

## Kent County Council response to the public consultation on proposed changes the designation and admission guidance for Kent's special schools and a school-to-school support model.

The public consultation ran from 19 June 2024 to 14 August 2024. 1,351 responses were received to the consultation and this document provides KCC's response to the feedback we received. The consultation report, which presents the analysis of the consultation responses, is available to read on the consultation webpage: [Special Schools Review: proposed changes to designations and admissions guidance | Let's talk Kent](#).

The purpose of the consultation was to gain further feedback on a range of proposals in relation to the revised special school model, with a focus on ensuring the efficient use of resources for children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans (“**EHCPs**”). The continued aim of the review is that KCC plans for and provides school places for children and young people with severe and complex special educational needs that is suitable and accessible, in or near to their local community to support them in preparation for independence in adulthood.

This is consistent with KCC's statutory duties, including its duty to plan sufficient school places for all children with special educational needs and disabilities (“**SEND**”). As part of its programme to transform SEND provision across the county, KCC has planned special education provision for children across mainstream schools, specialist resource provision in mainstream schools (“**SRPs**”), and special schools.

The aim of planning special school places for children and young people with severe and complex special educational needs must be viewed alongside the ongoing work to improve educational provision for all children and young people with SEND.

In mainstream schools this is being addressed through the Countywide Approach to Inclusion, and by having clear and defined expectations for supporting children with SEND through KCC's Mainstream Core Standards. A proposed new school-to-school support model is also intended to improve the SEN provision for children attending mainstream schools. In SRPs, places have been planned for children with special educational needs who have an Education, Health and Care Plan (“**EHCP**”), can potentially follow a mainstream curriculum with reasonable adjustments and/or adaptations and would be able to engage in some learning and or socialisation in a mainstream environment during their school career.

The initial recommendations presented to CYPE Cabinet Committee have been further developed following an analysis of the public consultation feedback

The table below shows the most frequently mentioned comments or concerns, with details of how KCC intends to take the comments on board and respond to any concerns. There are three main approaches (\*shown in column four) to be taken to the majority of comments raised:

1. Addressing misunderstandings: We've responded directly to any concerns based on misconceptions or misunderstandings.
2. Refining proposals: We have used your comments on the proposed changes to further refine and develop current and future proposals as part of the whole special school review.
3. Identifying gaps: Where comments or concerns have been given on areas which have already been identified as being a gap in provision by KCC and work is already underway with continued input from stakeholders.

<b>Section 1: Special school expectation statement</b>			
<b>Category of comment / concern</b>	<b>% of consultees answering</b>	<b>KCC Response</b>	<b>Approach*</b>
1.1 Every child should be planned for, complex or lower level / all disabilities / those with EHCPs but lower level should be planned for / in a special setting / every child has the right to a suitable education that meets their individual needs.	36%	<p>This is recognised. KCC is ensuring that all children and young people with SEND, across all levels of need, are being carefully planned for. A key focus of the Special School Review is to ensure KCC plans special school places for local children and young people with severe and complex needs, for them to have access to suitable education as close to their community as possible.</p> <p>In addition to this, KCC has identified a need to plan for the continuum of needs and provision to ensure all children and young people have access</p>	1 & 3

		<p>to suitable education. This is part of the broader SEND system transformation programme, in which KCC is working with mainstream schools to develop local collective responsibility for children with SEND, to improve inclusive education in all mainstream schools. KCC has also reviewed the SRPs that are provided across some mainstream schools and has identified gaps, which it has a plan to address.</p>	
<p>1.2 Perception that mainstream schools are not set up to support SEND children - e.g. the resources, the building / environment, classrooms, class sizes, number of pupils.</p>	<p>29%</p>	<p>While there are many examples of mainstream schools across Kent that have successfully made the necessary adaptations to ensure children and young people with SEND make good progress and achieve positive outcomes, KCC recognises that this level of support is not consistent throughout the county, which can lead to inequities in provision and a lack of parental confidence.</p> <p>As part of our ongoing work, KCC is working with mainstream schools to develop a shared understanding of the continuum of needs of children and young people with special educational needs and the expectations of provisions. These efforts are focused on strengthening local provision and ensuring that mainstream schools work in partnership to meet a wide range of needs.</p>	<p>1&amp;3</p>

