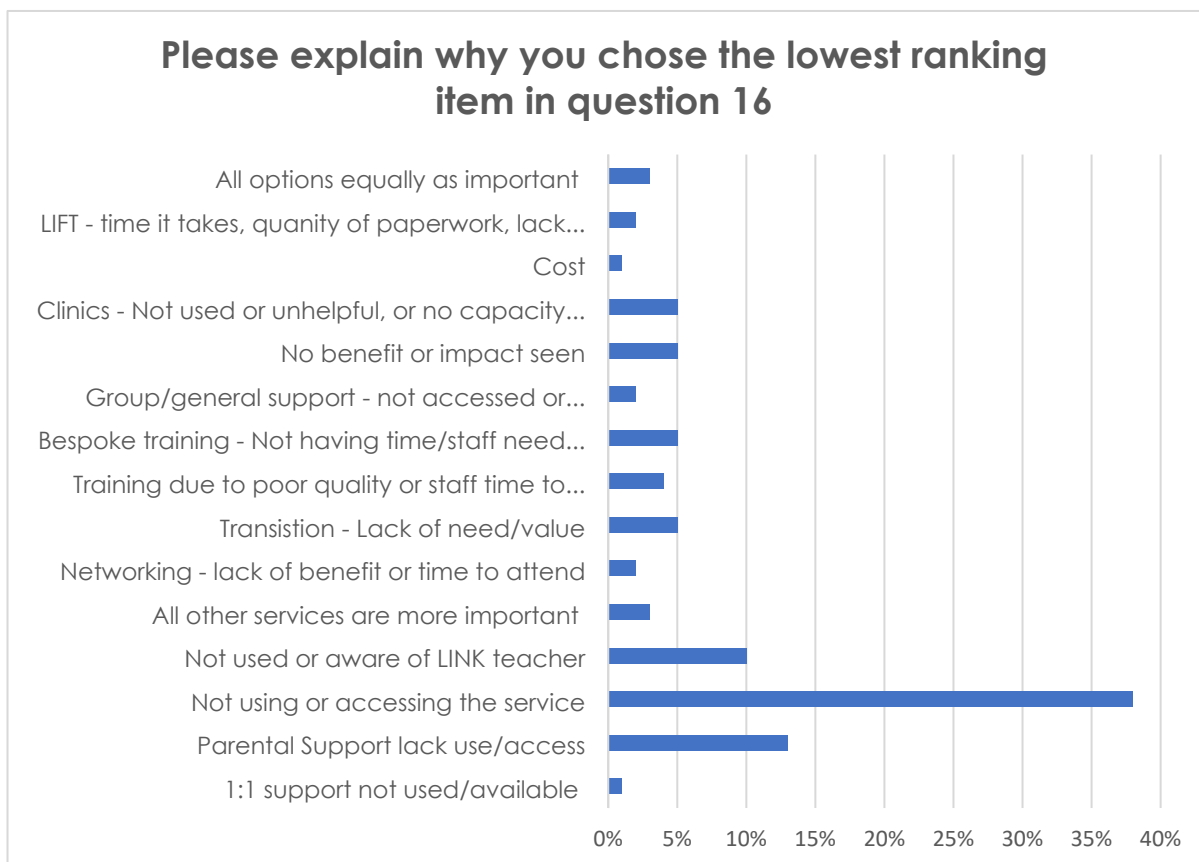


Figure 23: Reasons for lowest ranking item in question 16 – themed and ranked responses

In this, 38% explained that their lowest ranked area of support in question 16 was ranked lowest because they had not accessed it.

Key Quotes

“All the above are needed and probably all equally needed it is very hard to prioritise. There does need to be transition events / meetings between the setting and receiving school. But the last few years there has been no spare staff of schools being able to provide teachers with cover to be able to do this and there have been so many missed opportunities to pass on relevant information. A real sense of apathy.”

We did not access training delivered in school. However, I'm sure it would be excellent - they training we accessed at the STLS base was excellent (engagement model, sensory circuits, new SENCO training, Sensory Champions and Lego Therapy).”

“Parents can get support from other places or through us in school. I feel that STLS would be better places supporting the schools to support the parents. Most of our parents would not attend courses run at MIDAS”.

“LIFT meetings take a long time and are paperwork heavy. Sadly as settings it would be more helpful to just speak to professionals about the children in our own setting not have to wait 2 hours whilst we hear about other settings issues.”

“I do not feel that I have gained any advice or support through LIFT, updates that are given during these sessions are key and also information on what is available in Kent. However the basis of a meeting to discuss needs of a child and as to whether they meet threshold for support from a Specialist teacher could surely be completed through a referral and triage system instead. I can see the benefit for new SENCOs that have limited experience however with over 10 years experience in a highly inclusive borough in London these half days away from the children once a term seems a lot on an already time pressured role.”

“There isn't anything on the list that isn't welcomed support; I can see with now more limited funding that they can provide quicker support virtually at clinic whereas this advice would take longer if coming out to give face to face advice.”

Question 19: In any redesign which three STLS functions would you prioritise and why?

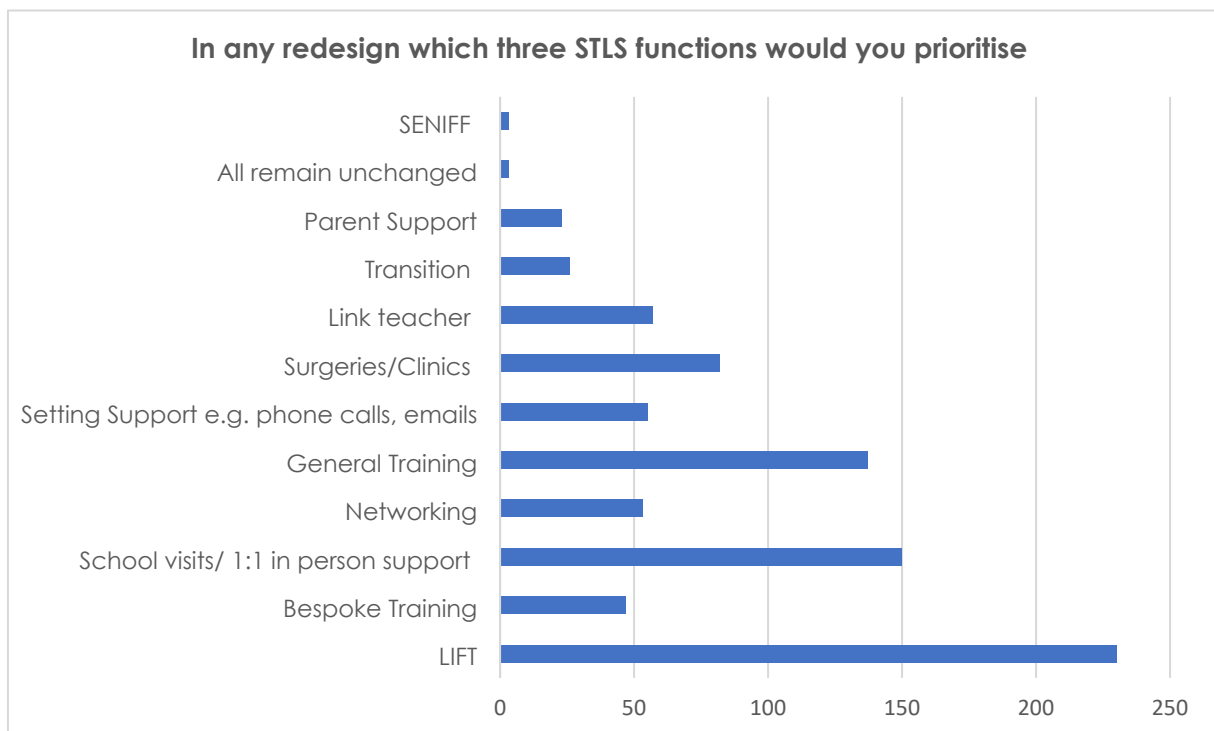


Figure 24: Which STLS functions would you prioritise in a redesign?

Most respondents would prioritise LIFT in any redesign, followed by school visits / 1:1 support. This feedback reflects that provided in question 16 (Figure 21) related to Support ranked in order of benefit to inclusive practice.

Question 20: Which training from STLS would you prioritise?

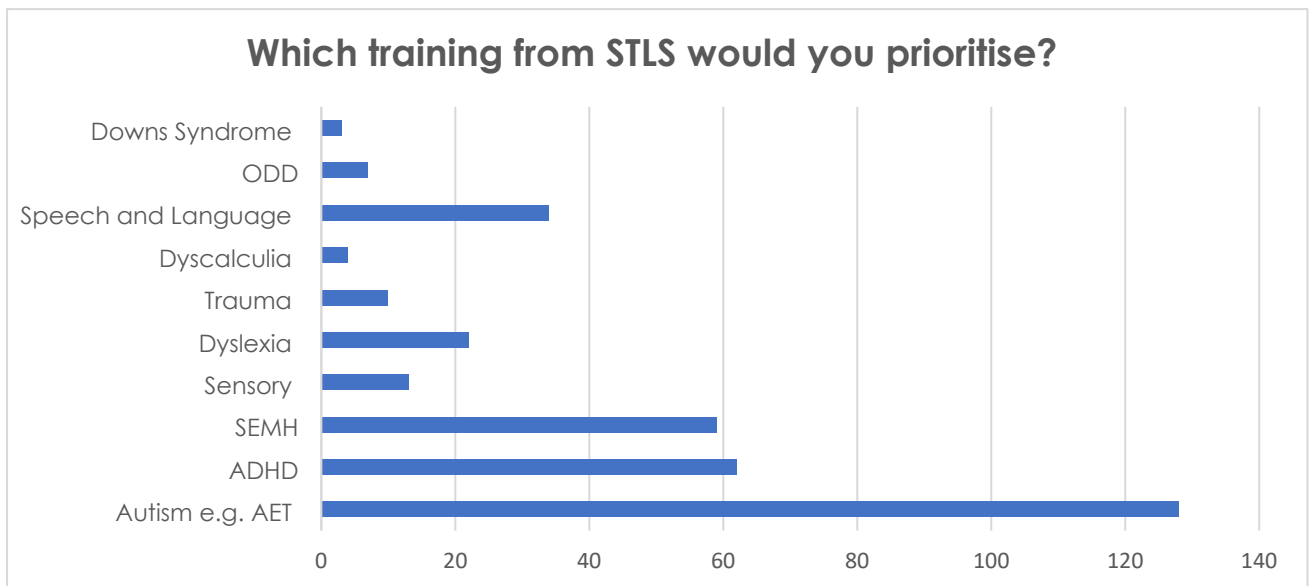


Figure 25: Which training from STLS would you prioritise?

Most responses to question 20 mentioned Autism as training they would prioritise, followed by ADHD and SEMH.

Question 21: Please provide any examples or comment on the impact of STLS in terms of inclusion in your school or setting.

A free text box provided in relation to this question received 451 comments. These were grouped into common themes as below:

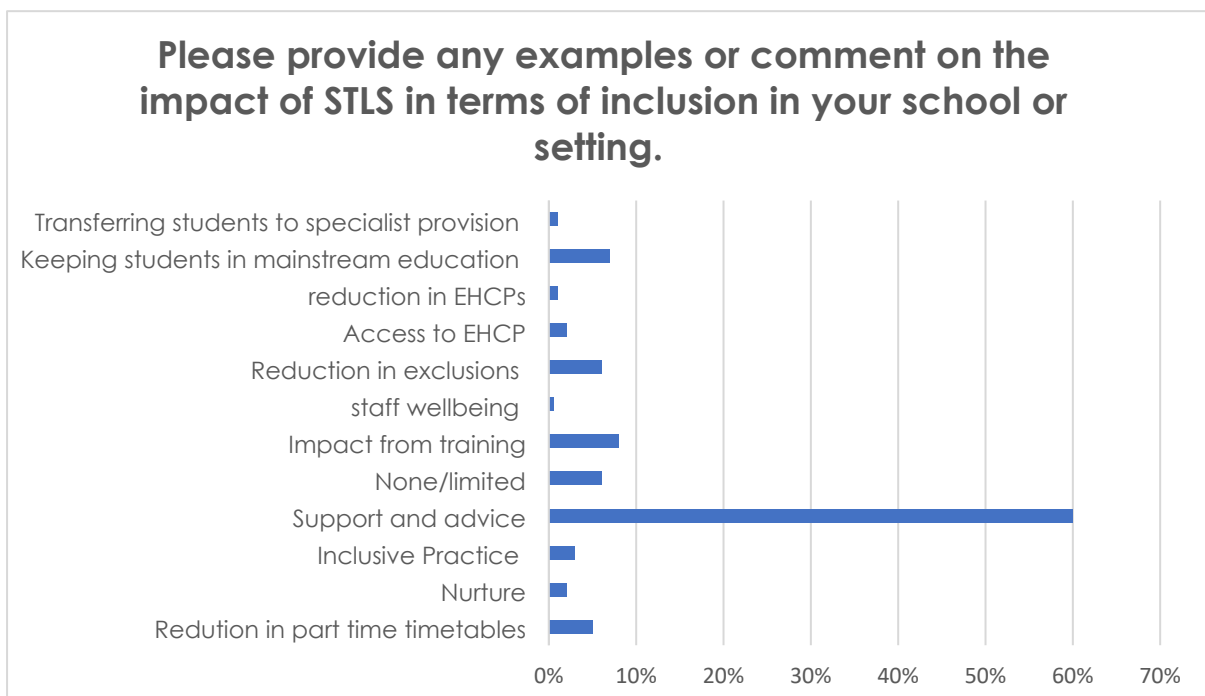


Figure 26: Examples of the impact of STLS in terms of inclusion in school or setting.

60% of comments identified support and advice as providing an impact on inclusion.

Key Quotes

“Extremely positive. We have had children who have been predominantly excluded from the mainstream classroom, reintegrate back into class”.

“We pride ourselves on our incredibly inclusive approach. STLS have been a huge part of this over the years with the specialist advice and support they have offered to our Inclusion lead, staff, children and parents. We cannot express enough how greatly they are valued and how much they bring to our school.”

“We have students with a very high level of needs of various types and working with the STLS specialists in each area as a team around the child has been vital to make inclusion a success for those children.”

“They are responsive to emails and offer further strategies. We have a child in Y3 out of cohort and they have gone out of their way to help me find the answers to parents questions around transfer.”

“The small steps progress on ROVs and recommendations put into place have impact on attainment. Parents feel that their child is making progress and they no longer need an EHCP”

“The impact of STLS has been limited for our setting. STLS often comment that we are inclusive and any suggestions they have are already in place. The quality of STLS support has noticeably decreased in recent years, possibly due to other changes taking place in the county. There are differences in the quality of support from the different dimensions. C&L has historically been strong in our district, with SEMH less strong. Although PD support from the countywide team is good on visits, I have received very few written reports from them, despite chasing”.

“STLS have limited impact. The idea of specialist teachers is a misnomer. This thinking encourages staff to believe that they are not 'experts' so they wait for the specialist teacher. In fact many specialist teachers are ineffective as they are so far removed from everyday experience in schools. All staff should be empowered to be inclusive. This will be achieved by improving teacher pedagogy and training. STLS is just a stepping stone to accessing further support. We have to evidence our engagement with external agencies and show that we have exhausted the local offer. Parents also now ask why we have not gone to LIFT. This is really frustrating for school settings. Experienced SENcos in inclusive schools should not be expected to attend further meetings with 'specialists' only to be told we are already doing everything possible. It is all a carousel of wasted time. STLS are an expensive resource. The money could be better spent elsewhere”.

“We have had incredible support with children with communication and interaction difficulties. Lots of ideas to try, signposted to useful resources and very effective ideas to support with transition and effective adult support. All of the STLS support has been impactful - I wouldn't be able to do my job as senco so successfully without the support from the STLS.”

“Staff are more confident when you have a specialist teacher tell you you are doing all you can for the child in question. It's also useful to have targets and strategies put in place by specialist teachers so we know we are doing something useful to help the child in question develop.”

“A member of STLS also conducted AET training for us recently - this helped raise awareness and understanding of neurodiversity and generated a whole school conversation about how to support such individuals in our setting.”

Question 22: Any other comments on the role of STLS in supporting Inclusion in your school or setting

A free text box provided in relation to this question received 267 comments. These were grouped into common themes as below:

- **47%** of additional comments were remarks on the valued support STLS have given.
- **27%** of additional comments were positive remarks regarding the STLS service, including notes of gratitude.
- **6%** of additional comments were remarks on how the STLS could be improved.
- **6%** of additional comments were regarding LIFT.
- **5%** of comments were regarding the importance of advice being given.
- **3%** of additional comments were regarding inclusion.
- **2%** of comments were remarks regarding Parental support and confidence.
- **1%** of comments were regarding transition.
- **1%** of comments were regarding the valuable training provided.
- **0.5%** of comments were regarding impact measures.
- **0.5%** of comments were regarding the impact on mainstream staff.

Question 23: Any other comments.

A free text box provided in relation to this question received 281 comments. These were grouped into common themes as below:

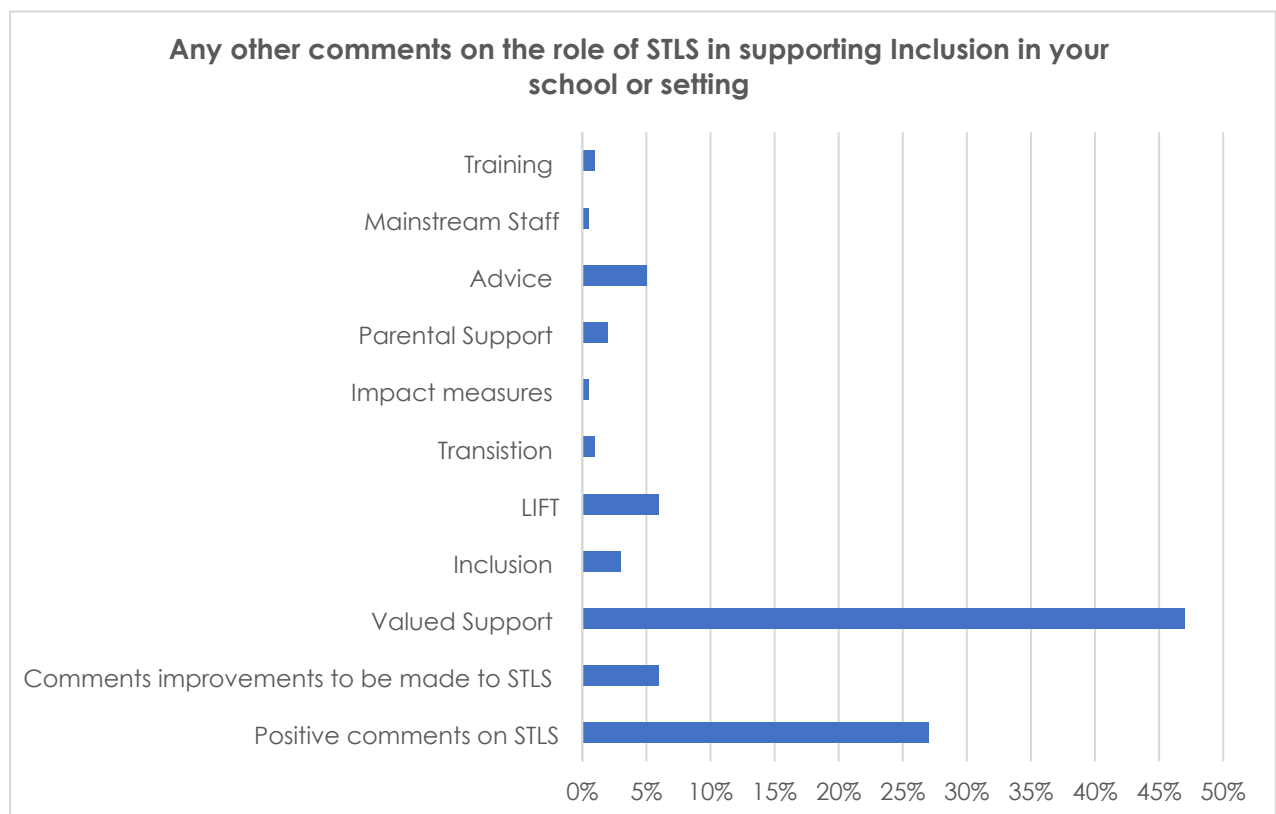


Figure 27: Any other comments

Most respondents mentioned 'support' in their responses and told us that they valued the support that STLS offers their school or setting. Comments were overwhelmingly positive, but some did reflect on the impact that budgetary restrictions and increasing demand is having on the service, and a small number did question the impact of the service.

Key Quotes

"The only problem with STLS is that they are underfunded and that being able to access support soon enough is a challenge to have the best impact - most investment in their capacity to support schools sooner and for longer will only have better outcomes for pupils in mainstream."

"I do not have high enough praise for the support we have received from STLS with respect to problem solving in our setting. They are professional and when not clear on next steps are happy to research and come back to us later. We have built good relationships built in a single goal of inclusion and trust. I hope this will be protected going forward".

"The STLS has always been a source of great wisdom and encouragement and the success of many SEND pupils who have been members of our school community over the last 16 years I have been class teacher/SENDCo and Deputy Headteacher, has been guided and strengthened by their expertise. I doubt I could do my job without them."

"There needs to be an acceptance that the current model is not working. Although lots of SENCOs speak positively about LIFT, I feel that this is largely as a social support network rather than as a professional network aiming to improve the quality of provision. I understand that it is familiar and has long been the established approach in Kent, but there is an opportunity to change the status quo and to lead to lasting change for inclusion in Kent. "

"Nearly always the same advice, copy paste reports, adds little value to provision"

"I really value the STLS, but accessing support this year has been increasingly challenging - it feels as though we are being told that our most complex children don't meet criteria because 'there is nothing more we can do' and our borderline children don't meet criteria because they are not severe enough. This puts schools in a really tricky position and means that at points, I have not attended LIFT as I do not have time to give over to these meetings when I know that my children will not meet criteria, especially compared to other settings where they have more children who meet need".

"We understand it is hard but that fact that there is only 2 specialist teachers in Dartford is putting so much pressure on them but also us. We are having to wait longer for Record of Visits, so longer to apply for SENIF. Children who are displaying obvious needs earlier are being made to wait because of the pressure on the STL base. We understand this is due to funding cuts but it is creating more pressure on settings. Dual placement has been an absolute godsend in support the children and ensuring that are more prepared for transitions".

"Reports and paperwork is time consuming an online joint system all professionals post to would keep everyone in the loop and up to date".

"I know that our SENCo really values the visits and advice from our link STLS teacher and the impact this then has in the delivery of specific interventions. Ideas such as Immersive Reader have also been picked up from LIFT and SENCo socials".

"PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE do not withdraw the STLS support from our district. If you want experienced SENCOs to remain in post, and do their utmost to promote and champion

inclusion in mainstream settings, then we NEED these individuals to support us, our teachers and our learners. Removing their support would have a detrimental impact on schools' abilities to support an increasing number of complex individuals - real inclusion would become impossible without them in my opinion".

"As a new SENCO, STLS input has been absolutely invaluable ranging from accessing the LIFT meeting process to accessing STLS training opportunities to in-school support, advice and guidance offered regarding individual pupils. "

"I do not have high enough praise for the support we have received from STLS with respect to problem solving in our setting. They are professional and when not clear on next steps are happy to research and come back to us later. We have built good relationships built in a single goal of inclusion and trust. I hope this will be protected going forward. "

Summary

This report details the feedback received from 485 early years settings and schools regarding their experience of support from STLS. The survey builds on feedback provided via a previous survey that demonstrated that the service is considered to have a positive impact on inclusion of children and young people in mainstream settings and school in Ken to understand in more detail what that impact is.

The survey was undertaken between 15th March and 26th April 2024. It received 485 responses. The largest single group of respondents (36%) were primary school SENCOs.

Respondents identified through the responses provided and additional comments submitted that advice and strategies are the most valued areas of support provided, especially in relation to LIFT.

In relation to the impact measures identified, the area of impact with the lowest scores was "There has been a reduction in part-time timetables." and the area of impact with the highest scores was "Parents are more confident in your school / setting's ability to meet the needs of their child with SEN".

However, the majority of respondents indicated that the service had a positive impact on the inclusion of children and young people with SEND in a mainstream school or setting with average scores against all impact measures consistently being 4 or above.

Comments submitted clearly indicate the value that the service has to the majority of early years and schools, and especially for SENCOs who are most often the point of contact with the service.

This report reflects the responses to the Impact Survey, and no decisions on the future of the service will be based on this document alone.

A previous draft of this report has been shared with representatives from STLS. This version has been updated to reflect comments provided as outlined in the letter embedded below.



Letter - STLS Impact
Survey Results Resp

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Children, Young People and Education

Children's Commissioning Team

Specialist Teaching and Learning Service Options workshops

Introduction

The 12 Service Level Agreements (SLA) for the Specialist Teaching and Learning Service (STLS) will end on 31 August 2025. To support the development of future options, and the identification of the preferred option to be presented at the Cabinet Committee in July 2024, Children's Commissioning undertook a series of workshops with stakeholders. This report details the activity and outcomes from these workshops.

The stakeholder groups engaged in this process include:

- internal stakeholders (specifically Council representatives from the Education and SEND Division of the Children, Young People and Education Directorate) who commission and fund the service,
- representatives from the Specialist Teaching and Learning Service (STLS), who are responsible for delivering the service, and
- representatives from mainstream early years settings and schools who are beneficiaries of the service.

Internal stakeholders were consulted at the STLS Steering Group on 13 March 2024.

Three in-person meetings were held with representative from the service. Representatives comprised of head teachers of the SLA holding schools and STLS district leads. One was held on 7 March 2024, and two further workshops were held 15 March 2024.

Three virtual workshops were held with schools – on 26 March, 17 April and 18 April 2024.

The presentation was the same for all workshops to ensure consistency.

In the workshops, we sought opinions on the following options:

- Option 1: Do nothing – the SLA and the service ends.
- Option 2: No change – the service continues to be funded through High Needs Funding (HNF)
- Option 3: Traded service
- Option 4: Funded by schools – use HNF allocated to them for decision making through the Localities model

Two additional questions were asked:

Additional question one: If funding continues:

- Please list the outcomes for children and young people that any future service would focus on delivering.
- Please identify who would write a future SLA?

Additional question two: If funding continues:

- Should funding remain as is, increase or decrease?
- If funding was re-profiled, what factors should be taken into consideration?

Attendance

Steering Group members were able to comment at the steering group meeting, 10 SLA-holding heads and 12 STLS Leads attended the STLS engagement workshops and 69 mainstream staff attended the early years settings and school workshops.

At the early years settings and school workshops, 67% of attendees were from primary schools.

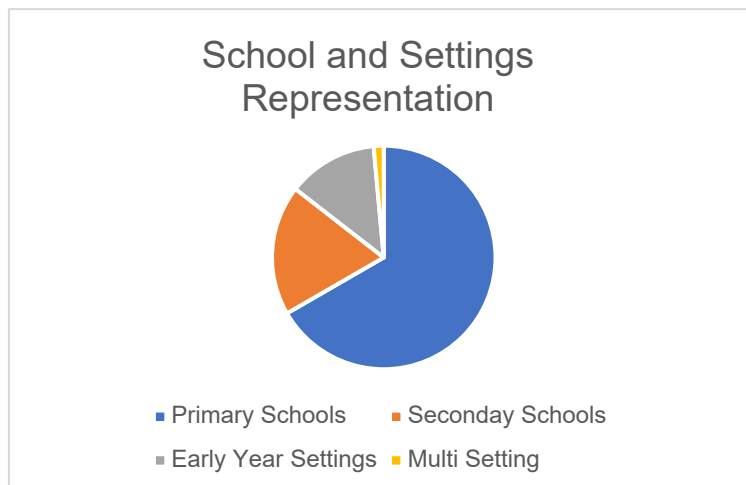


Figure one: representation from schools and settings

Based on Key Performance Indicators submitted by the service, primary schools are the greatest users of the service.

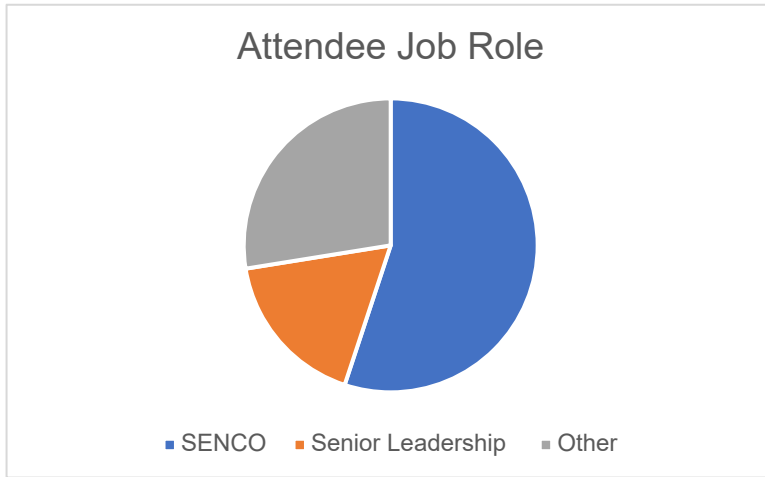


Figure two: School and setting attendee job role

55% of the attendees were SENCOs. A further 17% of attendees self-identified as having a Senior Leadership role.

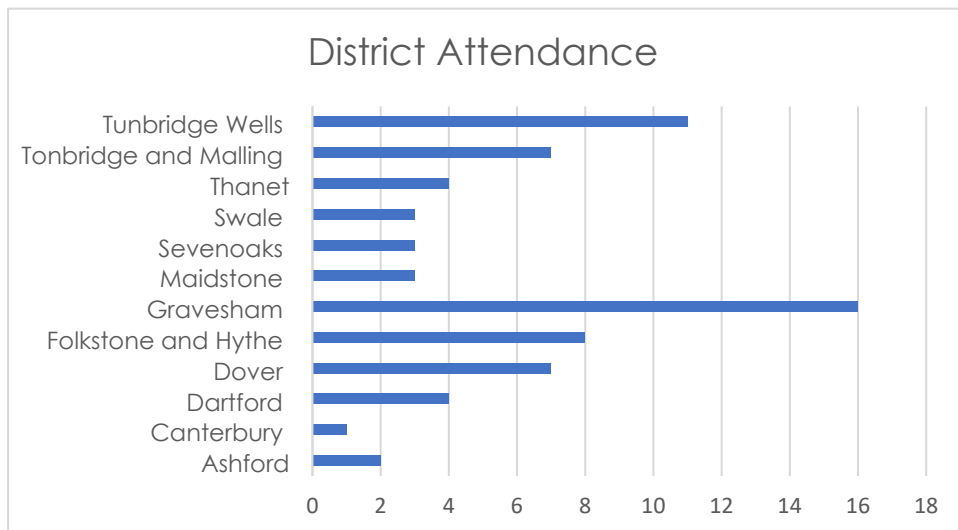


Figure three: School and setting workshop - District attendance

The schools' workshops had representation from all districts, with the highest representation from the Gravesham district, and the lowest representation from the Canterbury district.

Options feedback

In relation to the options, internal stakeholders and STLS meetings were held in person and feedback sought on the advantages, disadvantages, benefits and risks of each option.

Meetings with schools were held online and feedback collated via the Chat Function. For clarity, feedback was sought on the relative advantages (to include benefits) and disadvantages (to include risks) of each option.

Below is summary of feedback provided for each option.

The feedback is outlined for each of the stakeholder groups: internal stakeholders, representatives from the Specialist Teaching and Learning Service and representatives from mainstream early years settings and schools.

Option 1: Service Ends

Stakeholder Feedback: STLS

Advantages (2 comments)

- **100%** of comments- Ending the service would have a **positive impact in terms of finance.**

Disadvantages (18 comments)

- **24%** of comments stated ending the service would have a **negative impact on providing training.**
- **24%** of comments stated ending the service would have a **negative impact on inclusion** in schools.
- **12%** of comments stated ending the service would have a **negative impact on parental confidence in schools.**
- **12%** of comments stated ending the service would have a **negative impact on key Impact measures** e.g. attendance, specialist placements, exclusions etc.
- **12%** of comments stated ending the service would have a **negative impact on mainstream staff.**
- **12%** of comments stated ending the service would have a **negative impact on multi agency working relationships.**

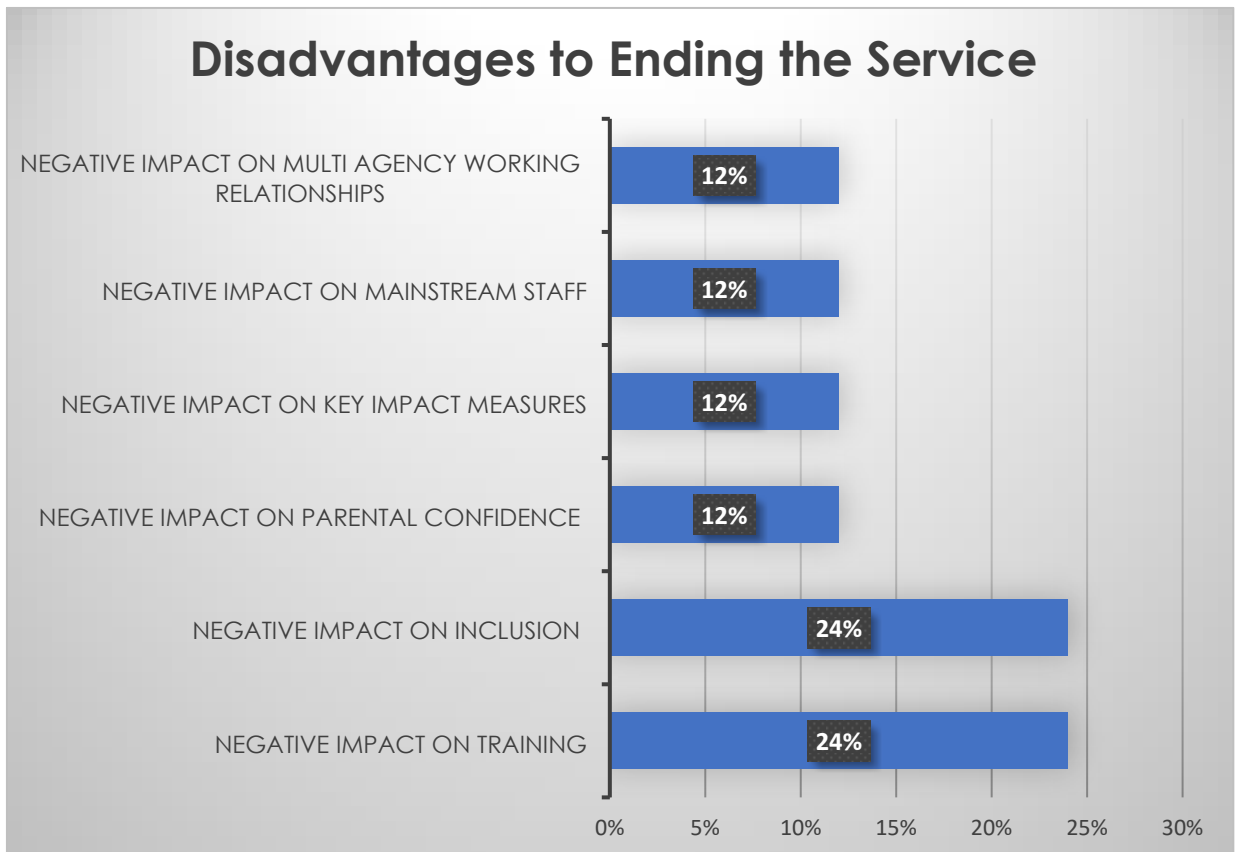


Figure four: STLS workshop: Disadvantages of Option One

Benefits

- STLS identified no benefits to the service ending.

