

From: Sue Chandler, Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services

Matt Dunkley CBE, Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education

To: Children's and Young People's Cabinet Committee – 9 March 2021

Subject: Extension of the Specialist Teaching and Learning Service (STLS) Service Level Agreement (SLA)

Decision Number and Title: 21-00023 Extension of the Specialist Teaching and Learning Service (STLS) Service Level Agreement (SLA)

Key decision: Overall service value exceeds £1m and affects more than two Electoral Divisions

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of report: SEND Improvement Board

Future Pathway of report: N/A

Electoral Division: all

Summary: To inform CYPE Cabinet Committee of the phased approach to developing the Specialist Teaching and Learning Service and to seek approval to extend the existing Service Level Agreement.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services on the proposed decision to:

1. Vary the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) within the Service Level Agreement and extend by 12-months from April 2021.

1. Introduction:

- 1.1 The Specialist Teaching and Learning Service (STLS) is a countywide provision which provides advice, training and direct interventions to support settings and schools in improving the outcomes for Children and Young People (CYP) with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).
- 1.2 The Specialist Teaching Service was historically an inhouse provision, which was devolved in 2012 to 12 Special Schools in Kent, one in each district, and two countywide provisions for Sensory impairments and Physical Disabilities.

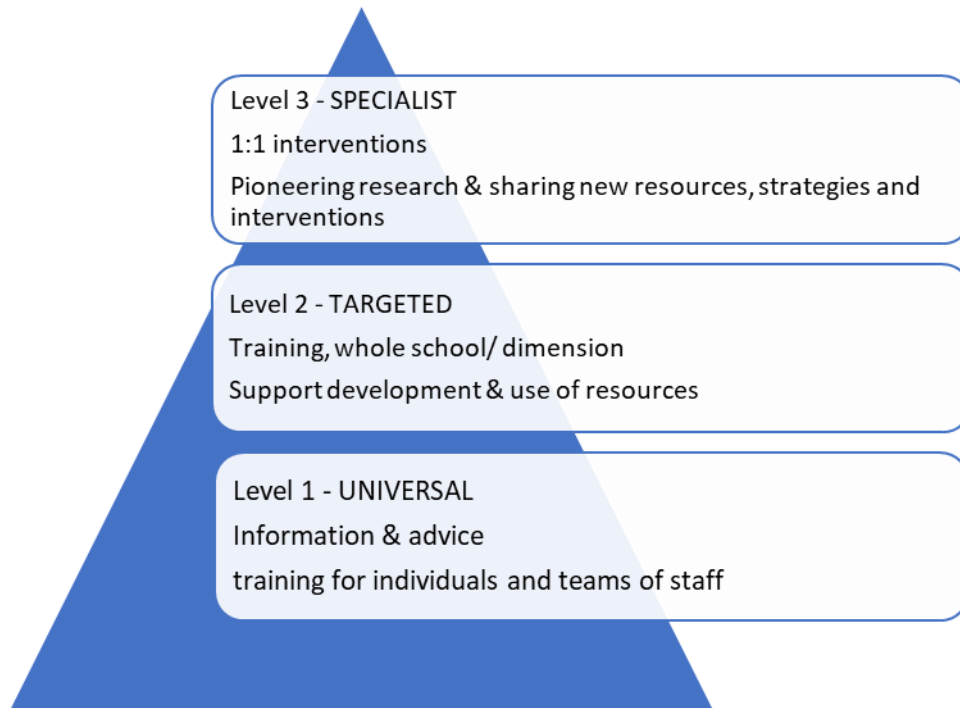
- 1.3 STLS supports mainstream settings and schools with the inclusion and progress of pupils with special educational needs. Each district STLS team has a range of specialist teachers providing support across the following four areas of need:
- Cognition and Learning
 - Communication and Interaction
 - Social, Emotional and Mental Health, and
 - Physical and Sensory
- 1.4 The delivery of the STLS service within the districts is coordinated by Outreach Managers who are located within the relevant Special School and managed by the Special School Headteacher. This includes responsibility for recruitment and management of specialist teachers, other specialist staff and administrative staff.
- 1.5 STLS also provide support to children with SEND in Early Years, carried out through home visits or visits to day nurseries and pre-school provisions.
- 1.6 STLS main point of referral (although not exclusively) is through the opportunities for discussion and decision making at the Local Inclusion Forum Team meetings.
- 1.7 Physical and Sensory STLS are County based teams. They access the 12 STLS team accommodation but are not devolved to the district special schools. Referrals are made directly to the service, rather than through LIFT.
- 1.8 The expectations and quality assurance of the delivery of the service are outlined in a Service Level Agreement (SLA), which will expire at the end of March 2021. This agreement has not seen any significant changes since implementation in 2012.