<p>1.3 Children's needs do not need to be severe / complex to be unable to cope in mainstream schools (e.g. sensory overload, MLD, those that mask / autistic / ADHD).</p>	<p>21%</p>	<p>This is recognised. Mainstream schools can be adapted to provide education for children and young people with a wide range of needs, but we know the current provision across Kent is inconsistent. Given the growing prevalence of children and young people who are neurodivergent, including those who may have autism and ADHD, KCC believes that all mainstream schools should be able to provide education for these children and young people where it is suitable. Work in this area is ongoing with the continued aim to improve the consistency of provision across all mainstream schools in the County. KCC want to shine a spotlight on the mainstream schools which are effectively meeting the needs for their pupils in this area and share their successful practices and strategies with other mainstream schools. The proposed new school-to-school-model of support will also help share the strategies and experience held in special schools across the wider education sector.</p> <p>We have identified that there are gaps in the SRPs which provide the opportunity to access specialist education in a mainstream environment. Plans are in place to address these gaps, particularly in secondary schools and specific</p>	<p>3</p>
--	------------	---	----------

		<p>districts; these developments will be taken forward from 2026.</p> <p>It is KCC's view that we need to be ambitious for children and young people with SEND, providing pathways for them in mainstream schools that helps them develop skills and strategies for independence in adulthood, whilst planning special school places for children and young people with severe and complex special educational needs. This approach allows children to grow alongside their peers in their local communities.</p>	
<p>1.4 Children with severe and / or complex needs should be in a specialist school setting / but not at detriment to others / why would we not agree with this.</p>	<p>19%</p>	<p>KCC agree that children and young people with severe and complex needs benefit from special school places where they can receive tailored support and resources that are not available in mainstream schools. KCC's approach is to ensure that these placements are made where they are suitable and most appropriate for the child or young person's individual needs, whilst also maintaining a focus on the overall equity of the educational system in Kent.</p> <p>KCC's work extends beyond special schools, aiming to improve the inclusion of children and young people with SEND in mainstream schools. KCC must also ensure that mainstream schools are supporting children and young people with varying levels of SEND. KCC is addressing this</p>	<p>1&amp;3</p>

		through several key projects including the Continuum of Needs and Provision, the Communities of Schools and the SRP Review.	
1.5 Mainstream schoolteachers / teaching assistants are not trained or experienced to support or cope with children with special needs.	18%	<p>The recommendation for a school-to-school support model will be built on the specialist expertise held by special school staff, enabling the sharing of knowledge and best practice with their mainstream colleagues. This aligns with the national direction of travel. While many mainstream school staff are already trained and experienced in supporting children and young people with SEND, KCC agrees that further work is required in this area to build on the substantial amount of training already provided for mainstream school staff which includes Autism Education Trust training, Inclusive Leaders of Education, Attention Autism and Nurture UK.</p> <p>As part of the Communities of Schools, KCC is developing a detailed implementation plan in collaboration with schools. This plan will outline the necessary training needed to further the skills and knowledge of staff, ensuring they are fully equipped to meet the diverse needs of children and young people with SEND. Communities of Schools will be implemented from September 2025.</p>	1&3
1.6 Some children fall between the metrics: special schools can't accept them, and mainstream schools can't support / many will be in limbo and unsupported / they must not be	15%	The Special School Review is a key element of the broader SEND transformation programme. This on-going work includes exploring options for improving SRPs across the county as part of the	3

<p>forgotten / will exclude certain cohorts, including those with physical disabilities.</p>		<p>SRP Review and further work reviewing the pathway between alternative provision and mainstream schools. As part of the Communities of Schools, schools will work together to ensure that the needs of children and young people in their area are effectively addressed.</p> <p>Additionally, KCC has prepared an Accessibility Strategy which sets out how the local authority and its maintained schools currently ensure education is accessible for pupils with SEND. It sets out the steps we plan to take to increase access to the school curriculum, how we will improve the physical environment so that accessibility is not a barrier to disabled pupils or those with SEND, and how we will improve the delivery of information to disabled pupils which is readily available to those who are not disabled.</p>	
<b>Section 2: Proposed designation and admission guidance</b>			
<b>Category of comment / concern</b>	<b>% of consultees answering</b>	<b>KCC Response</b>	<b>Approach*</b>
<p>2.1 Mainstream schools cannot support SEN children / my child will not cope in mainstream setting: not just about learning needs / being academically able / high functioning: anxiety / communication / interaction / sensory / environmental / disabilities / physical / class sizes.</p>	<p>34%</p>	<p>All placements for children and young people are made on an individual, case by case basis, to make the provision necessary to meet the child's needs. KCC is required to secure placements that are suitable for children, including complying with</p>	<p>1&amp;3</p>