Risks (20 comments)

- **11%** of the **risks** identified were in relation to a **long-term impact on society, the community, and the reputation of Kent County Council.**
- **15%** of the **risks** identified were in relation to a **rise in EHCP's and tribunals.**
- **22%** of the **risks** identified were in relation to a negative impact on **key Impact measures** e.g. decrease in attendance, increase specialist placements, increase in exclusions, CATIE aims and objectives would not be met.
- **5%** of the **risks** identified were in relation to an **increase in High Needs Funding**
- **11%** of the **risk** identified were in terms of an **increase in costs** associated with withdrawing the contract.
- **5%** of the risks identified were in relation to there being a **negative impact on mainstream staff.**
- **11%** of **risks** identified were in relation to **increase in referrals** to outside agencies.
- **5%** of the **risks** identified were in relation to schools becoming **less inclusive.**
- **5%** of the **risks** identified were in relation in **increase in escalating behaviour** issues in schools.
- **5%** of **risks** identified were in relation to there being a **negative impact on mainstream staff** e.g. staff burn out.
- **5%** of **risks** identified were in relation to there being a **negative impact on the county's work with the Accelerated Progress Plan (APP).**

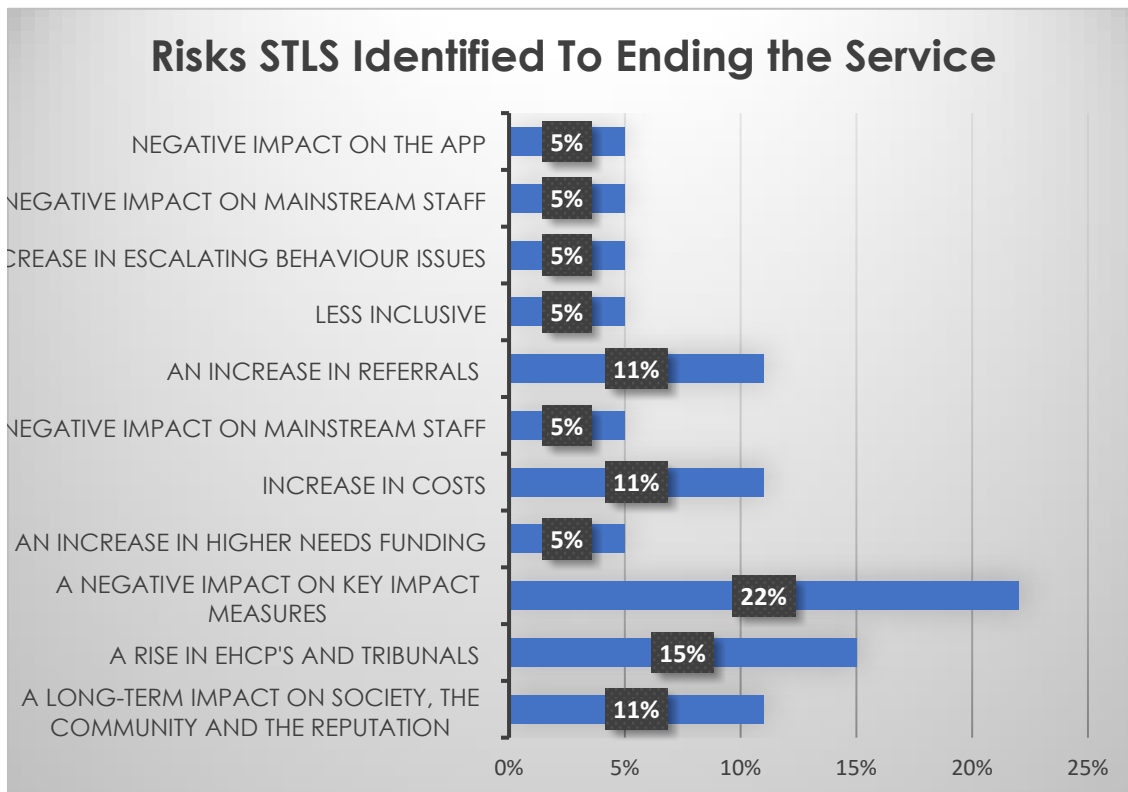


Figure five: STLS workshop: Risks for Option One

Key Quotes

"Children and schools that rely on the service will be cut adrift. This will negatively impact children and families."

"Unmet need will likely result in escalation of behaviours, leading to exclusions and possible progression to criminal activity."

"Consequences of withdrawing the service could ultimately result in budget pressures elsewhere in county, health and police as they deal with the consequences of unmet need/exclusion/disengagement of children and their families."

"Increased pressure on mainstream schools due to lack of appropriate support and resource."

Stakeholder Feedback: Internal**Advantages: (1 comment)**

"Supports a nationally model of school improvement, moving from a 'visiting expert practitioner model' (such as STLS) to one of school-to-school support, with system leaders and school partnership as the basis for improved school leadership, teaching and learning and outcomes for children."

Disadvantages: (1 Comment)

"Service will decrease in capacity over final year of SLA as staff leave"

Benefits: (1 comment)

"Financial savings against the Council's High Needs Funding budget"

Risks: (4 comments)

- 25% of risks identified were in relation to cost.
- 25% of risks identified were in relation to negative feedback.
- 25% of risks identified were in relation to demand for other external support services.
- 25% of risk identified were in relation to decrease in inclusive practices.

Stakeholder Feedback: Schools**Advantages (based on 30 comments)**

- **80%** of comments stated there were **no advantages** to the service ending.
- **20%** of the advantages identified were related to ending the service would have a **positive impact in terms of finance for KCC.**

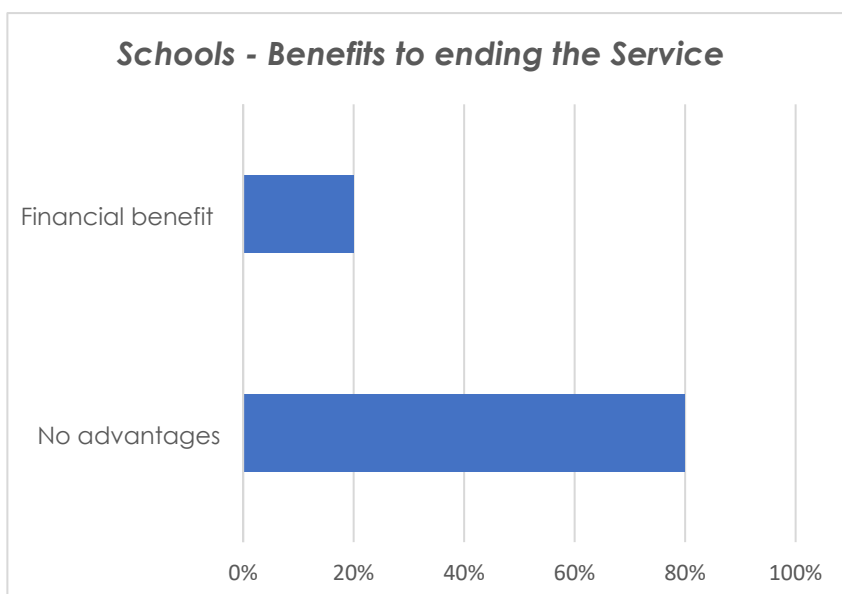


Figure six: Schools workshop – Advantages of Option One

Disadvantages (based on 71 comments)

- **41%** of comments given on ending the service were related to there being a **negative impact on support, training, and advice.**
- **25%** of comments given were related to there being a **negative impact on inclusion and inclusive practice.**
- **6%** of comments given were related to there being a **negative impact long term impact financially.**
- **4%** of comments given were related to there being a **negative impact on mainstream staff.**
- **7%** of comments given were related to there being a **negative impact on parents and families.**
- **8%** of comments given were related to there being a **negative impact on multi agency working relationships.**
- **1%** of comments given were related to there being a **negative impact on LIFT.**
- **1%** of comments given were related to there being a **negative impact on the accountability for provision.**
- **1%** of comments given were related to there being a **negative impact on transition.**
- **3%** of comments given were related to there being a **negative impact on STLS staff and the service provided.**
- **3%** of comments given were related to there being a **negative impact on consistency across schools/districts.**

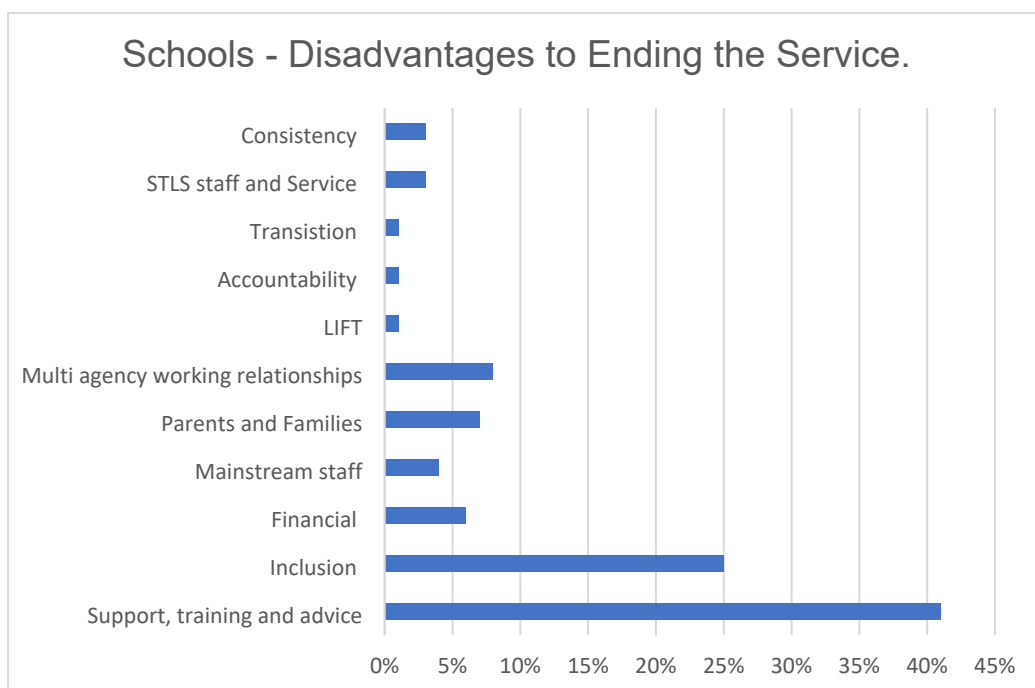


Figure seven: Schools workshop: Disadvantages to Option One

Benefits

- Schools identified no benefits to the service ending.

Risks (based on 57 comments)

- **7% of the risks** identified were related to **school budgets and financial impact**.
- **2% of risks** identified were related to **lack of accountability**.
- **11% of risks** identified were related to there being a **negative impact on inclusion and inclusive practice**.
- **5% of risks** identified were related to loss in **parental confidence and family disengagement**.
- **11% of risks** identified were related to there being a **negative impact on mainstream staff** e.g. retention of staff.
- **11% of risks** identified were related to there being a **negative impact on impact measures e.g. exclusions, suspensions etc**.
- **2% of risks** identified were related to there being a **negative impact on pupil behaviour**.
- **7% of risks** identified were related to **transition**.
- **5% of risks** identified were in relation to loss of **multi-agency working**.
- **12% of risks** identified were in relation to there being a **negative impact of loss of LIFT**.
- **11% of risks** identified were in relation to there being a **negative impact on EHCP's**
- **16% of risks** identified were in relation to **loss of support and training**.

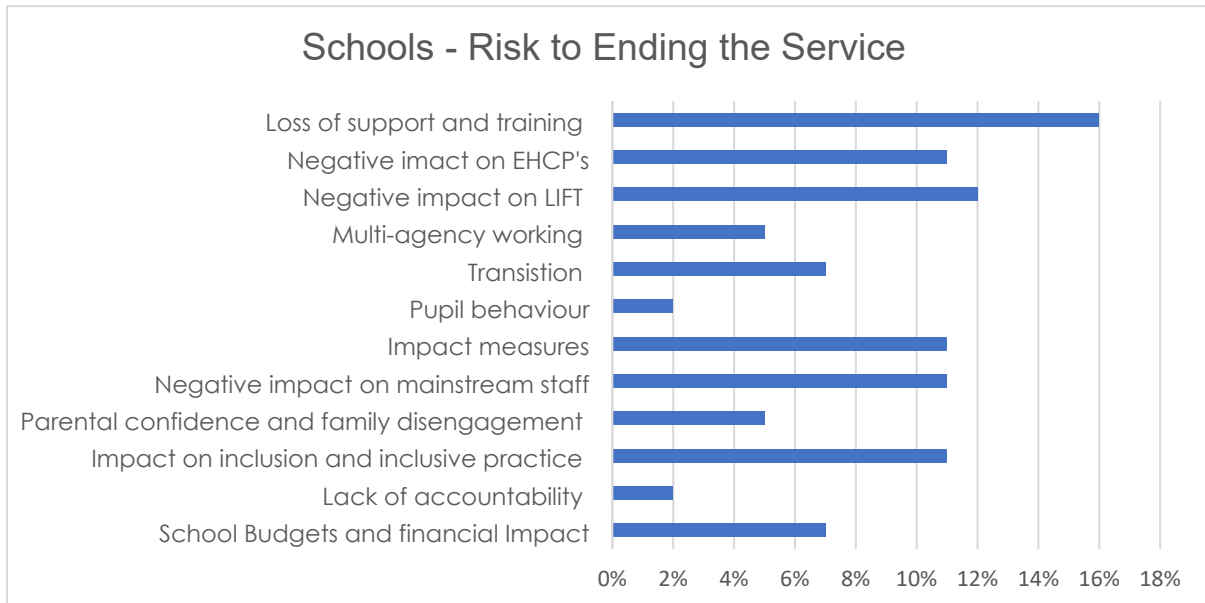


Figure eight: Schools workshop: Risks of Option One

Key Quotes

“We are having more complex children in our mainstream settings, and it is through support from STLS that we can ensure these pupils in particular have some success in a mainstream setting. Without STLS' support, this could lead to increased school refusal, exclusions etc.”

“The negative impact - with lack of Specialist Teacher support, we are reliant on practitioners being able to support our children. This will be in danger of becoming watered down and therefore the children not receiving the support they need to succeed.”

“Frees up funding to explore the commissioning of services that may more specifically target individual needs of schools.”

“Only benefit would be to KCC as part of cost saving measures but would have detrimental impact on schools and pupils”.

“Significant disadvantages to children and staff. STLS offer considerable support for staff who are supporting vulnerable children. I feel staff wellbeing would be hugely impacted if this support was removed. As a SENCo, I would suffer and worry that this may make teaching less appealing when we are already in a recruitment crisis. Outcomes for children would be negatively impacted due to lack of specialist support for schools.”

“We would lose a huge amount of valuable expertise and specialist knowledge. So much good practice is in danger of being lost particularly in terms of staff training and advice - this has led to a significant improvement in send provision. There would be a huge negative impact on parents/pupils/schools. STLS has been INVALUABLE in our SEN support of our most challenging complex and vulnerable pupils and families. STLS is our primary source of expertise and support. “

Agreed Points between Schools and STLS

Advantages	Disadvantages	Benefits	Risks
Financial advantage for KCC	Negative impact on training	No benefits	EHCPs
	Negative impact on Inclusion		Impact Measures
	Negative impact on Parents		Mainstream staff
	Negative effect on impact measures		Inclusive practice
	Negative effect on Mainstream Staff		Behaviour of pupils
	Negative impact on multiagency working		

Figure nine: Option One: Agreed points between Schools and STLS

Option 2: Service Continues – funded through HNF

Stakeholder Feedback: STLS

Advantages

- **20%** of advantages identified were related to improving **inclusion**.
- **20%** of advantages identified were related to **supporting mainstream staff**.
- **20%** of advantages identified were related to **key impact measures** e.g. reduced permanent exclusions.
- **13%** of advantages identified were related to **improving parental confidence in mainstream schools**.
- **7%** of the advantages identified were related to making **cost savings** by keeping children in mainstream schools.
- **7%** of the advantages identified were related to **benefits to society**.
- **7%** of the advantages identified were related to the benefits of keeping **consistency**.
- **7%** of the advantages identified were related to developing and **maintaining multi-agency working**.

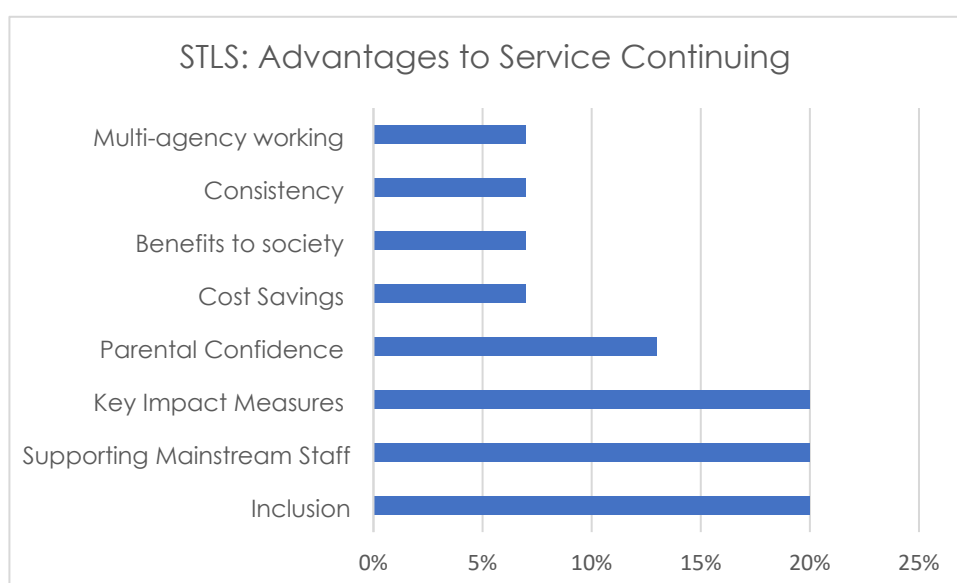


Figure ten: Option Two – STLS workshop: Advantages of Option Two

Disadvantages (1 comment)

- 100% of the disadvantages identified were related to cost of the service.

Benefits (7 comments)

- **71%** of benefits of continuing the service were related to **consistency** in terms of resources, staffing etc.
- **14%** of benefits identified were related to an improvement in **wellbeing for mainstream staff**.
- **14%** of benefits identified were related to **cost savings**.

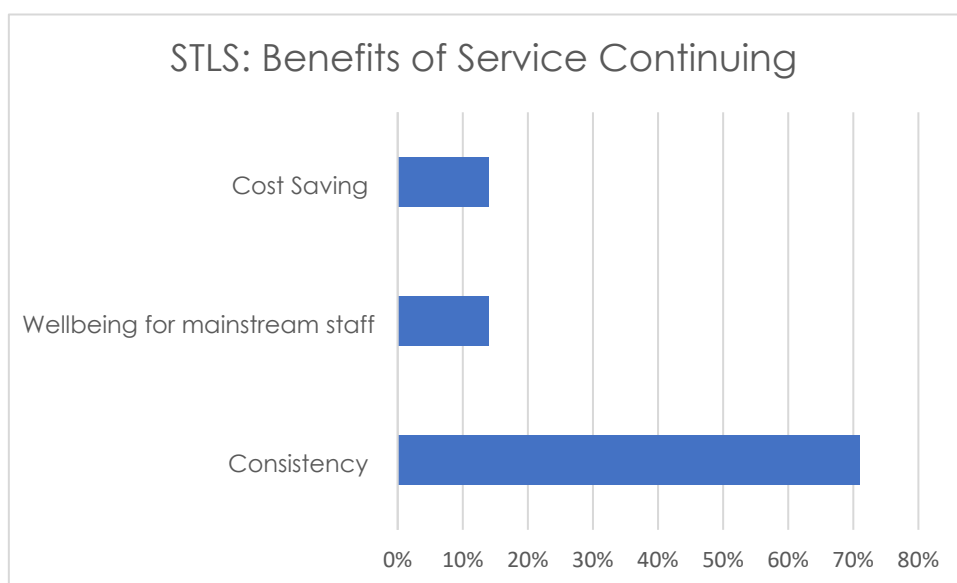


Figure eleven: Option Two – STLS workshop: Benefits of Option Two

Risks (1 comment)

- STLS identified no direct risks to this option as “it will depend on the funding option/delivery structure selected”.

Key Quotes

“Expenditure. However, in the wider societal context, investment in continued service will save in the long term when unmet need results in escalating behaviours, curtailed child potential, increased pressure on families and the most vulnerable people in our communities.”

“Retention of existing, highly skilled and experienced local Specialist Teachers and administrative staff will ensure continued service delivery, meeting the needs of children and schools in their community.”

“Use of existing structures and resources will reassure and continue to build confidence in schools, their staff and children and families.”

Stakeholder Feedback: Schools

Advantages (65 Comments)

- **22%** of advantages identified were related to improving **inclusion and inclusive practice**.
- **6%** of the advantages identified were related to developing and **maintaining multi-agency working**.
- **31%** of the advantages identified were related to **maintaining valuable support, training, and advice**.
- **6%** of the advantages identified were related to **maintaining consistency**.
- **32%** of the advantages identified were related to the **high quality of the STLS** currently received.
- **2%** of the advantages identified were related to **transition**.
- **2%** of the advantages identified were related to increased **parental confidence and support**.

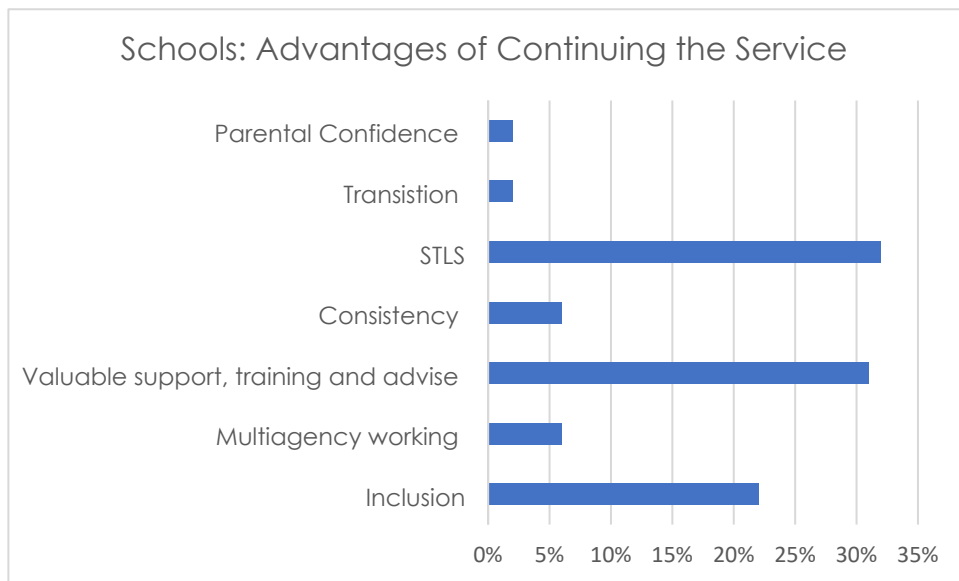


Figure twelve: Option Two – Schools workshop: Advantages of Option Two

Disadvantages (27 comments)

- **56%** of the disadvantages identified were related to the **STLS being inconsistent across districts, the level of service being provided is reducing and concerns over the service diminishing further**.
- **44%** of the disadvantages identified were related to **inadequate funding**.

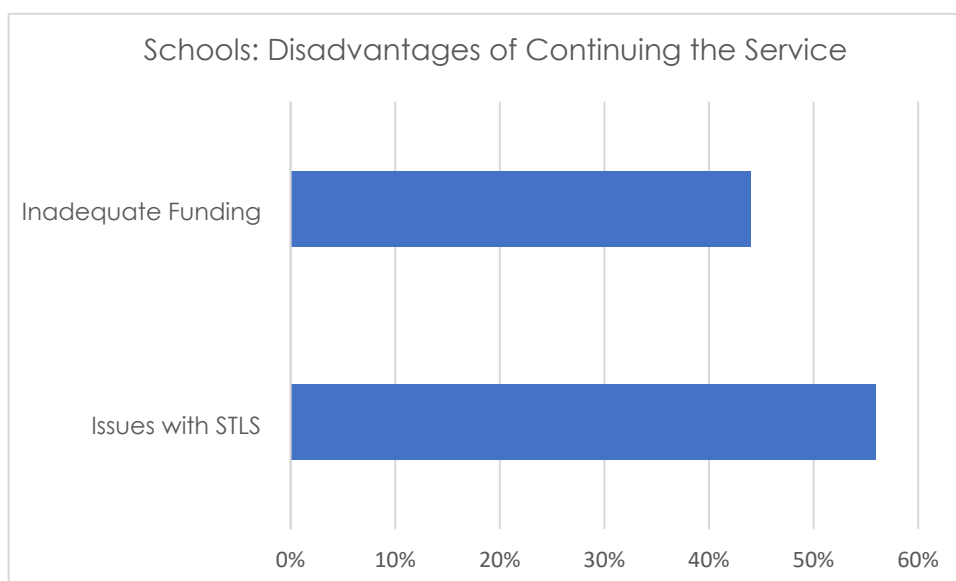


Figure thirteen: Option Two – Schools workshop: Disadvantages of Option Two

Benefits (42 comments)

- **7%** of benefits of continuing the service were related to being able to **keep service, resources, and equipment STLS provides**.
- **39%** of benefits identified were related to being able to **access support, training, and advice**.
- **7%** of benefits identified were related to being able to **maintain strong multiagency relationships**.
- **2%** of benefits identified were related to an improvement in **impact measures**.
- **12%** of benefits identified of continuing the service were related to **transition**.
- **17%** of benefits identified were related to **LIFT**.
- **2%** of benefits identified were related to **Improved parental trust**.
- **2%** of benefits identified were related to improved wellbeing for **mainstream staff**.
- **10%** of benefits identified were related to STLS being a key part of the **paediatric referral system**.
- **2%** of benefits identified were related to the need of STLS to access **EHCP**.

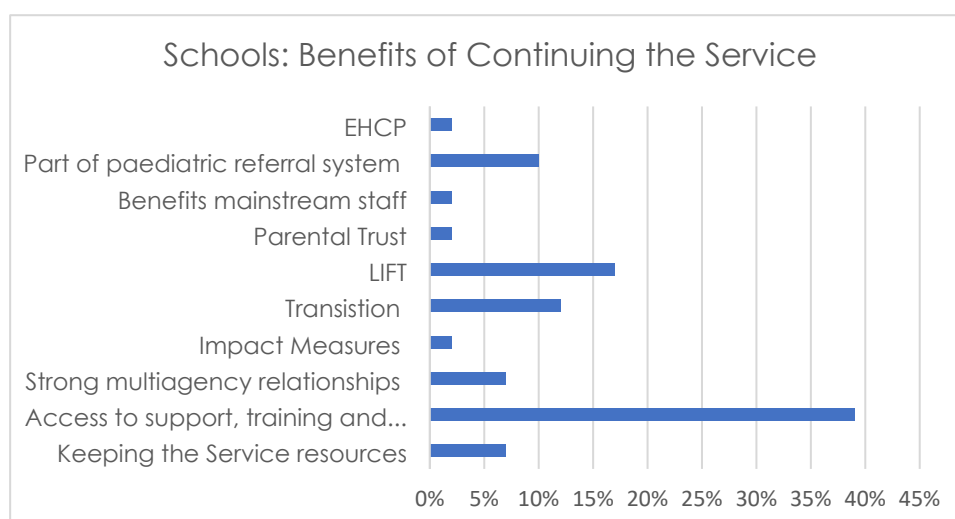


Figure fourteen: Option Two – Schools workshop: Benefits of Option Two

Risks (26 Comments)

- **65%** of risks identified were related to **STLS becoming diminished, overstretched due to lack of funding.**
- **35%** of risks identified were related to **unknown or reduced level of funding.**

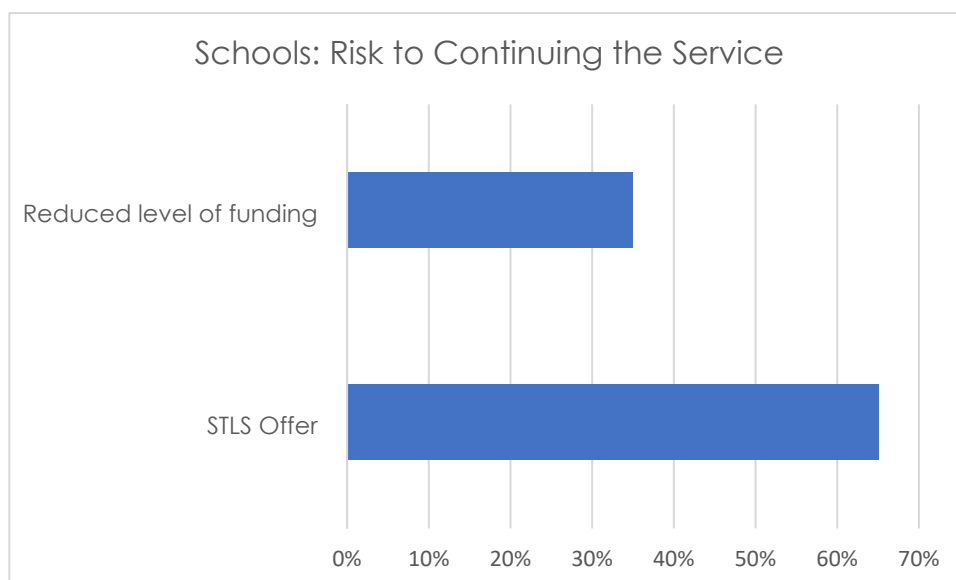


Figure fifteen: Option Two – Schools workshop: Risks of Option Two

Key Quotes

“Upskilling SENDCOs, teachers and TAs through LIFT meetings, surgeries and training opportunities to ensure we are successfully meeting the needs of children.”

“Retention of existing, highly skilled and experienced local Specialist Teachers will ensure continued service delivery, meeting the needs of children and schools in their community.”

“STLS is vital and needs to be funded according to the level of demand. This 'maintain funding' option might not allow them to increase their capacity as schools demand more whereas a 'bought in service' may act as a barometer for demand more successfully.”

“The service can be hit and miss. Some schools have good experiences, some not so”

“STLS is different across the areas. I work in Ashford and F&H and there are different specialities and support available”.

“Paediatric forms ask if LIFT and STLS has been involved”

“If it continues that application for HNF and EHCPs require specialist involvement, then withdrawing this will mean that schools will have to pay for specialist involvement. Not all schools will be able to do this”.

Agreed Points between Schools and STLS

Advantages	Disadvantages	Benefits	Risks
Inclusion and inclusive practice	Cost and funding	Mainstream staff wellbeing	Depends on funding
Parental Confidence			
Consistency			
Multi-agency working			

Figure sixteen: Option Two: Agreed points between Schools and STLS

Option 3: Traded Service

Stakeholder Feedback: STLS

Advantages (3 comments)

- **67%** of advantages identified were **cost saving related**.
- **33%** of advantages identified were related to **flexibility** and being able to adapt to local markets.

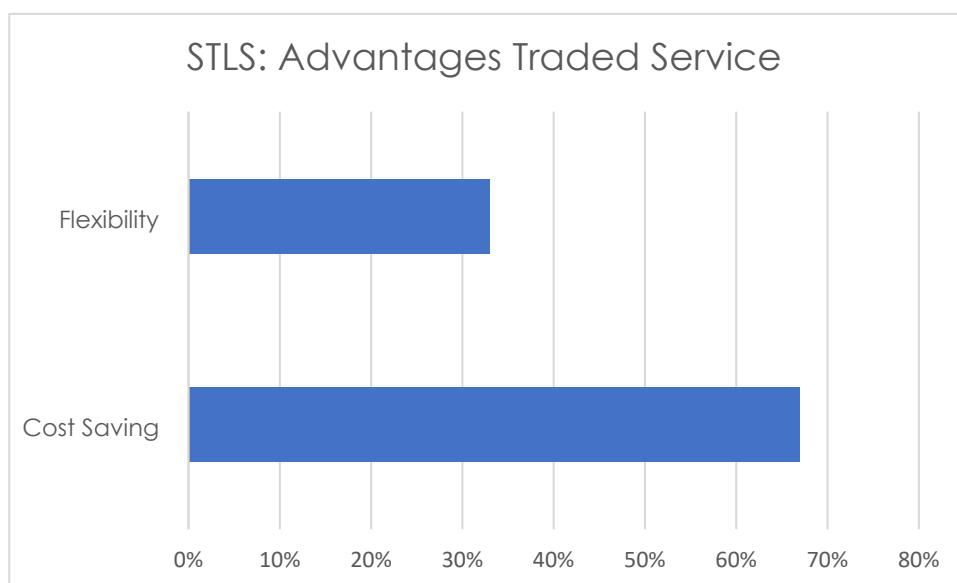


Figure seventeen: Option Three: STLS workshop: Advantages

Disadvantages (22 comments)

- **20%** of disadvantages identified were related **cost implications** to schools and profit prioritisation.
- **15%** of disadvantages identified were related to having a **long-term impact on society, the community, and the reputation of Kent County Council**
- **15%** of disadvantages identified were related to **lost of consistency and progress**.
- **10%** of disadvantages identified were related to **inequality and inclusion**.

- **10%** of disadvantages identified were related to the negative impact on **multiagency working**.
- **15%** of disadvantages identified were related to the **lack of accountability** this would create.
- **5%** of disadvantages identified were related to loss in **quality of STLS service**.

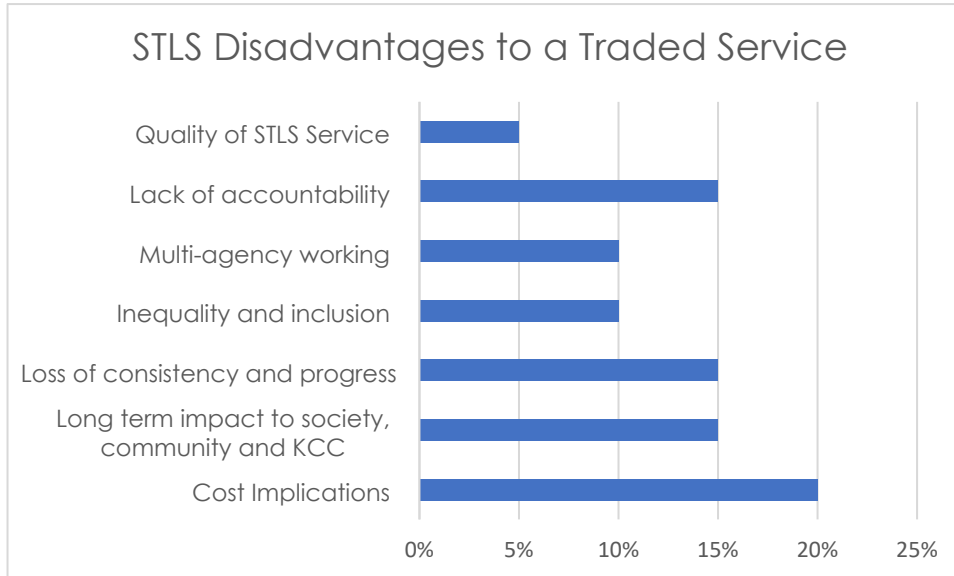


Figure eighteen: Option Three: STLS workshop: Disadvantages

Benefits (2 Comments)

Only two benefits identified by STLS

- Maintains a service.
- Short term cost benefit.

Risks (15 comments)

- **27%** of risks identified were in relation to there being a **diminished service**.
- **20%** of risks identified were in relation to **cost** to schools and **financial viability**.
- **20%** of risks identified were in relation to the **lack of inequality and inclusion** this option would cause.
- **7%** of risks identified were in relation to a **rise in EHCPs**.
- **7%** of risks identified were in relation to **transition**.
- **20%** of risks identified **long-term impact on society, the community, and the reputation of Kent County Council and the legislative requirements**.

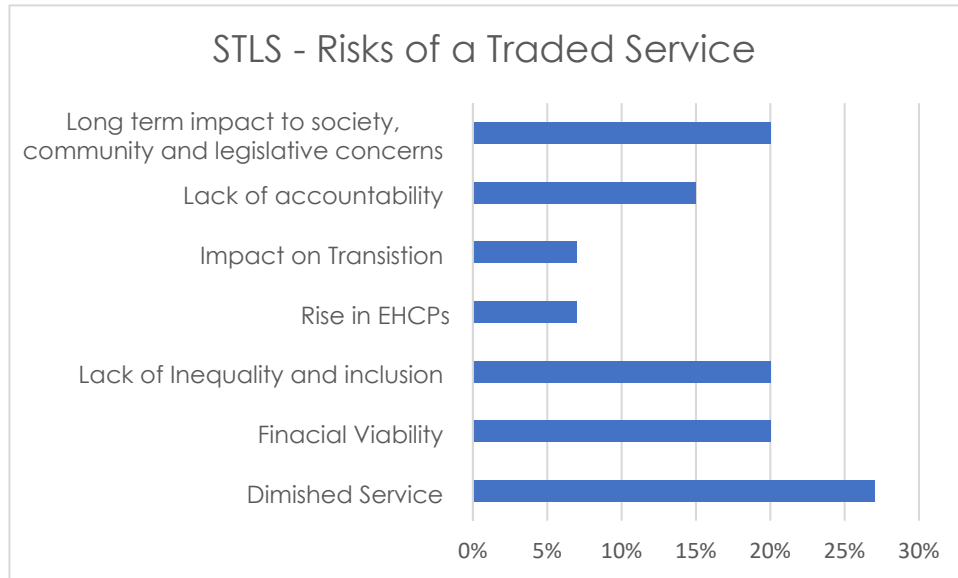


Figure nineteen: Option Three: STLS workshop: Risks

Key Quotes

“Despite setting the contract requirements, County will lose control of strategic and operational elements of delivery as this will be dictated by the company for profit rather than the needs of children and schools.”