2. Purpose and Aims

- 2.1 The purpose of the STLS is to promote the successful inclusion and progress of children and young people (CYP) with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), who are experiencing a greater difficulty than their peers in accessing the Early Years and National Curriculum, to achieve their personal best, working in partnership with Local Authority SEN, schools/ Early Years settings, parents/ carers, and other relevant professional agencies.
- 2.2 The aim of the service is to support mainstream Early Years settings and schools to build their capacity and confidence to identify the right children at the right time, deliver high quality provision for CYP with SEND, to improve pupil inclusion, progress and outcomes and to spread the best practice.

3. Current delivery arrangements

- 3.1 The STLS Service delivery takes place across a continuum of universal, targeted and specialist levels, as represented diagrammatically below:



- Level 1 – information & advice
 - Universal advice and support provided as part of the LIFT process, as well as generic training to parents and carers of Children and Young Persons with SEND
 - Information and advice to Early Years (EY) settings and school staff on accessing the curriculum and the use and maintenance of specialist resources and equipment
- Level 2 – training of the wider workforce including teachers, teaching assistants (TA), special educational needs coordinators (SENCOs) and learning support assistants.
 - Generic training
 - Bespoke training
 - Support mainstream schools and EY settings with specific need types on group, class, or whole school approach (such as Team Around School) to compliment (not replicate) existing approaches
- Level 3 – 1:1 intervention
 - One to one support tailored to CYP needs, with or without Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCP) (rather than diagnostic categories), and subject to ongoing evaluation

4. Context - SEND in Kent

- 4.1 Kent has seen an increase in the number of school-aged children and young people identified with SEND over the last two years, with increasing numbers who have an EHCP. This is in line with the national trend.

- 4.2 However, pupils with an EHCP in Kent are less likely to be educated in a mainstream school than would be expected nationally, with many attending special schools, and a significant proportion attending “out of county” provision. The updated [Kent SEND Health Needs Assessment \(June 2020\)](#) provides further analysis of the current education and health needs of children and young people ages 0-25 with SEND.
- 4.3 The joint OfSTED and CQC (Care Quality Commission) inspection of services in 2019 highlighted that too many children and young people with SEND do not get the support they need in Kent, and that a fragmented system has created too many opportunities for the needs of these children to be missed. The SEND Written Statement of Action forms part of Kent’s response to the inspection.
- 4.4 Following the inspection, the SEND Improvement Board was set up to have a strategic overview of services and drive the operational improvements needed to address each area of significant weakness.
- 4.5 The Improvement Board established five Workstreams to manage each identified area. The impact of the Specialist Teaching and Learning Service is measured against the activities of “Workstream B”, the outcomes of which are:
- Improved inclusion and quality of SEND provision in schools.
 - CYP with SEND have their needs successfully met.
 - School staff have the SEND knowledge and skills to be able to meet the needs of all CYP with SEND.
- 4.6 To achieve the above outcomes, a suite of commissioning activity is in progress, as part of a whole school inclusive approach to education, to support the inclusion of all CYP with SEND in Kent. These activities are designed to complement and build on the Inclusion Statement and the new Mainstream Core Standards (published in January 2021), and Kent’s strategy for CYP with SEND (in consultation 2 December 2020 to 4 February 2021).
- 4.7 The above whole system map of interventions provided for CYP with SEND are symbiotic. The STLS operates within this landscape. To achieve best value, it is necessary to understand the impact of these positive interventions, both existing and in development.

5. STLS Service Review

- 5.1 A comprehensive review of the STLS provision was undertaken with the SLA holding schools between October and November 2020.
- 5.2 The review identified the following areas as those that are most valued and considered as its strength:
- Solution focussed LIFT process embedded in some districts
 - Networking with linked professionals, such as Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators (SENCOs), Provision Evaluation Officers (PEOs) and Inclusion Attendance Advisors (IAA)

- Strong partnerships and collaborative relationships between districts
- Flexible offer to schools and settings to meet local need
- Parental trust and engagement
- Some districts have developed innovative approaches to transition planning and outcomes at different phases of education. The success of these approaches is yet to be tested to assess sustainability.