		<p>parental preferences for school placements unless a statutory exception applies.</p> <p>KCC and NHS England have recognised the necessity for a new approach to early intervention for children and young people who are neurodivergent in mainstream schools. KCC and NHS England are part of the national programme, Partnerships for Inclusion of Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS). Learning will be taken from that programme and will be applied more widely across Kent in the future.</p> <p>KCC recognise that many respondents to the special school review public consultation lack confidence that children and young people with neurodiverse needs can thrive or have their needs met in a mainstream school. To address this, we are working with Kent PACT to shape the future provisions for these children and young people in mainstream schools. These changes would be put in place at least a year before any changes were to be made to the type of SEN provided for at any special school.</p>	
2.2 Some children will fall through the net / not meet criteria / It seems to only cater for the most severe / profound, it should be for all SEND	27%	As answered in section 1.1	1 & 3



children / including those with less complex needs / those with challenging needs.			
2.3 Children will be impacted if removed from special setting / there for a reason / will impact their wellbeing / mental health / education / life chances / their future.	23%	If the proposed changes from this consultation are agreed, they would apply to admissions from September 2026 and would apply only to children and young people entering a special school placement from that date onward. The changes would be introduced gradually, year on year. Children already enrolled in special schools will continue to attend their current schools, with the process for their continued attendance remaining unchanged. Their needs and the suitability of their school placement will continue to be reviewed and considered through the annual review of their EHCP, as it does now.	1
2.4 Removal of Communication and Interaction; Physically Disabled, Complex Medical Needs - cannot just remove 2 designations, what happens to those children, they cannot be supported in mainstream setting, e.g. C&I, PD.	17%	<p>The proposed change to designations and admission guidance across the special schools is intended to improve the accessibility of support across the county. This is by providing local special school access for children and young people in their local communities, reducing the need of significant travel. Following the consultation there has been development on the proposed admission guidance for the proposed designation of Neurodivergent and Learning Difficulties.</p> <p>Currently there is only one school catering to children with physical disabilities and complex medical needs; there are children and young</p>	1,2 &3

		<p>people across the county with those needs which limits access for many children and young people unless they live nearby or can attend as residential students. This precludes a significant number of children and young people from attending the school. The children and young people that have been precluded from accessing this one school have had their needs met in Profound, Severe, Complex Need (PSCN) schools closer to where they live. The intention of broadening this designation is that all children and young people with severe and complex special educational needs can attend a school that is local or as near as possible to their local community.</p> <p>With regards to children and young people currently admitted to Communication and Interaction (C&amp;I) schools, current admissions guidance used by these schools excludes those who are not attaining within two years of their chronological age. This has resulted in situations where KCC is providing an education for a child or young person in a special school who is attaining within the expected age range and KCC considers could suitably be educated alongside peers in mainstream schools. Meanwhile other children and young people with severe and complex special educational needs who require an adapted</p>	
--	--	---	--

		<p>curriculum beyond which can be provided at a mainstream school are unable to access a special school placement or have been placed in a mainstream school.</p> <p>KCC is undertaking an extensive program to establish a common understanding of the continuum of needs and provision for children with SEND across all schools in the county. KCC will make suitable provision for all children and young people with SEN, including by planning special school placements for children and young people with severe and complex needs in special schools, and ensuring that those who are attaining within the range expected for their age can receive suitable and appropriate education in mainstream settings and/or SRPs, adapted where necessary.</p>	
<p>2.5 Special schools (e.g. Valence) provide unique settings, for specific disabilities and needs, changing their designation will mean their specialism will be diluted / children will be affected / they won't be able to support all of the children if the designations are widened / OFSTED have rated the SEND provision as good / outstanding so they need to remain.</p>	<p>12%</p>	<p>There is a need for greater equity across the education system.</p> <p>KCC has invested in supporting children and young people with physical disabilities across all schools through their specialist teaching and learning service for physical disabilities.</p> <p>There is expertise across the entire special school system in relation to physical disabilities and complex medical needs. Across the county there are children and young people with physical</p>	<p>1 &amp; 3</p>