“If settings cannot afford to access the service, early intervention will no longer be possible, losing progress made by STLS and creating bigger problems for schools further along the child’s education journey.”

“Companies may be accountable to shareholders, whose priorities may be at odds with the commissioning bodies”.

Stakeholder Feedback: Internal

Only Benefits and risks were identified.

Benefits (1 comment)

- *“Equity across maintained and academies support special school outreach.”*

Risks (3 Comments)

- *“The Education People do not want to take the service on due to potential financial viability”*
- *“Given that to-date the service has been free of charge to schools, they may not engage with a fully traded model of support”*
- *“Service may decrease in capacity over final year of SLA if staff leave”*

Stakeholder Feedback: Schools

Advantages (18 comments)

- **22%** of the advantages identified were **related funding**. Saving money for KCC and schools being able to spend HNF on what they wish.
- **33%** of the advantages identified were related to **maintaining training, advice and support and making it more bespoke**.
- **45%** of the advantages identified were related to being able to **keep and maintain a STLS**.

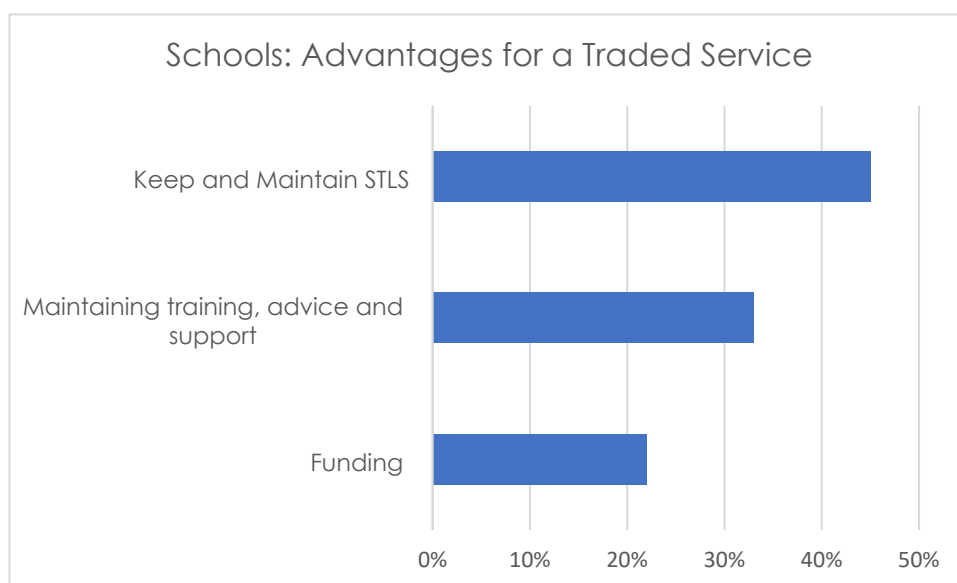


Figure twenty: Option Three: Schools: workshop: Advantages

Disadvantages (54 comments)

- **65%** of disadvantages identified were related to **school funding and budgets** and not being able to afford a service such as **STLS**.
- **4%** of disadvantages identified were related to **reduced inclusion and inclusive practice**.
- **21%** of disadvantages identified were related to there being a **negative impact on consistency across districts**.
- **11%** of disadvantages identified were related to there being a **negative impact on the STLS** e.g. more generic, becoming overstretched, different skills and qualities of STLS Staff.

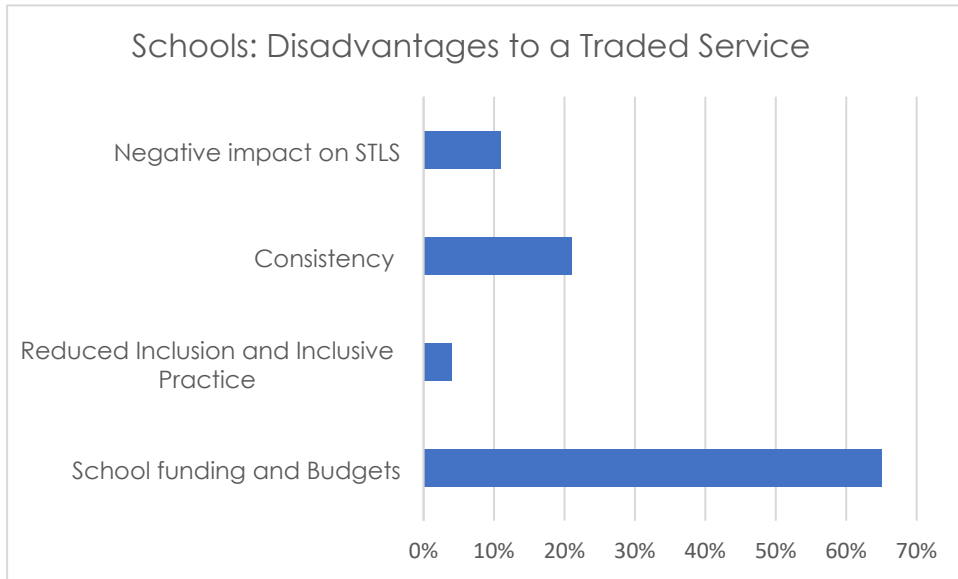


Figure twenty-one: Option Three: Schools: workshop: Disadvantages

Benefits

Only one comment made “Each school could choose what they needed, dependent on their own staff levels of expertise and own cohort of children.”

Risks (29 Comments)

- **48%** of risks of identified were related to **funding and the inability to afford** such a service.
- **28%** of risks identified were related to there being a **negative impact on the STLS** e.g. service not being used, being overstretched, staff being made redundant.
- **10%** of risks identified were related to there being a **lack of consistency and disparity between schools**.
- **3%** of risks identified were related to **accountability and compliance**.
- **3%** of risks identified were related to **LIFT**.
- **3%** of risks identified were related to **EHCPs**.
- **3%** of risks identified were related to a decrease in **inclusion and inclusive practices**.

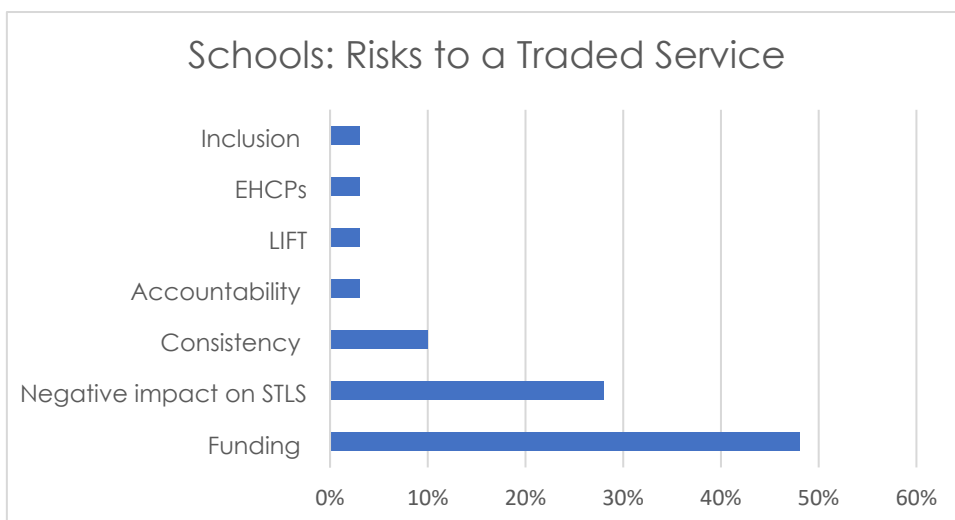


Figure twenty-two: Option Three: Schools: workshop: Risks

Key Quotes

"If we're paying for the service we would be very demanding!"

"Creation of magnet schools a real concern"

"schools may not want to spend the money on SEND training and support. where is the funding pot they use coming from? is it ring fenced. In EY how will the funding be given, it is very difficult to get funding for children and often it is "too late" as the child has left the setting as it cannot meet their needs. Children in schools may need to move schools if the first school cannot provide what is needed to support them."

"Postcode lottery of support for children with SEND, a child in one school may be able to access support compared to another school who may require support but does not have the funds to purchase the service".

We must keep a service which has shown to have such a positive impact as the need increases, and the pressures are going to increase as the shift turns to inclusion into mainstream and less SI intervention - especially, as was said, there are no other options...particularly for EY settings.

Nurseries have VERY limited funding, and it is extremely difficult to get! Budgets are stretched as it is. This service shouldn't be seen as a luxury, rather as instrumental.

This has not worked well in other sectors for the people using the system - example supply teachers.

Agreed Points between Schools and STLS

Advantages	Disadvantages	Benefits	Risks
Financial	Cost		Diminished Service
	Consistency		Funding and budgets being insufficient
	Negative impact on inclusion		Inclusive practice
	Negative impact on quality of service		EHCPs

Figure twenty-three: Option three: agreed points between schools and STLS

Option 4: Schools Fund the STLS

Stakeholder Feedback: STLS

Advantages (2 Comments)

- Respond to need within cluster.
- This option is dependent on the SLA holder.

Disadvantages (13 Comments)

- **25%** of disadvantages identified were related to the **negative impact on the STLS service and staff**.
- **25%** of disadvantages identified were related to the **inconsistency** this would cause.
- **8%** of disadvantages identified were related to the **financial impact** on stretched schools.
- **17%** of disadvantages identified were related to the **negative impact on mainstream staff** e.g. time management and over stretched staff.
- **8%** of disadvantages identified were related to there being a **negative impact inclusion**.
- **8%** of disadvantages identified were related to the **impact on tribunals**.
- **8%** of disadvantages identified were related to decrease in **parental confidence** in mainstream schools.

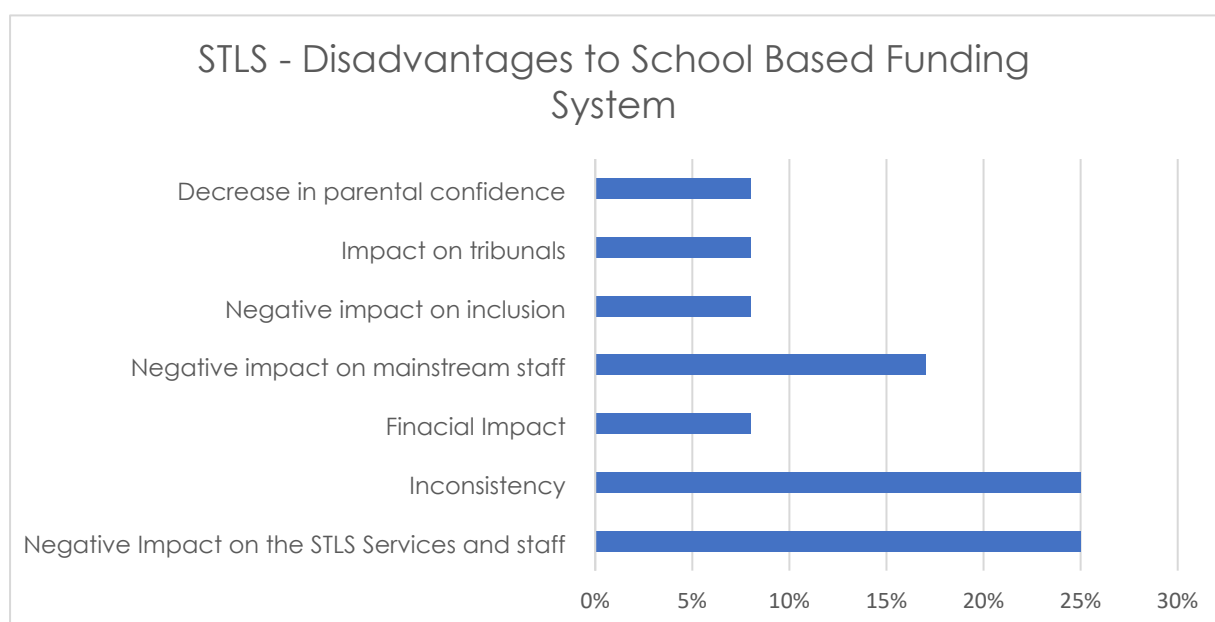


Figure twenty-four: Option four: STLS workshop: Disadvantages

Benefits (2 Comments)

Only Benefits identified by STLS for this option were:

- Maintains a service.
- Links with the locality model proposals.

Risks (11 Comments)

- **27%** of the risks identified were related to **funding** e.g. schools being unable to afford or being placed in financial hardship.
- **27%** of the risks identified were related to the **lack of inclusion and equality** in this option.
- **18%** of the risks identified were related to the **lack of consistency** across clusters/schools/districts.
- **18%** of the risks identified were in relation to **accountability** e.g. quality assurance and governance.

- **10%** of the risks identified were in relation to a **diminished service**.

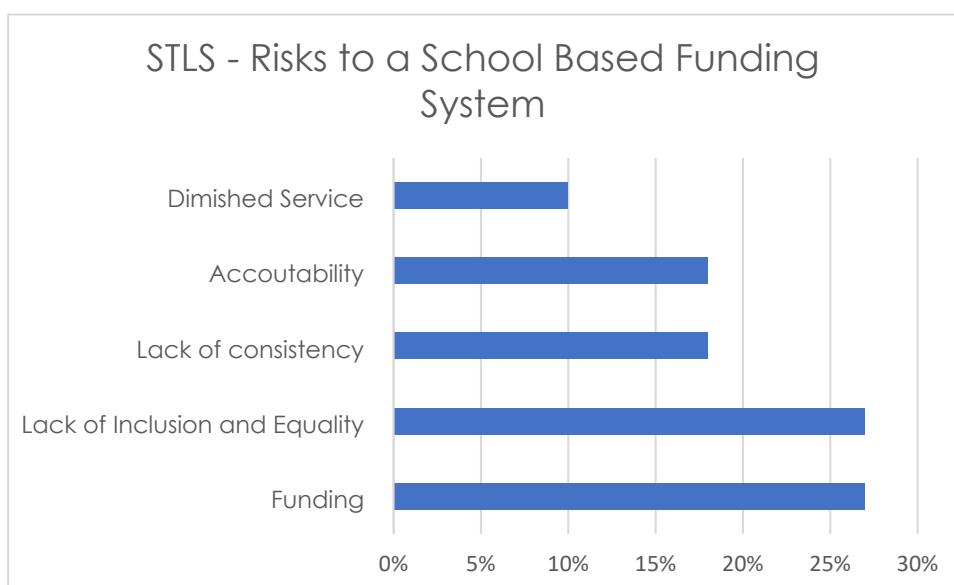


Figure twenty-five: Option four: STLS workshop: Risks

Key Quotes

“Wholesale change to funding and decision-making processes when existing structures could easily be tweaked to deliver new priorities with minimal disruption for already stretched schools and settings.”

“Impact on skilled, dedicated and experienced STLS teams whose work is valued and respected by schools, settings, children and families (evidenced across various consultation and customer feedback data sets)”

“Busy school SENCOs and SLTs will be required to stretch themselves further due to trying to understand and work within new, decision making and funding structures.”

“Smaller schools and those with high need but a ‘smaller voice’ will likely miss out and gaps for the most vulnerable children will widen.”

Stakeholder Feedback: Internal

Advantages (2 comments)

- *“Specialist teachers become a local resource hosted by school, deployed locally without the need for an SLA”*
- *“Mainstream schools have greater ownership of the service”*

Disadvantages

- None identified

Benefits (2 comments)

- *“Engage with mainstream schools to design a new SLA”*

- “Mainstream schools have increased ownership of the service”

Risks (5 comments)

- **40%** of risks identified were related to **funding** and schools do not want to fund the service
- **20%** of risks identified were related to the **STLS capacity** decreasing.
- **20%** of risks identified were related to **inequality and inclusion**.
- **20%** of risks identified were related to the **lack of consistency** across the districts.

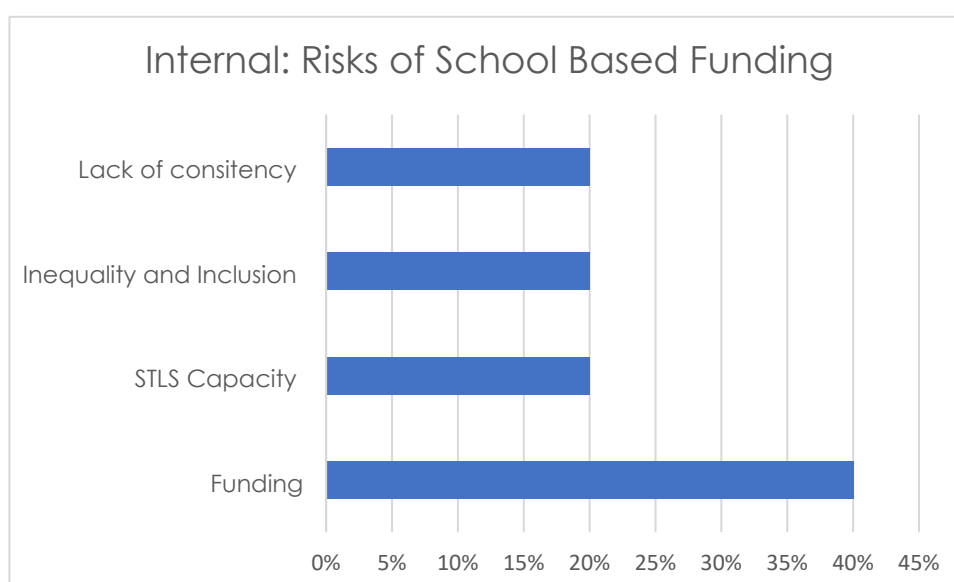


Figure twenty-six: Option four: Internal stakeholders: Risks

Stakeholder Feedback: Schools

Advantages (4 comments)

- “If LIFT is placed into Cluster school budgeting, this could be cost effective as the child has already been discussed historically and speed tier process up.”
- “Funding used to prioritise particular need”.
- “District level would mean that it would be more consistent across the district which is helpful”.
- “Need-based approach could be more efficient.”

Disadvantages (39 Comments)

- **36%** of disadvantages identified were related to significant concerns with regards to ownership/leadership **with localities and cluster models**.
- **5%** of disadvantages identified were related to their being a negative impact on **mainstream staff**.
- **2%** of disadvantages identified were related to their being a **negative impact on EHCPs**.
- **13%** of disadvantages identified were related to **funding/budgets** and being unable to afford STLS.

- **21%** disadvantages identified were related to the **inconsistency** this would cause across schools and districts.
- **8%** of disadvantages identified were related to the negative impact on **Inclusion and inclusive practice**.
- **2%** of disadvantages were related to their being a negative impact on **parental confidence**.
- **15%** of disadvantages were related to their being a **negative impact on STLS staff and the service they provide**.

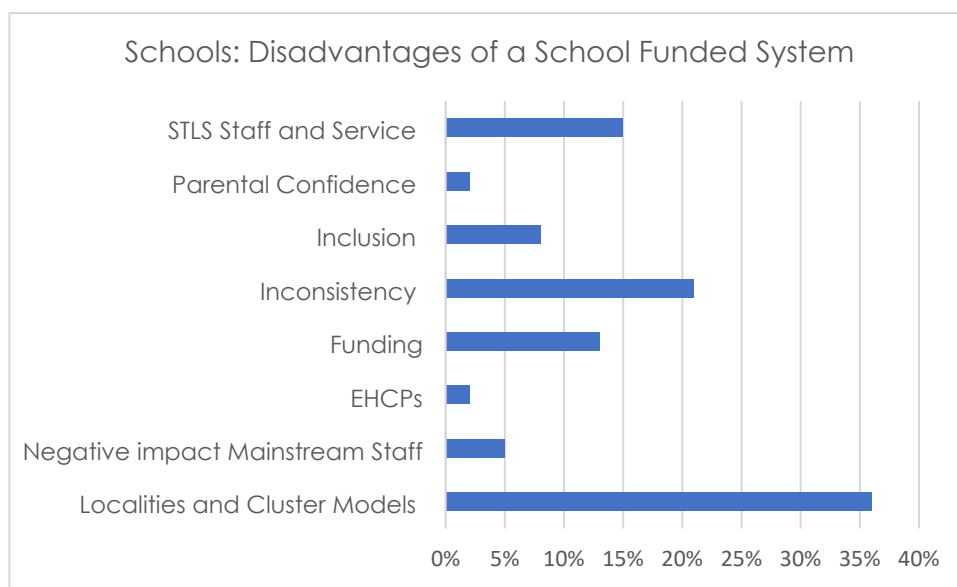


Figure twenty-seven: Option four: Schools workshop: Disadvantages

Benefits (2 comments)

- *“Cut out some of the hoops that we are expected to jump through to get support. trust in the judgement of early years settings.”*
- *“Would put support in locally but some settings might find this challenging.”*

Risks (24 Comments)

- **17%** of risks identified were related to **funding** and schools cannot afford to fund the service.
- **63%** of risks identified were related to **concerns on how localities and cluster models would work with this option**.
- **4%** of risks identified were related to **overwhelming mainstream staff**.
- **4%** of risks identified were related to their being a **negative impact on inclusion and inclusive practice**.
- **8%** of risks identified were related to their being a **negative impact on consistency across districts and clusters**.
- **4%** of risks identified were related to **STLS staff and their job security**.

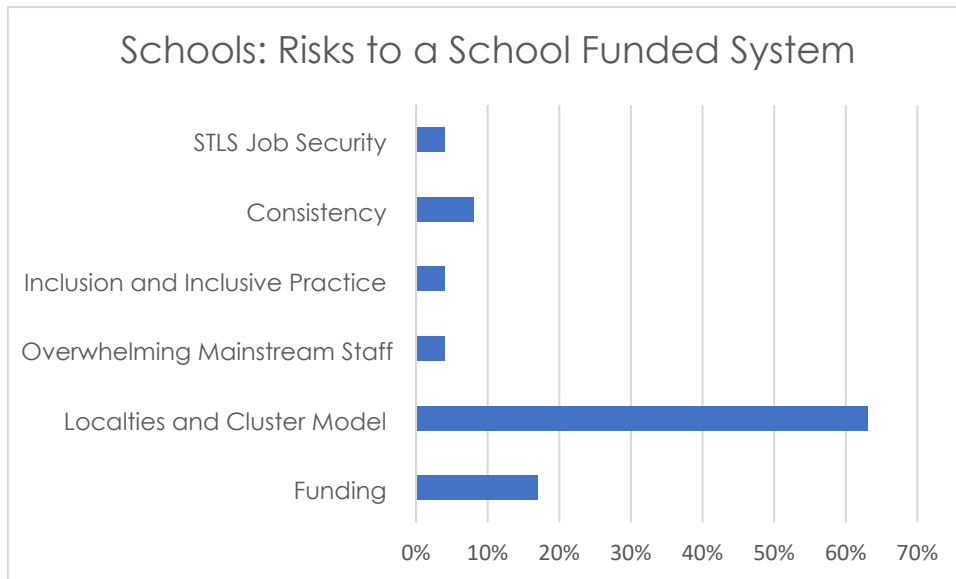


Figure twenty-eight: Option four: Schools workshop: Risks

Key Quotes

“Localities model – scared that we are delegating big decisions to groups of schools in local area. Hard for schools to not be selfish and this is a lot of work for the school and admin. Would we be spending a lot of time making decisions for other schools. Who makes the decisions at the end of the day?”

“This seems to encourage great differences across the county. I thought we were trying to get more consistency for parents/carers”.

“If a majority of the group decide not to invest in STLS service - schools that would like to access it won't be able to”

“How is this different to a traded model? This is a traded service by stealth”.

“Incredibly worried about this as an option. I fear that it could result in ‘the loudest shouter’. Inequitable model, based on postcode. Not right or appropriate. “

“If the schools or the localities model are making decisions about STLs engagement the EY settings will be dependent of them rather. Would it be possible to consider a separate pot (SENIF or something else) for EY settings?”

“STLS left in limbo as not knowing whether they will be sufficiently funded or not and therefore cannot make any long-term plans with regards to training and support”.

Agreed Points between Schools and STLS

Advantages	Disadvantages	Benefits	Risks
Bespoke Service	Negative impact on STLS Staff and service	Local Support	Funding/budgets
	Inconsistency		Inclusion
	Financial		Consistency
	Negative impact on Inclusion		Diminished Service
	Negative impact on Parental Confidence		Accountability/localities/clusters

Figure twenty-nine: Option Four: Agreed points between Schools and STLS

Additional Questions

Stakeholder groups were asked some additional questions.

Additional Question 1.1: Please list the outcomes for children and young people that the service would focus on delivering.

Stakeholder Feedback: STLS (28 comments)

- **11%** identified **training and support** as a delivery focus.
- **7%** identified **LIFT** as a delivery focus.
- **7%** identified increasing **parental confidence** as a focus.
- **21%** identified **Impact measures** as a focus.
- **39%** Identified **inclusion and inclusive practice** as a focus.
- **4%** identified **capacity** of the service as focus.
- **4%** identified working with **outside agencies** as a focus.
- **7%** identified **mainstream staff wellbeing and retention** as a focus.

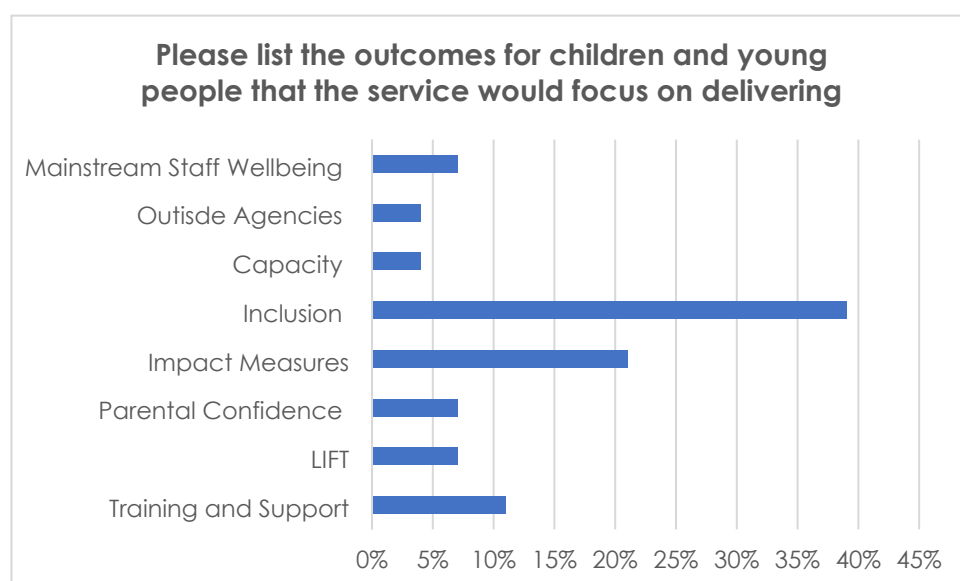


Figure thirty: Additional Question one - STLS

The STLS feedback was heavily focussed on Inclusion and Impact Measures.

Key Quotes

“Suggested that a district oversight board (like LIFT Executive) continues to ensure LIFT/Cluster Panels are consistently managed, consistent and fair decisions are made, LIFT/Cluster panel members receive relevant training, county priorities are delivered and monitored and local priorities are designed and delivered and monitored – under whichever model is progressed. Suggested membership to mirror that of current LIFT Executive to ensure a range of skills, experiences and all interests are represented”.

“Working with other agencies. Ehelp, KEPS, SEND advisors, NHS, Special schools”

“Including children in mainstream school (CATIE Priority 3)”

Stakeholder Feedback: Schools (73 Comments)

- **38%** identified **training and support** as a delivery focus.
- **1%** identified working with **outside agencies** as a focus.
- **15%** identified **Impact measures** as a focus.
- **7%** identified **transition** as a focus.
- **16%** identified **inclusion and inclusive practice** as a focus.
- **5%** identified **EHCPs** as a focus.
- **1%** identified **Consistency** as a focus.
- **4%** identified **LIFT** as a focus.
- **1%** increasing **parental confidence** as a focus.
- **8%** identified **capacity and improvements** of the service as focus.
- **3%** identified increasing **funding** as a focus.

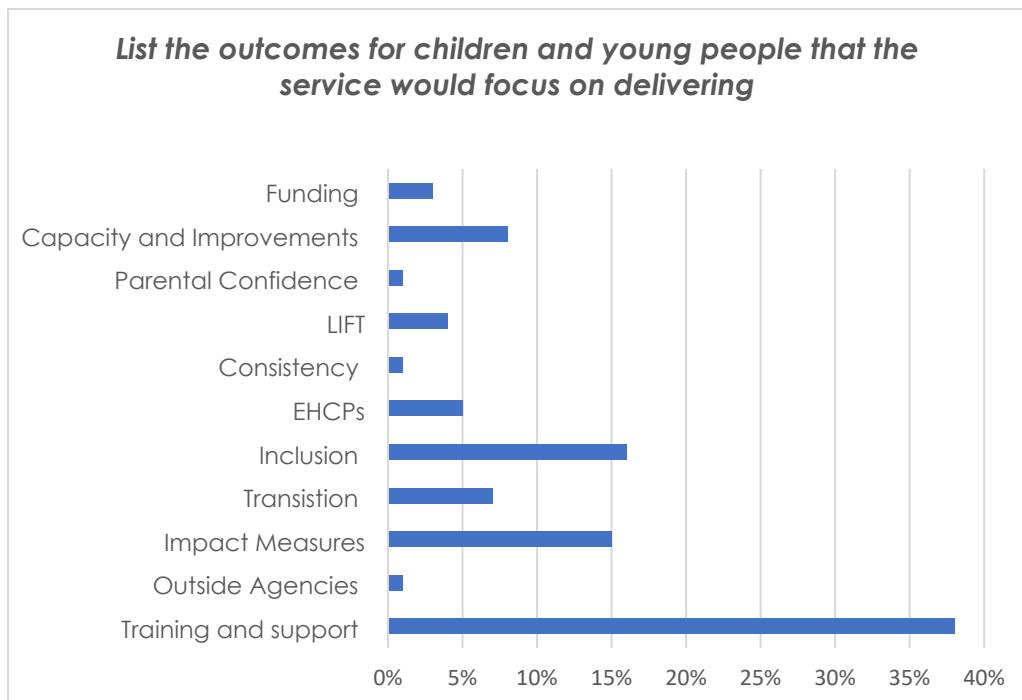


Figure thirty-one: Additional Question 1.1: schools

The feedback from schools for Additional Question one differed from STLS in that there was more focus on the specifics of training and support from schools. Inclusion was also mentioned, as was Impact Measures.

Key Quotes

“Supporting settings to provide services to children in order for them to thrive.

“Reducing suspension and exclusion

“Empowering schools to meet the need of high level of SEN needs”

“To ensure that there is adequate support available to help schools support pupils with additional needs when required. this could include training, transitions and LIFT and link teachers.”

“KCC wants to have SEN children in mainstream settings, we need to be shown how to do this and have the support to do this.”

Additional Question 1.2: What areas of the support should the service focus on?

Stakeholder Feedback: Schools (61 Comments) 46% identified **training and support** as a service focus e.g. THRIVE, ELSA, AET, SALT, bespoke, neurodivergence, SEMH, SLCN.

- **16%** Identified **LIFT** as a service focus.
- **18%** identified **further/improved services** from STLS e.g. school visits, individual student support, bespoke advice for specific children, online surgeries.
- **2%** identified **impact measures** as a service focus.
- **7%** identified **parental support** as a service focus.
- **2%** identified **HNF** as a service focus.
- **2%** identified support with **statutory assessments** e.g. providing evidence.
- **3%** identified **transition** as a service focus.
- **2%** identified **EHCPs** as a service focus.
- **2%** identified **funding** as a service focus.

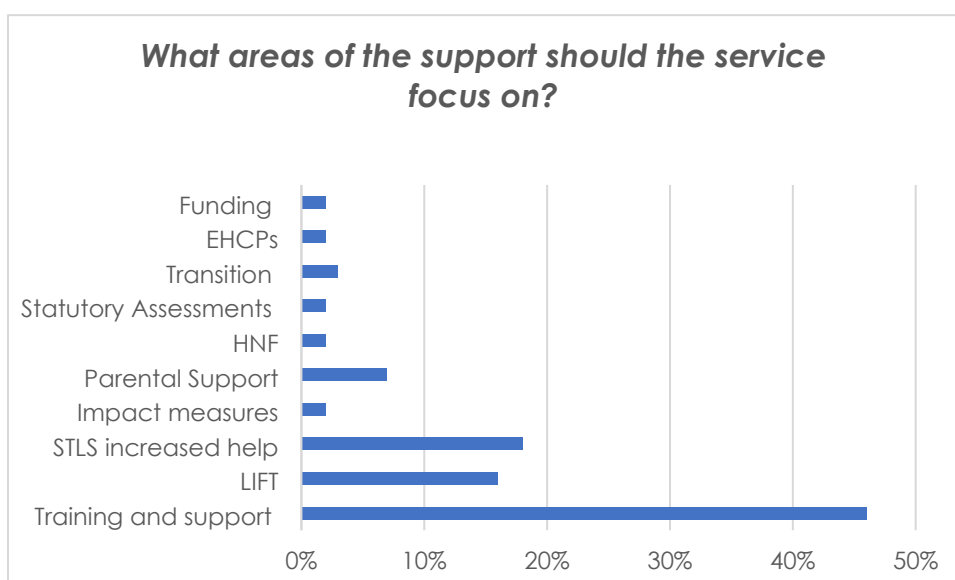


Figure thirty-two: Additional Question 1.2: schools

Schools ranked training and support highly for this question.

Key Quotes

“Support and advice for schools around supporting individual pupils.

Training for schools to enable them to better support a range of needs to enable children to be successful within a mainstream setting”.

“Professional development for teachers Development of expertise within staff to deliver provisions such as THRIVE, ELSA, AET, SALT”

“Direct support to school for children with complex and severe needs, taking into account the context of the school (contextual information).”

“Individual/group support for children, Training linked to specific areas of SEND, Supporting staff development, Partnerships with parents, Provide evidence for statutory assessments.”

Additional Question 2 : Who do you think should write the future SLA? (40 Comments)

Stakeholder Feedback: schools

83% of schools stated multiple stakeholders should be involved in writing the SLA.

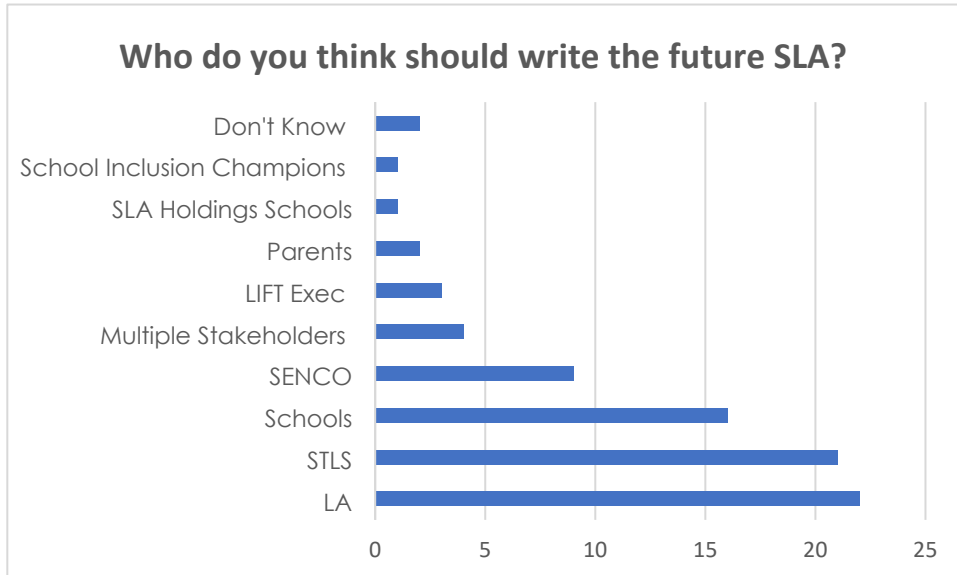


Figure thirty-three: Additional Question 2.1: schools

Schools told us that they thought the Council or the STLS should write a future SLA. Schools writing the SLA was the third most popular choice.

Additional Question four: Please identify which of the following options [regarding the amount of funding allocated to STLS] would be the best option for the service in your district in delivering the outcomes identified?