5.3 The review also identified areas requiring improvement. These included:

- Complex governance arrangements
- Capacity and funding issues
- Lack of consistency and equity of offer across Kent
- Access to other resources, particularly those commissioned by the NHS
- Clarity of roles and responsibilities of the wider workforce within SEND
- Accountability versus responsibility in relation to inclusive practice and academic achievement
- Lack of clarity of current KPIs in relation to the impact of the service on CYP with SEND.

6. Schools Satisfaction Feedback Survey

- 6.1 As part of Kent County Council's commitment to continuous improvement, identification of the most effective practice and the transparency of the use of funding, the district work of the Local Inclusion Forum Teams (LIFT) monitors the activity of the district LIFT meetings and invites schools to complete a satisfaction feedback questionnaire annually, at the end of the academic year.
- 6.2 Out of the 121 responses to the LIFT feedback questionnaire, 96% of the schools were satisfied with the overall quality of service received from the LIFT during the 2018/19 academic year, with 82% of schools satisfied with the allocation of specialist support to individual pupils at the LIFT meetings.
- 6.3 The report for 2019/20 has not yet been published, but the raw data indicates a similarly high level of satisfaction.

7. Impact of COVID

- 7.1 The STLS service has completely diversified the way in which it has worked during the pandemic. In developing the pandemic offer Head teachers, SENCOs, families and students have been consulted to make sure that what is offered matches the priority needs of the stakeholders.
- 7.2 Development and enhancement of online platforms and technology to offer virtual training and advice, as well as face to face support to the most vulnerable children and young people, whenever required.
- 7.3 Development of a SENCO Wellbeing offer to support the front-line staff in relation to their mental health and wellbeing during the pandemic.
- 7.4 Sharing resources for recovery curriculum (prepared by STLS and the Kent Educational Psychology Service) on a regular basis to schools, as well as building a resource bank for SEND remote learning activities.

8. Next steps

- 8.1 With consideration to the multiplicity of scheduled SEN activities, both systemic and commissioned, a phased approach to renewal of the STLS is recommended to ensure best outcomes will be achieved for CYP with SEND.
- 8.2 **Phase 1** – Variation and extension of the STLS SLA for one year from April 2021. A collaborative working partnership has already begun to review the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) with STLS leads, which will go through the governance approval of SEN management, Kent Association of Head Teachers (KAH) Area Boards and the Kent Special Educational Needs Trust (KSENT), prior to commencement of the SLAs from April 2021.

The impact of the service will be measured against the Children and Young People’s Outcomes Framework (shown below), which was developed with families and reflects what children and young people and their families told us was important to them.

In the context of this service, the outcomes can be measured, using both qualitative and quantitative data. For instance, measuring increased satisfaction of parents/pupils with direct interventions or an increase in parents’ confidence in the school meeting pupil needs using surveys, at various phases to ensure the support provided is the right one and sustained.



- 8.3 **Phase 2** – From April 2021, a programme of wider stakeholder engagement will be planned, including CYP with SEND and their families, as well as the mainstream schools and settings. Information sharing with and views of CYP

with SEND and their families will be integral to every level, to inform the effectiveness of the intervention and ongoing service improvement of the STLS.

During the first quarter of the new financial year, further information will be gathered based on Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), SEN systems, Schools/Settings, to identify any potential gaps in the provision and identify opportunities/ interdependencies/ overlaps in the system across the Inclusion work and other commissioning activities.

STLS support and interventions will be closely linked to the settings or school's levels of intervention and work collaboratively with Kent County Council SEN team and other key professionals to identify and set priorities to target the service for optimum impact.

- 8.4 Sensory STLS – is the only specialist service with a statutory function and is closely linked to the Statutory Social Work function and the Habitation Service provided by Kent Association for the Blind (KAB). Work is in progress to develop a more holistic sensory offer to ensure the right support is provided at the earliest opportunity.
- 8.5 Physical Disability STLS – Future delivery model needs further exploration to identify what the current offer is and whether better outcomes are achievable if the service is aligned to another part of the business.

9. Financial Implications

- 9.1 The current budget for the STLS is £7.8m per annum. This budget is funded from the High Needs Block of the Dedicated Schools Grant.

10. Legal implications

- 10.1 The Specialist Teaching and Learning Service operates within a framework of national legislation and local strategies and standards.
- 10.2 The Children and Families Act 2014 and SEND Code of Practice 2015 set out the responsibility to improve services, life chances and choices for vulnerable children and to support families. The Act states that “where a pupil continues to make less than expected progress, despite evidence-based support and interventions that are matched to the pupil’s area of need, the school should consider involving specialists.
- 10.3 Schools also have a range of duties under the Equalities Act 2010, including duties relating to disability.
- 10.4 Sensory STLS is the only service with a statutory function.