		<p>disabilities and complex medical needs in all of the PSCN schools. Children and young people should be able to go to their local school and that school should have the skills and expertise needed to meet their needs.</p> <p>Teaching staff at special schools have valuable expertise in curriculum adaptation and monitoring the progress of children and young people with SEND. If special schools work together, they can gain knowledge about specific interventions, though their skills in curriculum adaptation are generally transferable to different groups of children and young people. The key areas of expertise involve how to adapt the curriculum, assess individual needs and monitor progress.</p> <p>KCC expects special schools to work together, to develop their knowledge and skills on specific interventions they may or may not have experience of previously. This aligns with the broader approach of partnership working between schools. This model is intended to enable staff in both special and mainstream schools to develop the skills and expertise that is right for their school.</p>	
<p>2.6 Oversimplifying complex needs / cannot umbrella them under one term (A child with: C&amp;I does not mean they have severe &amp; complex needs; a PD child may also have complex medical</p>	<p>12%</p>	<p>KCC follows the guidance of the Code of Practice. Each child or young person's unique needs are carefully considered through the Education Health and Care needs assessment process and when</p>	<p>1&amp;3</p>

<p>needs; can be neurodivergent but have array of needs; complex physical is not the same as complex medical; having severe and complex needs does not mean they also have learning difficulties etc).</p>		<p>determining the placement to name in Section I of an EHCP. We are committed to our continued development of the Continuum of Needs and Provision to improve clarity and ensure a shared understanding between parent/carers, schools, and Local Authority staff. We recognise that further engagement is needed to clearly communicate the specific support available to children and young people with SEND. A collaborative approach will continue to take place with this work with key stakeholders.</p>	
<b>3. Proposed Implementation</b>			
<b>Category of comment / concern</b>	<b>% of consultees answering</b>	<b>KCC Response</b>	<b>Approach*</b>
<p>3.1 Children must not be disrupted / moved from their current specialist setting / will really struggle if transitioned to mainstream schools / cause trauma / anxiety / they're there for a reason.</p>	<p>23%</p>	<p>As answered in section 2.3</p>	<p>1</p>
<p>3.2 Citing the changes must not go ahead / do not agree to any of this.</p>	<p>22%</p>	<p>KCC acknowledges that the special school sector underwent significant changes in 2001 as a result of the previous Special School Review. Although the changes implemented following the previous review were suitable for that time, there is now a need to review and plan for the future. Since the previous review there have been a number of ad hoc changes to special schools which have led to inequity and variability in the access that parents and children and young people have to specialist places across the county. KCC need to plan for</p>	<p>1,2 &amp; 3</p>

		<p>there to be equitable access to specialist education taking account of population changes and the change in pattern of children and young people's special educational needs. Establishing a foundational system capable of adapting to these challenges is essential to consistently meet the diverse needs of children and young people in Kent.</p> <p>KCC will continue to collaborate with parent and carer groups, as well as special school communities, to provide timely information and improve communication. Feedback throughout the consultation period has highlighted the need for more open and direct dialogue between KCC and our special school communities, and KCC is now developing a more regular and formal engagement process to address this need.</p>	
<p>3.3 Belief there is not enough time to get everything in place / huge changes to settings / infrastructure / resources / recruitment / training</p>	<p>13%</p>	<p>KCC acknowledges that there is change being proposed across the SEND educational sector. However, these changes across the transformational projects and reviews outlined are being planned in a coordinated manner with projects aligned to implement the necessary adjustments at the appropriate time. This strategic system wide approach ensures that the transition is managed effectively and that improvements are made in a timely organised way. If KCC's</p>	<p>1,2&amp;3</p>

		proposals are approved in due course, an implementation plan for any changes arising from the special school review will be developed further in partnership with schools. KCC is keen to work with parents of children and young people in special schools and special school leaders.	
3.4 Perceptions that the annual review cannot be an excuse to place children in a mainstream setting / underhand way of moving children to a mainstream setting / if they're doing well it's because they're in the right setting.	12%	As answered in section 2.3	1
<b>4. Proposed school-to-school model of support</b>			
<b>Category of comment / concern</b>	<b>% of consultees answering</b>	<b>KCC Response</b>	<b>Approach*</b>
4.1 Lack of teacher resource / teacher time: will need additional resources / stretched as is / staff will not be able to do this in addition to current roles / not at detriment to their day duties (both SEN and mainstream) / teachers already under huge pressure / already struggling with staff recruitment and retention / will not be able to manage a class of 30 if one SEN child needs attention / all children will lose out / would need to be more 1-2-1 support.	36%	<p>Some special schools in Kent are already effectively collaborating with their mainstream school colleagues to share knowledge and expertise. KCC aims to build on this successful practice by expanding this framework to include all special and mainstream schools.</p> <p>The proposed model of school-to-school support compliments and will build on the local communities of schools and professional resources associated with these communities as these develop and evolve from September 2025 as part of the Communities of Schools Model (previously termed the Locality Model for Special Educational Needs Inclusion).</p>	1,2& 3

