

## KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

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### SEND SUB-COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the SEND Sub-Committee held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Tuesday, 31 October 2023.

PRESENT: Mrs B Bruneau (Vice-Chair), Mrs T Dean, MBE, Mr M Dendor, Mrs S Hudson, Mr H Rayner, Mr A Sandhu, MBE, Dr L Sullivan and Mrs S Prendergast.

VIRTUAL ATTENDEES: Ms J Hawkins.

ALSO PRESENT: Mr R Love (Cabinet Member for Education and Skills) and Ms B Hannon (Co-Chair Kent PACT).

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms S Hammond (Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education), Ms C McInnes (Director of Education), Ms A Farmer (Assistant Director/Principal Educational Psychologist), Ms E McQueen (Interim Assistant Director for SEND Quality Assurance) and Mr G Romagnuolo (Research Officer - Overview and Scrutiny).

### UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

**24. Apologies and Substitutes**  
*(Item 2)*

Apologies for absence were received from Mr P Cole, Ms J Hawkins and Mr M Whiting. Mrs S Prendergast substituted for Mr Whiting.

**25. Declarations of Interest by Members in Items on the Agenda**  
*(Item 3)*

There were no Declarations of Interest.

**26. Minutes of the Meeting Held on 28 September 2023**  
*(Item 4)*

RESOLVED that the minutes be approved as a correct record.

**27. Parents Engagement and the Voice of the Child**  
*(Item 5)*

- 1) Mr Love introduced the report. He explained that the information in the report was based around work that was set out in the Accelerated Progress Plan.
- 2) A Member asked a question about the working definition of 'co-production' and how co-production was put into practice in the development and improvement of SEND activities in Kent. Alison Farmer explained that KCC was working with the Council for Disabled Children and on the development and refreshing of the Co-production Charter. Its starting point was precisely the need to define 'co-production' but also to explore other areas in which KCC consulted and engaged with children and young people with SEND and their families.
- 3) In reply to a question about what criteria were used to define 'co-production', 'consultation' and 'engagement', Alison Farmer referred to p35 of the report (Refreshing the Co-Production Charter in Kent – Workshop Summary).
  - a) In reply to a question on whether the workshop was co-produced, Christine McInnes confirmed that it was co-produced, as the DfE recommended that KCC worked with the Council for Disabled Children, and Kent PACT was involved in this work as an active partner.
- 4) In response to a question about where KCC would use co-production to help drive policy standards, Christine McInnes said that this would be defined in the Lived Experience Framework, which also defined what was an appropriate form of engagement for the different tasks that KCC had to fulfil.
- 5) In reply to a question on where parents of children with SEND would be engaged and where they would be involved in co-production, Christine McInnes said that that depended on whether there was a management decision to be made.
  - a) Alison Farmer gave the example of the Autism Education Trust training, where KCC shared the training with a panel of young experts who had autism and, as a consequence of this initiative, a young person with autism is now successfully co-delivering this training alongside the professional trainer.
- 6) Mrs Hannon said that Kent PACT was involved in the co-production of the Lived Experience Framework. Kent PACT was also engaged in the Research & Improvement for SEND Excellence partnership (RISE) programme, although Kent PACT was not involved in the co-production of their presentation.
  - a) Christine McInnes said that the Framework, which was co-produced with Kent PACT, set out when it was appropriate to consult or to co-construct.
- 7) **Accelerated Progress Plan (APP) Area of Weakness 1: The widely held concern of parents that the local area is not able, or in some cases not willing, to meet their children's needs** - A Member pointed out that, in relation to **1A3** (Develop plan for celebrating successes and good outcomes

through our network of communications channels to build trust and confidence in parents and young people) and **1B1** (Finalise and implement the communications plans to build trust and confidence in parents in the ability of local schools to support children and young people with SEND by explaining the benefits of inclusion for all pupils, demonstrating this through success stories and building awareness of what support is ordinarily available in schools and settings), progress on these actions was green but the impact was red. The Member asked why this was the case.