11. Equalities implications

- 11.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) screening has been carried out. It identified a low adverse equality impact rating. A full EQIA will be undertaken as part of the new service development.

12. Other corporate implications

12.1 This service falls within the responsibility of the Special Educational Needs Division within the Children, Young People and Education Directorate, however it is anticipated there will be positive implications to the Education Directorate too.

13. Governance

13.1 Overall budget and responsibility sits within the Children and Young People's Directorate, with accountability falling to Matt Dunkley Corporate Director of CYPE and Mark Walker, Director of Special Educational Needs and Disabled Children and Young People.

14. Alternatives considered

14.1 Alternative options considered are set out in the table below, together with associated risks and benefits for each option.

14.2 From the options listed below, option 4 is recommended.

Option	Risks	Benefits
Option 1 - Do Nothing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The SLA will expire at the end of March 2021. The service will discontinue.• Sensory STLS provides a statutory function on behalf of the Local Authority (LA), discontinuation of which means the LA is not in compliance with its statutory duties.• Adverse impact on the Local Offer, where a significant proportion of the training is delivered by the STLS• LIFT offers a multiagency collaborative approach that enables schools and settings to identify the correct pathway to support CYP with SEND, thereby increasing their opportunities to be supported in mainstream settings as far as possible. Loss of this will be of great detriment to schools and settings.• Adverse impact in addressing the outcomes for CYP with	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Financial saving of £7.8M

	<p>SEND, as identified in the WSoA.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential public and political fallout of withdrawal of the provision, with no alternative plans in place. • Loss of outreach specialist support will result in an increase in requests in statutory assessments for Education Health and Care Plans (EHCP) 	
<p>Option 2 - Extend the SLA without variation to KPIs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The current SLA does not identify outcomes, and some of the KPIs are too broad for an effective measure of impact, service improvement or development • The current LIFT activity data is limited in its scope to address identified areas of need and improvement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuation of status quo
<p>Option 3 – Variation of KPIs and 6 month Extension of SLA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient time to undertake a truly collaborative approach to service improvement and development with the voice of children and young people and their families and the wider key stakeholders (mainstream schools and settings) missing, as an integral part of the process. • Wider SEND/ Inclusion activities will not have been implemented in time and therefore impacts & benefits not yet realised • The SEND Organisational Development work will not have been completed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited impact in addressing some of the immediate challenges, as identified through the service review • Limited alignment with aspects of the wider SEND commissioning activity that have been implemented by September 2021.
<p>Option 4 - Variation of KPIs and 12 month Extension of SLA (recommended)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service provision will remain the same in the interim period, pending extensive stakeholder engagement and co-production to design and develop the new service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised KPIs inline with the CYP Outcomes Framework will enable a more robust and meaningful measure of the impact of provision • A longer extension of 12 months will allow sufficient time to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ understand the impact of the current provision

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ undertake a full options appraisal ➤ co-produce the new service specification in collaboration with all key partners including parents/carers, and young people to create substantiable improvements in the STLS provision and transform Kent's SEND offer. • Achieve the outcomes set out in WSoA • Better value for money and return on investment with alignment of all related SEND activities
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15. Conclusions

- 15.1 The STLS is one of the pillars of inclusive practice in Kent, supporting Early Years settings and schools in a positive way to build their capacity and confidence to proactively engage with and support CYP with SEND within their settings, at an early stage. Feedback from schools and settings from 2018/19, as well as the commissioning review of the service in 2020, indicate a high level of confidence in the provision, although the review has also highlighted areas for improvement.
- 15.2 An extension of the SLA for one year, with more focused KPIs, will enable a comprehensive exploration of options as part of a commissioning plan, to improve and develop the service collaboratively with all key stakeholders, and ensure any future model is aligned with and complements the wider SEN inclusive practice across Kent.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services on the proposed decision to:

1. Vary the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) within the Service Level Agreement and extend by 12-months from April 2021.

16. Background Documents

16.1 The documents listed below can be used to gain a better understanding of the context in which this service operates.

- [STLS Prospectus 2012](#)
- [SEN Mainstream Core Standards 2021](#)
- [Best Practice Guidance for the Early Years](#)
- [Kent SEND Strategy 2021 - 2024](#)
- [Kent Inclusion Statement](#)
- [Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2020 to 2024](#)
- [SEND Local Offer](#)
- [Written Statement of Action](#)

17. Contact details

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