

EQIA Submission – ID Number

Section A

EQIA Title

Specialist Teaching and Learning Service Funding and provider change

Responsible Officer

Barbara Van Minnen - CY CC

Approved by (Note: approval of this EqIA must be completed within the EqIA App)

Christy Holden - CY CC

Type of Activity

Service Change

No

Service Redesign

Service Redesign

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

Education and SEND

Responsible Head of Service

Christy Holden - CY CC

Responsible Director

Christine McInnes - CY EPA

Aims and Objectives

A significant transformation program is underway to enhance how the Council and its partners support children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in Kent. Proposals like the Communities of Schools model aim to increase school involvement in decision-making regarding the utilisation of local resources for inclusion and the allocation of the High Needs Funding budget.

As part of this transformation, a public consultation titled "Specialist Teaching and Learning Service (STLS) and SEND Transformation in Kent" was held from 9 September 2024 to 3 November 2024. The consultation aimed to understand how existing STLS services, structures, and processes fit into the new ways of working, and to identify duplication and gaps in provision.

The STLS provides services to schools and early years settings across the county, including one-to-one advice for individual children (through Local Inclusion Forum Teams), training, and transition support. The current Service Level Agreement ends on 31 August, 2025, with no option for extension. Key stakeholders have been involved in assessing the current impact of the service and exploring future options. Some stakeholders found it challenging to fully participate in the consultation due to a lack of detail about the new ways of working.

The consultation outcomes indicate that the service is highly valued and plays a crucial role in supporting mainstream schools and early years settings. There is a clear preference for the continuation of the service. Both professional and resident respondents agreed that STLS supports children and young people in achieving the outcomes that are important to them, has the skills and knowledge to promote inclusive practices in mainstream schools, upskills teaching staff, and facilitates school-to-school support.

Recommendations regarding the future of the service reflect this feedback and the proposal is to continue to fund the service. Based on a proposal submitted during the consultation, a further assessment has been undertaken to determine the number of providers for the service and the proposal is for a single provider to deliver the service across the county. In considering the type providers who would be able to deliver a countywide service, within an evolving SEND landscape and recognising the financial pressure against the High Needs Funding, the proposal is that the service will be bought in house and Kent County Council will deliver it. This will ensure consistency and continuity of delivery across the county as SEND provision in mainstream education evolves.

An initial Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) was completed and included in the consultation documents. Respondents were asked to read the document and provide feedback on the equality analysis, including suggestions for additional considerations related to equality and diversity.

The EQIA has been updated to reflect the feedback from the consultation.

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?

No

Have you consulted with stakeholders?

Yes

Who have you involved, consulted and engaged with?

KCC stakeholders who form the STLS Steering Group

- . KCC internal governance groups i.e. Transformation Operational Group 2 (TOG2) and Divisional Management Team (DMT)
- . SLA-holding Headteachers and the STLS Leads
- . Schools and Early Year's settings
- . Families and carers
- . School Governors
- . Schools Funding Forum

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
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of the service by a single countywide provider will ensure an a more equitable offer to children with SEND across the county, addressing current variation in capacity and service offer. • A more integrated local offer of support will be achieved through greater alignment to schools through the Community of Schools model being implemented through the Localities Model. • The model will move to a link practitioner model, moving away from a visiting expert model and towards a mentoring and coaching model, building greater use of the expertise already within schools and settings. • Bringing the service into the Council will facilitate closer collaboration amongst Council inclusion services. • Greater opportunity for sharing of learning amongst SENCos, teachers and HLTAs
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
<p>Respondents identified a detrimental impact on younger children, specifically those in early years settings, if the service were to end. This would also be the case if the funding approach changed in a way that meant early years settings could not longer access the service.</p> <p>The impact on younger children, specifically those in early years settings, was also referenced in relation to transition into school age settings.</p>
Mitigating Actions for Age
<p>The risk of impact occurring will be mitigated by the service continuing to receive funding. Further, the proposal is that funding for early years STLS will come from the early years grant, a dedicated funding allocated for early years. This will mitigate the risk of the service no longer being provided to early years settings.</p> <p>The proposal to bring the service into the Council will allow for greater alignment of early years support service, supporting a more joined up and coordinated offer of support.</p>
Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions – Age
Siobhan Price
20. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Disability
Are there negative impacts for Disability?

Yes
Details of Negative Impacts for Disability
Respondents identified potentially detrimental impact on children and young people with SEND if the support provided by the service were to end. Some respondents identified a potential impact specifically on children with Communication and Interaction, Social Emotional and Mental Health, and Cognition and Learning needs. This is because children with sensory and physical disability needs will continue to be supported by in-house Sensory and PD STLS which fulfils a statutory duty.
Mitigating actions for Disability
The risk of impact occurring will be mitigated by the service continuing to be funded and the service continuing to support all eligible children. A move to a Link Practitioner Model will support the ongoing development of inclusive practice in mainstream schools for children of all need types. The involvement of Communities of Schools in directing the work of STLS will support a broader discussion of the needs of schools in support children of all need types.
Responsible Officer for Disability
Siobhan Price
21. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Sex
Are there negative impacts for Sex
Yes
Details of negative impacts for Sex
A potential negative impact on Sex was referenced by respondents to the consultation if the service ended. This is based on the high portion of women that make up the STLS, school and SENCo workforce.
Mitigating actions for Sex
The risk of impact occurring will be mitigated by the service continuing to receive funding. Further, the proposal to bring the service in house has been assessed as being the option most likely to provide longer term financial sustainability and security to the service and those who both delivery, and receive it.
Responsible Officer for Sex
Siobhan Price
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
No
Negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for Carer's responsibilities
Not Applicable