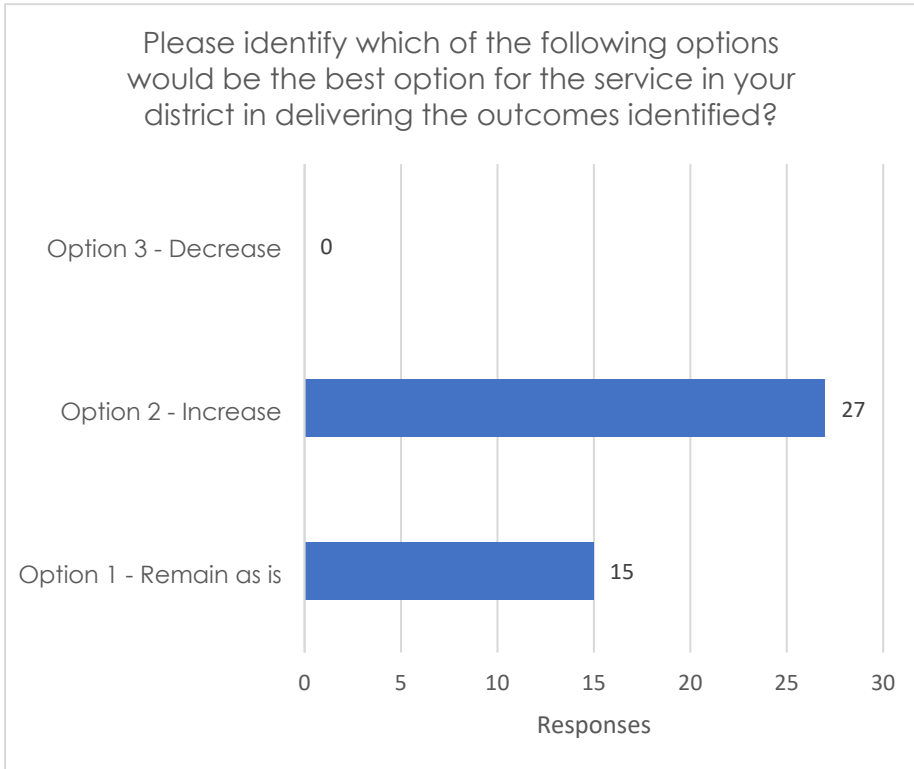


Figure thirty-four: Additional Question 2.1: schools

Schools were asked if funding to STLS should be increased, decreased or remain as is. No schools told us that it should be decreased.

Additional Question 2.2: Please identify which of the following options would be the most achievable given the financial position of schools, the LA and the High Needs Funding budget?

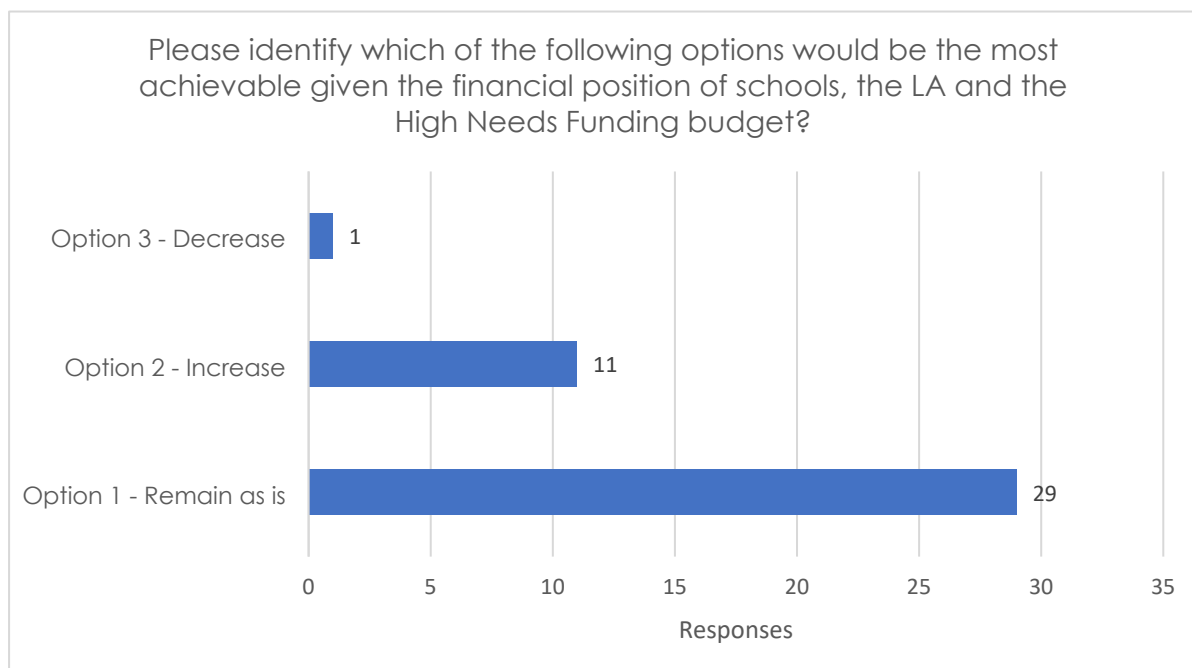


Figure thirty-five: Additional Question five: schools

The majority of schools told us that the funding for the STLS should remain as is. A small minority said the funding should decrease.

Additional Question 2.3: Which of the following factors should be used to do so [which factors should be used to determine levels of funding per district]?

Please prioritise the factors below into order of preference 1-9 (using the arrows on the right to move up and down), with 1 being the most important and 9 being the least.

Priority Factor	Ranking
Proportion of Pupils with EHCP at Mainstream Schools by School District	1 st
Proportion of Pupils with SEN Support at Mainstream Schools by School District	2 nd
Proportion of Mainstream Pupils	3 rd
Proportion of Mainstream Schools	4 th
Proportion of SENIF Applications by School District	5 th
Proportion of Pupils with EHCP at Mainstream Schools by Home District	6 th
Proportion of Special School Pupils	7 th
Proportion of Pupils with SEN Support at Mainstream Schools by Home District	8 th
Proportion of Special Schools	9 th

Figure thirty-six: Additional Question 2.3: schools

Schools told us that the most important consideration when allocating funding to STLS was the proportion of pupils with an EHCP, followed by the proportion of pupils with SEN.



Children, Young People and Education
**Specialist Teaching and Learning Service
 Options Appraisal**

Introduction

The options appraisal below summarises feedback in relation to four options for the future of STLS beyond the end of the current Service Level Agreement (SLA). Feedback was provided by key stakeholders during a series of workshops held for this purpose.

The stakeholder groups engaged in this process are:

- internal stakeholders (Council representatives from the Education and SEND Division of the Children, Young People and Education Directorate) who commission and fund the service,
- representatives from the Specialist Teaching and Learning Service (STLS), who are responsible for delivering the service, and
- representatives from mainstream Early Years settings and schools who are beneficiaries of the service.

In the workshops, options presented for feedback were:

- Option 1: Do nothing – the SLA and the service ends.
- Option 2: No change – the service continues to be funded as is through High Needs Funding (HNF)
- Option 3: The service becomes a traded service.
- Option 4: The service is funded by clusters of schools using High Needs Funding allocated to them for local decision making through the Localities model.

Options feedback

The summary below comprises feedback from all stakeholder groups. Statements referenced to do indicate a consensus across all groups but are a summary of different views from all groups. A more detailed report is available which describes feedback from individual stakeholder groups.

Options Appraisal

Option 1: Do nothing – the SLA and the service ends

<p>Advantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced financial pressure against High Needs Funding Budget • Financial advantage for KCC (caveated by some stakeholder groups as being a short term gain that is likely to see rising costs in the future due to negative impacts identified) 	<p>Disadvantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training for schools and settings would greatly reduce. • Reduction in level of inclusive practice within schools and settings. • Decrease in parental confidence in mainstream schools ability to support children with SEND. • Inability to demonstrate impact on Safety Valve and Accelerated Progress Plan outcomes. • Negative effect on mainstream staff in terms of staff morale and support. • Loss of multiagency working.
<p>Benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No benefits identified by schools, Early Years settings or STLS. • Supports move away from visiting expert model and towards a school led model of school improvement. • Aligns with proposals within the Locality Model for Special Educational Needs Inclusion regarding school-to-school support. 	<p>Risks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rise in number of EHCP request for assessment. • Rise in number of EHCP awarded. • Risk to achieving impact against Safety Valve and Accelerated Progress Plan outcomes. • Impact on mainstream staff, specifically related to loss of support. • Reduction of inclusive practice in schools. • Increasing negative behaviour of pupils. • Impact on delivery of Council priorities such as Autism Education Trust.

Option 2: No change – the service continues to be funded as is through High Needs Funding (HNF) under a further Service Level Agreement (SLA)

<p>Advantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enables continuity of support for schools and Early Years settings. • Continuing development of inclusive practice within schools. • Supports parental confidence in ability of mainstream schools to support children with SEND. • Continuing delivery of multi-agency working. • Consistency of support for schools. • Continued delivery of Council priorities such as Autism Education Trust. 	<p>Disadvantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing cost of funding the service from High Needs Funding Budget. • Does not align to strategic direction of travel in terms of move away from visiting expert model and towards a school led model of school improvement. • Does not align with proposals within the Locality Model for Special Educational Needs Inclusion regarding school-to-school support.
<p>Benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wellbeing of mainstream staff who receive support from the service. 	<p>Risks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk to the service is funding remains static. If funding is not increased, then the service will diminish over time. • Risk of pressure on the High Needs Funding block if funding continues or is increased. • Risk to other support funded through the High Needs Block is funding must be withdrawn from other areas to fund STLS.

Option 3: The service becomes a traded service.

<p>Advantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced financial pressure against High Needs Funding Budget. • Schools and Early Years settings can purchase bespoke support to meet their needs. 	<p>Disadvantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools and Early Years settings may be unable to afford to purchase support through this model creating unequal access within districts and across the county. • Schools and Early Years settings will not be able to afford to purchase the service for every child that needs a specialist teacher allocated so that they can apply for SENIF or HNF. • Negative impact on inclusion where schools cannot purchase support. • Negative impact on quality of service without central oversight.
<p>Benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools and Early Years settings can purchase bespoke support to meet their needs. 	<p>Risks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diminished service over time. • Funding and budgets being insufficient to create a financially sustainable model. • Reduction in levels of inclusive practice within schools. • Increase in number of EHCP requests for assessment and awards. • Disproportionate impact on Early Years settings who are private, voluntary and independent organisations and may have less funding available to purchase support. • Impact on delivery of Council priorities such as Autism Education Trust.

Option 4: The service is funded by clusters of schools using High Needs Funding allocated to them for local decision making through the Localities model.

<p>Advantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools can access support that is bespoke to their needs. • Reducing pressure on the overall High Needs Funding budget as funding would come from the allowance provided to clusters of schools for decision making. 	<p>Disadvantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative impact on STLS Staff and service – staff may leave. • Inconsistency of service delivery across and within districts where some clusters may choose to fund the service and others do not. • Lack of financial stability for the service. • Negative impact on inclusive practice within schools. • Negative impact on levels of parental confidence in mainstream schools and settings.
<p>Benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Localised support tailored to local issues. • Supports move away from visiting expert model and towards a school led model of school improvement. • Aligns with proposals within the Locality Model for Special Educational Needs Inclusion regarding school-to-school support. • Enables greater local decision making. • Enables greater local accountability for spend on high needs funding. • Enables greater local accountability for inclusive practice. 	<p>Risks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding and budgets being insufficient to create a financially sustainable model. • Reduction in levels of inclusive practice within schools and Early Years settings. • Level of service available diminishes over time. • Concerns regarding who is accountable for 'commissioning' and quality assuring the service at a local / cluster level. • Disproportionate impact on Early Years settings who are not funded through HNF budget and are therefore outside the scope of the Localities model and unable to access the allocated funding. • Impact on delivery of Council priorities such as Autism Education Trust.

Additional options identified.

Since the completion of the engagement process for the options appraisal, two alternate options have been identified. These are:

- Option 5: bring the service in house
- Option 6: transition option, extending the current SLA for one year to enable a transition to option 3 or 4.

Appraisals of these options are outlined below.

Option 5: bring the service in house

<p>Advantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greater control for the Council in relation to the quality of the service and creation of a consistent countywide offer for schools and Early Years settings. • Ability to deploy the service creatively in response to emerging needs or crisis. • Retains workforce to deliver Council priorities, such as AET. 	<p>Disadvantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not align to strategic direction of travel in terms of move away from visiting expert model and towards a school led model of school improvement. • Does not align with proposals within the Locality Model for Special Educational Needs Inclusion regarding school-to-school support.
<p>Benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistency of support for schools and Early Years settings. 	<p>Risks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diminished service over time unless funding is increased. • Financial risk to High Needs Funding Budget.

Option 6: transition option, extending the current SLA for one year to enable a transition to Option 3 or 4.

<p>Advantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates a 'buffer' zone, offering consistency of support while changes associated with implementing other options become embedded. 	<p>Disadvantages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not align to the strategic direction of travel.
<p>Benefits</p>	<p>Risks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates additional uncertainty for the STLS workforce who may leave the service, impacting on capacity. • Financial risk to the High Needs Funding budget. • SLA holding schools may not want to accept the financial risk of signing an SLA for additional year with no additional funding.

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EXECUTIVE DECISION

From: Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education

To: Rory Love, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

Subject: Proposed expansion of New Line Learning Academy

Key decision: *It involves expenditure or savings of maximum £1m*

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Past Pathway of report: N/A

Future Pathway of report: Cabinet Member Decision

Electoral Division: Maidstone South – Paul Cooper

Summary: This report sets out the proposed expansion of New Line Learning Academy, Boughton Lane, Maidstone, Kent, ME15 9QL

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member, concerning the proposals to:

- a) authorise the allocation of £6,900,000 from the Children Young People and Education Services Basic Need Capital Budget to fund the permanent expansion of New Line Learning Academy by 1FE, increasing its Published Admission Number (PAN) from 180 to 210 from September 2025.
- b) authorise the Director of Infrastructure, Strategic and Corporate Services in consultation with the General Counsel and Director of Education to enter into any necessary contracts/ agreements on behalf of the County Council with The Future Schools Trust.
- c) authorise the Director of Infrastructure, Strategic and Corporate Services to be the nominated Authority Representative within the relevant agreements and to enter into variations as envisaged under the contracts. Variations to contract value to be no more than 10% above the capital funding agreed by the Cabinet Member without requiring a new Record of Decision.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The expansion of New Line Learning Academy is proposed in response to the significant demand for places within the Maidstone non-selective planning group indicated in the County Council's Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2024-28 (KCP). The planning group has a forecast deficit of 129 places in 2024-25, which is set to increase throughout the Plan period.

- 1.2 In recent years, schools within this planning group have admitted over PAN, creating additional capacity. We anticipate this pattern to continue and will accommodate some of the forecast deficit. However, up to 90 temporary places via bulge provision within the existing Secondary schools will be needed to meet the demand initially, prior to permanent expansion works of up to 3 FE from 2025-26.

2. Body of the report

- 2.1 The Future Schools Trust, with support from Kent County Council (KCC), is proposing to expand New Line Learning Academy by 1FE, increasing the Published Admission Number (PAN) from 180 to 210 from September 2025 to meet the forecast demand. The proposed expansion will form part of Kent County Council's (KCC) co-ordinated response to the forecast demand.
- 2.2 New Line Learning is a co-educational non-selective school for students of 11-16 years that converted to academy status in September 2007 and is now part of. The academy was rated 'Good' by Ofsted at its November 2019 inspection. The academy and the trust are keen to expand the school and welcome the opportunity to temporarily expand in September 2024 prior to the proposed permanent expansion in September 2025.
- 2.3 Following discussion regarding the accommodation needs of the school, KCC has agreed with The Future Schools Trust that, should this proposal go ahead, it will be a trust managed scheme, with KCC providing the Basic Need funding and the Trust undertaking the necessary capital works.
- 2.4 The proposed works would include remodelling space within the New Line Learning that is currently used by the neighbouring Tiger Primary school. KCC space assessment has highlighted that Tiger is short on core teaching space and therefore this scheme will include new teaching accommodation on the Tiger site to re-provision the primary school space within New Line Learning.
- 2.5 The Trust has previously undertaken capital works relating to school improvement and maintenance and has the organisational infrastructure to manage such schemes.

3. Securing Kent's Future

- 3.1 The 'Securing Kent's Future' strategy outlines the measures that KCC intend to take to ensure that Kent remains financially stable, now and in the future. It describes the statutory priorities, one of which being the statutory duty, as the Strategic Commissioner of Education Provision in Kent, to ensure sufficient school places are available to any child or young person who requires one.
- 3.2 The KCP is a five-year rolling plan which is updated annually that sets out KCC's future plans as Strategic Commissioner of Education Provision across all types and phases of education in Kent. A copy of the plan can be viewed from this link:
<http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/education-skills-and-employment-policies/education-provision>

- 3.3 The KCP highlights significant demand for additional places in the Maidstone non-selective planning group over the coming years. Therefore, the proposed expansion to New Line Learning is necessary for KCC to continue to deliver its statutory duty, in a cost-effective way, in line with the guidelines described in the Securing Kent's Future strategy. It will help to maintain KCC's strategic role in supporting schools in Kent to deliver accessible, high quality education provision for all families.

4. Alternative options

- 4.1 The short to medium term expansion options within existing Maidstone schools are limited, with 2 of the town centre schools having already expanded in recent years, whilst others are constrained by site and infrastructure limitations. KCC are working with a number of schools within the planning group to formulate expansion proposals over the coming years and New Line Learning is the first scheme to proceed to the detailed feasibility stage.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 Capital Funding: In depth feasibility work has been undertaken which estimates the total cost of additional accommodation to be £6,900,000. The cost of this project will be funded through the CYPE Basic Need Capital Budget that was agreed at County Council in February 2024.
- 5.2 It is proposed that the first phase of works will be a school managed scheme, with the roles and responsibilities of each party formally set out through a legal contract between KCC and New Line Learning. KCC will monitor progress regularly during the building works to ensure that the accommodation needs are being met.
- 5.3 Revenue Funding: There is no General Fund revenue funding requirement. Should the scheme not proceed through to completion, any costs incurred at the time of cessation would become abortive costs and are likely to be recharged to Revenue. This would be reported through the regular financial monitoring reports to Cabinet
- 5.4 Should the scheme progress, £6,000 per new learning space would be provided towards the cost of furniture and equipment. This would be provided to the school to purchase required equipment. In addition, an allowance of up to £2,500 may be payable to outfit each new teaching room with appropriate ICT equipment, such as touch screens or projection equipment. The school would receive funding for the additional pupils that it admits in line with the funding allocated to schools through KCC's funding formula. All school related revenue costs will be met from the Dedicated Schools Grant as ring-fenced from the Department of Education, the expansion will fall into Kent's Growth Funding Policy.

6. Legal implications

6.1 The expansion will be subject to a legally binding and enforceable contract being in place between KCC and The Future Schools Trust. The Trust will need to secure planning permission for the new accommodation.

7. Equalities implications

7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been produced and no issues were identified in the early stage EqIA, but the assessment will be reviewed as the project continues.

8. Governance

8.1 The proposed decision will authorise the Director of Infrastructure, Strategic and Corporate Services in consultation with the General Counsel and Director of Education to enter into any necessary contracts/ agreements on behalf of the County Council with New Line Learning Foundation Special School. It will also enable the Director of Infrastructure, Strategic and Corporate Services to be the nominated Authority Representative within the relevant agreements and to enter into variations as envisaged under the contracts.

9. Consultation

9.1 In accordance with the DfE's Statutory Guidance 'making significant changes to an existing academy', the expansion proposal can be fast tracked without the Trust having to provide a full business case to the EFA. However, the academy is required to carry out a public consultation with stakeholders as part of their fast-track application.

10. Views

10.1 The View of the Local Member
The KCC Member for Maidstone South – Paul Cooper, have been consulted on this proposal.

10.2 The View of the Assistant Director Education – West Kent
The Assistant Director fully supports this proposal as provides additional places that will help to meet the substantial pressure for non-selective places in the Maidstone area.

11. Conclusions

11.1 This report sets out a proposal to expand New Line Learning by 1 FE to help meet the significant demand for places within the Maidstone non-selective planning group. The building works will be managed by the trust, who have previously demonstrated their ability to successfully complete capital works. The roles and responsibilities of each party will. be formally set out through a legal contract between KCC and The Future Schools Trust to ensure the accommodation requirements are met.

11. Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member, concerning the proposals to:

- a) authorise the allocation of £6,900,000 from the Children Young People and Education Services Basic Need Capital Budget to fund the permanent expansion of New Line Learning Academy by 1FE, increasing its Published Admission Number (PAN) from 180 to 210 from September 2025.
- b) authorise the Director of Infrastructure, Strategic and Corporate Services in consultation with the General Counsel and Director of Education to enter into any necessary contracts/ agreements on behalf of the County Council with The Future Schools Trust.
- c) authorise the Director of Infrastructure, Strategic and Corporate Services to be the nominated Authority Representative within the relevant agreements and to enter into variations as envisaged under the contracts. Variations to contract value to be no more than 10% above the capital funding agreed by the Cabinet Member without requiring a new Record of Decision.

12. Background documents

Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2024-28

13. Contact details

Report Author:

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Relevant Director:

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Director of Education

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KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

DECISION NO:

24/00059

For publication**Key decision: YES**

- It involves expenditure or savings of more than £1million.

Subject Matter / Title of Decision

Proposed expansion of New Line Learning Academy, Boughton Lane, Maidstone, Kent, ME15 9QL

Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, I agree to:

- (i) authorise the allocation of £6,900,000 from the Children Young People and Education Services Basic Need Capital Budget to fund the permanent expansion of New Line Learning Academy by 1FE, increasing its Published Admission Number (PAN) from 180 to 210 from September 2025.
- (ii) authorise the Director of Infrastructure, Strategic and Corporate Services in consultation with the General Counsel and Director of Education to enter into any necessary contracts/ agreements on behalf of the County Council with The Future Schools Trust.
- (iii) authorise the Director of Infrastructure, Strategic and Corporate Services to be the nominated Authority Representative within the relevant agreements and to enter into variations as envisaged under the contracts. Variations to contract value to be no more than 10% above the capital funding agreed by the Cabinet Member without requiring a new Record of Decision.

Reason(s) for decision:

The expansion of New Line Learning Academy is proposed in response to the significant demand for places within the Maidstone non-selective planning group indicated in the County Council's Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2024-28 (KCP). The planning group has a forecast deficit of 129 places in 2024-25, which is set to increase throughout the Plan period.

In recent years, schools within this planning group have admitted over PAN, creating additional capacity. We anticipate this pattern to continue and will accommodate some of the forecast deficit. However, up to 90 temporary places via bulge provision within the existing Secondary schools will be needed to meet the demand initially, prior to permanent expansion works of up to 3 FE from 2025-26. The proposed expansion of New Line Learning by 1FE, increasing the Published Admission Number (PAN) from 180 to 210 from September 2025, will form part of Kent County Council's (KCC) co-ordinated response to the forecast demand.

Background

New Line Learning is a co-educational non-selective school for students of 11-16 years that converted to academy status in September 2007 and is now part of The Future Schools Trust. The

academy was rated 'Good' by Ofsted at its November 2019 inspection. The academy and the trust are keen to expand the school and welcome the opportunity to temporarily expand in September 2024 prior to the proposed permanent expansion in September 2025.

Following discussion regarding the accommodation needs of the school, KCC has agreed with The Future Schools Trust that, should this proposal go ahead, it will be a trust managed scheme, with KCC providing the Basic Need funding and the Trust undertaking the necessary capital works. The Trust has previously undertaken capital works relating to school improvement and maintenance and has the organisational infrastructure to manage such schemes.

Financial Implications

Capital Funding: In depth feasibility work has been undertaken which estimates the total cost of additional accommodation to be £6,888,200. The cost of this project will be funded through the CYPE Basic Need Capital Budget that was agreed at County Council in February 2024.

It is proposed that it will be a trust managed scheme and The Future Schools Trust have engaged a suitable contractor who has completed previous building work for the trust. KCC will monitor progress regularly during the building works to ensure that the accommodation needs are being met.

Revenue Funding: Should the scheme progress, £6,000 per new learning space would be provided towards the cost of furniture and equipment. This would be provided to the school to purchase required equipment. In addition, an allowance of up to £2,500 may be payable to outfit each new teaching room with appropriate ICT equipment, such as touch screens or projection equipment. The school would receive funding for the additional pupils that it admits in line with the funding allocated to schools through KCC's funding formula. All school related revenue costs will be met from the Dedicated Schools Grant as ring-fenced from the Department of Education, the expansion will fall into Kent's Growth Funding Policy.

Legal implications

The expansion will be subject to a legally binding and enforceable contract being in place between KCC and The Future Schools Trust. The Trust will need to secure planning permission for the new accommodation.

Equalities implications

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been produced and no issues were identified in the early stage EqIA, but the assessment will be reviewed as the project continues.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

In accordance with the DfE's Statutory Guidance 'making significant changes to an existing academy', the expansion proposal can be fast tracked without the Trust having to provide a full business case to the EFA. However, the academy is required to carry out a public consultation with stakeholders as part of their fast-track application.

The Childrens, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee will consider the decision on 9 July 2024.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

The short to medium term expansion options within existing Maidstone schools are limited, with 2 of the town centre schools having already expanded in recent years, whilst others are constrained by site and infrastructure limitations. KCC are working with a number of schools within the planning group to formulate expansion proposals over the coming years and New Line Learning is the first scheme to proceed to the detailed feasibility stage.

Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the

Proper Officer:

None

.....
signed

.....
date

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EQIA Submission – ID Number

Section A

EQIA Title

Proposed Expansion of New Line Learning Academy

Responsible Officer

[Q04 ResponsibleOfficer]

Approved by (Note: approval of this EqIA must be completed within the EqIA App)

[Q05 ResponsibleHeadOfService]

Type of Activity

Service Change

[Q07a_ServiceChange]

Service Redesign

[Q07b_ServiceRedesign]

Project/Programme

[Q07c_ProjectProgramme]

Commissioning/Procurement

[Q07d_CommissioningProcurement]

Strategy/Policy

[Q07e_StrategyPolicy]

Details of other Service Activity

[Q07g_OtherActivityDetails]

Accountability and Responsibility

Directorate

[Q02_Directorate]

Responsible Service

[Q03_ResponsibleService]

Responsible Head of Service

[Q05_ResponsibleHeadOfService]

Responsible Director

[Q06_ResponsibleDirector]

Aims and Objectives

[Q08_AimsObjectives]

Section B – Evidence

Do you have data related to the protected groups of the people impacted by this activity?

[Q09_DataProtectedGroupsImpacted]

It is possible to get the data in a timely and cost effective way?

[Q10DataTimelyCostEffectiveWay]

Is there national evidence/data that you can use?

[Q11_DataNationalEvidence]

Have you consulted with stakeholders?

[Q12_ConsultedWithStakeholders]

Who have you involved, consulted and engaged with?

[Q13_WhoConsultedEngagedWith]

Has there been a previous Equality Analysis (EQIA) in the last 3 years?

[Q14_PreviousEqualitiesLast3Years]

Do you have evidence that can help you understand the potential impact of your activity?

[Q15_EvidenceOnPotentialImpact]

Section C – Impact

Who may be impacted by the activity?

Service Users/clients

[Q16a_AreServiceUsersClientsImpacted]

Staff

[Q16c AreStaffImpacted]
Residents/Communities/Citizens
[Q16b AreResidentsCommunitiesCitizensImpacted]
Are there any positive impacts for all or any of the protected groups as a result of the activity that you are doing?
[PositiveImpactsYN]
Details of Positive Impacts
[Q17 DetailsOfPositiveImpacts]
Negative impacts and Mitigating Actions
19. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Age
Are there negative impacts for age?
[Q19a AreThereNegativeImpactsAge]
Details of negative impacts for Age
[Q19b NegativeImpactsAgeDetail]
Mitigating Actions for Age
[Q19c MitigatingActionsAge]
Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions – Age
[Q19d ResponsibleOfficerAge]
20. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Disability
Are there negative impacts for Disability?
[Q20a AreThereNegativeImpactsDisability]
Details of Negative Impacts for Disability
[Q20b NegativeImpactsDisabilityDetail]
Mitigating actions for Disability
[Q20c MitigatingActionsDisability]
Responsible Officer for Disability
[Q20d ResponsibleOfficerDisability]
21. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Sex
Are there negative impacts for Sex
[Q21a AreThereNegativeImpactsSex]
Details of negative impacts for Sex
[Q21b NegativeImpactsSexDetail]
Mitigating actions for Sex
[Q21c MitigatingActionsSex]
Responsible Officer for Sex
[Q21d ResponsibleOfficerSex]
22. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Are there negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender
[Q22a AreThereNegativeImpactsGenderTransgender]
Negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender
[Q22b NegativeImpactsGenderTransgenderDetail]
Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
[Q22c MitigatingActionsGenderTransgender]
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
[Q22d ResponsibleOfficerGenderTransgender]
23. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Race
Are there negative impacts for Race
[Q23a AreThereNegativeImpactsRace]
Negative impacts for Race
[Q23b NegativeImpactsRaceDetail]
Mitigating actions for Race
[Q23c MitigatingActionsRace]
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Race
[Q23d ResponsibleOfficerRace]
24. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Religion and belief

Are there negative impacts for Religion and belief
[Q24a AreThereNegativeImpactsReligionBelief]
Negative impacts for Religion and belief
[Q24b NegativeImpactsReligionBelief]
Mitigating actions for Religion and belief
[Q24c MitigatingActionsReligionBelief]
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Religion and Belief
[Q24d ResponsibleOfficerReligionBelief]
25. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Are there negative impacts for Sexual Orientation
[Q25a AreThereNegativeImpactsSexualOrientation]
Negative impacts for Sexual Orientation
[Q25b NegativeImpactsSexualOrientationDetail]
Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
[Q25c MitigatingActionsSexualOrientation]
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
[Q25d ResponsibleOfficerSexualOrientation]
26. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Are there negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity
[Q26a AreThereNegativeImpactsPregnancyMaternity]
Negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity
[Q26b NegativeImpactsPregnancyMaternityDetail]
Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
[Q26c MitigatingActionsPregnancyMaternity]
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
[Q26d ResponsibleOfficerPregnancyMaternity]
27. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Are there negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
[Q27a AreThereNegativeImpactsMarriageCivilPartnership]
Negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
[Q27b NegativeImpactsMarriageCivilPartnershipsDetail]
Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
[Q27c MitigatingActionsMarriageCivilPartnership]
Responsible Officer for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
[Q27d ResponsibleOfficerMarriageCivilPartnership]
28. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities
Are there negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities
[Q28a AreThereNegativeImpactsCarersResponsibilities]
Negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities
[Q28b NegativeImpactsCarersResponsibilitiesDetails]
Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities
[Q28c MitigatingActionsCarersResponsibilities]
Responsible Officer for Carer's responsibilities
[Q28d ResponsibleOfficerCarers]

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EXECUTIVE DECISION

From: Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education

To: Rory Love, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

Subject: Proposed Increase of the Designated Number of Nexus Foundation Special School

Key decision: *It involves expenditure or savings of maximum £1m*

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Past Pathway of report: N/A

Future Pathway of report: Cabinet Member Decision

Electoral Division: Mark Hood and Paul Stepto – Tonbridge Division

Summary: This report sets out the proposed increase of the Designated Number of places at Nexus Foundation Special School, Upper Haysden Lane, Tonbridge, Kent TN11.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member, concerning the proposals to:

- a) increase the Designated Number of places at Nexus Foundation Special School, Upper Haysden Lane, Tonbridge, Kent TN11, from 228 to 330 from September 2024.
- b) authorise the allocation of £1,260,000 in funding from the Children Young People and Education Services Basic Need Capital Budget to fund the first phase of works to permanently expand Nexus Foundation Special School.
- c) authorise the Director of Infrastructure, Strategic and Corporate Services in consultation with the General Counsel and Director of Education to enter into any necessary contracts/ agreements on behalf of the County Council with Nexus Foundation Special School.
- d) authorise the Director of Infrastructure, Strategic and Corporate Services to be the nominated Authority Representative within the relevant agreements and to enter into variations as envisaged under the contracts. Variations to contract value to be no more than 10% above the capital funding agreed by the Cabinet Member without requiring a new Record of Decision.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Kent County Council (KCC), as the Local Authority (LA), has a statutory duty to ensure sufficient school places are available. The County Council's Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2024-28 (KCP) is a five-year rolling plan which is updated annually. It sets out our future plans as Strategic Commissioner of Education Provision across all types and phases of education in Kent.
- 1.2 The KCP identifies that additional places are needed to meet the demand for Special Education Needs (SEN) places in Tonbridge and Malling and the wider West Kent area.

2. Body of the report

- 2.1 The Nexus Governing Body, with support from KCC, is proposing to increase the school's Designated Number of places from 228 to 330 places from September 2024 to meet the forecast demand.
- 2.2 The Commissioning Plan highlights the SEN place pressure that Kent has experienced, with the number of Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) increasing significantly in recent years. The demand for special school provision within Tonbridge and the wider West Kent area has increased commensurately, and in recent years KCC has commissioned additional places at Nexus without providing additional accommodation.
- 2.3 Since the academic year 2021/22 Nexus has temporarily increased its intake to average of 16 on its main campus and to 6 for the Wouldham satellite to meet the commissioned demand. The demand for places at Nexus is set to remain for the foreseeable future and therefore the proposed scheme provides the physical capacity to continue to admit the increased intakes on a permanent basis.

3. Securing Kent's Future

- 3.1 The 'Securing Kent's Future' strategy outlines the measures that KCC intend to take to ensure that Kent remains financially stable, now and in the future. It describes the statutory priorities, one of which being the statutory duty, as the Strategic Commissioner of Education Provision in Kent, to ensure sufficient school places are available to any child or young person who requires one.
- 3.2 The KCP identified that additional provision is needed to meet the demand for SEN places in Tonbridge and Malling and the wider West Kent area. Therefore, the proposed increase to the Designated Number of places at Nexus is necessary for KCC to continue to deliver its statutory duty, in a cost-effective way, in line with the guidelines described in the Securing Kent's Future strategy.

4. Alternative options

- 4.1 Nexus is the only special school for children with Profound Severe and Complex needs in Tonbridge and, without the provision of permanent additional provision, pupils would need to travel further to access appropriate Special Education Needs (SEN) placements or be placed in expensive independent

special needs provision. Both options would increase the on-going financial pressure on the authority.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 Feasibility work has been undertaken which estimates the total cost of additional accommodation to be circa £4m. This sum was included in the CYPE High Needs Provision Capital Budget agreed at County Council as at February 2024.
- 5.2 The delivery of the additional accommodation to provide capacity for the increased Designated Number is proposed to be delivered over two phases. The first phase of works will deliver the accommodation required for the September 2024 school year. Costings and a tender process have been undertaken for the first phase of the works and an estimated cost of £802,400 identified. This is to provide a modular building comprising 2 classrooms and dining hall. The cost identified also includes design and management, planning application/building control, surveys, installation, and all associated works to construct and deliver the modular build. This would provide the school with the initial capacity it would need to accommodate a staggered increase in pupil numbers.
- 5.3 It is proposed that the first phase of works will be a school managed scheme, with the roles and responsibilities of each party formally set out through a legal contract between KCC and Nexus. KCC will monitor progress regularly during the building works to ensure that the accommodation needs are being met.
- 5.4 A second phase of works would be undertaken to provide the school with the remaining additional accommodation it requires to admit a total roll of 330 pupils in subsequent years. An early estimate of the cost of Phase 2 is £2.88m, detailed costings will be developed as a design is progressed and planning permission sought. The pre-construction design costs associated with Phase 2 are approximately £420,000; this sum combined with the Phase 1 costs of £802,400 reaches the threshold for a Key Decision and therefore a total of £1,252,400 is being sought; with the capital cost of Phase 2 subject to a subsequent Key Decision.
- 5.5 Revenue Funding: There is no General Fund revenue funding requirement expected for phase 1 of the project as the scheme does not currently include the need for temporary mobiles to be hired based on the anticipated programme. Should the scheme not proceed through to completion, any costs incurred at the time of cessation would become abortive costs and are likely to be recharged to Revenue. This would be reported through the regular financial monitoring reports to Cabinet
- 5.6 Should the scheme progress, £6,000 per new learning space would be provided towards the cost of furniture and equipment. This would be provided to the school to purchase required equipment. In addition, an allowance of up to £2,500 may be payable to outfit each new teaching room with appropriate ICT equipment, such as touch screens or projection equipment. The school would receive funding for the additional pupils that it admits in line with the funding allocated to special schools through KCC's funding formula. All school related

revenue costs highlighted will be met from the Dedicated Schools Grant, a ring-fenced grant from the Department of Education.

6. Legal implications

- 6.1 The increase in Designated Number and the accommodation required to permanently admit the additional pupils will be subject to a legally binding and enforceable contract being in place between KCC and Nexus. Planning permission will be required for the new accommodation to enable the expansion of the school.

7. Equalities implications

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been produced and no issues were identified in the early stage EqIA, but the assessment will be reviewed as the project continues.