- a) Christine McInnes explained that the definition of 'impact' that was used entailed the impact on children with SEND and their families. Progress was green because the production of the relevant documentation was completed. In terms of impact on children with SEND and their families, some of the completed documentation did not translate into a direct impact on them, and it would take some time to implement the actions set out in other documentation and to extract the evidence of their impact.
  - b) A Member asked whether this delay between progress and impact would have negative consequences when the evidence in the APP would be reviewed by the DfE (on 15 November 2023).
  - c) Christine McInnes said that KCC had taken advice from the DfE to prepare for their 6-month review, and that a strong evidence base that was being collated and finalised by KCC in preparation for this review. She agreed that it was important to start showing some impact on children with SEND and their families.
- 8) **APP Area 1B1 - Finalise and implement the communications plans to build trust and confidence in parents in the ability of local schools to support children and young people with SEND by explaining the benefits of inclusion for all pupils, demonstrating this through success stories and building awareness of what support is ordinarily available in schools and settings.** As the deadline for this activity was 1 October 2023 and the impact was still red, a Member asked what specific progress had been made and what specific objectives had to be met yet.
- a) Christine McInnes said that the work carried out so far consisted in putting the structure into place.
- 9) In reply to a question about promoting the voice of children in Kent, Elise McQueen said that she recently had a meeting with the youth participation in i-THRIVE Kent Resilience Hub, as one of the organisation's specialisms was developing opportunities for co-production with young people so that they could help to influence the design, delivery and evaluation of the service offered to them.
- 10) The Vice-Chair asked a question about how KCC ensured that the voice of children with disabilities that made it difficult for them to communicate effectively was captured.

- 11) Elise McQueen said that a range of resources was used to communicate with these children. For instance, tablets and sign language were used for those with limited verbal communication.
- a) Alison Farmer said that the KCC's Youth Participation service was carrying out work with young people in special schools to find out and collate their views about what helped them to learn and their sense of belonging.
  - b) Christine McInnes said that the KCC's fortnightly SEND Staff Bulletin was now being circulated. It detailed the work that was carried out by the staff to improve KCC's performance in a number of areas of SEND provision.
- 12) In response to a question about the career advice and support that KCC provided to young people with SEND, Christine McInnes said that last year KCC's career education was extended to include special schools. There were young people with SEND who were currently undertaking supported internships with KCC.
- 13) **APP Area 3 - That parents and carers have a limited role in reviewing and designing services for children and young people with SEND.** A Member asked how many parents and carers had been consulted and involved in reviewing and designing these services.
- a) Alison Farmer explained that work with parent groups was normally carried out through the parent/carer forums, which included representation from Kent PACT.
  - b) Ms Hannon said that Kent PACT was actively increasing its engagement. She added that parent/carers forums needed more funding to enhance their roles as parents were no longer able to commit a significant proportion of their time for free to volunteer in these organisations.
  - c) A Member asked what other channels, alongside Kent PACT, were in place to gather parents' views to inform service design. Christine McInnes explained that while Kent PACT was KCC's formal channel to engage with parents, regular feedback was sought from the parents themselves. Unfortunately, the parents' response received to date was low.
  - d) Sarah Hammond added that there was a rolling parental survey that was included in the regular SEND newsletter that was shared by KCC with parents.
  - e) In reply to a question about the extent to which the needs of young children with SEND were identified and met, Christine McInnes said that over the last year KCC had undertaken an in-depth review of its Early Years service in order to enhance this service. The review's recommendations on how to improve the Early Years system in Kent will be available in January 2024; they will focus on much earlier identification rather than intervention.

14) In reply to a question about the reasons why some of the KPIs for each area of weakness in the APP were blank, Sarah Hammond clarified that they were Health targets which had not been provided yet by partner Health organisations.

a) In reply to a question on whether the elements and actions of the APP that related to partner Health organisations could be discussed at a future meeting of KCC's Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC), the Vice-Chair explained that this required prior consultation with the Manager of KCC's Democratic Services.

b) Mr Love clarified that it was one of the tasks of the Strategic Improvement and Assurance Board (SIAB) to scrutinise the progress made by all partner organisations in the APP.

RESOLVED – The SEND Sub-Committee noted the contents of the report.

15) The Vice-Chair thanked all those present for attending the meeting.