<p>4.2 There's a reason children are in a specialist setting, they must stay there / build more special schools / mainstream schools cannot provide this support.</p>	<p>23%</p>	<p>A need for additional special school places to address population growth in specific areas of Kent was identified leading to successful bids to the Department for Education (DfE) under the Safety Valve agreement. As a result, the following new special schools are due to open:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Swanley Free Special School: Designated for pupils with PSCN, providing 250 places. Initial proposed opening: September 2026, but confirmation of opening date is awaited.</li> <li>• Whitstable Free Special School: Designated for pupils with PSCN, providing 120 places. Initial proposed opening: September 2026, but confirmation of opening date is awaited.</li> <li>• Estuary (formerly Nore) Academy: Designated for pupils with Social, Emotional, and Mental Health (SEMH) needs, providing 120 places. Proposed opening: January 2025.</li> </ul> <p>This alone is not sufficient to address the issues and challenges detailed in the consultation. KCC has developed the proposed changes to work alongside the additional special school places.</p>	<p>1&amp;2</p>
<p>4.3 There would need to be SEN trained staff in mainstream settings / robust training, e.g. Attention Autism is not sufficient / it takes years to train staff in SEN.</p>	<p>20%</p>	<p>As answered in section 1.5</p>	<p>1&amp;3</p>
<p>4.4 Funding: where is the funding for this? This will need funding / investment.</p>	<p>19%</p>	<p>KCC recognises that some special schools are already providing support to their mainstream peers within their current budgets. The feedback from mainstream schools who have received this</p>	<p>1&amp;2</p>



		support has been positive. It is KCC's intention to build on this approach and develop it further working in collaboration with schools across the mainstream and special sector.	
<b>5. Any comments about suggested designations for specific special schools</b>			
<b>Category of comment / concern</b>	<b>% of consultees answering</b>	<b>KCC Response</b>	<b>Approach*</b>
5.1 Special schools and teacher expertise are tailored to specific SEND needs: perceptions that changing their designation will dilute the specialism / will be unable to continue to deliver successful outcomes / limits the offer.	26%	As answered in section 2.5	1&3
5.2 Disagree with the changes to designations / deeply concerned about these changes.	17%	As answered in section 3.2	1,2 & 3
5.3 Lack of consultation / co-design with schools, parents, children, teachers, experts / listen/ lack of detail and evidence.	17%	Since the inception of the special school review in November 2022, a variety of methods have been used to collect views and feedback on key issues and potential solutions from key stakeholders including special and mainstream schools, parent/carers and children and young people with SEND. This process has enabled us to better understand the current situation of the special school sector and the needs of children and young people requiring special school support in Kent. A range of local and national data sources have been used to inform the proposed changes are based on evidence and input from stakeholders. KCC is continuing to engage with stakeholders to inform future developments and will continue to do so over the period of implementation.	1

		This consultation is a key step in our ongoing journey to gather and review feedback from key stakeholders and this has been used to develop the proposed changes and implementation plan to the special school model	
5.4 All SEN children have a right to an education that meets their needs, not just those you deem more complex / whole cohorts of children will be placed in settings unsuitable for them.	17%	As answered in section 1.1	1&3
5.5 How will this be funded? Special schools have received no info on how they'll be funded. This will need huge funding.	15%	<p>Special school funding was last reviewed in 2010. KCC acknowledged the model needed updating and the special school review has taken the feedback from stakeholders to inform a set of principles.</p> <p>The work carried out with schools across the sector to develop the Continuum of Needs and Provision will inform a tariff model which will be consulted on through Schools Forum. This process will allow all schools to have the opportunity to give their views.</p>	1&3
<b>6. Any other comments about proposed changes</b>			
6.1 Proposed changes are not about the children / proposals are failing the children / cruel.	30%	All children and young people are at the heart of KCC's plans for both the special school review and wider elements of the SEND transformation programme. KCC aims to support them in achieving their potential while living healthy and safe lives ensuring they feel seen and included. A key focus is on preparing all children and young people for adulthood within or close to their communities.	1