8. Governance

- 8.1 The proposed decision will authorise the Director of Infrastructure, Strategic and Corporate Services in consultation with the General Counsel and Director of Education to enter into any necessary contracts/ agreements on behalf of the County Council with Nexus Foundation Special School. It will also enable the Director of Infrastructure, Strategic and Corporate Services to be the nominated Authority Representative within the relevant agreements and to enter into variations as envisaged under the contracts.

9. Consultation

- 9.1 In accordance with the Department for Education's Statutory Guidance (January 2024): Making 'prescribed alterations' to maintained schools, there is a need to undertake a formal statutory consultation process.
- 9.2 An informal education consultation was held from 17 May 2024 to 21 June 2024. The consultation document was distributed by the Nexus to parents, members of staff and governors. The consultation was also emailed to all key stakeholders, including but not limited to the following groups:
- The Department for Education
 - The Diocese of Rochester, The Canterbury and Southwark
 - Elected Members (Kent County Council, District and Parish Councils)
 - Local MP
 - Trade Unions
 - Local Children's Centres and pre-school providers
 - Schools in Maidstone area

The consultation was advertised on the KCC and school websites and a drop-in information session was held on Tuesday 04 June 2024, 16:00 to 17:30 at the school.

- 9.3 As at the time this report was authored the consultation was on going and therefore the summarised results will be reported verbally by the Assistant Education Director for West Kent during the CYPE committee meeting.

10. Views

10.1 The View of the Local Members

The KCC Members for Tonbridge Division, Mark Hood and Paul Stepto, have been consulted on this proposal.

10.2 The View of the Assistant Director Education – West Kent

The Assistant Director fully supports this proposal as it contributes to ensuring sufficient places to meet the demand for SEND provision in Tonbridge and Malling and the wider West Kent area.

11. Conclusions

11.1 This report sets out a proposal to increase the Designated Number of places at Nexus Foundation Special School to meet the need for additional SEN places in the Tonbridge and Malling and the wider West Kent area. It also includes the realisation of Basic Need capital funding required to provide the additional accommodation needed to permanently admit the increased designated number of pupils. The building works would be split into 2 stages with the first stage proposed to be a school built scheme managed by Nexus. The roles and responsibilities of each party will be formally set out through a legal contract between KCC and Nexus to ensure the requirements are met.

11. Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills is asked to agree to:

- a) increase the Designated Number of places at Nexus Foundation Special School, Upper Haysden Lane, Tonbridge, Kent TN11, from 228 to 330 from September 2024.
- b) authorise the allocation of £1,260,000 in funding from the Children Young People and Education Services Basic Need Capital Budget to fund the first phase of works to permanently expand Nexus Foundation Special School.
- c) authorise the Director of Infrastructure, Strategic and Corporate Services in consultation with the General Counsel and Director of Education to enter into any necessary contracts/ agreements on behalf of the County Council with Nexus Foundation Special School.
- d) authorise the Director of Infrastructure, Strategic and Corporate Services to be the nominated Authority Representative within the relevant agreements and to enter into variations as envisaged under the contracts. Variations to contract value to be no more than 10% above the capital funding agreed by the Cabinet Member without requiring a new Record of Decision.

12. Background documents

Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2024-28

13. Contact details

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Relevant Director:

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KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

DECISION NO:

24/00060

For publication**Key decision: YES**

- *It involves expenditure or savings of maximum £1m*

Subject Matter / Title of Decision

Proposed Increase of a Designated Number of Nexus Foundation Special School

Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, I agree to:

- (i) Increase the Designated Number of places at Nexus Foundation Special School, Upper Haysden Lane, Tonbridge, Kent TN11, from 228 to 330 from September 2024.
- (ii) authorise the allocation of £1,260,000 in funding from the Children Young People and Education Services Basic Need Capital Budget to fund the first phase of works to permanently expand Nexus Foundation Special School.
- (iii) authorise the Director of Infrastructure, Strategic and Corporate Services in consultation with the General Counsel and Director of Education to enter into any necessary contracts/ agreements on behalf of the County Council with Nexus Foundation Special School.
- (iv) authorise the Director of Infrastructure, Strategic and Corporate Services to be the nominated Authority Representative within the relevant agreements and to enter into variations as envisaged under the contracts. Variations to contract value to be no more than 10% above the capital funding agreed by the Cabinet Member without requiring a new Record of Decision.

Reason(s) for decision:

Kent County Council (KCC), as the Local Authority (LA), has a statutory duty to ensure sufficient school places are available. The County Council's Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2024-28 (KCP) is a five-year rolling plan which is updated annually. It sets out our future plans as Strategic Commissioner of Education Provision across all types and phases of education in Kent.

The KCP identifies that additional places are needed to meet the demand for Special Education Needs (SEN) places in Tonbridge and Malling and the wider West Kent area.

Background

The Nexus Governing Body, with support from KCC, is proposing to increase the school's Designated Number of places from 228 to 330 places from September 2024 to meet the forecast demand.

The Commissioning Plan highlights the SEN place pressure that Kent has experienced, with the number of Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) increasing significantly in recent years. The

demand for special school provision within Tonbridge and the wider West Kent area has increased commensurately, and in recent years KCC has commissioned additional places at Nexus without providing additional accommodation.

Since the academic year 2021/22 Nexus has temporarily increased its intake to average of 16 on its main campus and to 6 for the Wouldham satellite to meet the commissioned demand. The demand for places at Nexus is set to remain for the foreseeable future and therefore the proposed scheme provides the physical capacity to continue to admit the increased intakes on a permanent basis.

Financial Implications

Capital Funding: Feasibility work has been undertaken which estimates the total cost of additional accommodation to be circa £4m. This sum was included in the CYPE High Needs Provision Capital Budget agreed at County Council as at February 2024.

The delivery of the additional accommodation to provide capacity for the increased Designated Number is proposed to be delivered over two phases. The first phase of works will deliver the accommodation required for the September 2024 school year. Costings and a tender process have been undertaken for the first phase of the works and an estimated cost of £802,400 identified. This is to provide a modular building comprising 2 classrooms and dining hall. The cost identified also includes design and management, planning application/building control, surveys, installation, and all associated works to construct and deliver the modular build. This would provide the school with the initial capacity it would need to accommodate a staggered increase in pupil numbers.

It is proposed that the first phase of works will be a school managed scheme, with the roles and responsibilities of each party formally set out through a legal contract between KCC and Nexus. KCC will monitor progress regularly during the building works to ensure that the accommodation needs are being met.

A second phase of works would be undertaken to provide the school with the remaining additional accommodation it requires to admit a total roll of 330 pupils in subsequent years. An early estimate of the cost of Phase 2 is £2.88m, detailed costings will be developed as a design is progressed and planning permission sought. The pre-construction design costs associated with Phase 2 are approximately £420,000; this sum combined with the Phase 1 costs of £802,400 reaches the threshold for a Key Decision and therefore a total of £1,252,400 is being sought; with the capital cost of Phase 2 subject to a subsequent Key Decision.

Revenue Funding: There is no General Fund revenue funding requirement expected for phase 1 of the project as the scheme does not currently include the need for temporary mobiles to be hired based on the anticipated programme. Should the scheme not proceed through to completion, any costs incurred at the time of cessation would become abortive costs and are likely to be recharged to Revenue. This would be reported through the regular financial monitoring reports to Cabinet

Should the scheme progress, £6,000 per new learning space would be provided towards the cost of furniture and equipment. This would be provided to the school to purchase required equipment. In addition, an allowance of up to £2,500 may be payable to outfit each new teaching room with appropriate ICT equipment, such as touch screens or projection equipment. The school would receive funding for the additional pupils that it admits in line with the funding allocated to special schools through KCC's funding formula. All school related revenue costs highlighted will be met from the Dedicated Schools Grant, a ring-fenced grant from the Department of Education.

Legal implications

The increase in Designated Number and the accommodation required to permanently admit the additional pupils will be subject to a legally binding and enforceable contract being in place between KCC and Nexus. Planning permission will be required for the new accommodation to enable the expansion of the school.

Equalities implications

An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been produced and no issues were identified in the early stage EqIA, but the assessment will be reviewed as the project continues.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

In accordance with the Department for Education’s Statutory Guidance (January 2024): Making ‘prescribed alterations’ to maintained schools, there is a need to undertake a formal statutory consultation process.

An informal education consultation is scheduled from 17 May 2024 to 21 June 2024.

The Childrens’, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee will consider the decision on 9 July 2024.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

Nexus is the only special school for children with Profound Severe and Complex needs in Tonbridge and, without the provision of permanent additional provision, pupils would need to travel further to access appropriate Special Education Needs (SEN) placements or be placed in expensive independent special needs provision. Both options would increase the on-going financial pressure on the authority.

Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:

None

.....
signed

.....
date

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EQIA Submission – ID Number

Section A

EQIA Title

Proposed Increase of a Designated Number of Nexus Foundation Special School

Responsible Officer

Paul Wilson - CY EPA

Approved by (Note: approval of this EqIA must be completed within the EqIA App)

Nicholas Abrahams - CY EPA

Type of Activity

Service Change

No

Service Redesign

No

Project/Programme

Project/Programme

Commissioning/Procurement

No

Strategy/Policy

No

Details of other Service Activity

No

Accountability and Responsibility

Directorate

Children Young People and Education

Responsible Service

Education, Planning and Access

Responsible Head of Service

Nicholas Abrahams - CY EPA

Responsible Director

Christine McInnes - CY EPA

Aims and Objectives

To provide sufficient school places; Kent County Council (KCC), as the Local Authority (LA), has a statutory duty to ensure sufficient school places are available. The County Council's Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2024-28 (KCP) is a five-year rolling plan which is updated annually. It sets out our future plans as Strategic Commissioner of Education Provision across all types and phases of education in Kent.

The Commissioning Plan highlights the SEN place pressure that Kent has experienced, with the number of Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) increasing significantly in recent years. The demand for special school provision within Tonbridge and the wider West Kent area has increased commensurately, and in recent years KCC has commissioned additional places at Nexus. Since the academic year 2021/22 Nexus has temporarily increased its intake to 16 on its main campus and to 6 for the Woudham satellite to meet the commissioned demand. The demand for places at Nexus is set to remain for the foreseeable future and therefore the proposed scheme provides the physical capacity to continue to admit the increased intakes on a permanent basis.

Section B – Evidence

Do you have data related to the protected groups of the people impacted by this activity?

Yes

It is possible to get the data in a timely and cost effective way?
Yes
Is there national evidence/data that you can use?
Yes
Have you consulted with stakeholders?
No
Who have you involved, consulted and engaged with?
There is an informal consultation planned to run from 17 May 2024 to 21 June 2024.
Subject to the decision from the Cabinet Member, a Public Notice is planned to run in July/August 2024.
Has there been a previous Equality Analysis (EQIA) in the last 3 years?
No
Do you have evidence that can help you understand the potential impact of your activity?
Yes
Section C – Impact
Who may be impacted by the activity?
Service Users/clients Service users/clients
Staff Staff/Volunteers
Residents/Communities/Citizens No
Are there any positive impacts for all or any of the protected groups as a result of the activity that you are doing?
Yes
Details of Positive Impacts
The increase in Nexus' designated number and physical accommodation will enable more children from Tonbridge and the wider West Kent area to benefit from an appropriate local SEN place.
Negative impacts and Mitigating Actions
19. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Age
Are there negative impacts for age?
No. Note: If Question 19a is "No", Questions 19b,c,d will state "Not Applicable" when submission goes for approval
Details of negative impacts for Age
Not Completed
Mitigating Actions for Age
Not Completed
Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions – Age
Not Completed
20. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Disability
Are there negative impacts for Disability?
No. Note: If Question 20a is "No", Questions 20b,c,d will state "Not Applicable" when submission goes for approval
Details of Negative Impacts for Disability
Not Completed
Mitigating actions for Disability
Not Completed
Responsible Officer for Disability
Not Completed
21. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Sex

Are there negative impacts for Sex
No. Note: If Question 21a is "No", Questions 21b,c,d will state "Not Applicable" when submission goes for approval
Details of negative impacts for Sex
Not Completed
Mitigating actions for Sex
Not Completed
Responsible Officer for Sex
Not Completed
22. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Are there negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender
No. Note: If Question 22a is "No", Questions 22b,c,d will state "Not Applicable" when submission goes for approval
Negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender
Not Completed
Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Not Completed
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Not Completed
23. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Race
Are there negative impacts for Race
No. Note: If Question 23a is "No", Questions 23b,c,d will state "Not Applicable" when submission goes for approval
Negative impacts for Race
Not Completed
Mitigating actions for Race
Not Completed
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Race
Not Completed
24. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Religion and belief
Are there negative impacts for Religion and belief
No. Note: If Question 24a is "No", Questions 24b,c,d will state "Not Applicable" when submission goes for approval
Negative impacts for Religion and belief
Not Completed
Mitigating actions for Religion and belief
Not Completed
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Religion and Belief
Not Completed
25. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Are there negative impacts for Sexual Orientation
No. Note: If Question 25a is "No", Questions 25b,c,d will state "Not Applicable" when submission goes for approval
Negative impacts for Sexual Orientation
Not Completed
Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Not Completed
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Not Completed
26. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity

Are there negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity
No. Note: If Question 26a is "No", Questions 26b,c,d will state "Not Applicable" when submission goes for approval
Negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Completed
Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Completed
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Completed
27. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Are there negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
No. Note: If Question 27a is "No", Questions 27b,c,d will state "Not Applicable" when submission goes for approval
Negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Completed
Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Completed
Responsible Officer for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Completed
28. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities
Are there negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities
No. Note: If Question 28a is "No", Questions 28b,c,d will state "Not Applicable" when submission goes for approval
Negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities
Not Completed
Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities
Not Completed
Responsible Officer for Carer's responsibilities
Not Completed

From: **Rory Love, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills**
Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education

To: Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee

Subject: **Implementation of Standardised School Led Home to School Transport Offer for all Home to School Transport**

Decision number: 24/00062

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Future Pathway of Paper: Cabinet Member Decision

Summary:

In line with the Council's Transport Policy for Children and Young People aged 4 to 16 and Post 16 Transport Policy Statement including Post 19, a proposed standardised approach for School Led Home to School Transport has been developed. This will facilitate direct provision of school transport to entitled pupils via their school, setting or other independent third party support agencies, at a reduced cost to the KCC arranged alternatives.

Recommendation(s):

The Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee is asked to CONSIDER and ENDORSE, or MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS to the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills on the proposals as set out in the PROD.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report updates and informs Members in regard to the delivery of Kent council tax payer funded school transport to pupils who are assessed as eligible for council support under KCC's Transport Policy for Children and Young People aged 4 to 16 (Appendix A) and Post 16 Transport Policy Statement including Post 19 (Appendix B). These policies were consulted on in January 2023 for implementation in September 2024.
- 1.2 The Transport Policy for Children and Young People aged 4 to 16 explains how KCC will identify who meets the national criteria for Kent council tax payer funded home to school transport for all mainstream and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) pupils aged 4 to 16 and highlights KCC's commitment to provide suitable transport. It also explains what additional transport support KCC will provide and how we will do it.

- 1.3 Sections 508B and 508C of the Education Act 1996 explain how Kent council tax payer funded school transport should operate across the UK for 4 to 16 year olds.
- 1.4 Under the Act, a parent is responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly. However, Section 444(3B) provides that a parent will have a defence in law against a prosecution by a Local Authority (Council) for their child's non-attendance at school, where the Local Authority has a duty to make travel arrangements in relation to the Children and Young People (CYP) under Section 508B and has failed to discharge that duty.
- 1.5 Local Authorities do not have a general obligation to provide fully funded or subsidised post 16 travel support in the same way as for pupils aged 4 to 16, but do have a duty to prepare and publish an annual transport policy statement specifying the arrangements for the provision of transport, or other support that the authority considers it necessary to make to facilitate the attendance of all persons of sixth form age receiving education or training.
- 1.6 The requirements placed on a Local Authority are defined in the Education Act 1996 (as amended), Education and Skills Act 2008, Education and Inspections Act 2006, Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 and the Equality Act 2010.
- 1.7 Both pre and post 16 transport policies include the following statement:

The Head of Fair Access will work in conjunction with schools with a willingness and sufficient capacity, to develop bespoke arrangements to provide transport to eligible Young People on their roll. Such arrangements will be agreed in line with principles outlined in this policy, but will be managed via separate formal agreements with the school.

2. Current Position

- 2.1 KCC currently provides support to 11,755 pupils aged 4 to 16 who are eligible for Kent council tax payer funded school transport. This figure includes 5,496 pupils with Education Health and Care Plans, with around 1,100 pupils are provided a Personal Transport Budget. 1,211 families qualify for Kent council tax payer funded transport under low-income criteria (including both mainstream and SEN pupils).
- 2.2 Historic non-standardised arrangements are currently in place with three schools who provide transport support for all entitled pupils that attend their setting. This accounts for around 250 pupils of the total entitled cohort, who would otherwise be in KCC provided vehicles. These schools report that these direct arrangements allow for a more responsive transport offer, which improves not only the child's journey to and from school, but also their learning experience throughout the school day. From a Local Authority perspective, school led arrangements are more cost effective than the market equivalent and ensure that limited capacity remains available for other pupils. Two of these schools are Maintained schools and one is a Foundation school.

- 2.3 The nature of school led transport means that while market forces will play a significant part in the overall cost of transport, children's individual needs also have the potential to contribute to wide variations in the average cost of transport for each setting. A setting that supports pupils with profound needs are therefore likely to cost significantly more to transport on average than a mainstream setting. Due to these high needs, the potential to deliver more cost effective transport arrangements may also vary. This means that "successful" arrangements may vary significantly from one setting to another. However, the key principles for all settings remains the same. School led arrangements must provide an equal or greater level of quality of transport at a lower average price point to the equivalent that could be arranged by Kent County Council.
- 2.4 While current school led arrangements have been in place for many years, an analysis was completed to assess the equivalent cost should KCC be required to transport those pupils today.
- School A currently transports approximately 75 pupils at an average annual cost per pupil of £5,826. Equivalent KCC arrangements would currently cost £8,062 per pupil, representing a saving of £2,236 or 27.7% per pupil. This equates to a total saving of £167,700 per annum.
 - School B current transports approximately 125 pupils at an average annual costs per pupil of £7,400. Equivalent KCC arrangements would currently cost £7,945 per pupil, representing a saving of £545 or 7.4% per pupil. This equates to a total saving of £68,125 per annum.
 - School C currently provides transport to approximately 50 pupils. Arrangements have been historically made on the basis of a fixed grant of £50k rather than a repayment mechanism. While the school currently provides transport at approximately 50% of the equivalent cost to KCC, the school has recently flagged concerns that they can no longer cover its costs further highlighting the need to review the current arrangement.

3. The Report

- 3.1 Since both school transport policies were determined in October 2023, Officers within Transport Eligibility in Fair Access have been investigating a large-scale expansion of School Led Transport. To ensure a consistent, sustainable and legally compliant offer, a standardised approach to agreeing and securing School Led Transport arrangements has been developed with Commissioning colleagues. This will allow new Maintained schools to be onboarded quickly and efficiently, while ensuring that licencing and insurance arrangements are appropriate for the type of arrangements that will be put in place. Service Level Agreements will be used for Maintained Schools with robust reporting and monitoring requirements.
- 3.2 A separate approach is also being developed for Private Schools, Non-Maintained Schools, Academies Trusts and other providers in order to comply with Spending the Council's Money and the Public Contract Regulations. There will need to be contractual arrangements, and these will clearly define monitoring requirements, to ensure that school led implementation will continue to provide ongoing financial benefit throughout the year. To establish a

compliant approach the service will work with the Commercial and Procurement Division where the value is above the threshold for the Public Contract Regulations (£214,904 (inc. VAT) from January 2024) and to manage a process that can flexibly achieve savings, reduce the reliance on the Home to School Transport Dynamic Purchasing System Framework and not be too onerous on the setting.

- 3.3 The driving principle, as with all discretionary transport schemes, is that arrangements will only be agreed where there is a financial benefit to the Local Authority and by implication to the tax payer compared to current delivery options. To support this goal, the new approach is intended to offer sufficient flexibility to accommodate the variations in school need and resources. For example, making use of pre-existing school vehicles wherever possible, and allowing cost effective access to lease vehicles where necessary. Similarly, smaller scale arrangements where KCC and schools agree a subset of the whole entitled cohort will be available, rather than an expectation that schools will transport all pupils. This will allow schools to trial arrangements and expand their engagement as their experience grows.
- 3.4 While school led arrangements must include the potential for the use of smaller hire vehicles, these monitoring mechanisms will also ensure that school arrangements minimise any additional market pressures where schools and KCC are competing for the same vehicles. Provision of new, or use of existing school vehicles will therefore be expected to form the basis of most new agreements.
- 3.5 As outlined in Section 2, it is important to recognise that the needs of each school and their unique cohort of entitled pupils will mean that a standardised savings target will not be beneficial for the scheme. Regular monitoring will ensure that schools do not enhance the service they offer beyond the agreed specification, at the cost of efficient use of resources. However, KCC will be reliant on schools choosing to engage with this scheme. There is no legal driver to compel schools to support in this way. As such, reasonable flexibilities should be expected, such as allowing scheme vehicles to support other school activities (at each school's expense), so long as core transport delivery is maintained.
- 3.6 As the scheme expands, the volume of monitoring by the Transport Eligibility Team and Commissioners will also increase. It will therefore be vital to regularly review staffing capacity and, where necessary, re-invest some of the savings to maintain the team's ability to ensure efficacy and availability to additional schools. This is outlined further in Section 4.
- 3.7 The Fair Access Team has been engaging with schools and settings to gauge potential interest. At the writing of this paper, seven settings have expressed a strong interest in transitioning to this framework from as early as January 2025.
- 3.8 Once the new approach is formalised and in place to allow new settings to be added, a review of pre-existing arrangements will be completed and schools will be brought over to the new approach. This activity is expected to be

completed by January 2026 to ensure that any required changes can be managed in a way that is mindful of the needs of current travelling pupils.

- 3.9 In addition, Officers will continue to engage with mainstream and private schools, Post 16 providers and independent third party support agencies to expand the number of establishments that provide support to some or all of the entitled pupils within their establishment, subject to the roll out of the offer to the different provider types.
- 3.10 These arrangements are expected to be in place for as many years as they remain cost effective. As such, the potential for individual arrangement costs to exceed the Key Decision threshold of £1m remains high. It will therefore be necessary to provide the Corporate Director with the delegated authority to enter into these arrangements wherever they provide a financial benefit to the Council, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills. The Corporate Director for CYPE will receive the main delegations to implement this decision, covering activity such as managing and entering into the required agreements with relevant schools etc. The Corporate Director may sub-delegate any of these functions as they see fit.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 The total spend on SEN Home to School and College transport was £67.9m in 23-24 of which £2.4m was spent on the existing school led transport arrangements with an estimated saving in the region of £0.240m (or 10%) as outlined in section 2.4. School transport and its administration is funded by the County Council's General Fund.
- 4.2 Future savings associated with this policy will be dependent on a number of factors including the number of schools, the degree in which the schools take part in the offer, the number of students and their current travel patterns. Schools would also propose different solutions for implementing their own alternative offer which will impact of the costs involved. The Council has received a number of proposals by education providers which are being assessed. One example suggested a saving of up to 48% which further emphasised the degree of variability in savings and a need to assess opportunities on a school by school basis.
- 4.3 There will be an additional administration cost associated with the implementation of this policy to support the set up and monitoring of these arrangements. The current arrangements are being supported by the existing Fair Access team in the CYPE Directorate but it is recognised that it will not be possible to manage the expansion of the offer within existing resources. Therefore the proposal includes the requirement for additional staffing resource dedicated to supporting the schools in setting up the arrangements and organising the ongoing contract monitoring and payment cycles. This will then be reviewed after 2 years (or early if demand is significantly higher or lower) to determine the level of ongoing support required. The estimated annual cost of staffing is approximately £110K and is expected to be offset by the savings from the new agreements being secured. Depending on the circumstances of the

individual school, this level of saving is likely to be secured with 1 new agreement.

5. Equalities Implications

- 5.1 Both transport policy consultations were subject to Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs), which can be found in Appendix C and Appendix D and remain relevant to the implementation of that policy.
- 5.2 Where necessary, individual EqIAs will be completed with schools and providers, to ensure that changes are made in line with collective equalities duties. However, Kent's experience in school led transport identifies that school provided arrangements allows for a greater level of bespoke support for individual pupils when compared to large scale implementation, so risk of detrimental impact remains very low.

6. Securing Kent's Future and Framing Kent's Future

- 6.1 This decision supports Securing Kent's Future both in terms of supporting the objective to ensure the in-year budget remains in balance (objective 1) along with identifying and delivering saving opportunities to support the setting of a sustainable budget and MTFP (objective 2) through providing alternative commissioning arrangements for Home to School Transport. This will contribute towards the delivery of the £6.8m savings attributed to Home to School Transport in 24-25 where new arrangements are entered in to during the new academic year.
- 6.2 This decision supports Framing Kent's future priority 2 – Infrastructure for Communities, in particular making use of innovative transport opportunities to ease pressures on pre-existing transport networks.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 Sections 508B and 508C of the Education Act 1996 explain how Council tax payer funded school transport should operate across the UK for 4 to 16 year olds.
- 7.2 Under the Act, a parent is responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly. However, Section 444(3B) provides that a parent will have a defence in law against a prosecution by a Local Authority (Council) for their child's non-attendance at school, where the Local Authority has a duty to make travel arrangements in relation to the Children and Young People (CYP) under Section 508B and has failed to discharge that duty.
- 7.3 Local Authorities do not have a general obligation to provide for Kent council tax payer funded or subsidised post 16 travel support in the same way as for pupils aged 4 to 16, but do have a duty to prepare and publish an annual transport policy statement specifying the arrangements for the provision of transport, or other support that the authority considers it necessary to make to

facilitate the attendance of all persons of sixth form age receiving education or training.

7.4 The requirements placed on a Local Authority are defined in the Education Act 1996 (as amended), Education and Skills Act 2008, Education and Inspections Act 2006, Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 and the Equality Act 2010.

7.5 There are legal implications in relation to compliance with the Public Contract Regulations 2015 in relation to Economic Operators as well as compliance to our internal policy Spending the Council's Money.

8. Data Protection Implications

8.1 All activities in relation to this decision will be implemented in line with pre-existing processes. As such, no new data protection implications need to be considered.

9. Recommendation(s)

The Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee is asked to CONSIDER and ENDORSE, or MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS to the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills on the proposals as set out in the PROD.

10. Background Documents

Appendix A - Transport Policy for Children and Young People aged 4 to 16 ([link](#))

Appendix B - Post 16 Transport Policy Statement including Post 19 ([link](#))

Appendix C – EQIA Home to School Transport Policy 4-16 ([link](#))

Appendix D - EQIA Post 16 Transport Policy Statement including Post 19 ([link](#))

11. Contact details

Report Author

- Craig Chapman – Assistant Director - Fair Access and (Interim) SEN Processes
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Relevant Director

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KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

DECISION NUMBER:

24/00062

For publication [Do not include information which is exempt from publication under schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972]

Key decision: YES / NO

Key decision criteria. The decision will:

- a) result in savings or expenditure which is significant having regard to the budget for the service or function (currently defined by the Council as in excess of £1,000,000); or
- b) be significant in terms of its effects on a significant proportion of the community living or working within two or more electoral divisions – which will include those decisions that involve:
 - the adoption or significant amendment of major strategies or frameworks;
 - significant service developments, significant service reductions, or significant changes in the way that services are delivered, whether County-wide or in a particular locality.

Subject Matter / Title of Decision

Implementation of Standardised School Led Home to School Transport Offer for all Home to School Transport

Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Education and Skills I agree to:

- a) Approve the implementation of a standardised School Led Transport arrangement for schools, settings and other independent third party support agencies.
- b) Delegate authority to the Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education, to assess the viability of any proposed school led transport arrangements and to enter into and manage the arrangements and associated agreements wherever they are found to provide a financial benefit to the Council; and
- c) Delegate authority to the Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education, to enter into relevant contracts or other legal agreements, as required including Service Level agreements (SLAs), and ensure sufficient administrative capacity, as necessary to implement this decision.

Reason(s) for decision:

In line with the council's Transport Policy for Children and Young People aged 4 to 16 and Post 16 Transport Policy Statement including Post 19, a proposed standardised approach for School Led Home to School Transport has been developed. This will facilitate direct provision of school transport to entitled pupils via their school, setting or other independent third party support agencies, at a reduced cost to the KCC arranged alternatives.

Historic non-standardised arrangements are currently in place with three schools who provide transport support for all entitled pupils that attend their setting. These schools report that these direct arrangements allow for a more responsive transport offer, which improves not only the child's journey to and from school, but also their learning experience throughout the school day. From a

Local Authority perspective, school led arrangements are more cost effective than the market equivalent and ensure that limited capacity remains available for other pupils. It is therefore prudent for Kent to implement standardised arrangements and make this opportunity available for all qualifying Kent schools.

How the proposed decision supports the [Framing Kent's Future - Our Council Strategy 2022-2026](#)

This decision supports Framing Kent's future priority 2 – Infrastructure for Communities, in particular making use of innovative transport opportunities to ease pressures on pre-existing transport networks.

How the proposed decision supports Securing Kent's Future 2022 -2026: [Securing Kents Future - Budget Recovery Strategy.pdf](#)

This decision supports Securing Kent's Future both in terms of supporting the objective to ensure the in-year budget remains in balance (objective 1) along with identifying and delivering saving opportunities to support the setting of a sustainable budget and MTFP (objective 2) through providing alternative commissioning arrangements for Home to School Transport. This will contribute towards the delivery of the £6.3m savings attributed to Home to School Transport in 24-25 where new arrangements are entered into during the new academic year.

Financial Implications

The cost of home to school and college transport is funded by the Council Tax General Fund and totalled £67.9m in 2023-24 of which £2.4m was spent on existing school led transport agreements.

The intention of all school led transport arrangements is that they will only be organised where there is a financial benefit in addition to the opportunity to provide more flexible options for eligible pupils. Given the nature of operator provided transport, it is likely that most school led arrangements will meet this requirement. Additional staffing administration requirements are expected to be funded from securing new agreements. Based on proposals put forward by providers to date, it is estimated this will be achieved with the securing of one additional agreement, with additional agreements contributing towards the wider savings targets related to Home to School.

Legal Implications

Sections 508B and 508C of the Education Act 1996 explain how Council tax funded school transport should operate across the UK for 4 to 16 year olds.

Under the Act, a parent is responsible for ensuring that their child attends school regularly. However, Section 444(3B) provides that a parent will have a defence in law against a prosecution by a Local Authority (Council) for their child's non-attendance at school, where the Local Authority has a duty to make travel arrangements in relation to the Children and Young People (CYP) under Section 508B and has failed to discharge that duty.

Local Authorities do not have a general obligation to provide Council tax payer funded or subsidised post 16 travel support in the same way as for pupils aged 4 to 16, but do have a duty to prepare and publish an annual transport policy statement specifying the arrangements for the provision of transport, or other support that the authority considers it necessary to make to facilitate the attendance of all persons of sixth form age receiving education or training.

The requirements placed on a Local Authority are defined in the Education Act 1996 (as amended),

Education and Skills Act 2008, Education and Inspections Act 2006, Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009 and the Equality Act 2010.

There are legal implications in relation to compliance with the Public Contract Regulations 2015 in relation to Economic Operators as well as compliance to our internal policy Spending the Council's Money.

Equalities Impact Assessment

Both transport policies were subject to Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs), and remain relevant to the implementation of that policy. These will be appended to the decision report going to Cabinet Committee on 9th July.

Where necessary, individual EqIAs will be completed with schools and providers, to ensure that changes are made in line with collective equalities duties. However, Kent's experience in school led transport identifies that school provided arrangements allows for a greater level of bespoke support for individual pupils when compared to large scale implementation, so risk of detrimental impact remains very low.

Data Protection Impact Assessment

All activities in relation to this decision will be implemented in line with pre-existing processes. As such, no new data protection implications need to be considered.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

The proposed decision will be considered by the Children's, Young People and Education cabinet Committee on 9th July 2024.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

Kent County Council is undertaking a full review of Home to School transport arrangements to identify potential opportunities to deliver it's statutory duties in a more cost effective manner. Consideration was also given to the potential to secure savings following retendering exercises within the existing network. This option was discounted as a system wide retendering exercise was recently completed in 2022/23 academic year and recent higher levels of inflation significantly reduce the potential for this to reduce current spend.

Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:

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signed

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date

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From: **Sue Chandler, Cabinet Member for Integrated Children’s Services**
Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education

To: **Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee – 9 July 2024**

Subject: **Direct Payment Support Services for Children and Young People**

Decision Number: **24/00051**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Past Pathway of report: Not Applicable

Future Pathway of report: Not Applicable

Electoral Division: All

Summary: This report provides the Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee with the background and rationale to commission a Direct Payment Support Service contract for an initial period of three years from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2028 with an optional 24-month extension period, based on the performance of the contract and other influencing factors at the time.

Recommendation(s):

The Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee is asked to **CONSIDER and ENDORSE, or MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS** to the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children’s Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills on the proposed decision to;

A) Approve the commencement of a procurement to commission the Direct Payment Support Service for a period of 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2028, with an optional up to 24-month extension.

B) Delegate authority to award the contract to the successful provider to the Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children’s Services.

C) Delegate authority to the Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education to take other relevant actions, including but not limited to finalising the terms of and entering into required legal agreements, as necessary to implement the decision.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Kent County Council has a statutory duty to offer a personal budget, which can be administered via a Direct Payment (DP), to people who are eligible for services assessed by the County Council.
- 1.2 A DP is the amount of money needed to cover the cost of the support (i.e. services, including care) for which a person is eligible. KCC must ensure that people are given relevant and timely information about DPs to decide whether to request a payment and how to use and manage this payment appropriately. The Special Education Needs and Disability (SEND) reforms in 2014 placed a further duty on Education, Health, and Social Care to increase the use of personal budgets, which could be taken as a Direct Payment, to meet the needs of children and young people with SEND.
- 1.3 Direct Payment entitlement spans Children, Young People and Adults and are covered by two distinct legislative frameworks; the Children's Act 1989 as amended by Sections 17A (inserted by the Health and Social Care Act 2001) and 17B (inserted by the Carers and Disabled Children Act 2000) and the Care Act 2014. As such, the administration of the current commissioned service for 0-25 sees the current provider managing the set up and monitoring of Direct Payments until the young adult completes their Education. The administration of the Direct Payment is then transferred to Adult Social Care and Health (ASCH) to focus on the social care requirements to meet the needs of the individual.
- 1.4 The Strengthening Independence Service (SIS) in the Children, Young People and Education (CYPE) Directorate promotes the use of Direct Payments well, to the point that DP's account for 64% of provision; however, DP's represents 18%¹ of total spending, demonstrating good value for money.
- 1.5 CYPE currently commissions the Direct Payment Support Service (DPSS) from a not-for-profit provider of Children's and Young People Services. The service is open to:
 - Parents and carers of disabled children
 - Parents and carers of children in receipt of an Education Personal Budget
 - Young people aged 18-25 in receipt of an Education Personal Budget
 - Young disabled people aged 18-25
- 1.6 As a part of the Making a Difference Everyday programme, ASCH is redesigning their self-directed support offer, and the opportunity to align the two DP services to create an integrated service for both CYPE and ASCH was explored. ASCH confirmed that they are currently not in a position to enter a joint commissioning arrangement at this time, and as such, the option of commissioning an integrated service has been discounted for this contract term.
- 1.7 CYPE have developed the specification around the views and opinions of families and people who use the current service and have sought these views through a variety of surveys over the last three years.

¹ Excludes looked after children

- 1.8 A clear theme from all surveys focuses on families' challenges in sourcing and retaining a Personal Assistant (PA). The main areas where families identified improvements that would lead to better retention and recruitment of PAs were:
1. Higher wage rates
 2. More information/guidance from DPSS about recruitment
 3. Standard templates for job descriptions, job adverts and interview guidance
- 1.9 Points 2 and 3 can be met through no or minimal expense by improving Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) from the Direct Payment Provider, this is further supported through survey findings undertaken in 2023 where 84% of total respondents² who found finding a PA challenging or extremely challenging cited having Standard templates for job descriptions, job adverts and interview guidance would be helpful.