6.2 Mainstream schools cannot support these children: it's the whole infrastructure: (not just teachers): class sizes, sensory, disabled access, uniform regulations, breakout rooms, pastoral care suites.	21%	As answered in section 2.1	1&3
6.3 Children in specialist schools are there for a reason / they will not cope if moved to a mainstream school.	20%	As answered in section 2.3	1
6.4 This is about budget / funding cuts / safety-valve is a cost-cutting exercise.	17%	The special school review is an important part of KCC's efforts within the Safety Valve Programme to stabilise the Local Authorities financial situation. A key focus is reducing KCC's dependence on the independent private sector to generate the necessary savings. However, the special school review goes beyond this, it also seeks to address deeper structural issues in the planning and organisation of KCC's special education provision which hasn't been updated since 2001. Through the special school review KCC aims to ensure equitable access to SEND provision that meets the needs of all children and young people who need it, including by planning special school placements for children and young people with severe and complex SEND that is in or near to their local communities. This requires Kent's special school education system, and mainstream SEND provision, to evolve to meet the current and future needs of children and young people with SEND.	1
6.5 Placing SEND children in mainstream setting will affect their well-being / mental health / traumatise them.	17%	When a child has an EHCP each case is looked at on the basis of their individual needs and circumstances, and in accordance with the	1

		<p>statutory scheme. That will continue to be the case as KCC's special educational needs provision evolves.</p> <p>Not all children and young people with SEND need to attend special schools to access a suitable education. Children and young people with SEND are currently placed in mainstream schools in Kent, and these schools adapt their curriculum to support the inclusion of SEND students. KCC acknowledges that this has not always been the experience for all children and young people with SEND in the county. The changes proposed as part of the Special School Review, along with the Continuum of Need and Provision, the Communities of School Model (previously termed the Locality Model for Special Educational Needs Inclusion), the SRP Review, Kent Sufficiency Plan, and Accessibility Strategy, are aimed at improving the equity and quality of provision for all children and young people with SEND, including in mainstream schools.</p>	
--	--	--	--

## Conclusion

### *Further information and next steps*

An issue has been raised by representatives of an Academy Trust that by proceeding with the proposed designations, Kent County Council may be discriminating against young people with special educational needs who are studying for GCSEs. KCC does not consider that our proposals discriminate against children and young people with SEN who are studying for GCSEs, as KCC believes young people with an EHCP will be able to appropriately do so in improved and suitable mainstream and SRP settings, with adaptations as necessary. This approach aligns with KCC's broader strategic aims and ensures adequate support is available

before the proposed changes to the special school sector would be implemented. This will allow planning for special school placements for children and young people with severe and complex needs.

During the academic year 2023/24 head teachers of mainstream schools were invited to sessions lead by a mainstream senior school leader working in partnership with KCC to establish the range of needs that mainstream schools currently provide education for to inform the development of a different approach to meeting children's needs through a continuum of provision and a commitment to local collective responsibility for children with SEND within the financial resources available.

As part of this ongoing process, scheduled to conclude in spring 2025, KCC discovered considerable variation in how schools interpret and define levels of special educational need. Most schools involved in the review had differing perspectives on what constitutes a severe or complex special educational need. Therefore, KCC, in collaboration with schools across mainstream, SRP, and special school sectors, shifted its focus to curriculum adaptation levels at each provision type, assessing whether each provision type can efficiently support an adapted curriculum.

What became apparent during the meetings between Local Authority officers and schools was that all mainstream schools are providing education for children with autism. Many mainstream schools are providing education for children whose learning is significantly more delayed than the two-year gap currently specified for the admission of children to some special schools and doing so effectively, making an efficient use of the resources available and enabling students to make progress towards adulthood with peers in

We note that the consultation highlighted a lack of confidence among parents and carers of children and young people with autism regarding the special educational needs system. To work towards resolving this we recognise the importance of increasing our engagement with this group of parents and carers. We will look to work with them in the future to clarify existing pathways, involve them in our proposed developments and demonstrate how their feedback is incorporated into KCC's planning. The concerns raised about provision available for children and young people that are Neurodivergent and/or Autistic highlights the need for a cohesive strategy that integrates our initiatives with existing provisions from NHS partners. KCC is committed to developing a clearer, more consistent neurodevelopmental pathway, ensuring families have a clear understanding of available resources and support in their local community.

Following full analysis of the consultation feedback, we propose to move to the next stage of KCC's decision-making process for changes to the SEND designation (i.e. the type of SEN provision made) and accompanying admissions guidance for particular special schools in Kent to be considered.

The full analysis, response and next steps are being taken to the Children, Young People, and Education Cabinet Committee in November 2024 for discussion and comment before a decision is taken by the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills in relation to the proposed changes.