2. Current Position

- 2.1 The Direct Payment Support Service for Disabled Children and Young People has been commissioned since 2008. The current provider, We Are Beams, has delivered the service since it commenced and has performed well against Key Performance Indicators. Feedback from service recipients³ and other key stakeholders indicates a good-quality service that meets expectations.
- 2.2 The current service provides Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG), Direct Payment Set-up and Monitoring Services.
- 2.2.1 IAG on employment of Personal Assistants (PA), including support to ensure compliance with employment law.
 - 2.2.2 Direct Payment Set-up, initial contact and developing costs in preparation to submit to KCC Finance for processing. Support the management of transition of the DP where recipients go from childhood to adulthood.
 - 2.2.3 Monitoring Services, including statutory monitoring of DP's and notification of unspent funds that are eligible for KCC to reclaim.
- 2.3 The current contract ends on 31 March 2025 with no further available extensions and therefore KCC are required to undertake commissioning activity to determine the options for the Direct Payment Support Service.
- 2.4 Work has concluded to understand the current context in which the service will function, including engagement with staff within the Strengthening Independence Service and service user groups. There have also been several market engagement events and the model has been tested with providers during events that have been advertised on the Kent Business Portal.
- 2.5 Kent Analytics developed forecast capacity for Direct Payment recipients to understand the current and forecasted demand into a Direct Payment Support Service over the next five years. Contracted capacity is predicted to remain stable.

² 206 respondents

³ The term recipients is used to describe either parents/carers of disabled children or the young adult

- 2.6 The successful provider will be required to deliver the service in line with two separate KCC Direct Payment policies. The Direct Payment Policy and Practice Guidance for ASCH as it relates to DP recipients who receive a social care DPs aged 18 and over, and the CYPE Direct Payment Policy and Practice Guidance as it relates to DP recipients under 18 years of age as well as those DP recipients who access an Education Personal Budget. As a result of this, case thresholds for social care DPs for Adults and for Children, and DPs for children and young people in receipt of an Education personal budget shall be separately defined in the service specification.
- 2.7 The Direct Payment Support Service will support children and young people to achieve the following outcomes.



2.8 The predicted forecasts of activity are:
Social Care DP Forecast (0-17)

Average Number of Cases each Month	
Lower Threshold	Upper Threshold
698	827

Social Care DP Forecast (18-25)

Average Number of Cases each Month	
Lower Threshold	Upper Threshold
316	400

Education DP Forecast

Average Number of Cases each Month	
Lower Threshold	Upper Threshold
75	112

3. Options

3.1 An options appraisal has been undertaken collectively with Commissioners, staff across CYPE and Finance. The following options were considered.

3.1.1 **Option 1 - Do nothing.** The Direct Payment Support Service will cease on 31 March 2025. Therefore, CYPE will have to make alternative plans to administer and support CYPE Direct Payments as part of KCC's statutory duty. This option is discounted.

A detailed Make or Buy Assessment was completed. Overall, the recommendation was to 'Buy' this Service due to the cost of direct provision and also increasing the headcount to the County Council. Following this, further options for buying the service were considered below.

3.1.2 **Option 2 - Commission an enhanced service (compared to that of previous years) which includes the recruitment and retention of Personal Assistants, in addition to the set up and monitoring of Direct Payments.** A key reason for poor recruitment and retention of PAs is the low wage, without the Cost Setting Guidance being reviewed, it is unlikely a provider could resolve these issues and therefore the risk of not being able to achieve this performance indicator is too high. The appetite for additional spend with no guarantee of a clear cost benefit is low given the councils current financial situation. This option is discounted.

3.1.3 **Option 3 – Commission a Direct Payment Support Service for Set up and Monitoring with PA Recruitment and Retention, Peer Support and PA Workforce Development included and Support Brokerage to be commissioned with ASCH.** This would require a significantly higher budget with insufficient evidence on a return within the required timeframe. This option is discounted.

3.1.4 **Option 4 – Commission a Direct Payment Support Service with the Specification to continue in its current form with some signposting to other resources on PA Recruitment and Retention with PA Peer Support included.** This option will ensure that KCC meets its statutory duty to provide DPs, whilst supporting the development of PA Peer Networks. PA Peer Networks will provide an environment for PAs to share knowledge, experiences and be a direct link to the Council to inform future strategy. A break clause written into the contract will allow potential for future joint commissioning opportunities with ASCH, should they be in a position to do so within the three-year contract term,

3.2 The preferred option is Option 4 - The Specification for the Direct Payment Support Service to continue in its current iteration with some signposting to other resources around PA Recruitment and Retention, PA Peer Support included. This was identified as the best option available to KCC within the available timeframe and budget. This allows a competitive procedure with known service gaps addressed in a cost-effective way and provides value for money whilst continuing to fulfil our statutory obligations.

4. Procurement route

4.1 The recommended procurement approach will be a modified one stage Competitive Procedure with Negotiation. KCC is seeking to develop the Specification in co-production with providers (in order to maximise added value), flexibility of negotiation will be required. Within the context of a small market, the one stage Competitive Procedure with Negotiation has been assessed as the most advantageous because it will maximise the market's uptake whilst reducing the timescale and resources required for the procurement process.

4.2 The process and the precise nature of any potential points for negotiation will need to be made clear in the Contract Notice and any applicable tender notices, documents and guidance. As will the process of negotiation, and any clarifications/changes that result from this negotiation, to ensure maximum fairness and transparency for all bidders participating in the tender.

4.3 The planned timeline is outlined below:

Procurement Timetable	Timeline 2024
Market Engagement	W/C 22 April
Contract Notice / Prior Information Notice	W/C 1 May
Expressions of Interest Received	W/C 13 May
Finalise draft Specification for Service and Invitation to Tender (ITT) Documents	29 March
Approve Specification for Service and ITT Documents	W/C 11 July
Selection Questionnaire (SQ) and ITT issued to Tenderers	1 August
Clarification Questions Deadline	20 September
SQ and ITT Deadline	1 October
Evaluation	1 October – 11 October
Moderation	11 October – 15 October
Clarification/Negotiations (if required)	15 October – 29 October
Submitted/Clarified revised offers	29 October – 12 November
Award Recommendation Report Developed	22 November – 2 December
Award Recommendation Approved	2 December – 6 December
Contract Award Notification	9 December 2024
Standstill Begins	10 December 2024
Standstill Ends	20 December 2024
Provider Planning Meeting	W/C 3 January 2024
Mobilisation Period (Start)	3 January 2024
Contract Start Date	1 April 2025

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 The Direct Payment Support Service is funded from the Children's Disability 0 - 18 Commissioning Revenue Base Budget, with financial contribution from Special Education Needs and Disability Service and Adults Social Care and Health, for Direct Payments where an education need is identified and where the DP recipient is a young disabled adult in an education setting. Further contributions are to be sought from the Integrated Children's Services Social Care teams to cover the cost of managing the DPs within their caseloads.
- 5.2 The cost of delivering the service over the full potential five-year period, 1 April 2025– 31 March 2030, is estimated to be £2,946,471.
- 5.3 The current (and future) contract requires the Provider to notify KCC of any unspent Direct Payments for reclaim. The following shows the values as identified by the current Provider:

2019/2020 – Total of £1,093,509 (Social Care = £1.07m / Education = £31.2k)
2020/2021 – Total of £1,281,465 (Social Care = £1.2m / Education = £61.7k)
2022/2023 – Total of £1,604,481 (Social Care = £1.34m/ Education = £259.2k)
2023/2024 – Total of £2,447,466 (Social Care= £1.87m/Education £570k)

- 5.4 The cost of undertaking this procurement exercise is estimated as £81,795.

6. Legal implications

- 6.1 Direct Payments for parents or carers of disabled children are a statutory duty under the Care Act 2014, Section 117(2c) of the Mental Health Act 1983, Children Act 1989 as amended by Sections 17A (inserted by the Health and Social Care Act 2001) and 17B (inserted by the Carers and Disabled Children Act 2000).

7. Other Corporate implications

- 7.1 Finance, Safeguarding and Health and Safety teams will be required to support the evaluation of tender submissions.
- 7.2 The Commercial and Procurement Division will draft the Terms and Conditions (with input from CYPE) based on KCC's Standard Terms and Conditions.
- 7.3 The Commercial and Procurement Division will manage the procurement process using established commercial best practice. The tender will be advertised, and bids will be received through the Kent Business Portal.

8. Equalities implications

- 8.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) has determined no significant impacts for this proposed Decision.

9. Data Protection Impact Assessment

- 9.1 A Data Protection Impact Assessment was completed and reviewed by the Data Protection Officer on the 22 March 2024 with final approval given on the 25

March 2024 by the Information Asset Owner, Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education.

10. Governance

10.1 Overall budget responsibility sits within the Children, Young People and Education Directorate, with service accountability in the Countywide Childrens Services Division.

11. Conclusions

11.1 A Make vs Buy assessment was undertaken to explore the viability of delivering the service within CYPE. The analysis highlighted that external service delivery is a more cost-effective solution that meets outcomes.

11.2 Many other local authorities have integrated Children's and Adults' Direct Payment Services, so there is an existing precedent for this proposal. However, further work is needed before KCC are able to implement an integrated contract, mechanisms have been built into the new contract to allow for this at such time.

11.3 The recommended procurement approach will be a modified Competitive Procedure with Negotiation via a one stage process.

12. Recommendations

12.1 The Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee is asked to CONSIDER and ENDORSE, or MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS to the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills on the proposed decision to:

A) Approve the commencement of a procurement to commission the Direct Payment Support Service for a period of 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2028, with an optional up to 24-month extension period.

B) Delegate authority to award the contract to the successful provider to the Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services.

C) Delegate authority to the Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education to take other relevant actions, including but not limited to finalising the terms of and entering into required legal agreements, as necessary to implement the decision.

13. Contact details

Report Author(s):

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KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Sue Chandler, Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services

DECISION NO:

24/00051

For publication *[Do not include information which is exempt from publication under schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972]*

Key decision:

- It involves expenditure or savings of more than £1million.

Subject Matter / Title of Decision

Direct Payment Support Services for Children and Young People

Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services in consultation with Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, I agree to:

- A) Approve the commencement of a procurement to commission the Direct Payment Support Service for a period of 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2028, with an optional up to 24-month extension.
- B) Delegate authority to award the contract to the successful provider to the Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services.
- C) Delegate authority to the Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education to take other relevant actions, including but not limited to finalising the terms of and entering into required legal agreements, as necessary to implement the decision.

Reason(s) for decision:

Background

As part of the support planning process, Direct Payments (DPs) are offered to individuals to provide a greater choice and control over their care and support arrangements. They are monetary payments that can be made to individuals to meet some or all of their eligible support needs. The legislative context is set out in the Care Act 2014, section 117(2c) of the Mental Health Act 1983, the Care and Support (DP) Regulations 2014 and the Children and Families Act 2014.

CYPE currently commissions the Direct Payment Support Service (DPSS) from a not-for-profit provider of Children's and Young People Services. The service is open to:

- Parents and carers of disabled children
- Parents and carers of children in receipt of an Education Personal Budget
- Young people aged 18-25 in receipt of an Education Personal Budget
- Young disabled people aged 18-25

The current Direct Payment Support Service has utilised all of its possible extensions and we are now in a position where we need to retender. A Make vs Buy assessment was completed and it is more financially viable for the council to buy this service in. As it is a statutory duty to provide Direct Payments, it is essential that the council retain this function beyond the life of the existing contract, which is due to end on 31 March 2025.

Financial Implications

The costs for the contract are funded from the Children's Disability 0-18 Commissioning Revenue Budget. Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) will contribute to contract costs over the lifetime of the contract, to cover the cost of supporting direct Payments that are held in this team.

The cost of delivering the service over the full potential five-year period, 1 April 2025– 31 March 2030, is estimated to be £2,946,471.

Legal implications

Direct Payments for parents or carers of disabled children are a statutory duty under the Children Act 1989 as amended by Sections 17A (inserted by the Health and Social Care Act 2001) and 17B (inserted by the Carers and Disabled Children Act 2000)

Equalities implications

An Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) has been undertaken and no issues have been identified at this stage. The equality impact assessment shall be kept under constant review as this project continues.

Other Alternatives Considered and risks if decision isn't taken

The current contract will end on the 31 March 2025 and alternative arrangements for the ongoing administration, and support, for Children Young People and Education Direct Payments will need to be developed. Currently there is no internal team that undertake this work for Children and Young People Direct Payments and there is a substantial risk that the Authority will not meet its obligations.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

The Children's and Young People Cabinet Committee consider the decision on 9 July 2024

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

- 1) Do nothing. The contract will end on the 31 March 2025 and alternative arrangements for the ongoing administration, and support, for Children Young People and Education Direct Payments. Currently there is no internal team that undertake this work for Children and Young People Direct Payments and there is a substantial risk that the Authority will not meet its statutory obligations.
- 2) Commission an enhanced service which includes the recruitment and retention of Personal Assistants in addition to the set up and monitoring of Direct Payments. A key reason for poor recruitment and retention of PAs is the low wage, without the cost setting guidance being reviewed it is unlikely a provider could resolve these issues and therefore the risk of not being able to achieve this performance indicator is too high. The appetite for additional spend with no guarantee of a clear cost benefit is low given the councils current financial situation. This option is discounted.

Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:

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signed

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date

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EQIA Submission – ID Number

Section A

EQIA Title

Strengthening Independence Service - For Disabled Children and Young People- Direct Payment Support Service

Responsible Officer

Steve Lusk - CED SC

Type of Activity

Service Change

No

Service Redesign

No

Project/Programme

No

Commissioning/Procurement

Commissioning/Procurement

Strategy/Policy

No

Details of other Service Activity

No

Accountability and Responsibility

Directorate

Children Young People and Education

Responsible Service

Strengthening Independence Service - For Disabled Children and Young People 0-25

Responsible Head of Service

Rosemary Henn-Macrae - CY LDCYP

Responsible Director

Kevin Kasaven - CY SCS

Aims and Objectives

KCC commissioned the Disabled Children and Young People Service (DCYPS) Direct Payment Support service in 2019. The current contract period is between April 2019 – March 2022, with two 12-month extension clauses enacted to extend the contract until March 2024.

Direct payments for disabled children and young people are a form of financial assistance made to individuals to meet some or all their eligible support needs. The legislative context is set out in the Children and Families Act 2014, the Care Act 2014, section 117(2c) of the Mental Health Act 1983, and the Care and Support (DP) Regulations 2014.

Direct payments aim to give families and carers more control over their child's care and support and enable them to choose the services that best meet their child's needs. Direct payments are usually made to the parents or carers of the disabled child, who are then responsible for managing the funds and arranging the necessary support. This means that families have more flexibility and choice regarding the level of support their child receives. Children aged 16 and over can receive their Direct payment directly if they have to capacity to manage it independently.

However, there are also challenges associated with direct payments. Some families may need help with the administrative tasks required to receive them and their role as employers. Therefore, KCC commissioned the DCYPS Direct Payment Support service to support families in setting up and managing the direct

payment and monitoring spend.

DCYPS currently commission the Direct Payment Support Service, which supports the following outcomes:

- 1) Employment legislation is complied with by service users who employ a personal assistant
- 2) Service users are supported, where appropriate, to find a suitable personal assistant with the skills, knowledge and experience required to support their child/young person
- 3) Personal assistants with current DBS clearance at the enhanced level support service users.
- 4) Direct payments are used appropriately to meet the agreed assessed needs
- 5) Young people in transition to adulthood and their families have a good experience of support for the transition of their direct payment. All service users feel supported in managing a direct payment
- 6) Young people aged 16-25 with the mental capacity to do so are supported to manage a direct payment should they choose to.

This EQIA is being undertaken as a part of the recommissioning planning for the future service. Governance approval will be sought via a Key Decision regarding re-commissioning decisions. This EQIA will inform decision-making and consultation, and engagement.

Summary of Analysis

It is not anticipated that the recommissioning of the service will adversely impact protected groups. However, ongoing monitoring will be required to ensure that all protected groups benefit as much as possible. The recommissioning process will include provider, social worker and parent/carer engagement to inform the business plan.

Section B – Evidence

Do you have data related to the protected groups of the people impacted by this activity?

Yes

It is possible to get the data in a timely and cost effective way?

Yes

Is there national evidence/data that you can use?

Yes

Have you consulted with stakeholders?

Yes

Who have you involved, consulted and engaged with?

A steering group with key stakeholders, including Children's Social care, Education, Health, Commissioning, Finance and Policy, has been created to consider the future service plans. Monthly meetings take place to discuss and document these discussions.

Service user feedback has been gathered to date from various resources, including a qualitative Short Breaks study in March 2023, The Disabled Children, Young Peoples and Families Survey in April 2020 and the Annual Service user feedback from the current provider.

Further engagement work is planned with social workers, service users and the market to shape the scope of the future service and inform decisions.

We have also engaged with other Local Authorities (LA's) to understand the offer in other areas. Information gathered has highlighted a mixture of LA's delivering DP support via in house provision and externally commissioning it to the third sector. There are also varying levels of Personal Assistant (PA) recruitment support given, with one end of the spectrum full PA recruitment support and the other more advice and information or a 'hands off' approach to PA recruitment.

There have also been various national publications relating to Direct Payments that will help to frame our considerations for the future scope of the service. Of note is July 2022 Think Local, Act Personal survey findings about Direct Payment recipients supported by a personal assistant titled, "The Forgotten Workforce: Recruiting and Retaining Personal Assistants". In Kent, approximately 90% of the DCYPS Direct Payments recipients use it to employ a Personal Assistant (PA).

Key findings from the Think Local, Act Personal survey were that 77% of people who had needed to recruit a PA had found it more difficult and two thirds said people were taking jobs with better pay rather than PA jobs. 59% think it's harder to find PAs with the right skills, values or training and overall low pay, poor terms and conditions, and insufficient hours were critical factors in PAs leaving.

2019 research by the University of Leeds Legal Entitlements and Problem-Solving (LEaP) Project into direct payments for disabled children and young people and their families found deep levels of dissatisfaction with the way that local authorities administer Direct Payment arrangements. The problems identified by the research findings can be summarised as 1) Lack of access to services, 2) Lack of information and clarity and 3) Restrictions on choice and flexibility.

Has there been a previous Equality Analysis (EQIA) in the last 3 years?

Yes

Do you have evidence that can help you understand the potential impact of your activity?

Yes

Section C – Impact

Who may be impacted by the activity?

Service Users/clients

Service users/clients

Staff

Staff/Volunteers

Residents/Communities/Citizens

Residents/communities/citizens

Are there any positive impacts for all or any of the protected groups as a result of the activity that you are doing?

Yes

Details of Positive Impacts

The eligibility is based on the Social Care Assessment (either the Children and Families Assessment or the Care Act assessment). The service is delivered without discrimination on the grounds of protected characteristics.

There is evidence that diverse groups are engaging with the service, and no signs of indirect discrimination have been identified in the practices. Due regard Equality Act 2010 was given during the commissioning of the service, and this ethos is embedded in the contract and reflected in the service provision.

Age:

The service is currently commissioned to deliver support to parents/ carers of disabled children aged 0-25 years and young people aged 16 years and over if they can manage a DP independently.

The eligibility criteria for the service are not determined by age but by the assessed need in the Social Care Assessment. The commissioned provider is expected to deliver the service in a way that meets the needs of various age groups. The service is designed with positive regard for the unique need's children and young people.

We do not hold data for the age of the parents/ carers that receive the Direct Payment to support their child's care; however, the service operates in a way that can accommodate all age groups of carers.

The current proportion of the children receiving a DP by age group is as follows: 0-5 years 4%, 6-10 years 24%, 11-15 years 27%, 16-20 years 24%, 21-25 years 21%.

Disability:

The eligibility criteria for the service are not determined by disability but by the assessed need in the Social Care Assessment. The service is commissioned to support families with a disabled child and, as such, proactively looks to remove barriers to engaging with support and reducing inequality due to disability within its policy and practices. The Service meets service users in their homes to ensure it is as accessible as possible and offers phone and video consulting if preferred. Where there is a need for additional support relating to disability, the service will work to overcome these barriers or work with children's social care to mitigate them.

We do not hold data about the disability status of the parents/ carers that receive the Direct Payment to support their child's care.

Please see the supporting data table for the proportion of cases by Disability type.

Sex:

The eligibility criteria for the service are not determined by Sex but by the assessed need in the Social Care Assessment.

Please see the supporting data table for the proportion of cases by Sex.

Race/ethnicity:

The eligibility criteria for the service are not determined by Race/ ethnicity but by the assessed need in the Social Care Assessment. The service promotes racial equality and inclusion by working with families to understand individual needs regarding ethnicity. This includes facilitating translation/interpretation if English is not a first language and recognition that different beliefs may observe religious festivals/celebrations/ practices.

Please see the supporting data table for the proportion of cases by Ethnicity and comparisons to the Census data.

Carer's Responsibilities:

The service works to support parents and carers through the set-up and maintenance of their direct payment. The service offers flexibility in how and when that support is given to ensure that carers can access it and fully understand their roles. Carers can access and contact the service in various ways to accommodate caring responsibilities.

Religion and Belief:

The eligibility criteria for the service are not determined by religion/belief but by the assessed need in the Social Care Assessment. The current service specification and any future service will be specified to adhere to the Equality Act 2010. Support is tailored to individual needs, including religion and belief.

Gender identity/ Transgender

The eligibility criteria for the service are not determined by Gender identity/ Transgender but by the assessed need in the Social Care Assessment. The current service specification and any future service will be specified to adhere to the Equality Act 2010. Support is tailored to individual needs, including Gender identity/ Transgender.

Sexual Orientation:

The eligibility criteria for the service are not determined by Sexual Orientation but by the assessed need in the Social Care Assessment. The current service specification and any future service will be specified to adhere to the Equality Act 2010. Support is tailored to individual needs, including Sexual Orientation.

Pregnancy and Maternity:

The eligibility criteria for the service are not determined by Pregnancy/ Maternity but by the assessed need in the Social Care Assessment. The current service specification and any future service will be specified to adhere to the Equality Act 2010. Support is tailored to individual needs, including pregnancy and maternity.

Marriage and Civil Partnerships:

The eligibility criteria for the service are not determined by Marriage/ Civil Partnership but by the assessed need in the Social Care Assessment. The current service specification and any future service will be specified to adhere to the Equality Act 2010. Support is tailored to individual needs, including Marriage and Civil Partnerships.

Negative impacts and Mitigating Actions

19. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Age

Are there negative impacts for age?

No

Details of negative impacts for Age

Not Applicable

Mitigating Actions for Age

Not Applicable

Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions – Age

Not Applicable

20. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Disability

Are there negative impacts for Disability?

Yes

Details of Negative Impacts for Disability

If the parent/ carer cannot manage a Direct Payment due to their own disability, then the option of a direct payment is not available to them. However, the Council can arrange the care and support required.

Mitigating actions for Disability

Additional support is given where appropriate to ensure a Direct Payment is accessible to parents/ carers. Children’s Social care will look to offer alternative provisions that meet the assessed need.

Responsible Officer for Disability

Kevin Kasavan

21. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Sex

Are there negative impacts for Sex

No

Details of negative impacts for Sex

Not Applicable

Mitigating actions for Sex

Not Applicable

Responsible Officer for Sex

Not Applicable

22. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender

Are there negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender

No

Negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender

Not Applicable

Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Not Applicable
23. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Race
Are there negative impacts for Race
No
Negative impacts for Race
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Race
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Race
Not Applicable
24. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Religion and belief
Are there negative impacts for Religion and belief
No
Negative impacts for Religion and belief
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Religion and belief
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Religion and Belief
Not Applicable
25. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Are there negative impacts for Sexual Orientation
No
Negative impacts for Sexual Orientation
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Not Applicable
26. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Are there negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity
No
Negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Applicable
27. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Are there negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
No
Negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Applicable
28. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities

Are there negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities
Yes
Negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities
<p>There is a risk that parents/ carers will have to take time away from their caring responsibilities to find and source a Personal Assistant to care for their child. The current service specification does not support families around Personal Assistant recruitment and retention.</p> <p>If required, Carer's need to source enhanced training to understand their responsibilities as an employer and manage the paperwork associated with this, which their caring responsibility commitments will compound.</p>
Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities
<p>The future Service scope will consider the need for Personal Assistant recruitment and retention support. Future Service scope is considering the need for training for families in their role as employers and PA training.</p> <p>Reviewing the cost-setting guidance for Personal Assistant wage rates is also recommended.</p>
Responsible Officer for Carer's responsibilities
Steve Lusk

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From: Rory Love, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education

To: **Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee – 9 July 2024**

Subject: KCC CLS Adult Education Funding Reforms

Decision no: 24/00046

Key Decision :

- (a) It results in savings or expenditure with regard to the budget for the service or function of over £1 million.
- (b) It has a significant effect on a significant proportion of the community living or working within two or more electoral divisions.
- (c) Involves significant service development, either County-wide.

Classification: Unrestricted

Contains an exempt appendix (Appendix D) in accordance with Schedule 12A, Paragraph 3 of the Local Government Act 1972 , *as it contains Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)*

Past Pathway of report: N/A

Future Pathway of report: *Cabinet Member Decision*

Electoral Division: All divisions and Members.
<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/mgMemberIndex.aspx?bcr=1>)

Is the decision eligible for call-in? Yes

Summary:

Following funding changes by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), KCC Community Learning and Skills (CLS) must undertake significant reform if it is to continue to deliver vital core skills to the residents of Kent and remain within the new terms of the funding contract.

While much of the provision will remain the same, whatever changes are implemented, it is expected that the reforms would alter the types of courses offered,

the customer base and the delivery locations particularly for the Creative and Personal Development components.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Committee is being asked to consider the proposed decision (as set out in the attached PROD) and either:

- (a) make comments for consideration.
- (b) make recommendations for inclusion/ consideration by the Cabinet Member.
- (c) endorse the proposed decision.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Community Learning and Skills is KCC's internally commissioned department to deliver Education and Training to adults and young people over 16. We deliver core subjects like English and maths, and we also have a long history of a creative arts curriculum as well as languages, fitness and humanities. We are responsible for delivering the Education & Skills Funding Agency Adult Education Budget (AEB) on behalf of KCC, which support the goals and objectives of Framing Kent's Future.
- 1.2 As outlined in the [CLS Accountability Statement](#) 2024/25, which was endorsed at the Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee on 16 May 2024, CLS provide and secure learning opportunities for Kent's residents which:
 - engage and build confidence, preparing them for further learning and employment,
 - improve essential skills in areas such English, ESOL, maths, digital skills,
 - equip parents/carers to support children's learning,
 - improve health and wellbeing to develop strong, integrated communities.
- 1.3 Currently the service is funded via a range of annually awarded (ESFA) contracts and fee income when adults enrol on certain courses.

2. Implications of FE (Further Education) Funding and Accountability Reform

- 2.1 In 2021 the Government published the Skills for Jobs white paper (see Background Documents) and this was followed by two consultations on the new FE Funding and Accountability system. The consultations were partly in response to the concern raised by FE providers nationwide. The final response and decisions were only published in July 2023, giving CLS less than a year to develop and implement substantial changes to the service. Indeed, further clarification was issued in February 2024 and 20 March 2024 with further adjustments anticipated in the following few months.
- 2.2 From the new academic year, starting on 1st August 2024, the DfE/ESFA are changing the AEB to become the Adult Skills Fund (ASF) embedding and

further adjusting the significant alterations to the funding rules and how the funding should be utilised.

- 2.3 These funding alterations require KCC CLS to amend the service offer both in the content and targeted learners and, subsequently, the infrastructure of KCC CLS. The most significant changes are:
- learning for leisure and pleasure is no longer fundable or to be subsidised via AEB/ASF
 - Learners classified as repeat learners (learners who have attended the same type of course, completing a full level) will be expected to progress to the next level, move to a different type of course or move into 'self-organised learning' which may be at an increased cost to the learner. This accounts for around 41% of CLS learners in relevant provision currently funded by the presently named Community Learning grant.
 - All learning by an individual must be categorised into a 'primary purpose' and outcome which can be one of the following seven areas:
 - Engaging and/or building confidence
 - Preparation for further learning
 - Preparation for employment
 - Improving essential skills including English, ESOL, Maths and Digital
 - Equipping parents/carers to support children's learning.
 - Health and well-being
 - Developing stronger communities
 - There are also various new requirements for data collection, which will require financial investment in Information Technology system development/software and General Data Protection Regulations, with the current academic year, 23/24, being a 'change over' year.
- 2.4 The changes will have significant impact on service delivery as non-accredited / regulated courses will be considered tailored learning. Only tailored learning which fits within a list of 124 learning aims (see Appendix A) and which enable one or more of the primary purposes listed in point 2.3, will be funded. The previous mainstay of CLS adult learning provision, creative arts and languages now accounts for only 2 of the 124 learning aims for which the funding is intended.
- 2.5 At the time that the Kent Communities Project started, CLS were unaware of the scale of the funding changes and the potential impact that it would have upon CLS and our building requirements.
- 2.6 Given the timescales for decision making, it is likely that, to best utilise paid hours of tutors and resources, during the autumn, some learner funded courses will take place. These courses will have no recourse to funding or concessions and must be fully financially viable to run. They will be gradually phased out across the year, to enable the service to focus on implement and delivering the Government's priorities in line with the grant funding.

3. How the decision supports Framing Kent's Future and Securing Kent's Future

3.1 The decision will have positive impacts for most learners and will support priorities stated in both Framing Kent's Future and Securing Kent's future. This includes:

- A greater focus on demographics within local communities to deliver improvements in adult educational attainment, skills and employment rates and economy.
- A new health and care services programme to support Kent's priority of New Models of Care and Support.
- Continued support of those with disabilities and requiring additional learning support to equip them with independent living skills.
- Continuing to deliver the highly successful Family Learning and Response programmes which support many of the most vulnerable.
- The forging of a greater relationship and joint working with Public Health on activity to improve the health of the population.
- Supporting rural communities in their access to education.
- Providing opportunities for people to develop their confidence and ability to build a stronger community.
- The opportunity to review the CLS occupied KCC freehold estate and relocate to more carbon efficient premises; giving the opportunity to release fixed assets and ensure Best Value is obtained from retained sites.
- Offering more provision within local communities, thereby reducing carbon emissions and the associated health impacts, along with costs incurred by service users when travelling to venues.
- An opportunity for local businesses, private tutors etc to increase their opportunities through the 'release' of more experienced learners from CLS courses.
- Ensures a focus on achieving the contract requirements, which support the aspirations of Kent, rather than splitting focus with a new high-risk discretionary learner-funded model.
- Enabling a service redesign to ensure Best Value through economy, efficiency, and effectiveness.

4. Options considered

4.1 KCC CLS is proposing to make changes to its delivery model to ensure it meets contractual obligations and gives even more focus to Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) priorities around skills gaps, and local needs. This would also include qualification and non-qualification courses leading towards working in Creative industries, as well as for example, language courses to support work in employers who require bi-lingual skills e.g. Border Force. Whilst learning for leisure/pleasure would not be included in this option, Creative and Fitness courses as a vehicle to support health and wellbeing would be delivered, and Creative and language courses would still be included for an individual for a defined period, as they sit within ESFA funding rules.

Sub-contracting opportunities will be explored where CLS do not have existing staff base, for example in particular vocational sectors.

This is the current short term preferred option on the basis that without further exploration this option appears to hold fewer immediate financial risks to KCC and will also enable the current service to be refocused to meet the new funding requirements. However, it remains desirable that further options for a blended delivery model involving other bodies such as FE colleges should be explored and developed.

4.2 The following options were also considered as part of developing this proposal.

4.3 **Contract plus Learner Funded Business Unit** -The focus and investment required to set up a new, untested, discretionary business unit would detract from the focus required to meet the revised requirements of the ESFA contract putting compliance at risk. It would also be a significant financial risk as the acceptance and take-up of significant price rises by paying learners is untested and therefore potentially not in line with Best Value considerations. Delivery of learner funded courses rely on volumes to be financially viable and thus more properties would need to be retained limiting the cost savings that CLS could make.

4.4 **Close CLS completely** - The removal of CLS as a gateway and technical learning provider would be a negative impact for Kent's strategic plans in relation to skills and employment for Kent residents. KCC, as the contract holders with the ESFA would need to either return the contract to DfE/ESFA or commission/sub-contract the delivery to external providers. With sub-contracting, KCC would still, as the contract holder, retain the responsibility for quality, data, compliance, and lead on OFSTED inspections. Additionally, there would be an arising redundancy and early retirement cost, which could not be funded from the contract funding. The running costs of the buildings that CLS currently occupy and pay would also remain payable to the council until alternative uses could be found or the assets sold. It is not possible without further exploration and discussion with external partners to rule out this option at this stage and therefore further time over the coming year is required to develop proposals for consideration.

4.5 **Do nothing** - Were CLS to continue planning and delivering the same programme as in the 23/24 academic year, a large number of courses would not be fundable under the tailored learning element of the ASF. At their current prices, the courses would not cover direct costs. With a large reduction in courses and learners submitted to the ESFA, a large reduction in the contract value would be likely. This makes this option financially unsustainable, cause, reputational damage and would most likely result in the closure of the service.

5. Financial Implications

Revenue Implications

5.1 Current income: CLS's total income per annum is circa £12.5m. This is derived from different funding sources including fee income paid by learners participating in Community Learning courses, fees from employers and other projects.

- 5.2 CLS aims not to be subsidised from the KCC General Fund and therefore does not receive any base budget funding directly from KCC income streams as funding for delivery of the service is via the ESFA contracts and fees. CLS instead is self-sustaining, covering its costs including property running costs and maintenance (excepting capital work).
- 5.3 Under the preferred option, it is anticipated that there will be an initial reduction of learner enrolments relating to the previous offer, but CLS would see growth of new learners in targeted areas across the three years which is anticipated to mitigate the longer-term risk of contract reduction. Further focus would be on joining up qualifications and apprenticeship courses creating an increased drawdown in these high priority areas. In order that this option can approach viability, a restructure would be required which would result in the one-off additional costs.
- 5.4 The largest financial impact of the funding changes is the anticipated loss of earnings through recovery of fee income from learners. The majority of fee income was gained from contributions towards “learning for leisure” type courses which can no longer be subsidised through the contract from 2024/25. Consideration was made to continue to deliver learning for leisure courses as private or self-funded options (section 4.2) but to be financially viable the course fees would require significant increases, in many cases a doubling of price. This increase would represent a significant risk in terms of learners continuing to enrol at the much-increased prices and therefore this option is not being recommended.
- 5.5 The reduction in income will be offset through a corresponding reduction in expenditure primarily through reduced staffing and property costs. The changes are estimated to result in a financial pressure to the Council in the region of £0.6m - £0.9m in 2024-25 financial year whilst the service adjusts to the new delivery model, with the expectation this pressure would be reduced in 25-26, and the service returning to a self-funded model by 2026-27.

Capital Implications

- 5.6 The change in offer provided by CLS requires a change in property requirements with a greater focus on more flexible, short-term community-based venues that can be alternated based on the areas of most need. At the time of the Kent Communities Project, CLS were unaware of the scale of the funding changes and the potential impact that it would have upon CLS and our building requirements. Had it been known, CLS would have had more buildings included and considered within that project. The factors considered in identifying buildings for potential vacation included:
- CLS costs to occupy and current financial viability.
 - Building condition and Modernisation of Asset (MOA) costs expected in next couple of years.
 - Expected utilisation once new funding rules are introduced.
- 5.7 It is anticipated this decision would necessitate the service ceasing delivery in KCC freehold Adult Education Centres in Gravesend, Dover and Sevenoaks, during 2024-25 academic year, with outreach alternatives being developed.

5.8 Beyond 24/25, there are a number of other sites that will be necessary to review to determine if the operation from them is still viable or if they need to be exited and alternative small / more flexible solution identified.

5.9 Moving forward, the service would require more short-term community-based venues that will alter based on the areas of most need. A less rigid property asset portfolio would have several advantages:

- It would enable KCC to dispose of and realise capital receipts.
- It would reduce capital spend on repair and improvements.
- It would significantly reduce CLS's fixed property costs.
- It would enable CLS to be more flexible and responsive to the provision it offers.
- It would contribute towards reducing KCCs carbon emissions to aid in the objective to achieve carbon neutral by 2030.

6. Legal implications

6.1 KCC does not deliver the CLS services pursuant to specific statutory powers or duties. KCC is required to deliver the CLS services in exchange for funding from the Education and Skills Funding Agency ("ESFA"). Under these proposals, ESFA funding for certain types of provision which amounts to the funding of 40% of KCC CLS learners is being withdrawn by the ESFA under those funding arrangements. Legal advice is being sought by the service throughout the project.

7. Equalities implications

7.1 The Government's EqIA for the funding reforms determined that there was little impact on learners. They noted: *'In our reforms of tailored learning (referred to as non-qualification provision in the previous consultation), we have not identified any impacts under limbs¹ 1, 2, or 3 of Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010.'*

¹ The limbs are defined as: limb 1 – The need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation (to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics); limb 2 – The need to promote equality of opportunity (to take steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people); limb 3 – The need to foster good relations between groups (to encourage people from protected groups to participate in public life or other activities where their participation is disproportionately low).

7.2 The EqIA conducted by CLS, has identified that the biggest, and most detrimental impacts to service users in the long term would have been from the two dismissed options of closing the service or doing nothing.

7.3 In the proposed decision, 'Contract only' option, the impacts on those with protected characteristics have been identified as:

- Potential reduction to the service offer, particularly for those learning for leisure or have completed the levels CLS offer in the subject area. Mitigation

would be provided by signposting to alternative learning providers (e.g. colleges / independent businesses); the promotion of self-organised learning and exploring what CLS may be able to offer.

- Potential reduced access, particularly for those who may, because of their protected characteristic, (e.g. disability, age) have limited financial means. There is limited mitigation by access to funding via CLS tailored learning.
- Older people may be more greatly affected because of their proportional representation within CLS and because they most often use classes for leisure purposes. Mitigation would be provided by either the introduction of a Learner-funded offer and/or signposting to alternative learning providers and the promotion of self-organised learning.
- Those identifying as women may be more greatly impacted, due to the proportional representation of women attending classes (54% female, 46% male).

7.4 The positive impacts of the 'contract only' operational model include:

- Continuation of supported learning and independent living courses for learners with moderate learning difficulties, to support independent living skills e.g. cooking, gardening, travel, shopping, self-advocacy.
- Supporting people across all the protected characteristics by offering an improved programme to support mental health and wellbeing such as managing anxiety and stress, techniques for emotional issues, coping mechanisms for stress, CBT, assertiveness and confidence building, relaxation, and meditation.
- An inclusive vocational skills programme to enable individuals to explore prospective career avenues.
- Closer links with public health, charities, and support groups to identify and address needs.

8. Data Protection Implications

8.1 The DPIA screening showed a full DPIA was not required due to the lack of personal / sensitive information.

9. Other corporate implications

9.1 The changes to KCC CLS will have implications for several other functions and departments for the Council.

9.2 Infrastructure – CLS may require significant support from the property teams in decommissioning and disposal of sites and assets. Likewise, for any site improvement activities to support vocational provision, there may be a need for project support.

9.3 Adult Social Care & Health – there may be an increase demand for social care support for people who experience a decline in wellbeing and mental health because of no longer being able to attend classes. Conversely, the refocus on priorities will see CLS working more closely with people who, typically haven't been engaged in education / employment and building a stronger relationship with the KCC team who support them.

9.4 Virtual Schools Kent – our work already overlaps, and it is expected that this would continue as now if not more in the future. For example, by providing a location for other providers to deliver their programmes.

- 9.5 KCC Agilysys – unknown impact, at this stage, on the call volumes and call type that they will receive.
- 9.6 KCC Finance – CLS will require additional budget for the next few years whilst the changes outlined in this proposal are implemented.
- 9.7 Growth, Environment & Transport – CLS would anticipate working more closely, particularly with their work on Growth and communities.
- 9.8 Libraries – Continue joint working with them on courses, promotion but there may be an increase in ad hoc utilisation of their spaces where possible for class delivery.
- 9.9 Public Health – working in partnership with them to achieve their goals.

10 Governance

- 10.1 A key decision is required to approve the revised operational model to focus on the ESFA contract terms. As this is implemented it may be necessary to adapt activity to ensure best use of paid hours and that the implantation is effective. Authority will be delegated to the Director for Education and SEN to implement and adjust these processes as necessary, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills. Ongoing scrutiny will be provided by CLS Client Group.

11 Conclusions

- 11.1 The proposed decision will provide the best, and most secure, learning outcomes for adult learners in Kent who are either stepping back into education to improve their employability skills or who are wishing to progress into further education.
- 11.2 The proposed decision will continue to support many who may utilise education for wellbeing and community involvement, while supporting the wider education and business community by signposting progression opportunities.
- 11.3 The proposed decision would negate against a level of capital expenditure associated with modernisation of assets within the existing KCC estate and may also realise capital receipt.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Committee is being asked to consider the proposed decision (as set out in the attached PROD) and either:

- (a) make comments for consideration
- (b) make recommendations for inclusion/ consideration by the Cabinet Member
- (c) endorse the proposed decision

12. Background Documents

- [Skills for Jobs White paper, January 2021](#)
- [ESFA Adult Skills Fund - Funding rules 2024-25](#)

13. Appendices

- Appendix A Fundable Learning Aims 2024-25
- Appendix B Options For / Against
- Appendix C CLS Reforms Equality Impact Assessment
- Appendix D Exempt Appendix

14. Contact details

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[Appendix A](#)

ESFA – Adult Learning, Allowable Learning Aims 2024-25 & Qualification Levels

New Learning Aims

Under the funding rules from 1st August 2024, each non accredited / regulated course must fit into one of the following learning aims.

Reference	Learning Aim Title
Z0060047	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Supported Learning and Independent Living
Z0060048	Non regulated Tailored Learning, First step engagement in learning
Z0060049	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Employability and transferable skills
Z0060050	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Managing mental health and well-being
Z0060051	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Vocational introduction - Health and Social Care
Z0060052	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Entry Level, Health and Social Care
Z0060053	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Level 1, Health and Social Care
Z0060054	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Level 2, Health and Social Care
Z0060055	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Entry Level, Construction
Z0060056	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Level 1, Construction
Z0060057	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Level 2, Construction
Z0060058	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Entry Level, Childcare, Teaching
Z0060059	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Level 1, Childcare, Teaching
Z0060060	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Level 2, Childcare, Teaching
Z0060061	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Entry Level, Horticulture, Agriculture, Animal Care, Environmental Conservation
Z0060062	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Level 1, Horticulture, Agriculture, Animal Care, Environmental Conservation
Z0060063	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Level 2, Horticulture, Agriculture, Animal Care, Environmental Conservation
Z0060064	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Entry Level, Manufacturing, Engineering
Z0060065	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Level 1, Manufacturing, Engineering
Z0060066	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Level 2, Manufacturing, Engineering
Z0060067	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Entry Level, Retail, Marketing
Z0060068	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Level 1, Retail, Marketing
Z0060069	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Level 2, Retail, Marketing
Z0060070	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Entry Level, Hospitality, Catering
Z0060071	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Level 1, Hospitality, Catering
Z0060072	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Level 2, Hospitality, Catering
Z0060073	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Entry Level, Leisure Industries, Tourism
Z0060074	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Level 1, Leisure Industries, Tourism
Z0060075	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Level 2, Leisure Industries, Tourism
Z0060076	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Entry Level, Creative Industries, Media
Z0060077	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Level 1, Creative Industries, Media
Z0060078	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Level 2, Creative Industries, Media

Z0060079	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Entry Level, Digital Sector
Z0060080	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Level 1, Digital Sector
Z0060081	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Level 2, Digital Sector
Z0060082	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Entry Level, Transport, Distribution
Z0060083	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Level 1, Transport, Distribution
Z0060084	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Level 2, Transport, Distribution
Z0060085	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Entry Level, Business Administration, Legal, Finance, Marketing, Public Services and Enterprises
Z0060086	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Level 1, Business Administration, Legal, Finance, Marketing, Public Services and Enterprises
Z0060087	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Level 2, Business Administration, Legal, Finance, Marketing, Public Services and Enterprises
Z0060088	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Entry Level, Science
Z0060089	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Level 1, Science
Z0060090	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Level 2, Science
Z0060091	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Essential Skills, Pre-Entry Level, ESOL
Z0060092	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Essential Skills, Entry Level, ESOL (Entry 1)
Z0060093	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Essential Skills, Entry Level, ESOL (Entry 2)
Z0060094	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Essential Skills, Entry Level, ESOL (Entry 3)
Z0060095	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Essential Skills, Level 1, ESOL
Z0060096	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Essential Skills, Level 2, ESOL
Z0060097	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Essential Skills, Pre-Entry Level, English
Z0060098	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Essential Skills, Entry Level, English (Entry 1)
Z0060099	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Essential Skills, Entry Level, English (Entry 2)
Z0060100	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Essential Skills, Entry Level, English (Entry 3)
Z0060101	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Essential Skills, Level 1, English
Z0060102	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Essential Skills, Level 2, English
Z0060103	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Essential Skills, Pre-Entry Level, Maths
Z0060104	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Essential Skills, Entry Level, Maths (Entry 1)
Z0060105	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Essential Skills, Entry Level, Maths (Entry 2)
Z0060106	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Essential Skills, Entry Level, Maths (Entry 3)
Z0060107	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Essential Skills, Level 1, Maths
Z0060108	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Essential Skills, Level 2, Maths
Z0060109	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Essential Skills, Pre-Entry Level, Essential Digital Skills
Z0060110	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Essential Skills, Entry Level, Essential Digital Skills
Z0060111	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Essential Skills, Level 1, Essential Digital Skills
Z0060112	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Life skills: healthy eating/cooking
Z0060113	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Life skills: first aid
Z0060114	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Life skills: household budgeting, financial literacy
Z0060115	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Life skills: lipreading
Z0060116	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Life skills: British Sign Language
Z0060117	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Life skills: parenting skills

Z0060118	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Life skills: environmental sustainability
Z0060119	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Life skills: volunteering, active citizenship
Z0060120	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Life skills: managing life transitions
Z0060121	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Preparation for Access to Higher Education
Z0060122	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Humanities and social sciences
Z0060123	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Languages
Z0060124	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Creative Arts
Z0060125	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Performing Arts
Z0060126	Non regulated Tailored Learning, Physical activity
Z0060127	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Employer Facing Provision, ICT for Users
Z0060128	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Employer Facing Provision, Building and Construction
Z0060129	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Employer Facing Provision, Crafts, Creative Arts and Design
Z0060130	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Employer Facing Provision, Health and Social Care
Z0060131	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Employer Facing Provision, ICT Practitioners
Z0060132	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Employer Facing Provision, Performing Arts
Z0060133	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Employer Facing Provision, Transport Operations and Maintenance
Z0060134	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Employer Facing Provision, Public Services
Z0060135	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Employer Facing Provision, Sports, Leisure and Recreation
Z0060136	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Employer Facing Provision, Hospitality and Catering
Z0060137	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Employer Facing Provision, Warehousing and Distribution
Z0060138	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Employer Facing Provision, Other Languages, Literature and Culture
Z0060139	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Employer Facing Provision, Engineering
Z0060140	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Employer Facing Provision, Business Management
Z0060141	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Employer Facing Provision, Service Enterprises
Z0060142	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Employer Facing Provision, Administration
Z0060143	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Employer Facing Provision, Media and Communication
Z0060144	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Employer Facing Provision, Accounting and Finance
Z0060145	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Employer Facing Provision, Retailing and Wholesaling
Z0060146	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Employer Facing Provision, Languages, Literature and Culture of the British Isles
Z0060147	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Employer Facing Provision, Environmental Conservation
Z0060148	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Employer Facing Provision, Direct Learning Support
Z0060149	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Employer Facing Provision, Teaching and Lecturing

Z0060150	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Employer Facing Provision, Horticulture and Forestry
Z0060151	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Employer Facing Provision, Agriculture
Z0060152	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Employer Facing Provision, Linguistics
Z0060153	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Employer Facing Provision, Marketing and Sales
Z0060154	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Employer Facing Provision, Child Development and Well Being
Z0060155	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Employer Facing Provision, History
Z0060156	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Employer Facing Provision, Law and Legal Services
Z0060157	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Employer Facing Provision, Manufacturing Technologies
Z0060158	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Employer Facing Provision, Animal Care and Veterinary Science
Z0060159	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Employer Facing Provision, Science
Z0060160	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Employer Facing Provision, Travel and Tourism
Z0060161	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Employer Facing Provision, Publishing and Information Science
Z0060162	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Employer Facing Provision, Nursing and Subjects and Vocations Allied to Medicine
Z0060163	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Employer Facing Provision, Architecture
Z0060164	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Employer Facing Provision, Geography
Z0060165	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Employer Facing Provision, Sociology and Social Policy
Z0060166	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Employer Facing Provision, Urban, Rural and Regional Planning
Z0060167	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Employer Facing Provision, Politics
Z0060168	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Employer Facing Provision, Mathematics and Statistics
Z0060169	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Employer Facing Provision, Foundations for Learning and Life
Z0060170	Non-regulated Tailored Learning, Employer Facing Provision, Preparation for Work

* These are funded at up to Level 3. CLS have allocated 120GLH per level as an appropriate number of hours for a learner to complete a level, based on comparison to qualification hours and supporting as many learners as possible with limited budget. Learners cannot repeat the level on the same course / aim.

Understanding Qualification levels:

<https://www.gov.uk/what-different-qualification-levels-mean/list-of-qualification-levels>

Source: nacro.org.uk

The Regulated Qualifications Framework has provided a structure of different levels of education in England and Wales.

Entry level qualifications

Entry level can be seen as a foundation to education. It is the preliminary form of qualification. It provides learners with an introduction to education. They are not generally compulsory. Entry level qualifications are available in three subcategories which progressively get more difficult: Entry level 1, 2 and 3.

Examples of entry level qualifications include:

- Functional or essential skills.
- Awards and diplomas
- Certificates
- English for foreign language speakers
- Skills for life

These are perfect for those trying to learn a new subject or language and or looking to enter formal education.

Common Entry Requirements:

None, perfect for those looking to learn a new subject or trying to enter formal education

Level 1 qualifications

Different from Entry Level, Level 1 is the earliest or first formal qualifications obtainable in the numbered system of qualifications. Level 1 is normally achieved years 10 and 11 of secondary school. Level 1 qualifications include and can be equivalent to achieving GCSE grades 3, 2, or 1 previously graded D, E, F, or G.

Other examples of Level 1 qualifications include:

- Level 1 functional skills or essential skills
- Level 1 awards and diplomas or certificates
- Level 1 National Vocational Qualification (NVQ)
- Level 1 ESOL

Common Entry Requirements:

No necessary entry requirements, perfect for those looking to further education.

Level 2 qualifications

Level 2 is the next step up from Level 1. Similar to Level 1 it is often achieved at the same time in years 10 and 11. Thus attaining a Level 2 qualification can be equivalent to achieving GCSE grades 9, 8, 7, 6, 5, or 4 previously graded A*, A, B, or C.

Other examples of Level 2 qualifications include:

- O level (grades A, B, or C)
- Grade 1 as CSE level
- Level 2 functional skills or essential skills
- Level 2 awards and diplomas or certificates
- Level 2 NVQ
- Intermediate apprenticeships
- Level 2 ESOL

Those who normally achieve Level 2 move onto Level 3. This is because Level 3 tends to require a higher level of knowledge and grades. By achieving a Level 2 the route to Level 3 opens up as well as other potential pathways which can be seen further below.

Common Entry Requirements:

No necessary entry requirements, perfect for those looking to further education and progress onto a level 3 or higher education.

Importance of Level 1 & 2

It can be said that achieving Levels 1 and 2 play an integral role in creating the foundations of learning and employment. In England the proportion of people achieving the equivalent of five GCSEs at grade 4 or above (also referred to as Level 2 attainment) by the age of 19 is falling and has been for five consecutive years – currently almost one in five young people do not achieve this. Too many young people are being held back from achieving their potential, unable to gain the skills that they need to achieve what they want with their lives – a situation that the pandemic has exposed and exacerbated.

**KCC CLS: Future of Adult Education in Kent
Future options opportunity and risks**

Option	For	Against
1 – Contractual delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This option would support and enable a change of mind set and culture for KCC CLS staff, and a focus on driving the skills agenda to upskill and reskill Kent’s residents for employment. • Reduced financial risk for KCC compared to other options. • Opportunities to attract additional funding would continue, for example wider funding attached to refugee groups and Hong Kong BN(O) passport holders. Also, opportunities to deliver fee income generating courses to employers and where needs were identified could still be implemented, within the focus on the skills agenda. • Learners who are no longer fundable would be signposted to organisations such as U3A (https://www.u3a.org.uk/) who have a broad leisure/pleasure offer. • Community groups, tutors for private classes and other partners could rent rooms when not being used. • More buildings will become available for disposal/repurpose. • Opportunity to prepare for devolution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk of inability to identify sufficient external venue availability/capacity to accommodate/support the level of community-based provision and at a reasonable price. Discussions have commenced with Colleges and Housing Associations. • Financial cost of sustaining buildings which are no longer required. • Higher levels of redundancy than option 2, with increased redundancy and pension costs. • Destabilisation of the organisation and personnel. • Time required to develop and implement changes to MI system, web site etc are challenging, but ongoing. • CLS is ‘behind the curve’ in adjusting business model. • Requires a peripatetic workforce. Increase in environmental impact.
2 – Contractual delivery plus Learner Funded Business Unit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A range of leisure/pleasure courses would still be available. • Mitigation of complaints regarding closure of courses. • Learners, ineligible for funding, who couldn’t afford new 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non funded, leisure/pleasure courses would see approx. increase in fees, for specialist courses requiring specialist equipment at circa 100% higher than the equivalent subsidised course rate, thus making them unaffordable

fees could be signposted to organisations such as U3A (<https://www.u3a.org.uk/>, Local council supported schemes, colleges etc)

- Some buildings will become available for disposal/repurpose.
- Community groups and other partners could rent rooms when not being utilised.

for some.

- Complaints regarding increase in course costs.
- Likely decrease in courses offered due to decreased demand, so staff redundancies would be likely but quantity unknown.
- Risk of non-viability of Full Cost unit with demand not meeting return on investment. Maintaining existing cost with reduced income would worsen the financial position of KCC CLS.
- Lack of 'start up' business development time may also limit KCC CLS ability to realise customer demand.
- Delivery of a full cost unit would be a distraction from contractual business, and in a time when a change of mindset/culture is required to undertake the work required to shape the core areas to best fit Kent's skills' needs. Engagement with staff regarding changes has been ongoing, with resistance being experienced.
- Risk of inability to identify sufficient external venue availability/capacity to accommodate/support the level of community-based provision and at a reasonable price. Discussions have commenced with Colleges and Housing Associations.
- Destabilisation of the organisation and personnel. Time required to develop and implement changes to MI system, web site etc are challenging, but ongoing.
- CLS is 'behind the curve' in adjusting business model.
- Financial cost of sustaining buildings which are no longer required.
- Requires a peripatetic workforce. Increase in environmental impact.

3 – Close CLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity to prepare for devolution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact and delay to delivery of KCC strategic plans and detrimental impact on residents of Kent. • Negative impact to partner organisations who work closely with CLS (e.g. DWP) to progress their aims and in supporting Kent residents. • KCC would need to source alternative providers to bridge the gap • KCC Property costs accumulating despite no inhabitants or income. • Significant redundancy costs. However, some of the cost could be mitigated should TUPE apply to the transfer of contract to a third party.
4 – Do nothing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No changes to delivery or existing staff base in 2024 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This option has been discounted as too high risk as it would not be compliant with funding rules or OFSTED expectations • Unable to claim funding to recoup spend to cover staffing costs / outlays (inc building costs) • Financially unsustainable with significant redundancy costs likely within a year or so. • Huge reputational damage to KCC which would impact on other aspects of KCC provision.

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EQIA Submission – ID Number

Section A

EQIA Title

Service and provision redesign

Responsible Officer

Mark Easton - CY EQS

Type of Activity

Service Change

Service Change

Service Redesign

Service Redesign

Project/Programme

No

Commissioning/Procurement

No

Strategy/Policy

No

Details of other Service Activity

No

Accountability and Responsibility

Directorate

Children Young People and Education

Responsible Service

Community Learning and Skills

Responsible Head of Service

Jude Farrell - CY EQS

Responsible Director

Christine McInnes - CY EPA

Aims and Objectives

Background

This Equality Impact Assessment is in response to, and in consideration of, the potential impact of the National Further Education Funding and Accountability reforms being taken forward by the Department of Education (DfE) and the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). These are a wide-ranging set of reforms which seek to improve how Central Government funding is used to reskill and upskill adults and to strengthen the accountability systems for Further Education (FE) providers. Many of the reforms will affect Kent County Council (KCC) and Community Learning and Skills (CLS) as well as other local and national providers of education and training.

CLS are KCC's internally commissioned department focussed to deliver education and training to adults and young people over 16. This includes delivering the ESFA Adult Education Budget (AEB) on behalf of KCC, to the value of £8.7m per annum. CLS's total income per annum, including ESFA income, is circa £12.5m, which is derived from different funding sources including circa £2.5m of fee income paid by learners participating in learning for leisure and pleasure courses, subsidised by

ESFA's AEB funding. CLS is not 'base funded' via KCC and therefore does not receive any funding directly from KCC income streams (capital or revenue) e.g., Government grants, council tax, fees, charges, and business rates.

CLS have circa 15000 active and enrolled learners which is 1.2% of the Kent adult population.

From the new academic year, 1st August 2024, the DfE/ESFA are changing the conditions of funding for AEB, which is to become the Adult Skills Fund (ASF). The changes to the conditions of funding will be implemented on 1st August 2024 and have necessitated KCC/CLS developing proposals for potential changes to the service offer and subsequently the infrastructure of KCC/CLS. The changes are necessary as learning for leisure and pleasure will no longer be fundable and/or be subsidised via AEB/ASF. The changes to the conditions of funding are:

- Those learners who are classified as repeat learners (learners who have attended the same type of course, completing a full level) will be expected to progress onto the next level or move into 'self-organised learning' which may be at an increased cost to the individual.
- All KCC/CLS learners participating in learning for solely for leisure and pleasure, who were previously funded/subsidised by DfE/ESFA, will no longer be as of 1st August 2024. This alteration will impact primarily those studying creative topics, languages, and fitness.
- All learning at participant level is to be categorised by a prescribed learning purpose and outcome.
- There should be a greater focus on delivering learning at the point of need (e.g. in the community).
- There are also various new requirements for data collection, which will require financial investment in Information Technology system development/software and General Data Protection Regulations, with this academic year, 23/24, being a 'change over' year, although this will not affect the service delivered by CLS to service users.

The change to the conditions of funding will negatively impact on KCC/CLS's ability to attract circa £2.5m of fee income per annum from learners participating in learning for leisure and pleasure courses. The negative impact will bring to bear increased financial pressures upon KCC/CLS. Should KCC/CLS decide to continue to provide learning for leisure and pleasure courses our provisional view is that this could only realistically be achieved through a self-funded, full cost business model, which would result in a significant price increase for learners.

Prior to the ESFA changes to funding, either financial concessions, and/or loyalty reward schemes, were available to those engaging with learning dependant on course type. From 1st August 2024 ESFA funding will not subsidise learning solely or primarily used for leisure and pleasure and, if offered, our provisional view is that these courses will have to be self-funded by course participants at full cost, with the removal of concessions and loyalty reward schemes. Loyalty schemes could not be used with accredited and partnership courses so there is no alteration in those courses. Concessions will still be available across all other streams including accredited and tailored learning.

Development of the proposals

In response to the DfE/ESFA changes to the conditions of funding KCC/CLS are considering 4 potential options which have been developed to respond to:

1. The imposed funding changes
2. The current economic/financial climate
3. The environmental climate

4. Business sustainability
5. Impact on local communities and demographic of Kent.

The options are

1. Provide training and education opportunities that meet the requirements of the amended DfE/ESFA funding conditions
2. Provide training and education opportunities that meet the requirements of the amended DfE/ESFA funding conditions and a privately funded, full cost business model for learning for leisure and pleasure.
3. Discontinue all training and educational training provision funded via DfE/ESFA.
4. Do nothing.

The four options are described in more detail below.

Overall impacts on service users of the options

Option 1 – Contractual

KCC/CLS delivery would be focussed to meet contractual obligations of the funding rules to be implemented by the ESFA on 1st August 2024 and the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) priorities around skills gaps, and local needs. No courses would be offered that do not meet the requirements of the reformed contract, as explained above (e.g. repeat learners). This Option would also see CLS expanding the offering of qualification and non-qualification courses leading towards working in Creative industries, as well as for example, language courses to support work in employers who require bi-lingual skills e.g. Border Force. Whilst learning for leisure/pleasure would not be included in the option, creative/fitness courses would be available as a vehicle to support health and wellbeing, and creative/language courses would still be included for an individual for a defined period, as they sit within ESFA funding rules.

Option 1 is the preferred option. This is on the basis that this option holds fewer financial risks for KCC long term and will also enable an undivided focus on achieving the KCC strategic aims and those outlined within the ESFA contract.

In order that Option 1 can attain a financially viable and sustainable position, an organisational redesign/ restructure would be required. The level of fee income received would be reduced to circa £800K (estimated).

It is anticipated that fewer buildings from which services are currently delivered would be required for the delivery of option 1, as this would require more courses to take place at the point of need and within localised community settings and that there would be no participation in non-funded courses. No decision has been taken by KCC against the closure of any buildings that CLS currently occupies, and this will be subject to appropriate future decision-making by KCC. Should KCC take a decision to close any of the estate CLS currently occupies a separate Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken against each building.

Locations where more community outreach venues may be of greater benefit, and potentially mitigate against the adverse impacts of any closures on those with protected characteristics, are

being identified. Prior to use, CLS will assess each venue in relation to accessibility, safety, location and suitability as a teaching venue. CLS have identified and used 274 outreach venues, county wide, in the last two academic years; these include children's centres, schools, village halls, community centres, housing associations, cricket clubs and Gurdwaras.

Option 2 - Contractual plus Learner Funded Business Unit

This would be option 1 (see above), alteration of our business model to meet the terms of the new contract, but with the addition of a commercial unit in the form of Learner Funded Business Unit (LFBU). The LFBU could help replace the offer for learners whose courses are now excluded from ESFA funding. These learners would pay for their courses without recourse to concessions or discounts. It is anticipated that this would result in an initial reduction of enrolments due to an increased pricing structure.

Learners attending courses via the LFBU would be those who are willing and /or able to pay increased fees to cover the full cost of the provision. There would be no restriction on repeat learners. Estimates for fees are variable, but biggest increases would be for specialist courses requiring specialist equipment at circa 100% higher than the equivalent subsidised course rate.

CLS would deliver in each district according to identified demand and building suitability. This option would involve changing the delivery model to adhere to the changes in funding. In order that this option can approach viability, an organisational redesign/restructure would be required. It is anticipated that, as per option 1, fewer buildings from which services are currently delivered from would be required for the delivery of option 2, as this option would potentially require more courses to take place at the point of need within community settings and that there would be a reduction to participation in Full cost/self-funded courses.

Locations where more community venues may be of greater benefit, and potentially mitigate against the adverse impacts on those with protected characteristics, are being assessed. Again, any closures would be subject to further appropriate decision-making and an Equality impact Assessment.

Option 3 - Close CLS

Closure of KCC/CLS will necessitate one of the following options:

- a) returning the funding contracts to DfE/ESFA. This option will remove and disperse the adult & young people's learning opportunities available via KCC/CLS to alternative learning providers.
- b) KCC to commission/sub-contract delivery to external/independent providers. Should this be implemented, KCC would still retain responsibility for quality, data, compliance, and OFSTED inspections etc, as KCC would remain the legal entity responsible for ensuring the conditions of the contract are adhered to and met.

Impacts of Option 3:

For both a) and b) variations, there would be a delay in setting up alternative providers which would interrupt learning for all individuals with any of the protected characteristics.

The impact on all service users, irrespective of protective characteristics would be that access to existing provision currently provided through KCC would have to be resourced from an alternative provider of education and training.

It may prove difficult for learners to find suitable alternative learning opportunities. In particular, this may impact on those with disabilities or those who don't have English as a first language so may find it difficult to navigate to a new area/provision.

Option 4 – Do nothing:

This option would see no change to the service offer. KCC/CLS would continue with the present breadth and volume of the current service offer, including courses attended by learners who will be precluded from funding from 1st August 2024. Courses would be offered with equivalent course pricing structures and delivered from existing buildings that KCC/CLS currently occupy across Kent. From 1st August 2024 courses for learning for leisure/pleasure that were previously fundable will not be under the Department for Education's funding reforms. This is likely to result in a loss of funding of the new Adult Skills Fund contract. The resulting financial loss has been estimated to be £3.3m for the 2024/25 academic year.

Impacts:

In the short term, there would be no impact to any individual. In the medium term, given the lack of funding income to cover the outlay in costs, the service will become financially non-viable. The impacts are likely to be as per Option 3 as the service and KCC would be unable to sustain such significant financial loss.

Equality impacts

This EIA is intended to assess the potential impact of the options outlined above on persons with different protected characteristics. This EIA has been prepared to help us have regard to the need to: (i) eliminate discrimination; (ii) advance equality of opportunity; and (iii) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not, in the exercise of our public functions. These issues are relevant considerations to be considered when we consider making a change in the way we deliver our service which may have equality implications. This EIA is also intended to evidence that these considerations have in fact been considered, and the weight given to them as part of our decision-making process.

Justification

The EqIA has identified that, overall, the biggest, and most detrimental impacts to service users, including those with protected characteristics, in the long term would be from Options 3 (close the service or sub-contract provision) and Option 4 (do nothing).

Options 1 and 2 would also give rise to impacts on those with protected characteristics, including (in summary):

- Potential reduction to the service offer, particularly in learning for leisure with mitigation provided by either the introduction of a learner-funded offer (under Option 2) and/or signposting to alternative learning providers and the promotion of self-organised learning (under Options 1 and 2).
- Potential reduced access, particularly for those who may, because of their protected characteristic (e.g. disability, age) have limited financial means. There is limited mitigation by access to funding via tailored learning.

- Older people may be more greatly affected because of their proportional representation within CLS and because they most often use classes for leisure purposes. Mitigation would be provided by either the introduction of a learner-funded offer (under Option 2) and/or signposting to alternative learning providers and the promotion of self-organised learning (under Options 1 and 2).
- Those identifying as women may be more greatly impacted, again due to the proportional representation of women among service users.

For a more detailed assessment of the negative impacts and mitigation on each of the protected characteristics, please see section C below.

KCC/CLS believes that the positive impacts of the funding changes on service users will include:

- A greater focus on demographics within local communities to deliver improvements in adult educational attainment, skills and employment rates and economy.
- Continued support of those with disabilities and requiring additional learning support.
- The forging a greater relationship and joint working with Public Health on activity to improve the health of the population.
- Supporting those in rural communities in their access to education.
- Providing opportunities for people with protected characteristics to engage with education, develop their confidence and ability to build a stronger community.
- The opportunity to increase our fully accessible venues by reviewing the existing CLS occupied estate.
- Offering more provision within local communities, thereby reducing carbon emissions and the associated health impacts, along with costs incurred by service users when travelling to venues.
- Supporting many of the most vulnerable by continuing and growing to deliver the highly successful Family Learning and Response programmes.
- Support people across all the protected characteristics by offering an improved programme to support mental health and wellbeing such as managing anxiety and stress, techniques for emotional issues, coping mechanisms for stress, CBT, assertiveness and confidence building, relaxation, and meditation.
- An inclusive vocational skills programme to enable individuals to explore prospective career avenues.

The preferred option for KCC/CLS is Option 1. While KCC acknowledges that Option 1 will have some adverse equality impacts, overall, and in summary, we consider that these are justified in light of the constraints facing KCC in terms of the policy changes introduced by the DfE and KCC's financial position. Additionally, both Options 1 and 2 will have some positive impacts on users with protected characteristics, as outlined above. While Option 2 would include additional mitigations (in the form of additional learner-funded provision), we consider that the financial risk to KCC of this option justifies our preference for Option 1. Option 4 is simply not financially viable. Likewise, Options 3 and 4 would, in our assessment, lead to worse outcomes for services users, including those with protected characteristics.

Section B – Evidence

Do you have data related to the protected groups of the people impacted by this activity?

Yes, in part.
It is possible to get the data in a timely and cost effective way?
Yes
Is there national evidence/data that you can use?
No
Have you consulted with stakeholders?
Yes
Who have you involved, consulted and engaged with?
Staff will be consulted with once a decision has been taken on which option should be adopted
Has there been a previous Equality Analysis (EQIA) in the last 3 years?
No
Do you have evidence that can help you understand the potential impact of your activity?
Yes
Section C – Impact
Who may be impacted by the activity?
Service Users/clients Service users/clients
Staff Staff/Volunteers
Residents/Communities/Citizens Yes
Are there any positive impacts for all or any of the protected groups as a result of the activity that you are doing?
Yes
Details of Positive Impacts
For <u>Service Users</u> - Please see below against individual protected characteristics and the executive Summary of the National Department for Education’s Equality Impact Assessment. <u>Previous EqIA in relation to Adult Education Funding reforms</u> The Department for Education FE Funding and Accountability Reform undertook an Equality Impact Assessment at national level in relation to the funding reforms and the Executive Summary findings are that there would be limited real impact to learners and that for many there would be a positive benefit. A summary of their findings is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The DfE reforms of funding for tailored learning (referred to as non-qualification provision) are a wide-ranging set of reforms which seek to improve how funding is used to reskill and upskill adults and to strengthen the accountability systems for Further Education (FE) providers. The DfE, in their EqIA for the reforms, have not identified any impacts under limbs 1, 2, or 3 of Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010¹. • Many of the reforms will bring benefits for learners through the stronger link between the training available to them and the employment opportunities in their local area; they will also bring benefits for providers through an improved funding model. • The change to remove provision purely for ‘leisure’ purposes is likely to have limited impact on learners. This is because the DfE will continue to fund provision for wider outcomes which will impact positively on learners, and thus a large proportion of the current provision is likely to continue. It is fully expected that most learners to be able to access a suitable offer and

providers can still deliver courses for 'leisure' with learners paying full cost fees (although KCC is not proposing a new learner-funded offer as explained elsewhere).

- The new funding rates will support the quality of provision and help to deliver the skills the current and future economy needs, delivering a positive impact on learners by giving them the skills they need to get high value jobs. While funding rates for about 20% of individual courses will reduce, providers are free to use their funding flexibly and maintain delivery of such courses or there are other courses that learners can take which overall will attract more funding in the future.

¹ The limbs are defined as follows: limb 1 – The need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation (to remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics); limb 2 – The need to promote equality of opportunity (to take steps to meet the needs of people from protected groups where these are different from the needs of other people); limb 3 – The need to foster good relations between groups (to encourage people from protected groups to participate in public life or other activities where their participation is disproportionately low).

- The DfE therefore, anticipate an overall positive impact under limb 2 for all groups in future, and no impacts under limbs 1 and 3. They have examined historical variations in take up of individual courses between different groups and while these show that for all groups, the majority of learners were on courses seeing an increase in funding, some groups are slightly more represented than others in the courses seeing reductions. However, it is not expecting these groups to be adversely affected in reality: the mix of learners on different courses changes year to year and providers are able to use their funding flexibly in determining the amount of resource spent on individual courses and will benefit from the increased overall funding rates.
- Looking forward, it is expected impacts to be minimal, as there are likely to be other avenues for all these learners to access further education through FE colleges and grant-funded providers.

Please note: KCC/CLS does not have any legal governance or option over whether KCC/CLS accept or not central government to changes in DfE changes to education and learning policy and is contractually bound by the conditions of contract.

KCC/CLS believes that the positive impacts of the funding changes on service users will include:

- A bigger focus on demographics within local communities, and the service users therein, to deliver improvements in adult educational attainment, skills and employment rates and economy.
- Continued support of those with disabilities and requiring additional learning support.
- The forging a greater relationship and joint working with Public Health on activity to improve the health of the population.
- Supporting rural communities in their access to education.
- Providing opportunities for people with protected characteristics to develop their confidence and ability to build a stronger community.
- Offering more provision within local communities, thereby reducing carbon emissions and service user costs incurred through travel.
- Continuing to deliver the highly successful Family Learning and Response programmes which support many of the most vulnerable.

- An opportunity for service users to expand their learning and form new community links by undertaking alternative provision with local businesses, private tutors etc.
- Continue to offer Supported Learning and Independent living courses for learners generally with moderate learning difficulties, to support independent living skills e.g. cooking, gardening, travel, shopping, self-advocacy.
- Support people across all the protected characteristics by offering an improved programme to support mental health and wellbeing such as managing anxiety and stress, techniques for emotional issues, coping mechanisms for stress, CBT, assertiveness and confidence building, relaxation, and meditation.
- An inclusive vocational skills programme to enable individuals to explore prospective career avenues.

Negative impacts and Mitigating Actions

19.Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Age

Are there negative impacts for age?

Yes

Details of negative impacts for Age

The 2022 mid year population estimates indicates that the population of Kent, by age range is: >19yrs 23.6%, 20-59yrs 49.9%; 60+yrs 26.5%.

In comparison, the percentage of learners enrolled on CLS courses, by age range, is 19yrs 1%, 20-59yrs 67%; 60+yrs 32%.

The table below shows the percentage of learners, by age range, for each sector subject area (SSA).

Percentage of CLS learners by age range in each subject area, March 2024	>16	16-18	19-24	25-59	60+	Total
1 - Health, Public Services and Care		1	5	85	9	100%
2 - Science and Mathematics	1		13	81	5	100%
3 - Agriculture, Horticulture and Animal Care			2	65	33	100%
4 - Engineering and Manufacturing Technologies			6	74	19	100%
5 - Construction, Planning and the Built Environment		12.5	12.5	75		100%
6 - Information and Communication Technology (ICT)			1	63	36	100%
7 - Retail and Commercial Enterprise			6	75	19	100%
8 - Leisure, Travel and Tourism			0.2	23	77	100%
9 - Arts, Media and Publishing			1	45	54	100%
10 - History, Philosophy and Theology				19	81	100%
12 - Languages, Literature and Culture		0	2	42	56	100%
13 - Education and Training		17	33	50		100%
14 - Preparation for Life and Work	1	11	7	76	6	100%
15 - Business, Administration and Law		16	16	54	15	100%

The courses most negatively affected by the funding changes will be those in Arts, Media and Publishing and Languages, Literature and Culture. In both of those areas, people aged 60+ make up the majority of learners.

Option 1 – Learning for leisure/ pleasure would not be part of the service offer under option 1. The courses most frequently used for leisure and pleasure are art / craft based courses and language studies. The data above shows that learners aged 60+ make up over 50% of those enrolled so they will be the most negatively impacted by those changes. Learners wishing to undertake courses purely for learning for leisure/pleasure would need to source alternative provision or be eligible for ESFA funded tailored learning provision, which may not be available on a like-for-like basis.

We know that many of our older learners use adult learning classes for reasons including socialisation and mental health, maintaining cognitive health, maintaining manual dexterity, mobility, and fitness. These may all be negatively impacted by the proposed changes.

The cessation of these activities may incur greater travel time/distance for those who wish to participate in leisure/pleasure courses as they may have to travel further distances to access similar provision. This may impact those older learners in more rural areas where bus routes are limited or if they find public transport difficult to use.

While no formal decision to close any buildings is being taken at this stage, in the event that the CLS footprint is reduced there may be some disproportionate impacts on older people (and possibly some younger people) as a result of finding it more difficult to travel to alternative provision. This may be compounded by other factors, e.g. other protected characteristics such as age, or indeed in rural areas where public transport links are not strong. On the other hand, some provision may be delivered closer to where some individuals live as a result of greater delivery in communities.

Option 2 – There is potential for service users to be negatively impacted through option 2 due to ESFA withdrawing funding for learning for leisure/pleasure. There are two predominant potential negative impacts, these being financial and access to provision. There is a potential for a negative impact regarding personal finance due to the revised pricing structure, which will increase the level of fees incurred for participation on self-funded courses. The level of negative impact will vary across all age categories as the level of impact is dependent on the level of disposable income available on an individual learner basis CLS do not hold any data regarding personal disposable income so are unable to quantify the percentage of existing or new learners this will impact. It is anticipated that the level of demand for learning for leisure/pleasure courses will diminish due to the increase in fees payable for participation and therefore potentially some KCC/CLS buildings will discontinue their learning for leisure/pleasure offer. The cessation of these activities may incur greater travel time/distance for those who wish to participate in leisure/pleasure courses as they may have to travel further distances to access similar provision. This may impact those older learners in more rural areas where bus routes are limited or if they find public transport difficult to use.

Should any buildings close, the impacts on those with protected characteristics may be as outlined in Option 1.

Option 3 – Option 3, which would see the total closure of CLS, would not allow KCC/CLS for service delivery for any courses at all, including those which people would like to take for learning for leisure/pleasure. This would have a detrimental impact on learners of all ages as learning would be interrupted and it may take some time to source an alternative provision. For younger people, this may impede on their ability to gain core / vocational skills which may lead into employment or

<p>employment progression. For older learners, the withdrawal of their learning community and activity may impact on their health and well-being.</p> <p>Option 4 - As the service offer is not proposed to change there will be no adverse/negative impact as access and availability will not alter in the short term, however any contravention of funding conditions and lack of enrolment fee income would soon mean CLS would be non-financially viable.</p>
<p>Mitigating Actions for Age</p> <p>Options 1 – 2. The ESFA will continue to fund provision for wider outcomes through ‘tailored learning’ provision that can continue to support wider outcomes such as engaging and/or building confidence, preparation for further learning, preparation for employment, improving essential skills including English, ESOL, Maths and Digital, equipping parents/carers to support children's learning, health and well-being and finally, developing stronger communities. CLS will be offering tailored learning classes and some of these may be accessible to older learners. It is expected that most learners will be able to access a suitable offer through learners paying full cost fees, through self-organised learning groups, other existing provision and/or accessing ‘tailored learning’ provision. CLS are planning courses to start from September 2024 which could act as a trial to gauge appetite. CLS have also been researching other providers and, as an example, there are twenty alternative independent businesses that offer ceramic arts (pottery) courses across Kent and the locations of these providers are similar to those currently offered by CLS. CLS will signpost learners to other providers and avenues. As an example, in Gravesend, there is another facility offering pottery classes approximately six minutes’ walk from Gravesend AEC.</p> <p>Option 3 – variant a) CLS would signpost learners to alternative providers include colleges, community groups, independent businesses and schemes supported by local councils as part of the UK Shared Prosperity Funding.</p> <p>Option 3 – Variant b) provision provided by third party suppliers via sub-contracted arrangements with KCC.</p> <p>Option 4 – no mitigation required in the short term.</p>
<p>Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions – Age</p> <p>Head of Service</p>
<p>20. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Disability</p>
<p>Are there negative impacts for Disability?</p> <p>Yes</p>
<p>Details of Negative Impacts for Disability</p> <p>The 2021 figures for Kent which shows that 17.9% of residents (including children) are Disabled under the Equality act. In the academic year 2023/24 to date, 15% of total learner participation declared a disability, 79% declared no disability and 6% were unknown.</p> <p>Across all options, there may be some detrimental impact if provision was to cease or relocate, if any buildings were to close for example, there may be longer travel times. This may particularly impact those with disabilities who may be more likely to find transport to alternative locations more difficult to access. This may be compounded by other factors, e.g. other protected characteristics such as age, or indeed in rural areas where public transport links are not strong. It is possible that some provision may be delivered closer to where some individuals live because of greater delivery in communities.</p>

Option 1 – Those learners with a disability who are taking classes only for leisure/pleasure or who have completed all of the levels which we offer in that subject area, would not be funded under Option 1. Therefore, disabled learners wishing to undertake courses purely for learning for leisure/pleasure would need to identify another learning purpose to enable funding support or source alternative provision. It may prove challenging to find an alternative provision which fully meets the particular needs of an individual for example, the alternative may run at a time of day which is difficult to attend because of the impacts of that disability.

Option 2 – The initial and most significant impact is as per Option 1. Under Option 2, CLS would offer Learner Funded courses. There is a potential for a negative impact regarding personal finance due to the revised pricing structure, which will increase the level of fees incurred for participation on learner-funded courses. This may impact on learners with disabilities, particularly those who are unable to work or have an income which enables disposable income. Those with a lower disposable income will incur a higher level of negative impact. CLS does not hold details of personal income so are unable to gauge the level of impact this may have.

Option 3 – Option 3, which would see the total closure of CLS, would not allow KCC/CLS for service delivery for any courses at all. This would impact those with disabilities by removing a countywide avenue to education and may further exclude those with disabilities from the workplace and society.

Option 4 – As the service offer is not proposed to change there will be no adverse/negative impact as access and availability will not alter in the short term.

Mitigating actions for Disability

Across all options: In the event that provision is relocated or ceases, mitigating activity to lessen the impact on those with disability include:

- For core skills (English / maths etc) and Independent Living, we would be sourcing venues to deliver services in community settings within the local area.
- we would explore, with the individual what alternative provision, provided by CLS or independent providers, may be suitable.
- We will also continue to offer a range of courses in an online format.

Options 1 – 2

The change in funding conditions to remove provision purely for ‘leisure/pleasure’ purposes is likely to have a limited impact on learners who have a disability unless they are using the CLS courses for leisure/pleasure only. Any learning that relates to core skills such as English, maths and digital skills, would continue as normal as would independent living, life skills, vocational and employment related topics.

There would also still be the opportunity to take personal development and creative courses, under one of the 7 primary purposes for learning which includes health and wellbeing and building stronger communities. It would only be courses which are being taken purely for leisure / pleasure purposes or an individual has fully completed the levels we are able to offer in a subject area where CLS could not offer a course place supported by funding.

For learners who are not eligible for funding or who don't wish to take CLS Learner Funded courses, CLS will signpost to alternative offers. This could be through self-organised learning groups, other existing provision and/or accessing 'tailored learning' provision.

Option 3 – variant a) CLS will signpost learners to alternative providers include colleges, community groups, independent businesses and schemes supported by local councils as part of the UK Shared Prosperity Funding.

Option 3 – Variant b) provision provided by third party suppliers via sub-contracted arrangements with KCC.

Option 4 – no mitigation required in the short term.

Responsible Officer for Disability

Head of Service

21. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Sex

Are there negative impacts for Sex

Yes

Details of negative impacts for Sex

The Kent 2022 mid-year figures for sex show that females make up 51.3% of the population and males 48.7%.

For the full academic year 2022/23 of total participation within CLS, female learners were more heavily represented (80%) than male (20%). In 2023/24, year to date, the figures are currently 78% female and 22% male.

The percentage of enrolments by sex, by curriculum area in 23/24 (as at 02.04.24)

Apprenticeships: Female 82%, Male 46%

CPD: Female 79%, Male 21%

CRT (creative): Female 83%, Male 17%

Family Learning: Female 88%, Male 12%

Response: Female 67%, Male 33%

Skills: Female 78%, Male 22%

Study Programmes: Female 40%, Male 60%

Workbased Training: Female 50%, Male 50%

Option 1 – Due to the numbers of female learners studying with CLS, they will be the most impacted by the changes. Although older (aged 65+) learners show a more even split along gender lines, so the impact is likely to be more balanced as between the two genders for this group.

Option 2 – As with option 1, the higher withdrawing funding for learning for leisure/pleasure. The impact of higher priced learner-funded courses could impact women more than men, not only because more women study with CLS but also because they may not have the same level of disposable income. There is still a gender pay gap across the UK and, because of child-rearing which may limit ability to progress a career, many women are working in the lower paid roles.

If courses cease or relocates under both Options 1 and 2, then women may be more greatly impacted than men should there be an increase in travel times. For example, if a journey to a course now took 45 minutes, then it may stop somebody from being able to take their afternoon class

because they would be unable to pick up children from school. Another example is that some women would refrain from enrolling if it meant that they are travelling late at night or in unknown areas.

Option 3 – Option 3 would not allow KCC/CLS for service delivery for learning for leisure pleasure necessitating learner to source provision through alternative providers.

Option 4 - As the service offer is not proposed to change there will be no adverse/negative impact as access and availability will not alter in the short term.

Mitigating actions for Sex

Options 1 and 2

The increase in community-based provision will help mitigate some of the impacts of increased travel time as a result of any relocation or cessation of provision and, it may also offer an improvement to the learning experience. Learners will be signposted to other providers to enable them to source the provision which best suits their needs.

Any learning that relates to core skills such as English, maths and digital skills, would continue as normal as would independent living, life skills, vocational and employment related topics.

There would also still be the opportunity to take personal development and creative courses, under one of the 7 primary purposes for learning which includes health and wellbeing and building stronger communities. It would only be courses which are being taken purely for leisure / pleasure purposes or an individual has fully completed the levels we are able to offer in a subject area where where CLS could not offer a course place supported by funding.

To mitigate against women who are responsible for childcare / school runs, classes starting after school drop off time in the morning will also be offered.

Option 3 – variant a) CLS will signpost learners to alternative providers include colleges, community groups, independent businesses and schemes supported by local councils as part of the UK Shared Prosperity Funding.

Option 3 – Variant b) provision provided by third party suppliers via sub-contracted arrangements with KCC.

Option 4 – no mitigation required in the short term.

Responsible Officer for Sex

Head of Service

22. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender

Are there negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender

No

Negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender

For the full academic year 2022/23, no data regarding gender identity/transgender is recorded within CLS.

The GP Patient survey has identified that younger trans and non-binary patients (aged 16 to 44) more likely to report a long-term condition, disability (including physical mobility) or illness compared with other patients of the same age. Surveys and studies with LGBT+ students have identified that, because of bullying, transphobia etc, that many trans people may also have achieved a lower outcome at school / college.

<https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/insight-and-analysis/blogs/ensuring-nhs-meets-needs-trans-people>
Source:

<https://www.trans.ac.uk/SupportingStudents/Whatdoweknowaboutschoolexperiencesattainment/t/abid/7351/Default.aspx>

The changes to the funding rules should not, in themselves, have a particularly negative impact for Gender identity/transgender individuals unless they are using CLS courses only for leisure purposes. There are no courses offered as part of KCC/CLS offer which are specifically aimed at, or specifically relevant to gender support purposes, that will be impacted negatively by the funding changes.

The disruption to learning if CLS were to close or needing to seek another learning provider may dissuade some people from continuing their studies.

Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender

Options 1 & 2. The change in funding conditions to remove provision purely for 'leisure/pleasure' purposes is likely to have a limited impact on Gender identity / transgender learners. This is because the ESFA will continue to fund provision for core skills, vocational courses and CLS would be offering a wide range of tailored learning provision that will support wider outcomes including progressing to further learning and mental health. CLS would continue to provide safe, inclusive learning environments.

Option 3 – variant a) CLS will signpost learners to alternative providers include colleges, community groups, independent businesses and schemes supported by local councils as part of the UK Shared Prosperity Funding.

Option 3 – Variant b) provision provided by third party suppliers via sub-contracted arrangements with KCC.

Option 4 – no mitigation required in the short term.

Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender

Head of Service

23. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Race

Are there negative impacts for Race

Yes

Negative impacts for Race

The 2021 census for Kent's population found people identifying as Asian was 4.4%, Black 2.6%, Mixed 2.3%, Other 1.2% and White 89.4%.

Within further education, or the full academic year 2022/23, in CLS 26.2% of total learner participation declared BME status which is above the 2020-21 England average of 23.6%*. However, on the courses most likely to be impacted by the funding changes (noted in CLS categories as CPD and CRT), those with BME status make up 14% of learners.

**see associated data table showing adults in further education compared to population, 2021.*

Option 1 – Those learners who identify as white would be the most impacted by changes affecting the courses most used for leisure / pleasure as they make up 84% of those enrolled on those courses. As identified earlier, just over half of those individuals are aged 60+. Of the 16% BME learners, at least 70% of those will not be impacted as their courses are not affected by the alteration to funding.

BME individuals make up around 16% of enrolments on the CPD and CRT category courses, which are those most impacted by the changes. As the Kent population figures show that BME people make up 10.6%, it could be said that, there may be some disproportionate impact. (compared to the population demographic of 10.6% BME in Kent).

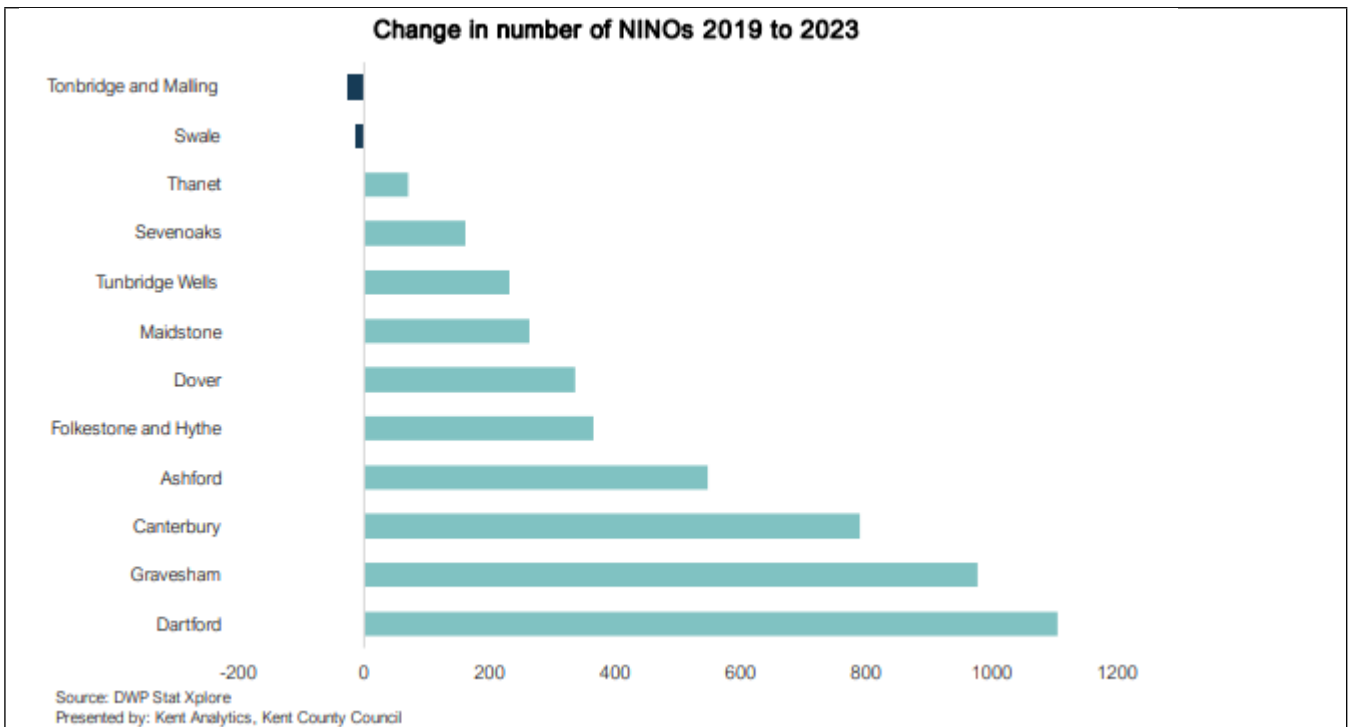
Option 2 – There is potential for service users to be negatively impacted through option 2 due to ESFA withdrawing funding for learning for leisure/pleasure. There are two predominant potential negative impacts, these being financial and access to provision. There is a potential for a negative impact regarding personal finance due to the revised pricing structure, which will increase the level of fees incurred for participation on self-funded courses. The level of negative impact is dependent on the level of disposable income available on an individual learner basis. Therefore, those with low disposable income will incur a higher level of negative impact. There is likely to be an interaction with the protected characteristic of race for some learners. It is anticipated that the level of demand for learning for leisure/pleasure courses will diminish due to the increase in fees payable for participation and therefore potentially some KCC/CLS buildings will discontinue their learning for leisure/pleasure offer. The cessation of these activities may incur greater travel time/distance for those who wish to participate in leisure/pleasure courses as they may have to travel further distances to access similar provision. To the extent that there is an interaction between disposable income levels and race, there may also be an effect related to race and ease of access to alternative provision.

Option 3 – The closure of CLS would have detrimental impact on all learners but for those who rely on CLS to learn to speak/improve their English and to improve their employment prospects and ability to advocate for themselves it would be catastrophic.

Option 4 - As the service offer is not proposed to change there will be no adverse/negative impact as access and availability will not alter in the short term.

Mitigating actions for Race

The [Kent Analytics 2023 National Insurance Numbers issued \(NINo\) report](#) show that there was a 33% increase in NINo (National Insurance Number) issued compared to the previous year. The top five countries of origin for those individuals were India, Nigeria, Ukraine, Nepal and Kyrgyzstan with a notable increase in the number of people coming from Hong Kong. The locations for where the NINOs were issued, broadly matches where CLS has seen an increase in demand for subjects such as ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages), English and maths. CLS will continue to offer ESOL, English and maths and support those who wish to improve their core skills, offering a variety of locations for learning including in Adult Education Centres, Gateways, community venues and online.



Options 1 – 2. The change in funding conditions to remove provision purely for ‘leisure/pleasure’ purposes is likely to have a limited impact on learners who are not repeat learners. This is because the ESFA will continue to fund provision for wider outcomes through ‘tailored learning’ provision that can continue to support wider outcomes. ‘Tailored learning’ is be used in a range of ways to primarily support learners into employment and to progress to further learning, in line with the overall purpose of the Skills Fund, as well as to support the most vulnerable who rely on further education to support their personal development and access to independent living. But it can also support, as the current system does, wider outcomes for local communities such as improving health and wellbeing. It is expected that most learners will be able to access a suitable offer through learners paying full cost fees, through self-organised learning groups, other existing provision and/or accessing ‘tailored learning’ provision. As explained elsewhere, CLS will signpost service users to alternative provision where appropriate.

Option 3 – variant a) CLS will signpost learners to alternative providers include colleges, community groups, independent businesses and schemes supported by local councils as part of the UK Shared Prosperity Funding.

Option 3 – Variant b) provision provided by third party suppliers via sub-contracted arrangements with KCC.

Option 4 – no mitigation required in the short term.

Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Race

Head of Service

24. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Religion and belief

Are there negative impacts for Religion and belief

No
Negative impacts for Religion and belief
<p>The 2021 Census showed that within Kent populace, the religious beliefs or lack thereof were: Christian 48.5%, No Religion 40.9%, Muslim 1.6%, Sikh 0.8%, Buddhist 0.6%, Other religion 0.6%, Jewish 0.1% and 5.8% 'not answered'.</p> <p>No data regarding religion and belief is recorded by CLS.</p> <p>Without CLS' own data to verify, it is assumed that the changes to funding would primarily impact those who follow a Christian belief purely because Christianity is the dominant religion in Kent and given the race and age profile of adult learners. However, the changes will not impact the person because of their beliefs and persons with any belief system will still be able to access courses and education.</p> <p>It may prove more difficult, in some community venues, to offer a quiet reflection / prayer space when required; something which we can usually offer in our adult education centre buildings.</p>
Mitigating actions for Religion and belief
<p>Options 1 – 2. The funding changes would not overtly alter the course type beyond the courses that are supported by the ESFA funding rules. Learners of all faiths, or none, will be able to access provision. For learners who are unable to access funding support, CLS would signpost to alternative provision which may be an alternative provider or, in the case of Option 2, a Learner-Funded course.</p> <p>CLS would continue to offer, building utilisation permitting, a quiet reflection / prayer space for learners when requested.</p> <p>While no data is collected, we are aware that many of our ESOL learners are Muslim. To ensure that we do not limit their ability to attend courses or to observe Salat-ul-Jumu'ah, we would continue to offer ESOL courses throughout the week.</p> <p>Option 3 – variant a) CLS will signpost learners to alternative providers include colleges, community groups, independent businesses and schemes supported by local councils as part of the UK Shared Prosperity Funding.</p> <p>Option 3 – Variant b) provision provided by third party suppliers via sub-contracted arrangements with KCC.</p> <p>Option 4 – no mitigation required in the short term.</p>
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Religion and Belief
Head of Service
25. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Are there negative impacts for Sexual Orientation
No
Negative impacts for Sexual Orientation
<p>The 2021 Census figures for the Kent populace shows that 90.6% identified as heterosexual, 1.3% as gay or lesbian, 1.1% as bisexual with 0.3% as other sexual orientation. People choosing not to answer the question amounted to 6.7%.</p>

No data regarding sexual orientation is recorded by CLS

There will be a limited impact to LGBT people as a result of the funding changes and alterations to CLS service unless a person was using CLS classes purely for leisure/pleasure or they have achieved maximum levels we offer in that subject. There are no courses offered as part of KCC/CLS offer which are specifically aimed at, or specifically relevant to LGBT+ purposes, that will be impacted negatively by the funding changes.

Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation

Options 1 -2: CLS would continue to offer a safe, inclusive learning environment to support all learners. In the event that a specific course was no longer running, we would endeavour to signpost the learner to other provision / groups.

Option 3 – variant a) CLS will signpost learners to alternative providers include colleges, community groups, independent businesses and schemes supported by local councils as part of the UK Shared Prosperity Funding.

Option 3 – Variant b) provision provided by third party suppliers via sub-contracted arrangements with KCC.

Option 4 – no mitigation required in the short term.

Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation

Head of Service

26. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity

Are there negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity

Possibly

Negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity

For the full academic year 2022/23, no data regarding pregnancy and maternity is recorded by CLS.

We believe that there would be a minimal negative impact in relation to pregnancy and maternity as a result of the alterations to funding unless an individual was using adult learning classes purely for leisure/pleasure.

If a preferred location wasn't able to offer a desired course, there may be an impact on the arrangements around travel time and childcare depending on an individual's circumstances.

If the entire service were to cease, the cessation of support and education, particularly the support given by CLS' parenting courses would have a negative impact.

Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity

Options 1 – 2 - CLS will continue to offer Family Learning and parenting courses in children's centres, schools, adult education centres and online. Likewise, CLS would offer core skills and employability related courses as well as tailored learning courses with wider outcomes.

If a learner needs to miss any classes either during or post pregnancy then class notes and home study work would be provided. If a learner needed a longer break away from their studies, then CLS would work with the individual to agree the best plan for them, for example an agreed break in learning could be arranged.

If a mother was nursing, while we do not accept babies and children into the classroom as it disrupts other learners, a quiet space to be found to enable to mother to either nurse or pump. Most of our classes last between one and three hours so most mothers find this duration to be manageable. The longer classes (3+ hours) per day, tend to be held in our adult education centres so there will always be a space for somebody to wait with a child, a quiet nursing space and if required a fridge for storing expressed breast milk.

Option 3 – variant a) CLS will signpost learners to alternative providers include colleges, community groups, independent businesses and schemes supported by local councils as part of the UK Shared Prosperity Funding.

Option 3 – Variant b) provision provided by third party suppliers via sub-contracted arrangements with KCC.

Option 4 – no mitigation required in the short term.

Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity

Head of Service

27. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships

Are there negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships

No

Negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships

CLS do not record data regarding marriage and civil partnerships.

There are no known changes or negative impacts that directly relate to marriage or civil partnerships. There is no entry requirement on any provision that requires or discriminate against marriage / civil partnership status.

Option 3 – variant a) CLS will signpost learners to alternative providers include colleges, community groups, independent businesses and schemes supported by local councils as part of the UK Shared Prosperity Funding.

Option 3 – Variant b) provision provided by third party suppliers via sub-contracted arrangements with KCC.

Option 4 – no mitigation required in the short term.

Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships

None required

Responsible Officer for Marriage and Civil Partnerships

Head of Service

28. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Carer’s responsibilities

Are there negative impacts for Carer’s responsibilities

Yes
<p>Negative impacts for Carer’s responsibilities</p> <p>For the full academic year 2022/23, no data regarding carer’s responsibilities is recorded by CLS. The Kent Adult Carers Strategy 2022-27 In Kent, estimates that 148,341 adults aged 16+ provide hours of unpaid care each week. In Thanet around 14% of people are carers and in Canterbury it’s around 12%. It is reasonable to assume that some CLS learners are also carers. A carer’s role can make paid work, study, maintaining social connections and getting involved in leisure activities difficult and sometimes almost impossible. Carers are more likely to suffer with physical, emotional, and mental health problems.</p> <p>Options 1-2: The proposed options would impact on a carer if they were using courses purely for leisure/pleasure rather than for wellbeing or considering future career options. Likewise, if a regularly attended course doesn’t run or the participants change, it could mean that a regular support network / community alters for the carer. There may also be a negative impact if a preferred course is only available on a Learner-Funded option and the carer has restricted means to pay the fees.</p> <p>Option 3: Carers would be impacted by the closure of CLS as it is an avenue of support removed. Most CLS classes, including vocational classes, are two to three hours per week in duration which, with additional travel time to a new provider, may make it difficult for carers to attend. Vocational courses in other providers like colleges may be more intense which can be harder for a carer, with all their commitments, to attend.</p> <p>Option 4 – in the short term there would be no immediately obvious difference barring a false sense that nothing would change.</p>
<p>Mitigating actions for Carer’s responsibilities</p> <p>Options 1 and 2: The change in funding conditions to remove provision purely for ‘leisure/pleasure’ purposes would likely to have a very limited impact on learners or colleagues who are carers. Core skills and employability courses would continue. The ESFA will continue to fund provision for wider outcomes through ‘tailored learning’ provision that would continue to support wider outcomes such as support learners into employment or health and wellbeing.</p> <p>If a learner needed to miss any classes because of caring duties, then class notes and home study work would be provided. If a learner needed a longer break away from their studies, then CLS would work with the individual to agree the best plan for them, for example an agreed break in learning could be arranged.</p> <p>If CLS no longer offered a course or if a course was financially out of reach for a learner, CLS would signpost to alternative providers or ways to continue learning.</p> <p>Option 3 – variant a) CLS will signpost learners to alternative providers include colleges, community groups, independent businesses and schemes supported by local councils as part of the UK Shared Prosperity Funding.</p>

Option 3 – Variant b) provision provided by third party suppliers via sub-contracted arrangements with KCC.

Option 4 – no mitigation required in the short term.

Responsible Officer for Carer’s responsibilities

Head of Service

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Rory Love, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

DECISION NUMBER:

24/00046

For publication *[Do not include information which is exempt from publication under schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972]*

Key decision: YES

Key decision criteria. The decision will:

- a) result in savings or expenditure which is significant having regard to the budget for the service or function (currently defined by the Council as in excess of £1,000,000); or
- b) be significant in terms of its effects on a significant proportion of the community living or working within two or more electoral divisions – which will include those decisions that involve:
 - the adoption or significant amendment of major strategies or frameworks;
 - significant service developments, significant service reductions, or significant changes in the way that services are delivered, whether County-wide or in a particular locality.

Subject Matter / Title of Decision

KCC CLS Adult Education Funding Reforms

Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, I agree to:

- (a) Approve the alteration to the CLS delivery model to align the council's approach to fit within the ESFA funding arrangements coming into force from August 2024.
- (b) DELEGATE authority to the Director of Education and SEN to design and implement the staffing and asset utilisation model to support the reforms imposed by the changes made to the ESFA funding contract.
- (c) DELEGATE authority to the Director of Education and SEN to take other relevant actions, including but not limited to finalising the terms of and entering into required contracts or other legal agreements, as necessary to implement the decision.
- (d) Delegate authority to the Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services, to take other necessary actions, including but not limited to entering into contracts or other legal agreements, as required to implement the decision.

Reason(s) for decision:

From 1st August 2024, Adult Learning will be funded by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) Adult Skills Fund (ASF) with significant alterations to how the funding should be used. There must be a greater emphasis on utilising the funding to support educational progression and equipping people with the skills to access and progress within employment,

KCC CLS is proposing to make changes to its delivery model to ensure it meets contractual obligations and gives even more focus to Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) priorities around skills gaps, and local needs. This will involve changes to both its staffing structure and locations of

delivery. Prioritising CLS offer in line with the ESFA funding contracts relating to the reskilling and upskilling adults for work, and to move away from courses taken purely for leisure / pleasure purposes.

This is the current short term preferred option on the basis that without further exploration this option appears to hold fewer immediate financial risks to KCC and will also enable the current service to be refocussed to meet the new funding requirements. However, it remains desirable that further options for a blended delivery model involving other bodies such as FE colleges should be explored and developed.

How the proposed decision supports Framing Kent's Future

The decision will have positive impacts for most learners and will support the priorities in Framing Kent's Future, including:

- A greater focus on demographics within local communities to deliver improvements in adult educational attainment, skills and employment rates and economy.
- Continued support of those with disabilities and requiring additional learning support.
- The forging of a greater relationship and joint working with Public Health on activity to improve the health of the population.
- Supporting rural communities in their access to education.
- Providing opportunities for people to develop their confidence and ability to build a stronger community.
- The opportunity to review the CLS occupied estate and relocate to more carbon efficient premises.
- Offering more provision within local communities, thereby reducing carbon emissions and costs incurred through customer travel.
- Continuing to deliver the highly successful Family Learning and Response programmes which support many of the most vulnerable.
- An opportunity for local businesses, private tutors etc to increase their opportunities via the 'release' of more experienced learners from CLS courses.

How the proposed decision supports Securing Kent's Future

Implementing the proposals will contribute towards Objective 3 of securing Kent's future:

- The transformation of the service, in line with the requirements of the grant funding and in response to changes in Government priorities, will aim to return the service to a self-funded model of delivery within 3 years and achieve financial sustainability in the longer term (recognising there will be a short-term pressure whilst this transformation takes place). The proposed model of delivery was considered the most cost-effective option over the next 3 academic years.

Financial Implications

The proposal involves changing the delivery model to adhere to the changes in funding. A restructure and changes to locations of delivery would be required which would result in a financial pressure to the Council in the region of £0.6m - £0.9m in 2024-25 financial year whilst the service adjusts to the new delivery model, with the expectation this pressure would be reduced in 25-26, and the service returning to a self-funded model by 2026-27.

The Revenue Budget for 2024-25, agreed by the Council in February 2024, expected CLS to be fully funded from a combination of external grants and fee income with the delivery of a small surplus of - £0.1m to support wider indirect overheads. When assessing the different options for the future of CLS, due to the estimated impact of the government funding from August 2024, it is likely there will be a short-term financial pressure on this service during 2024-25, this will be reported in the financial monitoring report presented to Cabinet. CLS will look to implement mitigating actions where possible, including continuing to run some fee-paying courses or let vacant spaces to private tutors,

whilst transitioning to the new model of delivery that could offset some of this possible overspend in the short term.

Legal Implication

KCC does not deliver the CLS services pursuant to specific statutory powers or duties. KCC is required to deliver the CLS services in exchange for funding from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (“ESFA”). Under these proposals, ESFA funding for certain types of provision which amounts to the funding of 40% of KCC CLS learners is being withdrawn by the ESFA under those funding arrangements. Legal advice is being sought by the service throughout the project.

Equalities Implications

The EqIA conducted by CLS, has identified that the biggest, and most detrimental impacts to service users in the long term would have been from the two dismissed options of closing the service or doing nothing.

In the proposed decision, ‘Contract only’ option, the impacts on those with protected characteristics have been identified as:

- Potential reduction to the service offer, particularly for those learning for leisure or have completed the levels CLS offer in the subject area. Mitigation would be provided by signposting to alternative learning providers (e.g. colleges / independent businesses); the promotion of self-organised learning and exploring what CLS may be able to offer.
- Potential reduced access, particularly for those who may, because of their protected characteristic, (e.g. disability, age) have limited financial means. There is limited mitigation by access to funding via CLS tailored learning.
- Older people may be more greatly affected because of their proportional representation within CLS and because they most often use classes for leisure purposes. Mitigation would be provided by either the introduction of a Learner-funded offer and/or signposting to alternative learning providers and the promotion of self-organised learning.
- Those identifying as women may be more greatly impacted, due to the proportional representation of women attending classes (54% female, 46% male).

The positive impacts of the ‘contract only’ operational model include:

- Continuation of supported learning and independent living courses for learners with moderate learning difficulties, to support independent living skills e.g. cooking, gardening, travel, shopping, self-advocacy.
- Supporting people across all the protected characteristics by offering an improved programme to support mental health and wellbeing such as managing anxiety and stress, techniques for emotional issues, coping mechanisms for stress, CBT, assertiveness and confidence building, relaxation, and meditation.
- An inclusive vocational skills programme to enable individuals to explore prospective career avenues.
- Closer links with public health, charities, and support groups to identify and address needs.

DPIA

The DPIA screening showed a full DPIA was not required due to the lack of personal / sensitive information.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

The proposed decision will be considered by Children, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee on the 9th July 2024.

Any alternatives considered:

- Contract plus Learner Funded Business Unit. The focus and investment required to set up a new, untested, discretionary business unit would detract from the focus required to meet the revised requirements of the ESFA contract putting compliance at risk. It would also be a significant financial risk not in line with Best Value considerations. Delivery of learner funded courses rely on volumes to be financially viable and thus more properties would need to be retained limiting the cost savings that CLS could make. Risking an entrepreneurial venture into an untested business model, such as the Learner Funded proposal, would be inappropriate at this time. Individuals unable to access funded courses within Community Learning and Skills will be signposted to alternative providers such as colleges, private tuition or independent businesses that offer similar services.
- Close CLS completely. The removal of CLS as a gateway and technical learning provider would be a negative impact for Kent's strategic plans in relation to skills and employment for Kent residents. KCC, as the contract holders with the ESFA would need to either return the contract to DfE/ESFA or commission/sub-contract the delivery to external providers. With sub-contracting, KCC would still, as the contract holder, retain the responsibility for quality, data, compliance, and lead on OFSTED inspections. Additionally, there would be an arising redundancy and early retirement cost, which could not be funded from the contract funding. The running costs of the buildings that CLS currently occupy and pay would also remain payable to the council until alternative uses could be found or the assets sold. The running costs of the buildings that CLS currently occupy and pay would also remain payable to the council until alternative uses could be found or the assets sold. It is not possible without further exploration and discussion with external partners to rule out this option at this stage and therefore further time over the coming year is required to develop proposals for consideration.
- Do nothing. Were CLS to continue planning and delivering the same programme as in the 23/24 academic year, a large number of courses would not be fundable under the tailored learning element of the ASF. At their current prices, the courses would not cover direct costs. With a large reduction in courses and learners submitted to the ESFA, a large reduction in the contract value would be likely. This makes this option financially unsustainable, cause, reputational damage and would most likely result in the closure of the service.

Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:

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signed

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date